THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIASPORIC NETWORKS BY RECENT
POLISH MIGRANTS TO LONDON, UK

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fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By Weronika A. Kusek

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Justification of Research Project, Research Question

Citizens of the European Union are spatially fluid. Freedom of movement has provided millions of Europeans with a new framework that may be challenging the nation-state as the anchor for the European identity and personal life. Europeans are increasingly considering other European states as an alternative to their homeland, and despite a conflict between nationalism and pan-Europeanism, an increasing group of Europeans are seemingly embracing transnational lifestyles. In 2004, after the accession of 10 new members to the European Union, Eastern Europeans joined other EU citizens who can freely explore professional, academic, and personal opportunities in other countries within the EU. They also accessed the opportunity to experience the benefits and challenges of life in wealthier, Western European countries such as the United Kingdom. The academic world has studied the post 2004 accession Polish migrants in the United Kingdom (see Burrel 2009, 2010, 2011, Cieslinska 2008, 2010, 2012, Datta 2008, 2009, Galasinska&Kozlowksa 2009, Iglicka 2007, Rabikowska 2009) mainly focusing on experiences of service-sector labor migrants. The existing body of knowledge invites further inquiry into why Polish migrants move to the UK, but more importantly, lacks studies into how migrant experiences differ among social classes, and how modern technology influences Polish migrants, their choices, and what effect it has on
transnational communities. The study of the impact of modern technology on the migrant experience is particularly interesting, because many Polish migrants in the UK have used technology in their lives in Poland. In this fashion, technology not only becomes a channel for maintaining diasporic networks, but also becomes a constant element linking their Polish and British lifestyles. At a higher level, existing research is also lacking detailed perspectives on the migration of people from one developed region to another. While Poland’s economic and social development is not equal to that of the UK, Poland, as a member of the EU, represents an advanced level of economic, political, and social achievement. With these factors in mind, the focus of this research project is to analyze migrant experiences of Poles who settled in London, United Kingdom after the 2004 EU expansion, to explore how they maintain diasporic networks, how technology assists and influences the lives of Poles as transnational migrants, and how modern communication technology may be challenging traditional perceptions of diaspora. This research objective was pursued by addressing the following research goals:

- to explore the personal profiles of a diverse group of Polish migrants to the UK, representing two social classes of migrants: service sector labor workers and professional sector European elites (later referred to as Eurostars)
- to explore the complexity of their reasons for migration, and how these reasons may influence the nature and intensity of their diasporic networks
- to understand, compare, and contrast the living patterns, interactions, and daily routines of Polish migrants in each of the studied migrant classes (labor workers / professionals)
- to understand, compare, and contrast how migrants maintain contact with their homeland, and how that contact is facilitated by the use of modern communication technology in each of the migrant classes (labor workers / professionals)

1.2 Methodology Overview

This research has been accomplished through deploying qualitative methodologies during extensive fieldwork in London. This research relies on interviews with Polish migrants working and living in London, mental maps produced by migrants during interviews, and participant observation. This research is a result of three fieldwork visits to London during which thirty-five Polish migrants who live and work in London and its surroundings were interviewed and observed. The interviews took place over the period of three years and hours of in-depth interviews that were facilitated in the participants’ apartments and homes, coffee shops, and other public spaces such as parks, libraries, hospitals, and university facilities.

In light of the reliance of this dissertation on qualitative methodologies, this work also explores the research process in the context of researcher positionality and the influence of gender on conducting research. This subsection also includes a discussion about insider vs. outsider perspectives on doing fieldwork by analyzing my perspective on the issue of Polish migration in the U.K. as a Polish migrant in the United States as compared with the perspective of researchers like for example Janta (2009) who,
similarly to the people studied, was a Polish migrant in the UK herself. I believe my positionality will contribute to the existing literature by providing a more distant perspective on the issues of Polish migrants in the UK.

1.3 Research Background

Migration and assimilation occupy important areas of interest for governments, international organizations, and scholars from the disciplines of geography, sociology, and political science. Scholars dissect migration and identify its different forms based on its source, length, and intensity but also explore its consequences on an individual level; national and local governments are concerned with the consequences that migration has on the host and sending countries, their policies and economies, and international organizations monitor, survey and also directly support various transnational initiatives.

The voluntary Polish migration within the European Union and particularly the migration wave to the UK after Poland joined the EU in 2004 became a convergence for all migration-related interests due to the unique processes, scale, and characteristics defining this migration phenomenon. The migration of Poles to the UK does not only occur in a novel technological context, but is unprecedented in its intensity, and set within the framework of a political entity with very fluid internal dynamics.
1.3.1 Contribution to existing research

The contributions of this work to the field of migration research can be categorized into three main categories.

First, this research contributes to the study of migration by analyzing a new migration process in a dynamically changing social and political context of the European Union. This research provides an alternative perspective to studies focused on migration from third-world, post-colonial countries to the West. Therefore, on the one hand, it allows for the study of migration between countries of a relatively comparable social, technological, and economic development status. On the other hand, it focuses on migration within the European Union and between the “new EU” and “old EU 15” – a relatively new and evolving process accounted for by an increasing, but still lacking body of research.

Second, while Polish migration is neither a new phenomenon, nor a novel subject for scholarly work, especially in the context of transnationalism and diaspora (see Burrell 2009, Iglicka 2009) its recent manifestation provides an opportunity to define the qualities of modern Polish migration. The post-2004 Polish migration to the UK has challenged traditional perceptions of Polish migrants defined by pre- and post-WWII political and economic migrants, and labor migrants of the Communist Era. These modern migrants not only leave Poland for different reasons than previous generations, but also perceive Poland – the place they are leaving – in a different way than migrants of the past. In order to investigate these migrant paths, and connections with Poland more
fully, I have also focused my research on two distinct groups of Polish migrants – labor migrants and professional Eurostars (term coined by Favell 2008). Existing studies (see Burrell 2006, 2009, Galasinska and Kozlowska 2009, Iglicka 2006, 2009) focus mainly on the experiences, lifestyles, and choices of migrants working on the service industry and currently, there is no substantive research focusing on professional Polish migrants to the West. The inclusion of their perspectives allows for a deeper understanding of the reasons for Polish migration to the UK, but also of social and economic dynamics that are occurring in Poland and within the EU.

Furthermore, this dissertation provides deep insight into how technology influences diasporic networks. Within research in this space, there is abundant literature on the subject of technology and migrant lifestyles, for example Stafford (2000) argues that information and communication technologies (ICTs) contribute to the experience of migration but they do not solve the problems of separation within families, Madianou and Miller (2012) note that polymedia provides justification for mothers to migrate to another country. Nevertheless, most studies focus on long-distance international migrants from the developing world, and few have analyzed how technology influences migration when migrants come from a country with existing and robust access to modern communication technology. This is important for two main reasons. First, the intensity of technology use by Polish migrants in the UK allows them to sustain many of the activities they performed in Poland despite their migration to another country. They can buy Polish goods online, read Polish news, follow the lives of friends back home, or maintain and manage bank accounts in Poland, etc. In this sense, technology is not only used by Polish
migrants to stay in touch with family members or other migrants, but connects them to their lives in Poland on many functional levels: as family members, consumers, taxpayers, entertainment audiences, etc. Second, technology is not only a tool for Polish migrants, it is an element that remains constant between their Polish and British lives. Thus, as this research points out and previous research has not identified, the patterns of use of technology and in some cases even the electronic equipment that migrants own remains the same regardless of the migrant’s physical location. Therefore, technology helps to bridge distances not only due to the effects of its use, but by the process of using it in itself.

1.3.2 The European Union

The European Union consists of 28 European member countries. As an economic and political union it is focused on facilitating the integration and exchange of people, goods and services; therefore one of its major goals and principles is to enable EU citizens to freely move from one country to another. In 2004 the European Union experienced unprecedented expansion when 10 of the former Communist states joined the Union (known as the A10) (Castles and Miller 2009). For Poland, joining the EU allowed its citizens to relocate to Western European countries – many have taken advantage of this opportunity to pursue financial gains. The majority of Polish migrants have moved to England with London serving as a main receiving destination. The scale of this migration, unprecedented in EU history, has challenged theoretical models of EU
policy, and has been reshaping intra-EU dynamics, perceptions of EU integration, and plans for the future of the Union.

1.3.3 Local focus of research

Polish migration to the UK is, furthermore, having an impact on other political entities and can be viewed at different scales. In addition to its significance at the national and international scale for the EU, Poland and the UK, the concentration of Polish migration in London provides a unique opportunity to introduce a local-level perspective to this research. Data for this research was gathered in London, UK, one of the biggest concentrations of the contemporary Polish diaspora, and interestingly a site for both the current and past waves of Polish migrants. London has always played an important function as a city in the British, European and global scale not only for economic but also for political and cultural activities of England, Great Britain, the UK, the British Empire, and today the European Union. London is appealing for labor migrants from all over the world and has become the destination of choice for immigrants from Poland in particular. London is a cosmopolitan city with a population of over 7 million people and a metropolitan area with almost 15 million residents, many of whom come from all over the world. London has been an attractive migration destination due to dynamic employment opportunities and a stable democratic political environment. But, London is also a site where past and current migratory processes can be studied and compared. A significant portion of this research was conducted in London districts of Ealing and
Hammersmith which are the traditional (pre WWII) and recent centers of Polish migration.

1.3.4 New face of Polish migration

The long-history of Polish migration abroad provides an additional significance to this study. Due to a turbulent political and economic past, Polish migrants have built communities in Canada, the United States of America, and Australia. The UK was a major destination for Polish political migrants at the beginning of the XX century and during WWII, and London served as the host-site of a Polish shadow government. Later migration waves, like the migration of the 1980s was characterized by a focus on countries in closer proximity to Poland, when Poles relocated to Germany and other close-by Western European countries (Castles and Miller 2009). The latest migration wave of Poles to the UK is redefining the Polish identity in the UK, and is characterized by a clash of perceptions of Poland – one drawn by traditional political and economic migrants with established lives in the UK and the other imported by recent migrants, a portion of whom have been born after the collapse of Communism in Poland in 1989. The perception of Poles in the UK is also being changed simply due to the intensity of migration and the impact of volume on assimilation. According to the Office of National Statistics: ‘in 2012, Polish was the most common non-British nationality.[..and] 700,000 residents in the UK have Polish nationality. By comparison, in 2004, 69,000 residents of the UK had Polish nationality. Therefore, there has been an increase of 631,000 Polish

Popular media, however, report the number to be closer to approximately 1 million people (BBC 01/22/10). In light of the intensity of the recent Polish migration it is fairly easy to overlook the history of Polish culture in the UK before 2004. Polish neighborhoods, Saturday schools, and organizations such as POSK have existed and served Polish migrants for decades before Poland became an EU member. Migrants representing the post-2004 migration wave do not only represent a different Poland than the one remembered by Polish migrants who have already lived in London for decades, but also migrate for different reasons and with different sentiments. Kozlowska and Galasińska (2009) identify the motivation for current migration as a ‘search for

![Figure 1.1 – Five Most Common Nationalities in the UK](image-url)
normality’, a much more personally driven migration than one motivated by escape from war, poverty, persecution, or communism. This research aims to explore in detail the personal motivations of migrants to the UK, and outline their spatial, technological, and lifestyle patterns.
Chapter 2 – Review of pertinent research on globalization, migration, and transnationalism

2.1 Globalization and its regional dimension in Europe

According to Jones (2012) ‘globalization is about the emergence (or not) of an integrated human society on Earth’ (Jones 2012 p.23), and ideas such as ‘the global village’ are relatively new. He claims that geographers and other social scientists understand globalization as a change in the way humans experience space and time (Jones 2012). Globalization, according to Held et al. 1999, is ‘the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life’ (Held et al. 1999 p.2). Despite the presumed global scale of the phenomenon, globalization can also be analyzed at the regional level, providing a framework for understanding regional interconnectedness, such as the one promoted among European states. Castles and Miller (2009) stress that globalization is a new framework for analyzing migratory processes, especially those from the South to the North but also within regional political entities like the European Union. The European Union is composed of 28 members. Despite several contentious qualities like those highlighted in debates regarding the supremacy of the EU government over sovereign member governments, in general, the daily reality within the EU is characterized by fairly unrestricted migratory flows of Europeans from the South and East to the Northern European cities, and even more significantly, unrestricted trade
among all member states. As such, at least interconnectedness within Europe has been
achieved with the help of the EU.

Globalization can also be analyzed through its objectives or perceived outcomes.
Thomas Friedman (2005), who analyzes globalization with a focus on the early 21st
century, expands to concept of globalization to mean more than just interconnectedness.
He sees the globalized world as a level playing field in terms of commerce, where all
competitors have an equal opportunity, and people from all over the world can compete
for employment in the biggest corporations (Friedman 2005). Friedman’s concept may be
difficult to explore when comparing, at least superficially, starkly different regions of the
world (Manhattan and Mumbai, for example), but understanding the “flattening of the
world” is more easily visible within the European Union, and can be easily emphasized
via the lens of Polish migrants to the UK, and particularly when focusing on educated
professionals who pursue international careers. In “Eurostars and Eurocities”, Favell
(2008) explored the experiences of Western European professional migrants to other
Western European countries and labelled them as “Eurostars”. The term referred to
people who represented a high level of mobility, high educational attainment, and a
desirable, international lifestyle. Their language skills and professional skills allow then
to seamlessly transition locations. As Favell (2008) further noted, many of these migrants
detest being categorized as migrants, and rather see themselves as internationals, who can
transition boarders and locales without difficulty. An increasing number of Polish
professional migrants in the UK is representative of the fact that after years of post-
communist transitions crowned by Poland’s membership in the EU, Eastern Europeans
can join the ranks of Western European professionals who become internationally mobile and embody the EU’s values and objectives of facilitating trans-national mobility among member states. In this work, I have decided to apply the label of “Eurostars” to Polish professional migrants in the UK. By applying this term, I am adapting Favell’s definition to the context of this work.

As Castells (1996) points out, the study of also invites the analysis of mechanisms and processes which enable globalization. These include new information and communication technologies and cheap air travel (Castells 1996). These mechanisms assist migrants and provide a foundation for their migratory choices (see Burrell 2012, Madianou and Miller 2012).

Whether focusing on outcomes or the processes occurring under globalization, it is difficult to ignore the fact that globalization is also expressed in economic terms; particularly through the flow of money which occurs from the migrants to their families in the home countries, and in reverse from the home countries to the migrant families. It is estimated that eight percent of the world’s population receive migration related remittances (UNDP 2006 in Madianou and Miller 2012).
2.2 London – A Global City

In the context of an increasingly globalized world, researchers have identified that results of globalization can be identified at different scales, and they are particularly visible when looking at specific global cities like London.

London, although spatially located far from the European mainland, has always been one of the most important European cities. Its strategic location next to the Thames River has positioned this city for future growth evidenced by its long and rich history which included its role as the capital of a vast colonial world. That historical foundation, coupled with a progressive and modern approach to business and social politics have solidified London’s position as a center for economic, political, cultural, and educational activities of Great Britain and, increasingly, the European continent as a whole. London’s global prominence, however, has been marked with several tragic events such as the great plague in 1665, a fire that destroyed almost the whole city, and a bombing during the Second World War, however these destructive events did not prevent this city from securing its leading economic and political position among cities worldwide (Brunn et al 2008).

London was one of the first centers of industrialization in Europe and around the world – a phenomenon which influenced the development and the current high status of the city. Building on its colonial presence, London has been one of the first cosmopolitan cities, and relying on a diversified economy, is able to quickly adapt to the changing
global reality. The liberal political and social climate, coupled with an international economic presence, has made it attractive for both political and labor migrants for decades. Today, London is considered as one of the traditionally recognized three world or global cities with a new, service oriented economy and internationally-significant centers for economic, political, and cultural activity. It hosts one of the key global Stock Exchange centers (LSE), Bank of England, at the Royal Exchange attracting not only major businesses, banks, and corporations but masses of immigrants from all over the world who hope to become part of the growing global-economy workforce, or at least the broader, internationally-fueled local economy.

London’s metropolitan area hosts 15 million residents, many of whom represent countries from around the world. Historically, the city has always been known for welcoming immigration policies for people from former colonies (Brunn et al 2008). Consequently, the majority of London’s international population came from: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Caribbean. Even today, when most countries in the world tighten immigration policies, the UK was one of only three European Union countries that granted the new, post-2004 EU enlargement members, including Poles, work permits without temporal or territorial restrictions. As Moszczynski (2010) estimates, about one million Poles moved to the UK since 2004, and many of them settled in London.

The traditional definition of a global city is rooted in the definition of “world cities” and, under this definition, global cities are simply the most advanced world cities. The concept of the World City was first coined by Geddes in 1915 but it was not until the 1960s when Hall reintroduced the world city definition (Clark 2003). Hall described
world cities as places where most important business is conducted. He distinguished economic and political importance of world cities. Over the years, world cities became a major focus of research and the term has been constantly redefined (Clark 2003). Today, most researchers see world cities as the decision-making centers for the world economy (see Friedmann 2005, Ley 1998, 2000, 2004, Sassen 1988, 2001, 2005). Furthermore, Mollenkopf talks about the “key nodes” where capital is concentrated therefore function rather than size (Mollenkopf in Clark 2003) is the criteria for classification of global cities.

Throughout the years urban scholars have used different factors to classify cities. One way to classify cities is to look at their importance in the world economy in the general sense of the term. If the cities play the role of control centers for the world economy many scholars automatically define them as world cities. Depending on how important the role is, the city will fall into a particular tier (Friedmann 2005). Thus, third tier world cities include: Amsterdam, Moscow, Sydney, etc. Second tier cities include Paris, Frankfurt, Chicago, Singapore, and first tier cities include only 3: London, Tokyo, and New York City. Under this classification – only tier one cities are called global cities.

Friedman (2005) argues that world cities, and consequently even more so global cities, are control and command centers for banking, finance, healthcare, higher education, etc. Consequently, the linkages between major industries make world cities to have more in common with each other rather than with other cities in their nations. And a major common quality of world cities is an increase in migration (both national and international) to the city. The increased role of the city in the global economy attracts a
lot of people who participate in the city’s global position. The link between global cities and migration is probably best showed by Kaplan and Schwartz (1996) who, in the search for qualities important to the definition of a global city identified immigration as one of the key qualities. Also, Ley (2004) (citing Friedmann) describes seven characteristics of a top tier world city, and within those includes: the city’s position in the international division of labor, and its function as an immigrant destination.

Despite a global role of a city like London, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the vast majority of residents and workers within global cities are not directly connected to global-economic functions (trading, finance, politics). This divide between residents of global cities among those who are members of the global elite, and those who are not raises several important questions. First, while most residents may not be directly connected to the global-scale activities occurring within the city, it is possible to characterize the city’s global status as an engine which provides many jobs indirectly dependent on the global activities within that city (consumer services, professional services, entertainment, etc.). Second, the city’s global status is often reflective of its culture which embraces diversity and welcomes cultures and traditions from around the world – at times creating a melting-pot of cultures shared among all city residents. Most importantly however, as researchers point out, due to the large diversity (ethnic but also economic and political) among residents that live in a global city, these urban centers are characterized by a large polarization between different resident groups. Researchers point out that the economic significance of a global city is not always beneficial to all residents
of that city, as there are also residents that are not only isolated from the city’s global role, but are in fact exploited by the global classes (Ley 2004, Sassen 2005).

Abu-Lughod (2000), Clark (2003), Sassen (2005), among many other scholars, have directed their attention to this problem of polarization within cities, with a particular focus on ethnic minorities, people of color, and international migrants. Sassen (2005) furthermore redefines the term “global city” highlighting important factors which may fuel polarization among residents. The first is the simple fact that the majority of residents of a global city are actually excluded from participating in the global economy that supports the city (they do not work for global firms, they do not fly abroad, and they are not globally educated). A second source of polarization is physical - global elites lives in very separated parts of a city (for example Chinese ethnoburbs in LA described by Li 1988) or within a city (citadels described by Marcuse (1997)) and do not interact with people who are of a lower socio-economic status even if they share the same nationality. Over time, cities like Chicago witness a shifting of populations between physical areas, and different populations (or waves of migration) struggle for control over particular physical parts of the city. The traditional poor Chinese workers live in Chinatowns (for example: Chicago) and never really socialize with the Chinese elites. Sassen (2005) also points to the fact that polarization occurs at an economic level, between business actors. Traditional companies present in global cities cannot compete for talent with global companies, which pushes them towards an informal economy (illegal immigration/lower skilled labor force/part time hiring, etc). What is most interesting from my perspective, however, is the polarization that occurs on ethnic grounds, and is a direct result of
migration. Ethnic, immigration based polarization occurs: within ethnic groups (class polarization), between ethnic groups (ethnic and class polarization: for space, for work), as well as between migrants and host society (ethnic and class polarization). For example, you may have Indian immigrants living in London who compete for jobs with Chinese immigrants (both in white and blue collar sectors). In London, Latvians may be competing for jobs with Poles. Furthermore, as Ryan et. al (2007) discuss, antagonisms also occur within ethnic communities, like the Polish community in London. They conclude that the recent Polish migrants do not have a trusting attitude towards the wider Polish community. They regard the wider Polish community with suspicion, and associate it with rivalry, competition, and jealousy.

Sassen (2001) classifies cities as “global cities” not only due to a city’s objective economic and political importance on the international level, but rather analyzes the profile of the city’s economy to see if it fits the modern, supra-national global economy. Consequently, under Sassen’s (2001) definition, a global city does not have to be a control center, but rather has to be a host for modern, global-economy organizations, and must attract a global elite workforce. For Sassen (2001, 2005), modern global cities, while they also can be world cities, are products of the modern global economy that functions independently of nation states. Global cities in that respect have the infrastructure and services to support these global actors. Consequently, all traditionally defined world cities are also global cities according to Sassen (2005), but Sassen (2005) also adds other cities to that list. Sassen’s (2001, 2005) effort to redefine the global cities is important in the context of migration, because even if her urban classification is not
correct, she was able to accurately notice certain elements of the modern global economy that produced the global elites, and have led not only to international migration, but also the mentioned polarization within large urban centers. First, as Sassen (2001) points out, globalization characterized by a geographic dispersal of economic activities, caused the need for the creation of central corporate functions. As these corporate functions grew and specialized, their needs led to the outsourcing of corporate functions to specialized firms (accounting, legal, public relations). A growth in outsourcing led to increased corporate mobility (because less work was done in headquarters). As a result, global economic actors were serviced by a global specialized elite, and neither of them were tied to a particular geographic location. They all had an incentive, and thanks to their mobility and resources the ability, to relocate and concentrate in global cities which allow them to strengthen business networks, attract talent, etc. The result, as Sassen (2001) points out, is that a global city concentrates and attracts highly skilled and rewarded professionals, but at the same time attracts support labor, and still hosts a local, non-global population. This all increases the spatial and socio economic inequality within a city.

Global cities are also important for analyzing and theorizing migration because, despite their role as a global city, they also often retain their local and national roles. These additional roles are a source of more factors that impact the lives of migrants. For Ley (2004), the global scale promoted by Sassen (2001) (transnational, focused on the global flow of people and capital) ignores a personal and regional perspective. Ley (2004) points out that although global cities share many characteristics and together have an elite labor force, the mobility of people and ideas is exaggerated. Ley (2004) points
out that on a personal level globalization is difficult, and people are still closely tied to regional cultures. This is important because polarization in the context of global cities is usually discussed in the context of a sharp contrast between the opportunities and resources available for global elites and the limited opportunities and resources available to the non-elite workers (blue collar workers, labor migrants, local population not involved in global economy [for example: underclass in the US context], etc.). This traditional thinking of polarization in global cities is especially visible in London where you not only see the global banking and trade elites, but also Middle-eastern elites, the fashion industry, and others contrasted with vast populations of labor migrants from across the world. But if global cities are, as Ley (2004) states, inseparable from the countries they are a part of, this means that polarization in global cities can also occur for national/ethnic reasons as well that may be completely independent from the global economy.

2.3 Migration Theories

International migration involves a complex set of factors, participants, and processes, and thus can be studied from a virtually infinite number of perspectives and approaches (see Castles and Miller 2009, Manning 2005, Sammers 2010). Castles and Miller (2009) point out that, generally, two areas of focus are easily distinguishable: studying migration with a focus on the ‘determinants, processes and patterns of migration’ (Massey et al. 1993, 1998, Castles and Miller 2009) and focusing on the
outcomes of the migration process by looking at ‘the ways in which migrants become incorporated into receiving societies’ (Massey et al. 1998, Castles and Miller 2009). While identifying this distinction, Castles and Miller (2009) stress that it is artificial, and they prefer to understand migration as a fluid ‘migratory process’ which is open to researching all complexities of migration in its entirety. Therefore, they also note that research on migration is and should be interdisciplinary including academic disciplines such as sociology, history, geography, political science etc. (Brettell and Hollifield 2007, Castles and Miller 2009). Consequently, this research, although mainly based on geographic theories, also relies on theories from other disciplines and draws from the many contradictory and complementary attempts that have been made to explain migratory movements.

The vast array of theories on migration, and an intense academic interest in migration can be explained on two levels – the macro level pertinent to political, economic, and social systems, and the micro level, focusing on migrants as individuals. As many researchers agree, migration has profound effects on both the macro and micro levels. The micro level relates to the choices, experiences, stresses, and consequences of migration for individual migrants, and also analyzes how migration affects those individuals, their families, and social networks. At the macro level, researchers explore the growing phenomenon of international migration, and generalized drivers of migration. Although only three percent of the world population actually migrates internationally, (UNDESA 2005) the changes brought about by international migrants on
their sending and hosting countries are significant, and have consequences on entire societies, economies, and political systems.

The tension between a micro- and macro-focus on migration has been prevalent throughout the development of migration theories which started with the neoclassical approach focused on the individual, developed into labor-market and systems theories, and now incorporate inter-disciplinary and multi-scale approaches.

The neoclassical theory (Todaro 1969) based on Ravenstein’s laws of migration is one of the oldest and most dominant theories of migration. The neoclassical perspective created a foundation (see Cohen 1987) for understanding the factors which cause migration by evaluating regional, national, or international characteristics from the perspective of an individual migrant. As such, the neoclassical theory suggested that, generally, migrants move from low to high income areas or from densely to sparsely populated areas. It is based on the assumption of differentials in wages between countries, and the belief that migrants make decisions by performing a cost-benefit analysis on these factors (Borjas 1989). Therefore, the theory introduces the concept of push-pull factors suggesting that people leave certain areas due to unfavorable conditions and are attracted to other areas by factors such as higher wages, better living conditions, improved economic opportunities or political stability (see Borjas 1989, Chiswick 2000, Sactels and Miller 2009, Todaro 1969).

The neoclassical theory, while sensitive to a variety of factors on the individual level, has been criticized for failing to account for factors independent of the migrant, and
for assuming rationality in decision making (Sassen 1988, Portes and Rumbaut 2006, Castles and Miller 2009). To address these shortfalls, researchers have looked at the social and family networks of migrants as other factors influencing migration decisions.

In the 1980s, Taylor (1987) argued that decisions to migrate are not made by individuals themselves but rather they are a result of consecutive decision made by families, households, or even broader communities to improve not only the life of this particular individual migrant but also his family or the whole community. Massey et al. (1987) describes the reasoning of Mexican farmers who migrate to the U.S. to earn capital needed to make their land in Mexico productive and Madianou and Miller (2009) discuss the Marekina women who migrated to London and their decisions were influenced by parents and husbands seeking improvement in their economic situations.

The historical-institutional approach is an example of a macro-scale approach. It was conceived in the 1970s and 1980s and identifies the drivers of migration as being rooted in the differences between political and economic powers, developed and underdeveloped countries, and the exploitation of labor and resources by developed colonial countries to become even more profitable (Castles and Kosack 1973, Cohen 1987, Sassen 1988, Castles and Miller 2009). While this perspective has limited applicability to the situation of Polish migrants in the UK, macro-scale migration theories are nevertheless relevant. The World Systems Theory (Wallerstein1984) identifies migratory movements as a result of the global labor supply system. This theory argues that the world economy is controlled by core capitalist nations, and multinational corporations are responsible for the lack of progression in third world countries. It also
assumes that global capitalism is responsible for migration because the industrially
developed world takes advantage of cheap labor sourced in the underdeveloped periphery
(Massey et al. 1993).

The migration systems theory provides another context for analyzing the causes of
migration. Rooted in geography, migration systems theory assumes that migratory
movements are based on the existence of prior links between sending and receiving
countries (see Castles and Miller 2009, Portes and Rumbaut 2006, Sassen 1988).
Migration systems theory examines both ends of the flow and analyzes the evolution of
linkages between places. The migration systems theory also emphasizes that a specific
country can be part of several migratory systems. An important quality of the migration
systems theory, which is reflected in this dissertation, is the fact that according to the
migratory system theory migratory movements are a result of the interaction of factors on
both the micro- and macro- levels. This approach inclusive of theories developed
throughout the history of migration studies is particularly valuable in the context of the
European Union which, as an entity, is founded on micro- and macro- scale principles of
the free movement of people, but also information, goods and services.

Migration theory is not, however, only concerned with diagnosing the causes of
migration. The transnational theory of migration is concerned researching factors
contributing to the facilitation of the growth of migrant mobility and the economic,
social, and cultural linkages that migrants have between two or more places. It
emphasizes the role of globalization and the improvements in communication,
technology, and transportation that enable migrants to maintain relationships with their homelands (Castles and Miller 2009). The Dual Labor Market Theory developed by Piore (1979) in (Castles and Miller 2009) reflects on the stratification of labor markets in host countries. Building on the push-pull concepts, its stresses that labor markets of hosting countries are divided into primary and secondary categories. Primary job market offers stable and well paid employment opportunities and the secondary markets offer employment which is of low prestige, lower wages, and attracts low skilled migrants. The theories of migration described above, taken as a whole lead to an understanding of migration as a process defined by tension between macro-scale and micro-scale drivers. As I will try to demonstrate, due to the complexity of reasons driving migration, these drivers need to be explored at the individual level, as an individual choice first. That individual case can then be placed in the context of a broader family or social situation, and analyzed via a lens of broader relationships between countries, economies and maybe also the chaos characterizing the global economy.

2.4 Migration in the World

According to the International Migration Report 2009 – A Global Assessment (2009) prepared by the United Nations, by 2010 the number of international migrants increased to 214 million (compared to 58 million since 1990) thus in 2010 international migrants represented 3.1 percent of the total world population. According to the same report, developed regions accommodated 60 percent of the total migrant stock with
Europe hosting the largest number of international migrants (70 million), followed by Asia (61 million) and North America (50 million). Africa hosted 19 million international migrants, and there were 7 million migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean. Oceania accommodated 6 million migrants but it had the highest percentage of international migrants relative to the total population (16.8 percent), followed by Northern America (14.2 percent) and Europe (9.5 percent).

The UN also reports little change in the trends related to the gender of migrants. Female migrants in developed countries represented 51.5 percent of all international migrants in 2010, with the European continent experiencing female migrants outnumbering the male migrants in contrast to developing world regions with 45.3 percent of female migrants (the International Migration Report 2009).

Countries such as Australia, Canada, or the United States have been historically attracting migrants from around the world (Castles and Miller 2009). Since the 1980, most countries in Europe have experienced increasing immigration. In addition to countries in Europe that have attracted immigrants for some time, such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom, former countries of emigration, such as Italy and Spain, have become preferred destinations for immigrants from other parts of Europe as well as from developing countries. Europe on the other hand was sending their people out due to colonial plans and ambitions but also due to many economic issues that countries such as Ireland were facing (Castles and Kosack 1973, Castles and Miller 2009). It was not until after the World War II when western European countries, United Kingdom
included, started attracting people from the Caribbean, Asian, and African regions (see Massey et al. 1998, Manning 2005). As a consequence the ethnic and racial make-up of British, French, or Belgian societies started to change. With many heated debates on cultural assimilation, discrimination, and adaptation of the immigrants from far corners of the world, a new wave of immigrants to the United Kingdom occurred in large numbers. The new immigrants come from culturally closer places such as: Poland, The Czech Republic, Latvia, or Lithuania.

2.5 Human Mobility and Diaspora Population

New technologies of transportation enable humans to move from one place to another. The first transportation infrastructure included the creation of roads, bridges, wagons, railroads, new port facilities, and steamships (Manning 2005). Railroad construction began in England in the 1830s and spread throughout the world. Therefore, a noticeable mobility of people can be traced to the 19th century but it really accelerated to unprecedented numbers, due to the latest developments in air transportation in the 20th century. The scale of human mobility has increased not only in frequency but at its intensity, and it continuous to grow in the 21st century as well enabling human beings to move to different parts of the world.

The term ‘Diaspora’ is used today by human geographers and other social scientists (see Cohen 1997, Van Hear 1998, Blunt 2007, Dufoix 2008, Jones 2012) to define members of certain ethnic groups who are spatially dispersed throughout the world.
but for many years this term was only applied to ‘physically scattered religious groups (peoples, churches, congregations) living as minorities among other people and other faiths’ (Dufoix 2008, p.1). In the late 20th century and early 21st century, Diaspora has been defined as ‘communities of migrants around the world that retain an identity with their homeland and their common ancestry” (Manning 2005 p.157-158), and since 1970s has been applied to many groups of people. Traditionally tough, Diasporic groups that have been referred as such have usually been Jews, Chinese, or Black Africans (Dufoix 2008).

“In this way, ‘diaspora’ has become a term that refers to any phenomenon of dispersion from a place; the organization of an ethnic, national, or religious community in one or more countries; a population spread over more than one territory; the places of dispersion; any nonterritorial space where exchanges take place, and so on” (Dufoix 2008, p.2).

Nevertheless “although many diasporas are seen to be born of flight rather than choice, in practice migration scholars often find it difficult to separate voluntary from involuntary migration” (Cohen 1997).

Cohen (1997) defines “Diasporic communities [as] settled outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, acknowledge that “the old country” – a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore-always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions” (Cohen 1997, p.ix).
Brinkerhoff (2009), drawing from Cohen (1997), provides a list of characteristics that a diaspora ought to have. These include: involuntary or voluntary dispersion of people of the same nationality, a collective memory and myth about the homeland, the idea of return to homeland, and a diasporic consciousness.

Although ‘diaspora’ can be commonly defined as spreading of migrants to other various parts of the world and the formation of ethnic communities in a new country (Samers 2010), the economic, political, cultural, and social connections that migrants maintain across the borders are called ‘diasporic networks’ (Sammers 2010), and these are important for the creation of diasporic or transnational migrant communities. Such communities are “transnational social spaces held together by financial remittances and social networks derived from ethnic ties” (Dicken 2011). It is not uncommon for the participants of transnational communities to be bilingual, frequently move between both countries, or even have homes in both places (Faist 2008).

Transnational communities, although very helpful for many migrants, especially those representing a low socio-economic status, can also have an isolationist quality. In extreme cases, transnational communities are a double-edged sword - they may prevent full assimilation by practically isolating migrants from the society at large. The idea of transnational, or specifically bi-national immigrant communities, which Poles have created in the UK, is not new in the history of global migration. Latinos in the United States, for example, have created bi-national communities in which they have mainly focused their activities on earning income in the US but at the same time they have
retained their cultural norms without adapting to the American reality (Rodiguez 1995). In extreme cases, this dependency on ethnic networks can be described as ghettoization (Kelly and Lusis 2006) where migrants do not leave their communities as they are unable to function in the wider society due to the lack of language skills (Ryan et al 2008).

Transnational communities and diaspora influence the identity of migrants. Migratory experiences affect the identity of migrants often causing ‘diaspora or hybrid identity’ (Hall 1990). Hybrid identity has been studied and scholars came to the conclusion that diaspora identity is not permanent. It is rather being constantly produced and reproduced, and it is a combination of lived experiences from the homeland and the host country (see Brinkerhoff 2009, Friedman 1994). While discussed later in more detail, it is worth mentioning that modern technology also to the formation of hybrid identities. As Brinkerhoff (2009) realizes the Internet and digital diasporas ‘present opportunities for identity negotiation’ (p. 53). She later explains that “IT enables homeland identity maintenance, reinterpretation, and hybridity” (p. 53) and it also enables migrants to experiment with issues that were not visible or even not allowed in their homeland such as exploring more liberal values. The Internet is also a tool to storytelling and sharing which enable migrants to understand their feelings and struggles as well as identity change (Brinkerhoff 2009). Finally, the Internet is a source of information for migrants (see Tibet Board case described by Brinkerhoff 2009) where they can learn anything from legal issues associated with immigration to social events and activities, and advertising or fundraising.
2.6 From Traditional to Transnational Community

Poplin (1979), Suttles (1972), Tuan (1975, 1977) and others have attempted to account for the variables that must be considered when defining the term “community”. As the interconnectedness of the world increases, fueled largely by rapid developments in technology, the traditional conceptualizations of communities have a limited application to the types of networks that migrants form today. Traditionally, communities are defined by boundaries (Agnew 1987). Suttles (1972, p. 7) argues that “people use territory, space, and movement to build collective representations that have communicative value”, and Poplin (1979) adds that a ‘community has been used to refer to a condition in which human beings find themselves enmeshed in a tight-knit web of meaningful relationships with their fellow human beings” therefore he defines a community as a social network. Researchers also have argued that people strive to achieve a sense of community (e.g. Castellini et al. 2011; Hummon 1990; Keller 2003) but traditional communities although still a part of many Polish migrants in London are slowly becoming less significant.

Transnational means across nations. Transnationalism connects the concepts of human migration with the maintenance of connections between communities (Jones 2012). In the past, cultural, economic, political, and social connections were being maintained on a national level but the scale has expanded to global levels (Jones 2012) in the last several decades, and therefore transnationalism is being discussed in the areas of cultural exchange of ideas, global consumerism, maintenance of common identity in ethnic communities, and even the mobility of transnational elites. Transnational networks
are seen as key to understanding patterns of migration and links with home (Castles and Miller 2003, Jordan and Duvell 2003) but access to the latest technology and other factors, such as the financial situation of migrants, have resulted in a rapid change in the quality and form of transnational networks (Madianou and Miller 2012).

In today’s European Union transnationality became the way of life for many people, including thousands of Poles who moved to the United Kingdom. Even though Rouse (1995) notes that identities ‘are traditionally said to be localized’ (Rouse 1995 p.353) it seems that, increasingly, with the latest developments in technology the traditional perceptions of transnationalism are more intense and genuine.

The concepts of transnationalism, and ethnic identity are further complicated when considering theories such as the one proposed by De Vos (2006). De Vos (2006) notes that a coherent definition of ethnicity does not exist and the factors that make up ethnicity depend on the context a particular ethnicity is being discussed within. De Vos (2006) distinguishes ethnicity from other ways that people classify themselves. According to De Vos (2006) ethnicity is as a set of traditions that include some combination of religious believes, language, sense of historical continuity, common ancestry, place of origin, territoriality, etc. that is self-perceived as exclusive to the group sharing those traditions.
2.7 Cyberspace and Technology

Communication infrastructure, even in its primitive, pre-electronic form, has always served as an important link between migrants and their homelands. In the past, various groups of migrants sent letters and packages to relatives who remained at home. They waited for days or weeks to exchange basic personal information, or learn about recent local developments. In more modern times, the telephone allowed migrants to enrich their connection with home by instantly gaining access to people who they wanted to speak with. Despite its efficiency, the telephone was still often an expensive form of communication. Until the advent of cheap phone cards and shops with international call service, phone calls were expensive, and a reduced access to technology in home countries further inhibited relying on phones as sources of communication. In many cases, migrants had to plan each phone conversation, and, in the end could make calls that lasted only a few minutes. In their study of Philippine migrants, Madianou and Miller (2012) note that, in the Philippines, family members of Philippine migrants had to make special trips to the nearest town in order to take such a call. Thus, in order to communicate, families had to make their calls with advance warning or schedule them well in advance (Madianou and Miller 2012). The same authors indicate that Saudi migrants in London often queued in international call shops to make calls to their relatives in Saudi Arabia (Madianou and Miller 2012). Mahler (2001, p.584) points out that, once popularized, inexpensive calling cards enabled migrants and their families to ‘feel and function like a family” despite the physical distance and Cairncross (1997) takes an even more extreme approach stating that inexpensive international calls cause ‘the
death of distance’ (Cairncross 1997, p.27). Vertovec (2004) summerizes that “nothing has facilitated processes of global linkage more than the boom in ordinary, cheap international telephone calls” (p. 219). Recognizing how important it is for migrants to maintain connections with home, cumulatively, the term diaspora was accepted as a reference to the complexity of personal needs, and subsequent efforts that migrants make in order to maintain their national identity and relationships with their homelands (Manning 2005). In many respects, these traditional migrant efforts to preserve their national identity are also visible today. As Madianou and Miller (2012) indicate in their study of Philippine migrants - people are still in transition from traditional communication methods to those which are more reflective of today’s Internet-driven, continuously and redundantly connected world. Despite this transitional state of migrant communication efforts, this study of Polish migrants in the UK will demonstrate that, at least for this migrant group, the transition into a heavy reliance on modern technology has not only already occurred, but, as a result, has dramatically challenged the traditional perceptions of the diaspora. In the words of Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff (2009), who has extensively studied the emerging concept of a “digital diaspora”, technology has generated sub-communities of migrants. As migrants participate in physical, place-based diasporic communities, they also form parallel online communities with new values, and new ways of organizing. In that way, “IT leads to new diasporic identities with stronger ties within and among diaspora communities and with the homeland […] we are nearing the end of conventionally conceptualized ethnic group identity”. (Brinkerhoff 2009, p. 12).
2.7.1 Categorizing communication technology

There are several theoretical approaches to categorizing communication technology. For example, Madianou and Miller (2012) distinguish voice-based communication, text-based communication, and multimedia communication (Madianou and Miller 2012). Nevertheless, despite this natural tendency for researchers to classify communication into strict categories, today’s technology is making that classification more difficult due to the multiple functions accessible via integrated technology solutions such as smart-phones or personal computers. Today a person can access their email on their phone and use a computer connected to the Internet as a calling device.

The advancement in technology specifically in communication enabled diasporas to create bridging and bonding among diasporas as well as home countries (Brinkerhoff 2009). Many researchers diverted their attention to how immigrants utilize the advancements in technology to communicate with, maintain contacts, and connect to their homelands but also with other members of diaspora (see Mills 2002, Adams and Ghose 2003, Hiller and Franz 2004). Digital diasporas, online communities, and virtual ethnicity have become a center of attention of geographers and social scientists (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010, Brinkerhoff 2009, Nakamura 2013).

The term ‘Cyberspace’ emerged in 1970s and 1980s (Batty 1997) but it was not until 1990s when the geographies of Cyberspace received academic attention (see Batty&Barr 1994, Kitchin 1998, Dodge 1999). Since then, a variety of studies have been published regarding virtual geographies (see Batty 1997), cyberspace and virtual places
(see Adams 1997, 1998), and geographers have been called to gain greater interest in this topic (Dodge 1999). Batty (1997) presented the differences between place/space, cspace, cyberspace, and cyberspace (Batty 1997 p.340). For example, cspace revolves around ‘the uses of computers for games, design, various types of science [...]’ (p.340) and cyberspace is ‘the use of computers for communication” (p.340).

Cyberspaces become communities (Brinkerhoff 2009). Brinkerhoff (2009) in her book discusses digital diasporas and reports that the phenomenon of digital diasporas is a new occurrence. She provides examples of how different organizations assist diaspora in a variety of ways with the assistance of cyber-grassroots organizations (CGOs). She explains that most of the cyber-grassroots organizations exists only online and do not have offline activities or resources. The communication between members takes place as online discussion boards, online rooms, email listserves, and electronic bulletin boards. Brinkerhoff (2009) presents a case of an Afghani website where Afghans from all over the world interact with each other. She also presents a case of Somalinet which today is one of the biggest digital diasporas in the world.

Madianou and Miller (2012) rightly note that the studying new media in the context of transnational family relations is a challenging task as technologies constantly change. Wilding (2006) who looked at the use of email, and Madianou and Miller (2012) who introduced the term of ‘polymedia’ all agree with Vertovec (2004) (who studies) cheap international cards that communication is ‘the social glue of transnationalism’.
In my study, I not only consider ‘polymedia’ but also follow the term ‘media ecology’ (Slater 2013) to analyze communication modes such as transportation with inexpensive flights and driving between Poland and the United Kingdom.

The influence that IT has on diaspora is rooted in the fact that the Internet enables migrants to form voluntary communities (Brinkerhoff 2009). Some studies indicate that migrants maintain transnational networks with their families and friends and never fully feel that they moved to another country (e.g. Ryan et. all 2008).

In modern Europe, where communication has significantly improved, diasporic networks are simply easier to develop and maintain. What is particularly crucial is the practice of telephoning or “skyping”. It enables migrants to maintain their personal networks at home on an everyday basis. Technological impact on migration is also present via the modern transport infrastructure.

In this research I look at the use of cyberspace and the importance of the Internet to understand the recent Polish migration, the choices Poles make regarding their migratory movements, and the importance of technology in undertaking their migratory challenge.

Consequently, the latest technology enables people to seek emotional support through transnational communications (Kelly and Lusis 2006).
2.8 The European Union and Intra-EU Labor Migration

The main principle of the European Union is the free movement of people, goods, and information (Europa.eu). Today the EU has 28 members. Since the 2004 expansion when Poland and other Eastern European states joined the EU, the political entity has slowly added additional members from the Eastern bloc. The debate about the success of the EU’s mission, its future, and even purpose of expansion is relevant to this dissertation, but secondary and will not be discussed in much detail. This work is focused on the end result of EU expansion: new members, like Poland, and their citizens were given the opportunity to experience processes and choices which their Western and Southern European counterparts were defining in the years past. Favell (2008) described the phenomenon of Eurostars from Southern Europe who moved to Northern Western European cities of Amsterdam, Brussels, and London to partake in professional opportunities that were unavailable to them in their home countries like France, Spain, or Portugal. In this dissertation I will discuss a group of the new, Eastern European generation of Eurostars who also arrived to the UK in order to pursue professional progress.

Many European countries are currently encouraging immigration of foreign populations to address consequences of their slow or negative population growth, and to fill gaps in their labor force (Jones 2012). Nearly all European countries face low birth and death rates which result in a stable growth of the elderly population and falling number of young population members (Castles and Miller 2009). The practical outcome
is that these countries experience shortages in the workforce and an intergenerational fiscal imbalance (Bonin et al. 2000, Castles and Miller 2009). The need to supply economies with a productive workforce is, in some cases, also supported by political statements of inclusion, or compensation for colonial damages, nevertheless, especially in the Polish context, the first and foremost reason seems to be rooted in the execution of an official European Union strategy.

Due to the fact that the EU is evolving from a purely economic towards a more complex, political organization, EU lawmakers and member states pursue policies which often lack precedent, and result in unexpected phenomena. The integration of Europe and expansion of the European Union in 2004 was a major milestone in the development of this organization and sparked a true shift in political and economic relations within the EU, but also opened up the doors for major social processes that were not possible in the past. The core idea of the European Union is the economic and social integration for the mutual benefit of all members which results in free flow of people, goods, and information across national borders (Europa.eu). Consequently, residents of EU member states can freely move from one country to another to seek job opportunities or a better quality of life providing ample examples that fit the framework of push and pull factors associated with migration, first described by Lee in the 1960s (Lee 1966). Furthermore, predating Lee, in the XIX century Ravenstein noted that the majority of migration is caused by economic factors, solidifying the laws of migration (Ravenstein 1885 and Ravenstein 1889) that are often applied 120 years later in the context of analyzing drivers of Polish migration. As I will aim to demonstrate, however, economic reasons for
migration become significant when individual migrant stories are generalized and analyzed with the intention of identifying trends; at the individual migrant level, other reasons for migration are often more prominent and individual drivers of migration are much more diverse than pure economics. Although there are some restrictions in regards to migration within the European Union, they are in practice not significant enough to warrant a deeper discussion at this point. It may be sufficient to point out that some European countries, for example the UK, have opened their borders for immigrants from Central and Easter Europe without any protectionist restrictions.

Although the political environment within the EU has definitely laid the foundation for modern migration trends in Europe, there are additional factors which must be accounted for, which result in simply making migration a relative easy act (Heinz and Ward-Warmedinger 2006). Unlike in the past, crossing borders is now a mere formality, improvements in transportation technology and availability of options have made travel convenient, and the more equal economic status among Europeans has expanded the population for whom European migration has become a practical alternative to domestic existence (Heinz and Ward-Warmedinger 2006). Migration is no longer the life changing decision it has been in the past as migrants can move freely among countries (Favel 2008).

The abovementioned policies have been met with broad interest from a variety of migrant groups, whose presence in countries like the UK is easily noticeable. The flow of labor migrants to countries like the UK has furthermore intensified after the EU
enlargement in 2004 (see the Office of National Statistics: “1 in 8 of the usually resident UK population were born abroad.”) Nevertheless, providing host countries with the desired workforce is also coupled with societal friction, and stress at the personal level. Immigrants arriving to the United Kingdom become a minority which is culturally different from the dominant society. That distinctness may lead to problems with ethnic identity when confronted with the British culture. This general picture of the cost of migration is strengthened by researchers who point to the fact that, over time, it is difficult for immigrants to maintain their ethnic identity or even self-esteem (see De Vos 2006).
Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Geography as an interdisciplinary field connects many academic fields and often intersects many disciplines. This broad spectrum of disciplines covered by geography allows researchers to not only explore and incorporate a variety of research methods into their projects but furthermore invites researchers to test and identify those methods which could allow them to successfully paint a more complete picture of dynamic geographic phenomena like migration. In order to gain insight into immigrants’ lives I decided to rely on select research techniques grouped under the umbrella of qualitative methodology. Generally, physical geographers often employ quantitative methodologies in their research while human geographers skew towards qualitative research (see Gomez and Jones 2010). Qualitative research is appropriate in this context, as the subjective experiences of people in a place can only be understood by gaining the insight into their lives through the implementation of methodologies such as interviews and participant observation. These techniques are conceptually subjective (see Gomez and Jones 2010), but also inherently more flexible, dynamic, and receptive to exploring problems, perspectives, and ideas. In order to understand the relationship between people and place I study ‘geography of the world as home’ (Tuan 1974, 1977). I believe that “it is not
possible to sustain an objective and detached view of the world. What we study affects us and we affect it” (Rodaway 2012 p. 264). To conduct this research, I relied on participant observation, mental maps, and interviews. The analysis of my findings is presented in the context of existing research on Polish migration.

3.2 Participant Identification and Selection Process

In order to prepare for this research and fieldwork, I relied on 3 parallel sources for identifying and selecting research participants.

First, I identified research participants by contacting my personal network of colleagues who attended my high-school and who have since moved to London. I was aware of their migration path thanks to online social network connections, for example Facebook. My family members have also referred me to recent Polish migrants to the UK. I was able to contact these participants via email or Facebook and arrange for a meeting in London. A significant portion of this work was completed before my first trip to London.

Despite the effort to secure as many research participants as possible before travelling to the UK, these efforts were mainly successful in ensuring the participation of Eurostars in the research. Thus, I dedicated a large portion of my first trip to London to identifying and soliciting the participation labor migrants in my research. This occurred in one of two ways. First, I relied on Polish organizations in London, such as POSK, to
provide contacts to Polish migrants. Second, I was able to interact with random Polish migrants by visiting Polish owned, Polish-migrant focused, and English businesses who employed Polish service staff. For example, while dining in a Polish restaurant in London, I introduced my research to a Polish waitress and set up a meeting time with her for a follow-up conversation. These random interactions with Polish migrants also led to snowballing. Interviewed migrants sometimes provided me with contacts for other labor migrants who could be willing to participate in my research.

3.3 Fieldwork

This research has been conducted during 3 visits in London, United Kingdom between the years 2011-2013.

3.3.1 Fieldwork: Trip 1

The first visit took place in June 2011 was aimed setting the foundation for future research and included activities aimed at allowing me to become more familiar with the city as a whole and with sites more specific to Polish migration to the UK. I visited many sites, including: neighborhoods classified as predominantly Polish, non-governmental organizations serving migrants, Polish Catholic parishes, and Polish grocery stores and restaurants. In addition to gaining familiarity with the migrant landscape in London, I
focused on securing a list of participants that I could interview and work with during subsequent research trips to London.

3.3.2 Fieldwork: Trip 2

As a follow up to the foundational research trip in June 2011, in the summer of 2012 I returned to London with a list of participants who had confirmed their willingness to participate in my project. I stayed in London for three weeks and was able to interview 17 Polish migrants, all falling into the category of professional, educated migrants (Eurostars, Favell, 2008). The majority of these migrants participated in the mental maps exercise as a supplement to their interviews. The interviews were conducted in Polish but all participants stated that they also speak English fluently. All participants were between the ages of 20 and 51, and all held at least bachelor’s degrees. All but two arrived to London after the accession of Poland to the European Union. The two women who arrived to London in the 1980s had been living there continuously since then. At the time of the interviews, four of the participants had graduated from Polish universities, and the remaining 12 people held degrees from or were enrolled in British institutions.

3.3.3 Fieldwork: Trip 3

The third trip took place in March/April 2013. During this time I interviewed 18 Polish migrants who were employed in blue-collar sector. All were between the ages of
18 and approximately 50-60. All migrants graduated from Polish educational institutions, but not all had attended college. Seven migrants held either a bachelor’s or master’s degree from Polish higher education institutions, and the remaining twelve migrants either graduated from high schools or vocational schools in Poland.

When compared to the first group of migrants I had interviewed in the summer of 2012, this group of migrants seemed to be less trustful and I had to spend more time and effort to encourage them to participate in this research project. Almost all participants refused to draw mental maps, and only two participated in the mental map assignment. The interviews, however, although difficult to initiate and uncomfortable at first, turned out to be very helpful, interesting, informative, and, like previously, also more time-consuming than I had expected. Seven of the research participants lived in small towns outside of London, one just moved from Brighton to London and was uncertain is she would stay in London or move back to Brighton. The remaining migrants resided in the city of London.

3.4 Participant Observation

In order to gain a unique level of insight into the lives of the studied migrants, I decided to include participant observation in the research methodology applied to this project. During my visits to London I participated in Polish Catholic services, attended Polish art galleries, shopped in Polish stores often accompanied by my research participants, ate in the same Polish restaurants which my research participants either recommended or
invited me to join them during their trips, I participated in walks to parks, car repairs, grocery shopping, other shopping endeavors, and/or entertainment gatherings. I also sat in restaurants or pretended to shop in grocery stores for hours in order to observe my research participants at their work (with their approval). Dowler (2001), Jackson (1983), and Ford (2001) are particularly strong advocates of this method. Participant observation aims at allowing the researcher to live the life of the studied people, and analyze facts and information from their perspective, as “one of them” (Bennett 2010). This method complements any other method used in research by changing the researcher’s perspective and allowing them to gain a lot of detail about the lives of research participants. It is very difficult to present any results or offer recommendations if the context of the studied site is ignored. It is important to understand the every-day life of participants, the interactions and dynamics in a place. For example, Dowler (2001) would not be able to talk about the war zone if she never experienced conflict herself. In my own research, participant observation was crucial to the understanding of the lives of Poles in London (the context of their economic situation, homesickness, family relationships, everyday struggle, etc.). While migrants shared a lot of information with me during the interviews, I recognize I would have not been able to draw equally detailed conclusions about their lives without experiencing myself the long commute times in the London Underground, rather modest but highly priced London accommodations, high prices of food, and the every-day experience of identifying with a large, increasingly growing and polarizing ethnic group of workers in London.
3.5 Interview Process and Mental Maps

Recognizing that “an interview allows individuals to describe their experiences in rich
detail, and can provide researchers with information that might be impossible to access in
any other way” (Nesti, 2004 p.48), during my fieldwork I interviewed 35 Polish migrants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education Attainment</th>
<th>Current Employment</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrzej</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urszula</td>
<td>3 years towards Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karolina</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Stay-home-mom</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grzegorz</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>London/Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrycja</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Still a student/internship at a big corporation</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Stay-home-mom</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Restaurant/Transportation</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomek</td>
<td>PhD Student</td>
<td>PhD Student</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monika</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>;Franciszek</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daria</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Businesswoman</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marek</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalia</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Seeking permanent employment/working part-time</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artur</td>
<td>Medical Doctor</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwona</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Works at Posk</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta</td>
<td>BS in Envir. Studies</td>
<td>Waitress/Supervisor in an Italian Restaurant</td>
<td>Outside London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monika</td>
<td>BA in cosmetology</td>
<td>Waitress in a Polish Restaurant</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michal</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>Cook in a British restaurant</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasia</td>
<td>BA in Human Resources</td>
<td>Polish store</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lukasz</td>
<td>Van driver</td>
<td>Transports people to the airport</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomek</td>
<td>3 years towards MA</td>
<td>Waiter in an English restaurant</td>
<td>Outside London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krzysztof</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>Transporter at hospital</td>
<td>Outside London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jolanta</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>cleaner</td>
<td>Outside London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monika</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>cleaner</td>
<td>Outside London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alina</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>cleaner</td>
<td>Outside London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnieszka</td>
<td>BA in cultural studies</td>
<td>Waitress in an Italian restaurant</td>
<td>Brighton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michal + Magda</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Housewife/ Driver at a transportation company</td>
<td>London – Tooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrzej</td>
<td>University drop-out, financial reasons</td>
<td>Cook’s assistant in a restaurant</td>
<td>London – Tooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>Machine Operator in a Ciabata Bread Bakery</td>
<td>London – Tooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcin</td>
<td>Vocational school - construction</td>
<td>Cook’s assistant in a restaurant</td>
<td>London – Tooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartek + Marzena</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Cook’s assistant in a restaurant</td>
<td>London – Tooting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 - List of Research Participants
Some interviews lasted one half hour others took up half of a day; the vast majority lasted between an hour and hour and a half. Researchers choose different forms of interviews: structured interviews, semi-structure interviews, or unstructured interviews. I chose to employ the semi-structured interview method which allowed me to ask the questions I had prepared during the planning stage of the project but also provided the participants with the opportunity to tell the researcher what they desired to share with me in an open-ended fashion.

The mechanics of interviewing may become challenging (see Bennett 2010, Dunn 2010, Herod, 1999, Herrold, 2001, McDowell 2010). These challenges became evident particularly in reference to scheduling the interviews. Sometimes, migrants cancelled their participation a few minutes before the scheduled meeting by sending a text message. The meeting times suggested by the participants of my study often overlapped between the participants which made it very difficult to adjust to everyone’s schedule. Most participants expressed the willingness to either meet with during their lunch break or right after work, requiring me to travel between distant locations in London, sometimes requiring me to be in two places at the same time. Despite an aggressive plan to meet with 4 – 5 migrants per day, on certain days I was only able to meet with two people due to long commutes during London’s rush hour. Sometimes, the subway station was located at a significant distance from the place where the migrants wanted to meet. My estimates of walking times were also not always accurate further impacting my schedule for the rest of the day. In light of scheduling challenges and extended interview schedules, I became increasingly aware of potential safety concerns, especially during dinner-time meetings.
While I did not encounter a situation that put my personal safety at risk, I was often uncomfortable in dark subway tunnels in unknown parts of a large city.

The lack of comfort and need to adjust to unexpected situations was also evident during interview interactions themselves. A group of eight young men working in blue collar occupations in London agreed to speak with me under the condition of not being recorded. Such a request puts a researcher in a rather difficult position. On the one hand, it is easier to record and transcribe interviews but on the other hand a researcher needs to respect the requests of her/his interviewees. Situations like this had made it difficult at times for me to find balance between pursuing the goals and structure I had planned for each interview and incorporating the flexibility necessary to allow the interviewees to feel comfortable. Similarly, as I will be describing later, at times pursuing the comfort and convenience of my interviewees had forced me to make difficult decisions and travel or sites or districts in London where I was questioning my personal safety.

Despite these challenges, interviews, supplemented by participant observations had been very informative, and have formed the crucial elements of this research. Interviews enabled me to better understand what I had learned during the participant observation phase of the research as well as to interpret the metal maps the migrants had created. Interviews are crucial especially in research projects where the researcher is interested in social and cultural interactions between people (McDowell 2010). Mental maps exercises provide visual insight into how migrants perceive the city that is their migrant home, however interviews allow for a full interpretation of these visual
representations. As Chase (2011) notes, interviews enable the researcher to understand what is not always visible via quantitative or qualitative visual tools, such as challenges associated with homesickness, misunderstanding of the cultural context, difficulties associated with language barriers, or the expression of migrant identities, personal values, and professional ambitions. As Jackson (1983) points out, interviews are particularly useful when a researcher is interested in personal experiences of participants. Herrold (2001) in her article that described the consequences of vodka drinking in Russia provides another great argument of why interviews cannot be replaced by any other method. Interviews also make it easier to encourage participants to discuss personal issues in the more intimate environment provided by an interview setting. Most importantly, interviews allow for breaking of the ice between the researcher and participants, and allow the researcher to immediately adjust and take advantage of information that the researcher did not anticipate receiving. By relying on interviews, I was able to explore the subjective aspects of the migrants’ efforts to maintain their connection to Poland (reliance on Polish newspapers and TV, Polish online forums, etc., how many trips to Poland the participants make, how often the participants phone or Skype their families in Poland, etc.). Personal relationships, experiences, feelings are hard to measure by visualization or mathematical numbers. Nevertheless, as evidenced in my experience during this research, interviews require significant effort (preparation, trust building, familiarizing with culture) and time, and often test the researcher’s willingness to adjust to unexpected and uncomfortable situations.
I met with the research participants in a variety of locations. Some migrants invited me to their apartment or homes, others preferred local coffee shops, but the interviews also led to additional experiences that I had not expected at the planning stage of my fieldwork. As a result of the interviews many of the research participants invited me to join them in their every-day activities after the formal interview was finished. Due to the willingness of the participants to help me to conduct this research project I was invited to join the migrants on their way to work, join them for dinner at their favorite restaurants, during the trips to parks and playgrounds with their children, or even participating in their Friday night outings to bars and clubs. I went grocery shopping, furniture shopping, and even to work with a migrant who was conducting a research project at a university and could not skip his office hours. Consequently, interviewing is not only a process of collecting data but also a process during which one develops friendship which can benefit both the researcher and those researched (see Myers 2001). In a study of Africans, Myers (2001) pointed out that through interviews geographers become translators. They gather data about a place but at the same time they tell stories of places. They are often the only source of information between the research site and the rest of the world. As McDowell (2010) notes, interviewing is an interpretive methodology which requires a lot of time (building trust in a community, recording, transcribing, etc.) but at the same time it also has ethical obligations such as maintaining contact after the formal research period is over which I have been trying to do using popular media such as Facebook, send holiday cards to some of the participants, and quick emails with updates reading my personal and professional advancement.
In order to gain the maximum amount of insight into the migrants’ lives, I decided to supplement interviews with mental maps to explore people’s awareness of and perceptions of their environments. Mental maps have been an important research method for geographers for decades (see Golledge 1978, Lynch 1960, Pocock 1976). They were first used in 1913 but the method gained popularity in the 1960s when behavioral geographers used mental maps as a method to explore people’s awareness and perceptions of their environments. Mental maps provide insight into social and cultural geographic inquiry regarding place. The most known researcher to use mental maps was Kevin Lynch (1960) and his book The Image of the City. He looked at how humans perceive cities and how they navigate through urban spaces. Lynch (1960) used Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles for his research site and reported that people form mental maps using five elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (Lynch 1960). Due to the fact that London is a very diverse environment which can not only shape the lives of the migrants, but also can be selectively utilized to meet the needs of each migrant individually, I found this research method particularly suitable for my research.

Due to the fact that, via my research, I was aiming to explore the migrants’ perceptions of London, verify how Polish migrants maintain diasporic networks with their homeland and how technology facilitates this process, mental maps enabled me to explore these issues by allowing me to analyze and identify trends in how Polish migrants interact with their environment and how they navigate through London. Some specific questions that the mental maps allowed me to answer included: are Polish migrants familiar with the city of London? What services are they using in London? What places
or landmarks do they consider to be important? What places in London have they included in their daily routines? What are the activities that migrants perform to stage their identities or to create a home in the UK?

Despite its great analytical potential, unfortunately, not all migrants agreed to participate in the mental-maps exercise. According to Gould (1966) mental maps are very personal thus, not surprisingly, not all participants of my research project felt comfortable to participate in the mental maps exercise. Previous research shows that hesitation to composing a mental map is not unusual and Smiley (2013) citing others (for example Stea cited in Pellow 2006) lists a few reasons for this hesitation. The reasons include, for example, perception of incapability, or unfamiliarity with pencils. In my study, I was able to convince 19 participants to participate in the mental map assignment. The participants in the exercise were almost solely composed of representatives of Polish professionals and students classified as Eurostars. For those who participated, the technical collection of mental map data was performed during our meetings. First, participants were asked to participate in an interview, and later they were asked if they were willing to participate in a mental map assignment. Instructions were given to each participant who agreed to contribute to the mental maps exercise and the instructions were given in Polish. The participants were asked to draw a map of London, indicating in their representation the places that are important to them. Each individual was provided with a blank sheet of white paper, a pencil and a pen. The participants were told to provide as much details as desired in their representations, and time was not limited. The individual maps are available in the appendix. To aid in analyzing the results, I improvised one map
compiling the individual mental maps using Google Maps. This improvised map depicts the majority of the locations represented on individual maps by participants of the mental maps exercise.

Although a portion of the interviewees declined to participate in the mental maps exercise – those who declined were mostly composed of service-sector, labor migrants – I would like to stress that I was still able to obtain spatial information. In the interview process, the migrants described the locations they visit frequently, where and how they spend their work time and their personal time. To preserve this information in a format that can be compared to maps produced by the Eurostars, relying on interview information and again using Google Maps, I composed an improvised mental map that is a compilation of locations referenced by labor migrants in their interviews.

3.6 Challenges associated with Positionality and Gender

The fieldwork phase of my research included interviews, mental maps, and participant observation methodologies. I am convinced that all three methodologies enriched me as a researcher, human being, migrant, and a college instructor. My positionality and gender greatly impacted my experiences in the field, something I described in a co-authored article (see Kusek and Smiley, 2014). Positionality has been discussed by many researchers who conduct fieldwork in social sciences (see Chacko, 2004; Chattopadhyay, 2012; Nagar, 2003; Nagar and Geiger, 2007). The increasing popularity of qualitative methods raises questions not only about the methodology used in
geographic research but also about the perspectives and positionality of researchers, what Kong (2004) terms the “by whom, for whom” question. Positionality includes cultural backgrounds and socio-economic characteristics of a researcher. As Meriam et al. (2001) note, traditionally researchers are categorized as insiders or outsiders relative to the ethnic or cultural group they are studying based on whether or not they share characteristics. What I experienced while in the field cannot be classified as being either an insider or outsider (see Chacko 2004; Entrikin 1991; Katz 1994; Nast 1994). These relationships in my case seemed to be very fluid. As a result, I accepted either an insider or outsider role at various times during the research process. This duality of insider and outsider status became more important than I had originally thought as it informed how various people in London interacted with me. On the one hand, I was perceived as a Polish native and an immigrant which allowed me to be an insider in the broader group of Polish migrants in London. On the other hand, by treating London as a research site rather than a home, I was an outsider while in the city. This dual position allowed me to better connect with some research subjects but also presented some challenges. For example, to young professional migrants, I was an insider in terms of age and broader life experiences. Like these young professionals I am educated, relatively well-travelled, and aspiring to build a successful career. Not surprisingly, while interacting with underprivileged labor migrants, insider status was more difficult to achieve. On the one hand, the migrants and I grew up in Poland during a similar cultural period, vacationed in the same seaside and mountain towns, enjoyed the same forms of entertainment, and participated in similar social activities. On the other hand, I was perceived as luckier
than other migrants since I had the opportunity to migrate to the United States while thousands of Polish migrants had to ‘settle’ for the United Kingdom. Johnson-Bailey (1999) uses the term ‘colourism’ to describe the perception that her lighter skin led to more advantageous life experiences than darker-skinned African Americans. In a similar way, I felt that my migratory path to the US was perceived as more advantageous to my career than other migrant paths to the UK. I found one way to overcome this barrier was to seek common ground through the description of experiences at the personal level. These personal interactions led to extended interviews that often extended beyond the allotted time but also resulted in richer research results. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that these migrants wanted to hear about my own experiences in the US. I soon realized that if I wanted to gain information about their lives I had to share and equal amount of details about my own life. I interpreted the data I collected through the lens of my personal migratory experiences rather than national or ethnic perspectives. But, as I realized, the personal perspective also involved the risk of bias. As a doctoral student from an American institution interacting with blue collar labor migrants in the United Kingdom, I constantly needed to stay reminded of the bias resulting from applying my own career, personal, and cultural standards in order to avoid judging career decisions of study participants and to arrive at objective conclusions.

The awareness of my own bias reminded me of what researcher state that qualitative research, especially when conducted in distant field sites, also has a profound effect on the researcher. As Parker (2001) notes, research may take one to places he or she would not normally visit. Even though I would probably visit London at some point
in my life, I would have not visited the neighborhoods I have visited during my research trips. My experience with London would have been probably limited to the Mayfair area as it is for most tourists who choose to visit London. Parker (2001) also believes that fieldwork has shaped her professional life as much as her private one. I could not agree with this statement more. The fieldwork does not only enabled me to collect data for my dissertation but more importantly allowed me to understand the many challenges, opportunities and accomplishments that Poles experience. It also provided me with a different perspective on my own migratory story and many colleagues whom I have met in the United States.

Gender is another aspect of my research that I have found surprisingly important. Issues associated with gender of a researcher I described in a co-authored piece (see Kusek and Smiley, 2014). Feminist geographers often focus on the lived experiences of individuals and groups in their own localities but also remind academics about the challenges that female researchers face while conducting fieldwork (see Bell et al. 1993; Chacko 2004; Chattopadhyay 2012; McDowell 1992; Nagar 2002; Till 2001). I quickly realized that my own gender not only informs my work but also plays a very important role during our day-to-day research activities. I was raised in the patriarchal Polish society and I was concerned that my position as a woman would affect how Polish male research participants interact with me, and how I would approach interactions with Polish male research subjects. When beginning my research, I was worried about the possibility of conducting a successful interview. First, I was afraid that Polish men would not fully value me as a researcher. Second, I was afraid they would not believe in my ability to
specifically relate to their lives as male laborers. In spite of my apprehensions, I discovered that all of my male research participants were approachable, friendly, and eager to share their stories. In fact, in the article I concluded that my position as a female researcher could have been beneficial, as the Polish men were both boasting about their professional successes and also mentioned a variety of personal problems in order to receive empathy, a behavior that may have been less verbalized in front of another man.

My identity also affected the way I approached field research, often presenting me with the previously-mentioned issues of finding balance between assuring a comfortable environment for the interviewees, and addressing concerns of personal safety. In particular, I found that I placed a higher premium on personal safety than that expressed by our male colleagues. I was paying constant attention to my security and safety in the field. I was very careful in selecting a proper place to meet with male respondents so they felt comfortable enough to answer personal questions but at the same time also select a place that offered a safe environment for me. One day, I was invited to an apartment where a group of eight men shared accommodations. I knew this was a one-time opportunity to interview men who otherwise, due to their work schedules and lifestyle, would be virtually inaccessible. In order to minimize any risk, I asked a friend to accompany me to this interview under the pretense of needing transportation.

This research project has been equally influenced by the methodologies I had chosen to implement as much as it has been affected by my own gender, positionality, and identity. To recall the citation from above, I believe that the phrase “what we study
affects us and we affect it” (Rodaway 2012 p. 264) is the best summary of my research experiences during this dissertation project.
Chapter 4 - The Polish Experience of Migration

4.1 Introduction to Polish Migration

By tracing the migration of Poles throughout history, it becomes evident that Poles have, in a way, secured a right to be recognized among the world’s significant diasporas, although it must be noted that the motivation for Polish migration has shifted over time from political to predominantly economic factors. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs accurately captures the reasons for the massive displacement of several generations of Poles pointing to “border shifts, forced resettlement, and political or economic emigration” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, website). The Ministry also defines and quantifies the Polish Diaspora: “The Polish diaspora refers to people of Polish descent who live outside Poland; it includes an estimated 15-20 million people of Polish ancestry who live outside of Poland” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, website). The intensity and extensiveness of Polish migration in various stages of history, has created an opportunity for the formation of Polish Diasporas in several countries in the world. The countries which host significant communities of Poles or people of Polish origin include: the United States, Germany, Ukraine, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Ireland as well as Brazil, Canada, and Australia (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Consequently, these robust transnational
communities, with developed ethnic cultures in a host country, and active connections to migrant homelands can provide ample opportunity for the study of mechanisms that migrants rely on to maintain ethnic identity and balance their own cultural heritage with existence within a host country. Due to the diversity of political and economic conditions behind Polish migration, it is often easy to distinguish cultural and social differences between groups or “waves” of Polish migrants.

4.2 Polish global migration from a historical perspective

Migration among Poles is not a new phenomenon and, as Cyrus realizes, ‘Poland is undoubtedly one of the most important emigration countries in modern times’ (Cyrus 2006 p.25). As Janta (2009) notes, Poland has had a long history of migration that can be traced back to the 18th century when many famous pieces of literature were composed that tackled about Polish emigration (see writers such as Mickiewicz, Slowacki). In the 19th century Poland was partitioned under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Prussian Empire, and Russia (Davies 1981) and at that time, Poles were emigrating in large numbers to the United States of America and to other locations on the European continent such as Germany, were also major destinations. Throughout the years the US and Germany were the biggest recipients of Polish migration (Burrell 2009). Thomas and Znaniecki (1996) wrote a book on Polish migrants to the United States in the early twentieth century describing the ways immigrants maintained diasporic relationships with their families who stayed in Europe. Historically, the Polish migration has included a
significant population of Polish Jews who, forced by anti-Semitism on Russian-occupied territories, emigrated from Poland - a country in which they lived for years (Iglicka 2001). It is estimated that “by 1914, over 3.5 million people had left the Polish lands” (Iglicka 2001). Political and economic turbulence continued throughout the XX century in Poland, leading to several waves of Polish migration. Most significantly, millions were displaced by conflict and deportation during the Second World War and later the post-war Soviet rule of Poland.

What will be described in more detail later, the United Kingdom has been serving as a receiving country for Polish migrants for generations. Although, over time, there has been a shift in the reasons for Polish migration to the UK, from wartime generated atrocities and famine to more economically-based migration, displaced Poles exhibit similar tendency to maintain connections to home and people who they left behind.

The analysis of historical Polish migration around the world leads to a conclusion that cultural, social, and technological changes have strongly impacted the interaction of Poles with their host societies, and the resulting processes of assimilation. On the one hand, modern Polish migrants are more open to integrating with their host societies than previous migrations of Poles. For example, migrants in Chicago described by Kantowicz (1975) who usually stayed in Polish settlements such as the Polish Downtown or Rogers Park (Kantowicz 1975). Poles were concentrated around Catholic parishes and parish affiliated schools (Kantowicz 1975). Migrants gathered together in order to keep their history, habits and maintain a protective, supportive network in an ethnically segregated
environment. Today, the way of keeping traditions has evolved along with ideas and the technology behind global interdependence. Although migrants rely on other migrants, they often easily build diverse networks in the host countries, and maintain a strong and direct connection with their homeland by relying on technology (Ryan et. al 2007).

The historical analysis of Polish migration also provides suggestions about the impact of the reasons for migration on the significance and expression of manifestations of national heritage. Polish migrants who moved to the UK after the Second World War were very vocal in their diasporic activity, but in a more organized and symbolic fashion. Their stance was clearly a result of forced emigration, the traumatic memories of childhood, and their longing for home. In a situation of political oppression or very serious economic disadvantage, members of transnational communities usually take political and economic action in both states (Portes 1997). For these migrants, manifesting their national identity and staging it in London through cultural, political, and economic events and organizations was their only real chance to participate in Polish culture and hopefully impact events back home. Polish political refugees organized a robust political life in London, published newspapers, and sent packages to relatives who remained in Poland (Burell 2003). In today’s free Europe, transnational connections are technically even more intense but they occur at a much more individual level and the reasoning behind them is very different as many migrants are less dependent on the Polish diaspora in the UK. Today, the Polish diaspora and ethnic communities have a different general purpose. They no longer organize significant political actions but rather assist the needs of individual family members by sending remittances to spouses or
parents, and/or child support for children who stayed in Poland. Some migrants choose to work in the UK seasonally and therefore are not part of Polish diaspora. They treat their migration as a temporary process and never participate in the life of transnational communities in England. These can be observed with some members of the recent Polish migrants to the United Kingdom. Garapich (2008) for example categorized this type of migrants as temporal, seasonal or circular and Burrell (2008) calls them “commuters rather than settlers”.

The historical, but also current scale of Polish migration has led to several categorizations of Polish migrants by researchers. Some have focused on the transnational networks and the maintenance of connections between places that Polish migrants maintain. For example, Duvell and Vogel (2006) divided Polish migrants into 4 groups: return oriented migrants, emigrants, transnational migrants, and global nomads (open to migrate to other countries), In a more modern context, Eade et al (2006) developed a set of categories to classify modern labor Polish migrants according to their motivations, and duration of stay. Their classification included Storks, Hamsters, Searchers, and Stayers. These classifications were aimed to provide insight into the permanence of migratory decisions, and the assimilation process. For example, Storks were migrants who were only seasonally present abroad. While interesting, this classification has limited relevance to my research. My focus was more concentrated on the experience of being abroad and maintaining connections with Poland despite short or long term migration plans, which often turned out to be dynamic and uncertain.
4.3 Poles in the UK: Polish Migration to the UK Before The European Union

As suggested above, the history of Polish migration to the United Kingdom is not a new phenomenon but it was not until World War II when the history of Polish migration to the UK became significant for the first time (see Burrell 2006, Janta 2009, Kay and Miles 1992, Stanley and Olson 2004). The period of forced migration brought 15,000 Polish combatants and soldiers to the United Kingdom (Stanley and Olson 2004) and this group established a patriotic, anti-communist government in exile (Janta 2009). The first ethnic Polish community in the United Kingdom was estimated to have had over 160,000 people (Burrell 2006) and was a result of British policies that allowed Polish refugees to settle in their territories (Tannahill 1958, Kay and Miles 1992). There has been a relatively significant presence of Polish pilots in the Great Britain during the World War II but little has been written about their stories. Olson and Stanley in their book entitled “A Question of Honor” describe a story of the refugee Polish pilots who joined the RAF and played an essential role in saving Britain from the Nazis (Olson and Stanley 2004). Krzystek (2007) writes not only about the male pilots but also mentions almost 1,500 females serving in foreign-based (including Great Britain) Pomocniczej Lotniczej Sluzby Kobiet. [Female Airforce Support Service] (Krzystek 2007)

Wasilewski (2013) describes the situation of major Polish generals in London after the World War II and the relatively humiliating professions they had to pursue while trying to survive in a foreign land. (Wasilewski. Przeglad. Nr. 17-18:695-696; 2013). Afterwards, Polish migration to the UK was not really significant again until 2004 when Poland joined the European Union but there were a couple of periods when Poles were
still arriving to the UK nevertheless at lower rates. For example, in the 1980s General Jaruzelski introduced martial law in Poland, and many Polish Solidarity opposition members escaped Poland in the hope of finding freedom in England. (Garapich 2007) The period of communism forced an estimated 800,000 people to visit England and remain in the UK illegally. (Cyrus 2006, Janta 2009) As researchers such as Brown (2003), Burrell (2006), Cyrus (2006) and Janta (2009) note there was also an influx of Poles in the 1990s but their residence in the UK was illegal and therefore employment opportunities were limited. In 2004 the situation changed as the British government granted free access to British labor market to all citizens of countries newly admitted to the EU.

4.4 Poles in the UK: Contemporary Aspects of Polish Migration

Kathy Burrell described the construction and maintenance of a diasporic national identity and transnational consciousness of WWII era Polish migrants in Leicester, UK, by painting a strong contrast to the modern wave of Polish migration. Proposing the idea of small-scale transnationalism, she accurately described the predominant character of transnational networks of the historical group of Polish migrants. The habits, activities, and processes relevant to the older Polish diaspora do not apply to the new wave of Polish migration in the UK. It is in comparison to the historical Polish migration to the UK that it is possible to understand how the post-2004 Polish migration to the UK has challenged the way scholars had thought about the Polish Diaspora for years. Today, the
Polish Diaspora in the UK features a technology-based transnational network that is furthermore reinforced by an economic reality that promotes the portability of both homeland goods and ideas, and is placed in the context of a springing European and global identity that seems to be striving for a more uniform lifestyle across nations and cultures. Due to the latest technology, the feeling of displacement from Poland is not equally strong as it was in the past because migrants can participate in Internet forums, read Polish newspapers, watch Polish streaming TV and VOD programming, or plan their next trip home. (Ryan et. al 2008) Today’s immediacy and directness of maintaining connections to home using modern technology is most striking when compared to particular past practices, when migrants kept links to the homeland by sending letters or parcels to family members at home who waited weeks or months for delivery. (e.g. Burrell 1994) In this context, it is interesting to explore whether, despite a physical relocation, the recent Polish migrants to the UK have, in a practical sense, actually left Poland. As I will be arguing in further sections, technology allows migrants to not only increase their ability to celebrate their national identity while abroad, but rather allows them to maintain a continuous, “live” connection to their evolving culture, language, and social networks.

4.5 Measuring the Scale of Post-2004 Polish Migration to the UK

According to the Office of National Statistics (2011), between 2001 and 2011, all regions within the United Kingdom registered an increase in residents born outside the
UK. The numbers of residents of England and Wales who were born outside the U.K. has been increasing significantly over the last decade. According to the Office of National Statistics (2011), the most common non-UK countries of birth for residents of England and Wales in 2011 were India, Poland and Pakistan. Poland is noted as having by far the largest percentage increase in the top ten countries of birth, with a nine-fold rise over the last decade and following its accession to the EU in 2004.

Although several sources are available to quantify the extent of Polish migration to the UK, it seems that exact estimates are actually difficult to obtain. The popular media cited the number of Polish migrants to the UK after 2004 to be close to one million (NBC) but the latest British Census estimates the number to be around 700,000 people (Office of National Statistics: Five most common nationalities in the UK in 2012, 2008 to 2012. (accessed on 9/3/2013) Statistics may be inaccurate due to a variety of reasons. Some migrants change their residence seasonally, others express the willingness to return to Poland but soon realize that securing a stable work and family life in the UK is easier and therefore they return back to the UK, or some travel between Poland and England on a regular basis to, for example, to care for their grandchildren, property etc. (see Ryan et. al 2007)

Additionally and not surprisingly, a noticeable byproduct of migration has been reflected in increased birth rates in the UK. According to the Office of National Statistics (2011), the three largest groups of residents born outside the UK are Indian-born, Polish-born, and Pakistani-born. As mentioned above, with the accession of Poland to the
European Union and the increase mobility of Poles, the number of Polish people residing in the UK has demonstrated the most significant growth between 2001 and 2011. That growth translated into birth rates. While the number of Poles-born in the UK in 2001 was 58,000, in 2011, the number rose tenfold.

In addition to population statistics, an indicator of the significance of Polish migration to the UK can be found among the press coverage that this migration wave has been receiving. As Janta (2009) notes, a variety of daily press and tabloids regularly report on Polish migration. Some of the reports are positive and others paint a very negative picture of Polish migrants. The profile of a Polish migrant varies anything from a hard-working, well trained, ethical migrant to a one who abuses public assistance, takes employment from English people, and even commits crimes. Janta (2009) Starkey (2008), citing one of the multiple Home Office statistics that include data on Polish migration, reports that many Polish migrants contribute to the local economies in cities such as London by accepting employment which requires low to moderate skill levels, areas of British industry that were lacking workforce until the new influx of Poles. Starkey (2008) and Janta (2009) report that nearly 50 per cent of Polish migrants accepted jobs in the hotel and catering industry. Others report that many Polish migrants accepted employment which did not correspond with their Polish education and often was under their qualifications (Iglicka 2004).
4.6 Post-2004 Polish Migration to the UK: Redefining Traditional Migrant Perceptions

The media attention attributed to Polish migrants in the UK contributes to the fact that the post 2004 Polish migration to the UK is challenging traditional perceptions of Polish migrants. Before 2004, most of the Polish migration to the UK had been defined by WWII and Communist-era political refugees, and a handful of labor and professional migrants. Today, it is difficult to ignore the fact that a much broader portion of the British society has an opportunity to meet Polish migrants, simultaneously providing the new Polish migrants with an opportunity to define the new face of Eastern European migration to the West.

Fihel et. al (2006), Iglicka (2006, 2009), Janta (2009), Trevena (2009) and others generally characterize Polish migrants as an attractive labor force for the UK as many of them are well-trained, speak basic English, and are culturally more accustomed to the British culture than many of the migrants arriving from former colonies, yet their wage expectations are much below their British counterparts, and many of them pursue employment under their educational attainment.

Contemporary Polish migrants to the UK also demonstrate that migration does not have to equate with isolation. Rouse (1995) notes that identities ‘are traditionally said to be localized’ (Rouse 1995 p.353), however, it seems that increasingly Polish transnational migrants maintain relationships with at least two places at the same time: the UK and Poland. Transnational networks and transnational communities described by Faist (1999) became a daily reality for Poles residing in the UK as ‘the processes by
which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link
together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et. al 1994 p.8).

As it will be explored later, the ability of these migrants to maintain relationships
with more than one location is largely facilitated by technology. However, it is important
to note that the technological impact on migration is also present via the modern transport
infrastructure. In an era of “discount” airlines such as Ryanair or Wizzair, the ability to
inexpensively visit home or invite relatives to the UK allows immigrants to participate in
the lives of their relatives who remained in Poland. Repetitive travel was not always a
characteristic of Polish migrants, especially in the past when many of them were forced
to leave Poland and move to the UK due to political oppression after the Second World
War (Lebedeva 2000). Modern transportation technology also enables migrants to rely on
physical assistance by their family members in time of need. Some Poles, for example,
invite their parents to stay with them in the UK to help raise their children. When parents
go to work it is not uncommon for the grandparents to arrive to London to help with
childcare. (Ryan et. al 2008) Consequently unique phenomena like “transnational care”
(Ryan et. al 2007) are created when grandparents provide temporary care for their
grandchildren in another country. As opposed to WWII migrants from Leicester
described by Burrell, and what will be discussed in following chapters, the modern Polish
diaspora feels like homeland is close and more importantly is accessible to them at any
time
What is interesting about the post-2004 Polish migration to the UK, is that it also helps re-define traditional perceptions of economic processes occurring within migratory relationships between more and less wealthy states. In the case of recent Polish migrants to London, a bi-directional exchange of funds is commonplace, with currencies traded from England to Poland, and from Poland to England as well. Many migrants, due to strong relationships they maintain with their families in Poland, send remittances to their spouses, children, and/or parents who remain in their countries of origin. As this work will detail later, however, the flow of money also occurs from Poland to England, generated usually by the needs of Polish students and young professionals who receive financial support from their families in Poland.

4.7 Tracing the reasons for Polish migration to the UK

The unprecedented intensity of the Polish migration to the UK after Poland joined the European Union in 2004 naturally suggests the need to identify the reasons for this migration wave. The existing compilation of reasons for the broad migration of Poles to the UK seems characterized by generalizations that ignore individual-level factors and drivers. Thus, as this study attempts, a detailed exploration of the reasons for migration is warranted, and can significantly contribute to understanding how migration decisions are made, and how they can be impacted. Before proceeding with a detailed review of the reasons for migration identified via this research, I would like to review the studies and statistics which are often recited in Polish and British media.
It is difficult to ignore the fact that the Polish presence in the UK is related to certain qualities of the United Kingdom. When generalized, pull factors contributing to the decision to move to the UK include a generally well known, familiar culture, a welcoming political climate, a language which is familiar to many Poles through their education and exposure in pop culture, proximity to the home country, and the availability of relatively quick and inexpensive travel between the host country and the country of origin. Janta (2009) realizes many Poles who were born in the 1980s had the opportunity to learn languages other than Russian, and many had English as a compulsory foreign language class which a few years later became an important pull factor in a migratory decision making process.

Despite this attractiveness of the UK as a destination, for many migrants the decision to migrate to the UK occurs without previously visiting their migrant destination, and is fueled by reasons local to Poland. Among push factors listed in the context of Polish migrant to the UK, it is difficult to ignore: high unemployment rates in Poland at the level of 20% in 2003 down to 13% in 2013 (GUS 2013), and low wages and limited employment opportunities for graduates in Poland. (Iglicka 2009) Poles who moved to the UK after EU enlargement are often portrayed as migrant workers confirming individual decisions to migrate for income maximization. (Lewis 1952, Borjas 1989) They came to the UK searching for better opportunities, stable employment, fair wages, and although income maximization is an often emphasized cause for their migration, some researchers note Polish migrants are not necessarily looking for a ‘better’ life as much as they are searching for a ‘normal’ life (Galasinska and Kozlowska
2009). This concept of search for “normality” will be explored further, but, in brief, as some researchers point out – many migrants emigrate to escape from absurdities of the Polish social, legal, and economic situation that is a side-effect of a rapid transition from a centrally planned, communist economy to a democratically managed, market economy. As this dissertation will further demonstrate, the Polish migration to the UK is diverse in terms of the education, profession, and life situation which have contributed to the decision to migrate. Featured in this work are stories of migrants convicted of crimes in Poland who, in the hope of avoiding a jail sentence, have chosen to emigrate from Poland; I will also describe stories of women abused by their husbands in Poland who emigrated in order to avoid domestic violence. These stories often include an economic justification for migration, nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, economic reasons are often a backdrop for more complex personal stories where economics are only a vehicle for people to achieve independence, escape abuse, satisfy curiosity, or simply apply themselves in an environment which seems more predictable and more accepting of a broader range of skills, backgrounds, and beliefs. Furthermore, it is important to remember that Polish migration to the UK also includes stories of young lawyers, investment bankers and doctors who made conscious, discriminating decisions regarding their careers, and who actively participate in the UK’s primary labor market.
4.7.1 Exploring Reasons for Migration: Service-sector labor migrants

During three research trips to London, I interviewed 18 Polish service-sector labor migrant workers. While I will be exploring a variety of themes related to the reasons for and experiences related to migration, the overarching theme associated with this group is that they emigrated from Poland in the search for “normality” (see Galasinska and Kozlowska, 2009) – an escape from perceived unequally distributed absurdities of the Polish reality formed as a result of quickly phasing out the communist system, and replacing it with a capitalist economy and a new, democratically elected administration. The absurdities include spiraling costs of goods with unequally rising or stagnant earnings leaving many of the goods advertised on TV or in magazines out of reach of the average consumer, a stratification of the society by income and education with an increasingly alienated group of those who could not adjust to the new reality, an archaic administrative and judicial system, and a much less obvious but still prevalent corruption and nepotism in local and national politics. In the UK, the migrants I interviewed pursued “normality” working as cooks and cook’s assistants, waitresses and waiters in Polish, Italian and British restaurants in London, machine operators in bakeries, janitorial staff and transporters in a hospital, associates in a Polish grocery store, receptionists in a boutique hotel, and drivers of airport shuttles. As confirmation of previous research (see Anderson et al. 2006, Iglicka 2009, Fihel & Kaczmarczyk 2009, Trevena 2011) the participants of my study were also either educated beyond the requirements of their jobs or highly skilled. Six of the participants held college degrees, two completed some college courses but dropped out in the process, one had a high school diploma, and eight
graduated from vocational schools in Poland. Furthermore, two out of eighteen participants was over the age of 50 whereas participants fell into younger age categories.

Ravenstein’s laws of migration assume that, if migrants move longer distances, they tend to choose big-city destinations (centers of absorption) and that rural residents are more likely to make the decision to emigrate. Moreover, Ravenstein also noticed that young adults are more likely to make international moves and that women migrate more than men. This theory, although 130 years old, seems to apply to the recent Polish migration to the UK. Most of the participants of my study classified as labor migrants came from small towns in Poland, were young and not married. Women seemed to consider and act on migration plans based on a list of push and pull factors composed and analyzed in a much more conscious fashion than men, who seemed to act more due to impulse or hopes and perceptions. The application of Lee’s push and pull factors model to explain recent migratory choices of Poles in the UK has, in fact, been used by many recent academics in explaining the post 2004 wave of Polish migration to the UK. However, interestingly, most of the recent academic literature focuses on and mainly accounts for economic push and pull factors for Polish migration to the UK. Galasinka and Kozlowska (2009), Iglicka 2008, Janta (2009), Burrell (2010) describes migration motivations and strategies that Polish migrants undertake. Among others, she lists economic opportunities in the UK as pull factors for Polish migrants. Drinkwater et. al (2006) focus on high unemployment in Poland as a push factor for migratory decision making process.
While my research project confirms what Burrell (2010), Drinkwater et al (2006), Galasinka and Kozlowska (2009) and others have observed, as I will demonstrate, I contribute to the existing body of knowledge by identifying the fact that the decision to emigrate from Poland is much more complex and economic factors, although very significant for the decision-making process, are not the only ones or at least not the most important ones especially at the individual scale. When generalized, economic factors are often common and seem to draw the attention of researchers, but at the personal level of each migrant, the reasons for spatial relocation are very complex and analyzing the migratory decisions from a purely traditional, economic perspective, may hinder the discovery of other equally important factors that, while more scattered and variable, heavily influenced the decision to emigrate and inform the nature of the migrants’ connections with Poland. In the first part of this chapter, I will present seven different stories which present the motives for emigration and current professional situation of the participants of my study. I believe that the stories presented by the migrants I interviewed are not unique but rather reflect the stories of many Polish migrants in London, the United Kingdom, or other Western European countries.

I would like to especially emphasize that although all migrants listed economic factors as a reason for emigration from Poland, there were other more complex factors which encouraged migrants to relocate, and I am inclined to suggest that those non-economic reasons were the drivers of their migratory decisions which were only confirmed or strengthened by economic considerations. The different factors are often cultural, familial, or individual taboos which the migrants are not willing to share when
asked by a random person. In fact, only five migrants interviewed listed unemployment in their hometowns as the only push factor for emigration and the rest of the participants of my study listed many other causes for their migratory choices. The immigrants shared stories in which they stated factors such as: work/personal life balance issues, embarrassment associated with failing college, death of a family member, the willingness to avoid legal consequences for a committed crime, embarrassment associated with infertility, stigma associated with homosexuality in the Polish society, domestic abuse by spouses, and many others.

The five migrants who listed unemployment as the only push factor for emigration all come from very small towns in regions of Poland which are under economic distress. Marta is a 24-year old graduate of environmental sciences who was unable to find employment in her field. She was single, comfortable with her English skills, and curious about London. She moved to London with a friend of hers and they both work in an Italian restaurant. Kasia and Lukasz, Bartek and Marzena, like many other couples described by academics from the UK, are young couples from rural areas of Poland who were unable to find employment in their hometowns and thus took the risk to relocate to London. Both couples have graduated from vocational schools and were unable to secure employment in their towns. Kasia is a tailor and Lukasz is a car mechanic. This young couple, faced with a migratory decision, decided to move to London and expressed their approach to moving as a “trial period” to determine if London could be their new home. They thought that it would have been equally difficult to move to a big Polish city such as Wroclaw or Krakow and, as they stated, in the UK
they were at least certain they could receive higher wages and better benefits when compared to big-city Polish counterparts. They currently both hold jobs which satisfy their professional ambitions. Kasia works in a Polish grocery store and likes the fact that she has the opportunity to interact with other Polish migrants on a daily basis. Lukasz is a van driver and transports people to and from the airport. They are appreciative of their lives in the UK and they feel like they are slowly beginning to understand the British culture.

Bartek and Marzena are also happy in London but since Bartek is the sole income provider for their household and Marzena is a stay-at-home mother, they are slowly considering moving to a smaller English town where the living costs are lower. Even these brief stories of migrants motivated to move to the UK by economic factors, it is possible to notice that the economic reasons for migration are intertwined with personal curiosity, and a pursuit of adult independence which, in an era of pan-European openness, allows young adults to consider international cities to stage their independence. Their stories are also important because, in making the transition to the UK, these migrants left their families, and reasons for frequent communication back in Poland. They are also monitoring the economic and employment situation in Poland, and enjoying the company of other Polish migrants, availability of Polish services and goods, but their return to Poland remains questionable.

Monika also reported that although unemployment in Poland was one of the most important factors for emigration she also had personal reasons which were equally
important. She emigrated to the UK with her boyfriend hoping that in the UK they will be able escape a multitude of family obligations and a suffocating family relationship to focus more on each other and create an intimate bond which will allow them to start a family. Monika is from Krakow where she obtained a bachelor’s degree in cosmetology. She struggled with finding employment corresponding to her college degree in Krakow which along with other factors motivated her to emigrate from Poland. As she described it, all these factors combined - the high cost of living in a big city like Krakow, lack of employment opportunities, and the lack of time for her boyfriend – felt like something forcing her to look for “normality” (Galasinska and Kozlowska 2009) in the West. Encouraged by her friends she decided to move to London.

Economic opportunity in the UK was also a pull factor for Tomek whom I interviewed in June 2012. But, in line with the claim that, at a personal level, economic factors often become of lesser importance to other issues, Tomek’s migratory decision was motivated by his failure in the academic program he was enrolled in Poland. Tomek was in his late twenties. He moved to London in the summer of 2006 as a seasonal labor migrant. He just completed the third year of a bachelor’s program, but needed to pass a few additional exams to graduate. He failed a couple of final exams that he would have to retake and pass in order to receive his college diploma. In the meantime, in order to avoid the embarrassment associated with failing his college exams, he decided to go to London to take a break from college and make some extra money. He knew that his parents who had helped him to cover costs associated with attending a university would have been very disappointed to find out that, in the end, their son was not able to complete the
degree they invested in, so he wanted to divert their attention from his college. Although Tomek planned to return to Poland in September to attempt to finish his degree, encouraged by a salary that seemed high to a new migrant, and the excitement associated with residing in London he decided to remain abroad. He convinced his girlfriend Asia to join him, and work in London for at least one year in order to save money to purchase an apartment in Poland. Their original plan was to collect enough money to save for a down payment for an apartment in Gdansk. In the summer of 2013, at the time of the interview, they had already spent seven years in London.

Michal and Magda have been married for eight years. Four years ago they decided to move to London. This young couple was able to secure jobs in Warsaw which were also related to their university education. Unfortunately, even such employment did not allow them to purchase an apartment. As Michal admitted, their Polish salaries were far from satisfactory, nevertheless they felt that they were leading a rather comfortable lifestyle in Warsaw. This young couple who comes from a small town in north-eastern Poland said they were described as a success story by their families and friends who remained in their hometown. Similarly to previous examples, their migration story also interweaves economic factors with less advertised personal decisions. Although officially they moved to the UK out of professional ambitions and the willingness to progress professionally, Magda shared with me that higher wages and the opportunity to save for an apartment were certainly attractive for her husband but the most important push factor for her personally was difficulty with becoming pregnant and a lack of accessible, reliable in-vitro treatment in Poland. Magda was too embarrassed to share her fertility
problems with her family and friends and she also hoped to receive a better infertility
treatment in the United Kingdom. In London, Magda took a job in small coffee shop and
focused on exploring fertility treatments available in the UK. Her husband was able to
secure a job with a transportation company which assists migrants with trips back home.

In my interviews, despite a limited sample size, it seemed to me that personal
factors for migration became even more important as the personal situations of
interviewees grew in complexity. Along with the complexity of migrant stories, the
intensity of their motivations to maintain relationships with Poland also changed. My
interview with a group of eight young Polish cook assistants, who were roommates at the
time of the interview, cast further light on diversity of reasons for migration, and the
inverse correlation between the importance of economic reasons for migration and the
complexity of personal challenges of migrants. Out of the eight male immigrants only
three provided me with detailed stories which can be used for the purpose of analysis.
The migrants came from a few neighboring towns in eastern Poland and they all knew
each other before arriving to London. The young men were forced to emigrate due to a
variety of reasons; mostly related to economic depression of their region such as very
high unemployment caused by a closing of a factory, a phenomenon described by many
other studies on the recent Polish migration (see Fihel and Kaczmarczyk 2009,
Galasinska and Kozlowska 2009, White 2009) but also some personal reasons such as
family issues (Ryan et. al 2009) or minor problems with the law. Like many others,
Andrzej immigrated to the UK mainly in pursuit of economic advancement. He attended
college in a big city of Poland. During his studies he received financial support from his
parents, however, as the financial prosperity of this family dwindled and the costs of living in a large Polish city grew, he was forced to abandon his college education. He returned to his small town, unsuccessfully searched for employment, and finally encouraged by people in his town, he decided to emigrate. He joined a group of friends in London and today sends remittances to his parents who remained at home.

Another one of the roommates, Marcin, had even more compelling personal reasons to emigrate from Poland. He lived with his parents in a little town in Poland until his parents died in a car accident. He inherited a small apartment that his parents used to own but was unable to cover basic utilities and fees due to unemployment. In order to cope with the death of his parents, and to be able keep the apartment (covering utility bills) he decided to leave his home town. He learned about a job opportunity in London and joined his friends.

Death in the family was also a push factor for Krzysztof who works as a transporter at a small hospital in the outskirts of London. Krzysztof’s migratory story is very unique because it includes a 20-year-long migrant experience in New York City, where he was employed as maintenance staff at a large public university. Krzysztof never married in the United States but thinks of the American years as one of the happiest years of his life. Despite his comfortable life in the US, Krzysztof decided to return to Poland in 2000 when his elderly mother became sick and needed assistance. Krzysztof relocated and tried to adjust to the Polish reality while caring for his mother. He hoped to use his life savings to purchase a small apartment in Poland, possibly find a partner to marry,
continue caring for his sick mother, and find stable employment in his hometown. After spending four years in his hometown in Poland, his mother passed away, his American savings were almost gone, he did not find marriage, and he was unable to secure stable employment. When he learned about an employment opportunity in the UK he immediately decided to pursue it not only to solve his financial insecurity, but, more importantly, to use it as a catalyst to process the grief associated with his mother’s death.

Roman’s reason for migration, while introduced as economically-motivated, was revealed to be related to a criminal conviction that was waiting for him should he return to Poland (he did not describe the crime). Afraid of going to jail, embarrassing his parents and immediate family, and in fear of losing a few years of his life he decided to emigrate from Poland. He expressed regret for committing the crime and the desire to be a productive citizen. He decided it would be more beneficial for him and his parents if he moved to London in order to begin a new life where he can pursue productivity.

Other labor migrant stories continued a pattern which recounted a mixture of personal reasons for migration fueled by economic considerations. Many of the migrants were treating the UK as a place of employment, and disclosed significant emotional and personal ties to people and places in Poland. Poland was home, nevertheless the UK provided financial, personal, and in some cases, cultural independence that could maybe never replace the feeling of home, but provided a significant reason to migrate.

Agnieszka holds a bachelor’s degree in Cultural Studies form a Polish university. After college, she felt lucky to be able to secure a job with a travel agency in Poznan
where she is from. She enjoyed her job and was satisfied with her salary. She migrated to London from Poznan after revealing her homosexuality to her parents, and facing lack of acceptance from her family, and immediate community. Hoping to avoid exposing her parents to embarrassment associated with her publicly displaying her sexual orientation, she decided to relocate to the UK with her partner.

As I have learned during the interviews, economic instability in Poland is a frequently mentioned push factor for emigration for labor migrants to the UK. During the interviews I did not deploy a system for quantifying the importance of economic factors, nevertheless, in many cases, I also had the subjective impression that personal reasons were the primary drivers of migration, even if economic advantages seemed enticing and were a convenient official reason that migrants mentioned at the beginning of our conversations. That subjective impression was probably the most pronounced when I interviewed women who decided to emigrate from Poland to escape domestic abuse. In the case of Polish women who had faced recurring domestic abuse in either a physical or mental form, who come from a country which provides very limited institutional and financial resources to secure independence from abusive spouses, the meaning of emigration to pursue “normality”, as described by Galasinska nd Kozlowska (2009), gains an additional dimension. The women, who stayed in abusive relationships for years and led very modest personal and professional lives, expressed a wish to simply achieve stable, dignified lives, without hopes for true love or financial success. Alina comes from a small town in southern Poland. She is in her mid-fifties and is employed as janitorial staff in a hospital located in the suburbs of London. She is a trained tailor but never
worked in her profession. Instead, for many years she worked as an associate in a small grocery store in rural Poland. The store was owned by her friend and, due to a growing number of big, foreign-funded, corporate supermarkets in Poland, was forced to close the grocery store in 2007. Alina’s daughter had already lived in London and found the closing of the store as an opportunity to bring her mother to London as well. Alina had been in an abusive relationship with her alcoholic husband for almost 30 years and decided to join her daughter in order to avoid further physical and mental abuse. The closing of the store signified the end of the last reason that she had to remain at home with her abusive husband. The opportunity to migrate seemed like the only chance she had ever received to truly start a new life. Alina also mentioned that her migratory trip and search for independence, Alina also saw an opportunity to improve her financial situation which was only degrading in Poland due to the loss of employment.

Monika is a young woman in her early thirties who immigrated to London from a small town in southern Poland. Monika shares some of the same experiences described by Alina. Monika recounted complex stories of abuse, both mental and physical. Her alcoholic father was degrading towards women and undermined their ability to pursue ambitious personal growth. Seeking support, she married her boyfriend and became pregnant. Her young husband, frustrated with limited employment opportunities and the inability to financially support his wife and daughter, began blaming Monika for his financial frustrations. He was often aggressive and abusive, verbally abusing all the women in his family. The family environment grew increasingly unpleasant, and Monika became encouraged to search for different life options to improve the situation for her
daughter. She did not want her daughter to be raised in the same type of a home she had known from her childhood. She had heard many stories about her childhood friends who moved to London. Every time she saw them during a return visit to Poland, she noticed they wore nice clothing and shared stories of personal success. She dreamed of leaving her little town but was not sure how to proceed with acting on her dream. She took formal steps to move to London after a job-fair in her town introduced her to a company which was looking for janitorial staff to work in the UK. At first, intimidated by the unknown she considered emigrating with her husband and their daughter hoping for her husband’s behavior to improve. However, following her mother’s recommendation, Monika pursued a life independent from her husband, and migrated to the UK only with her daughter.

Jolanta also works in a janitorial position in a hospital in London. Jolanta is in her early forties, and has lived in London with her two teenage children since 2007. Jolanta is from a small town in southern Poland. She was married to a truck driver, was a stay-at-home mother and never had a stable job in Poland. Faced with an unexpected divorce request after 15 years of marriage, Jolanta was faced with a personal situation that made migration an attractive option. Her example indicates how, in certain cases, migration is a result of a complex set of factors that drive migration only as a result of overlap. The apartment that Jolanta occupied belonged to Jolanta’s mother-in-law. Along with her children, she had to move in with her mother who owned a one bedroom apartment. Jolanta was shocked and depressed but knew she had to find an alternative life path for herself and her children. Her current employer leveraged family connections, and recommended Jolanta to a relative who was already living in the UK. In addition to
highlighting a complex relationship between economic and personal factors for migration, Jolanta’s example supports studies that highlight the importance of social networks for migrants’ success. (see Ryan et. al 2009) The contact provided by her Polish employer allowed Jolanta to learn about an opportunity to work in a hospital in London.

The people described above, provide several examples in support of a claim that economic factors are important in driving migratory movements, but migrants are often driven, encouraged, motivated by situations in their personal life which make migration a much less calculated lifestyle decision. As I hope the above-mentioned examples demonstrate, in cases where personal situations compel migrants to build a life away from their home countries, economic factors are not drivers of migration itself, but rather indirect factors or auxiliary considerations. In the case of push factors, the economic situation of Polish towns, high unemployment rates, and a young, production and consumer-service oriented economy could potentially be tied to certain personal situations of migrants. For example, economic frustrations can potentially lead to stressful family environments which exacerbate the natural aggression of their members. Similarly, when looking at pull factors, the availability of a relatively well-paid job in the UK is an important element in a woman’s pursuit to set up a home independent of her abusive husband. Nevertheless, in the case of the migrants described above, I cannot avoid the impression that economics simply serve as a mechanism which only really fuels other, more personal drivers of migration.
The migrant examples described above, challenge the perception of economic factors as drivers of migration by providing stories of clear needs, issues, and challenges in the personal lives of Poles which they could not address while remaining in Poland. Interestingly, however, other groups of Polish migrants to the UK also emigrate with economic reasons serving as secondary considerations to other personal factors, although, in their case, the personal factors are much more ambiguous, egotistic, and center around satisfying their own curiosity.

During one of my research trips, I had the opportunity to interview two sisters: Karolina and Anna, on the surface both stereotypical examples of educated, intelligent young women who followed the path of many other Poles who were unable to find employment corresponding with their college degrees in Poland and emigrated to the UK which provided a much wider range of career opportunities. For both of them however, emigration became a way to satisfy their curiosity. Eade et. al (2007) distinguish a new category of migrants called “searchers” who emigrate to gain life experiences. Karolina and Anna are in their mid-twenties. Karolina has been in London since 2004 and Anna joined one year later. The two sisters spent a lot of time in Poland socializing with foreign exchange students who were arriving to Poland from all over the world. They hosted international students at their parents’ home for a variety of holidays and during family gatherings. The two young women were always curious about other cultures, places, and traditions. Unable to extensively travel due to limited financial resources they found the opportunity to apply for British grants to attend a university in London and
used it to explore the United Kingdom, learn about the British culture, and socialize with young people from all over the world.

4.7.2 Exploring Reasons for Migration: Eurostars

London has served as a hub for immigrants from around the world for many years. Through a variety of historic events, this global city has become rooted in several global networks: postcolonial, transatlantic, and, most recently, the EU. As evident from the examples listed above, London is often perceived by European immigrants, particularly those from new-EU-member countries, as a destination offering the most vibrant economic, social, or entertainment opportunities – comparable to those of big American cities, but yet located closer to home. (see Favell 2008, chapter3) But London’s attractiveness extends beyond service-sector labor migrants, and successfully lures professionals and elites from around the world. As a global city, London has been offering an employment market attractive to young talent from continental Europe for decades; that attractiveness was further increased as London has been able to shield itself from the effects of the recent economic crisis felt in cities like Madrid or Athens. According to Favell (2008, p.30) young Europeans began relocating to London in the second half of the 1990s and today their Eastern European colleagues are following similar migratory steps.
During my field study I had the opportunity to interview a group of sixteen migrants which I classify as embodying Favell’s (2008) loosely described definition of Eurostars.

Fourteen of my interview participants held college or graduate degrees and were employed in British banks, international corporations, city government, or hospitals. One participant was working towards completing a bachelor’s degree and another one was working on a doctoral degree. Out of 17 participants only one young woman was a college drop-out who, nevertheless, remained accomplished professionally. The minority of the interview participants, while not employed professionally in a full-time capacity, either arrived to London to pursue internationally desirable professional employment or recently removed themselves from their London City careers due to personal reasons. Two young women interviewed were recent migrants and were in the process of searching for employment and meanwhile working part-time. Two other women mothers on a maternity leaves but previously had graduated from British institutions and had been employed in the hospitality sector in London. Three of the participants were still students but all three were already working on their professional internships at international corporations. At the time of the interview, one of these students was completing his doctoral thesis and was employed as a research assistant at the university with secured further employment at the same institution. Eight more interviewees were employed in banking, healthcare or the governmental sector.
All of the interviewed Eurostars spoke English fluently when they arrived to London and all had a strong educational foundation. All of the interviewed migrants not only held a Polish passport, but had spent a significant part of their life in Poland. They either graduated from Polish high schools and attended or graduated from British universities, or they had arrived to the UK with a degree from a university in Poland (3). They felt competent in their professional and academic fields, thus ready to compete for scholarships and job opportunities with their counterparts from London and the rest of the world. All migrants shared extensive travel experience which they were able to acquire as children, with the help of their parents. Ten of the interviewees credited organized travel or exchange programs as sources of their familiarity with ethnic diversity, and all said they were culturally comfortable with people of different nationalities, races, or religious affiliations. More interestingly, five of the participants admitted to have lived outside of Poland as children for an extended period of time. That group of previous expats was able to gain international experience through their parents, who served a variety of assignments abroad related to academic or business functions, which allowed their children to attend schools in Germany, the United States, and Canada. For three of the migrants who did not experience significant life abroad before coming to the UK, their international curiosity was passed on by their parents who had lived abroad either before having children, or while the children were very young. The parents’ familiarity with the western culture, and extensive travel for leisure, enabled the young migrants to move to London without much hesitation related with culture-shock. All but two migrants received some sort of financial assistance either from their parents or partners, and relied
on a network of family members or friends who assisted them with finding comfortable accommodations in London and provided them with the opportunity to take a longer time to look for satisfactory employment. Ten migrants specifically pointed to emotional support and professional advice received from their parents as the source of their confidence in their job search.

The above-described international background of the interviewed Eurostars suggests a mixture of very diverse personal and educational experiences, which, nevertheless, remains unified by certain common factors: a certain level of financial affluence, high level of educational attainment, and some form of international exposure, whether through extended or brief but extensive international travel. That dichotomy reflected in the diversity of details contrasted by certain common, overarching themes can also be found when analyzing the reasons for the young migrants’ move from Poland to the UK. Here, similarly to the group of low-skilled labor migrants discussed in the previous section of this chapter, economic factors were not always the driving force behind moving to the UK. Similarly to the less affluent group of migrants – economic factors always remained a consideration, or, in the case of Eurostars economic success not only defined their professional goals, but also often described their familial backgrounds. Nevertheless, although common among the research participants, and natural to gravitate for researchers, it seemed to me that migration motives were not always rooted in economic or professional opportunities. Contrary to public perception, I was often under the impression that economic opportunity was at the bottom of the migrants’ reasons to migrate. The pull factors that the migrants at the focus of my study
emphasized included: international recognition of degrees from British universities, the
willingness to explore life abroad, desire to improve English skills, proving to their
parents that they can be equally and independently successful, establishing their own
career paths independent of their parents’ ambitions or businesses, and using London as
the setting for establishing multi-cultural, multi-lingual romantic relationships where both
partners can remain professionally productive due to the universal knowledge of English
—something very difficult in the migrants’ places of origin where one partner would need
to sacrifice his/her career due to limited language skills.

The vast majority of the research participants (12) graduated from British
universities. British universities (see Favell 2008), similarly to American institutions
constantly compete for students from around the world generating an international
student body. (see Kretovics 2011) In fact, according to Favell (2008, p.68), many
doctoral programs in England would not be able to exist if they did not accept
international students. British Universities offer English instruction, internship
opportunities with multinational corporations, attractive exchange program locations,
and, most importantly, reduced tuition rates for citizens of EU member states, thus
creating a very attractive offering for global but specifically intra-EU university
applicants. As my interviewees indicated, that allure of British education was one of the
factors they considered in selecting the destination for their international experience.

Nevertheless, as I will describe in more detail in the upcoming paragraphs, the reasons
were complex, and varied greatly at the individual level of each migrant studied. Ten of
the research participants indicated that their move to the UK was planned as a temporary
experience and that their plan was to graduate from British institutions and search for employment opportunities in Poland. However after completing a variety of internships, establishing relationships with other Eurostars in London, and discovering rather limited employment opportunities in Poland they decided to stay in London indefinitely.

Robert, Patrycja, and Marek came to London to complete their business degrees. They met during a social event in London, became friends and spend a lot of time together supporting each other in their migrant experience in London. As their stories disclosed, the three young Poles come from affluent Polish families and wanted to prove to their parents that they can become successful without relying on family businesses or connections. While that success is often measured in financial terms, the interview conversation indicated that their decision to migrate was more driven by the desire to achieve adulthood through independence from their parents, and through growing their own cultural interests. The three interviewees were inspired by London’s diversity, nightlife, and opportunity to meet people from around the world. They were also very comfortable with London because they spent a significant portion of their childhood in Western countries (US, Canada, Germany). Although they all admitted that their parents provided funding to pay for their university tuition, living costs, and travel while they were students, the interviewees quickly emphasized that they each secured an attractive position with an international corporation – an achievement they credit to using only their own knowledge and talents without relying on any assistance from their parents.
Five of the research participants pointed out that romantic engagement was a factor which translated their temporary, education-oriented stay in the UK to an indefinitely long, migrant lifestyle. Favel (2008, p.69) states: “romance and relationships are playing a role in decisions, alongside with career factors.” The migrants shared that during their studies they had started personal relationships with foreigners. London became the setting for their shared lives, but also the provider of a unified language and cultural context, which allowed them to build their relationship of an equal footing, without the stress associated with maintaining a relationship where one partner would be a local and the other would be a cultural and linguistic outsider. Favell (2008, p.70) describes an example of Claudia and Miguel – Italian-Portugese couple – who chose to settle in Brussels in order to have equal professional opportunities.

The appeal of the UK serving as an inter-cultural link, or a “third country” (Favel 2008, p. 70), was highlighted in my interviews with previously mentioned sisters, Karolina and Anna, who, while not fitting the template definition of Eurostars started their journey to the UK fueled by international sentiments and curiosity, pursuing degrees from British institutions.

Andrzej, a more befitting example of a “Eurostar”, is a young Pole who arrived to London only to complete his undergraduate degree, but changed his plans after establishing complex personal and professional ties to the city. Initially, Andrzej had planned to obtain his English education, complete an internship, and return to Poland to work with his father. During the internship with the Greater London Authority (“GLA”),
he met and developed a relationship with a young woman from Greece, which was one of the factors which motivated him to accept a permanent position with the GLA.

In a book exploring processes, factors, and drivers of migration, Favell (2008) explores the lives of “following spouses” – people who migrate to another country due to the professional opportunities of their romantic partners - and challenges the common perception that “following spouses” often become frustrated expats without their own migrant success stories. In his study, Favell (2008) depicts several couples who demonstrate that migration driven by the professional opportunity of one partner, can also lead to the success and fulfilment of the other. In my study, I was able to collect a small sample of information which seems to confirm Favell (2008)’s observations from Amsterdam and London. Monika and Grzegorz emigrated to London only due to the fact that Monika received a professional opportunity which required relocation to London. Grzegorz graduated with an MBA degree from a prestigious university in Poland and secured a relatively well-paid position at a bank in Warsaw. Despite his young age and a soaring real-estate market in the country’s capital, he was able to purchase a small apartment in Warsaw and led a comfortable lifestyle. He decided to relocate to London when his girlfriend of a few years received an opportunity to work for an international publishing company in London. Although not individually motivated to move to the UK, Grzegorz was further encouraged to migrate by the flexibility of his employer, who allowed him to transfer to the bank’s London branch, thus allowing Grzegorz to maintain certain continuity in income, work-life, and daily routines. In Grzegorz’s case, it seems that his migration was not only fueled by the positive force of his romantic engagement,
but also by the international nature of his employment which diminished the significance of his physical workplace location. With families left in Poland, Grzegorz and Monika maintain a close connection with home via online communications, travel, and Facebook. Grzegorz is also maintaining relationships with his work colleagues at the Warsaw branch of his bank, and occasionally explores employment opportunities in Warsaw.

The example of Iza demonstrates that for some migrants, decisions to relocate can also be generated by unexpected events, and can be caused without serious considerations of any factors. Iza graduated from a Polish university with a law degree and was employed in a law office in Warsaw. During a party organized by one of her coworkers, she met Waldek who was visiting Poland from London. After engaging romantically, they decided to begin their life together, and within a few months, Iza had quit her job and moved in with Waldek in London. At the time of the interview she was in the process of searching for a full time job and was employed as a part-time legal advisor for one of the non-governmental organizations that serve Poles in London.

In discussing the migratory choices of Eurostars, it is important to highlight that in the backdrop of economic success, many of them were predominantly motivated by EU and Western sentiments, which are particularly significant to the youth who grew up in a Poland recovering from communist isolation from the Western world. The idea of living in a global city such as London was attractive to them as a concept in itself, and economic opportunities were only considered as a function of living and participating in the life of a global city. Their migrant stories often begin with a plan to live in London
for a few months and return to Poland in order to start, what they called, a “normal adult life”. The “normality” referred to by these migrants has a different connotation than the search for “normality” described by Galasinska and Kozlowska (2009), nevertheless it points to another perception of Poland as a country filled with absurdities, even if perceived from a different vantage point. For these migrants, the time in London was planned as a “gap year” which eventually transitioned to a more permanent relocation.

Natalia, Monika, and Urszula all came to London with the intention of spending a few months of their lives in this global city; at the time of the interview they had all been living in London for a few years. Urszula held a university degree from a Polish university when she arrived to London. Attracted to London by her father who resided in the city for many years, she saw migration as an opportunity to rekindle the relationship with her father, but also to meet new people, enjoy London’s nightlife and return to Poland to begin her adult life enriched by an international perspective. At the time of the interview, Urszula had been living in London for several years, but describes herself as fulfilled professionally and personally, and comfortable with her English lifestyle. Natalia and Monika came to London with their high school friends to earn spending money during the summer break. They planned to come to London to make enough money so they would not have to work while attending Polish universities. Their summer trip turned into a more permanent stay, and they abandoned their plans to study in Poland in favor of enrolling in British universities. Both women are currently completing their degrees and work part-time in advertising. They hope to switch to full-time positions when they obtain their university degrees.
Tomek is completing a doctoral degree and works as a research assistant for one of London’s universities. He came to London with a plan to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees and was going to return to Poland to work with his father who is a university professor and consultant. Tomek admits that his plans changed after he enrolled in a doctoral program. He developed a multi-year research agenda which secured his financial position for the foreseeable future. More importantly, he really enjoys his work, colleagues, and working conditions, and he believes that it would be difficult for him to return to Poland and adjust to the reality of working at a Polish university.

Franciszek is from Wroclaw. His father owns a construction business in Poland. His parents encouraged him to study in London to obtain a business degree and wanted him to return to Wroclaw to help operate the business office that manages the construction firm. Franciszek was not initially convinced about the idea of studying in London but decided that London may be the only option for him to fulfill his own professional ambitions which would enable him to become independent from his parents. During his studies, Franciszek created a business plan and secured an EU grant to fund his venture. At the time of the interview, he shared with me that he was planning to return to Poland to launch his business in Warsaw.

Anna completed her university degree in tourism in Poland but was not very satisfied with her job in Poland. She worked for her mother’s restaurant as a manager but did not see any opportunities to grow professionally. She came to London to attend a 1-year university course in management and was hoping to return to Poland to open her
own café. During her English studies, she worked as a manager of a restaurant where she met a lot of Polish migrants. She noticed that there is a big need among Polish migrants for transportation services. When she completed her studies she started a transportation company which offers personal transportation and package deliveries between Poland and the UK. She is very satisfied with her business and plans to expand her transportation services to other Eastern European countries.

As described above, both Franciszek and Anna have used their experience in the UK as a mechanism to fuel professional and economic aspirations. Nevertheless, I would argue that in the end the drivers of their migration were not economic in nature, but, at the personal level, more associated with goals of achieving independence from family networks, or, what may be even more ambiguous and difficult to pinpoint, aimed at defining their adult identities by leveraging the newly available opportunities to expand the reach of their life to places outside of Poland. At the same time, they both feature a very strong emotional and business connection with Poland. Emigration has provided them with an opportunity to redefine that connection on their own terms. Previously, Poland was defined through the perspective of their parents and the life they had there as children. Emigration allowed them to develop a more mature and independent connection to home, which is now a source of their livelihood.

Artur emigrated to the UK due to complex reasons that include opportunities made available thanks to Poland’s membership in the EU, but also related to his family experiences. Artur’s parents, highly educated in Poland, had lived abroad in the past, and
since returning to Poland, have always promoted the idea of education abroad. Artur was brought up with the idea that education abroad is not only potentially better than Polish university education, plagued with a post-communist, antiquated approach to teaching, but most importantly beneficial in terms of personal development. As Artur admitted, his education abroad was also a point of pride for his parents who could boast among their friends about their child’s attendance to one of the highly ranked British universities.

4.8 Conclusion

When analyzing the recent Polish migration to the UK from the perspective of reasons for migration, it seems that many migrant stories include an economic thread that defines part of the reason for beginning a migratory journey or at least part of a justification for continued migration. It is difficult to question that, in a country faced with often concentrated areas of high unemployment, relatively low wages and a consumer market which places increasing pressure on people to purchase the latest and greatest goods, people emigrate in pursuit of economic attainment. Nevertheless, as I hope I have been able to demonstrate, economic reasons are often a backdrop for more complex personal stories where economics are only a vehicle for people to achieve independence, escape abuse, satisfy curiosity, or simply apply themselves in an environment which seems more predictable and more accepting of a broader range of skills, backgrounds, and beliefs. In thinking about the stories that the migrants had shared with me, I often applied the simple “but-for” test for analyzing causality. When asking “if Poland did not lack economic opportunities/competitive wages that can be found in the
UK, would the migrants interviewed still move to the UK”, in most cases the exercise still led me to a fairly certain “yes”. Nevertheless, it must also be highlighted that most of the interviewed migrants demonstrated fairly strong sentiments towards Poland. In recounting their reasons for migration, the pursuit of “normality”, better careers, or education was often placed in the context of a wish that one day Poland can afford similar opportunities. During their migrant experience, they are appreciative of the opportunities that the UK has offered, and many are exploring the British culture. At the same time, fueled by connections with friends, families, and regular visits, most of the migrants nurtured their Polish traditions, national sentiments, and treated Poland as a permanent context and point of reference for their current experience as migrants.
Chapter 5 – Migrants’ Experience in London

5.1 Introduction

As it has been indirectly highlighted in the previous chapter via the analysis of migrants’ reasons for migration and continued presence in London, moving to the UK has afforded Polish migrants with an opportunity to gain independence from family connections or abuse, remedy difficult financial or familial situations, satisfy international curiosity, or pursue and grow international careers. Throughout my interviews and observations of these migrants, it also became evident that most of them have a strong sentimental, family-based, and even business connection with their homeland. Even for Polish international elites represented by Eurostars, Poland serves as a context for their career and lifestyle decisions. The information gathered via interviews and observations has provided a lot of context for the migrants’ current life in the UK. Although completed mainly by Eurostars, by relying on mental maps, I was able to gain further insight into their daily routines and habits as citizens of London. To supplement the information provided by Eurostars via mental maps, I also improvised a labor-migrants’ mental map using information from the interviews.
5.2 Settling in London

Like I previously mentioned, London has been maintaining its role as a center for global migration to the UK for centuries. Recently, the numbers of European migrants from former Communist states has redefined London’s character as a destination of migrants from former colonial states of the UK. Although Polish migration to the UK can be traced to many locations and regions, London remains the most popular receiving destination for Polish migrants.

According to the Office of National Statistics (2011), Polish-born migrants have mainly settled in West London, Slough and the area of Boston in Lincolnshire. Analyzing the numbers, it can be stated that Poles are concentrated in West London. Ealing hosts the biggest number of Polish-born residents and the biggest number of recent migrants. According to the statistics (Home Office statistics 2013), 6.4 percent of all Ealing residents are of Polish origin. Hammersmith is another area that hosts Polish migrants. This community has had strong historic linkages to Poland for years. Although, Ealing hosts the biggest number of Polish-born residents, Hammersmith and Fulham have significant populations of Polish migrants as well - 9000 residents (Starkey 2008).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Local area</th>
<th>Number in area</th>
<th>Per cent of all residents in area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Ealing</td>
<td>21,500</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slough</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Haringey</td>
<td>10,900</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hounslow</td>
<td>10,400</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 - Unitary/local authorities with highest proportions of non-UK born usual residents from 2011 Census; England and Wales


“The close historical ties between Poland and Hammersmith and Fulham are demonstrated by the fact that there is a Polish eagle on the Council's mayoral regalia” (Starkey 2008, p.136). Starkey (2008) also notes that many Polish businesses have been established in Hammersmith and Fulham since Poland joined the European Union. In light of the long history of Polish migration, recent wave of Polish migrants to Hammersmith and Fulham should not be surprising. This area of London, for decades, has been a home to the Polish Cultural Centre which is the largest Polish cultural institution outside Poland. The Polish Cultural Centre serves as home to a variety of community organizations, professional associations, a Polish newspaper, an art gallery, Polish restaurant, bookstore, and a library (Starkey 2008).

Recognizing the importance of support networks in the success of transnational migratory journeys, it is easy to justify why London is often the most attractive destination for Polish migrants. Its robust Polish diaspora (see Garapich 2006, Drinkwater et. al 2006) sets a foundation for new migrants to continue at least a portion of their daily lives. They benefit from the existence of Polish non-profit organizations
such as the POSK, the availability to attend services offered by Polish Catholic churches, recognized Polish Saturday schools for immigrant children, and stores catering to the tastes of Polish migrants. Moreover, especially in London, it is not uncommon to see Polish medical centers, Polish libraries and bookstores, Polish grocery stores and restaurants, services such as hair salons or construction workers catering to Polish migrants’ needs, or daily newspapers and magazines published in Polish and widely available. In fact, for certain groups of migrants, the ability to immerse themselves in a familiar culture leads to isolation. Recent research has shown that some Poles in London live in communities dominated by other Poles and they do not even have any contact with the rest of the society (Ryan et. al 2008). Coleman (1990) describes that situation as ‘network closure’ which seems like a likely product of the combination of a weak cultural and economic capital, strong social capital and technological advances.

Although Polish services are widely available and often concentrate groups of Polish migrants within specific areas of London, as I will demonstrate via data gathered for this research, London’s ability to attract a diverse population of Polish migrants in terms of education and professional attainment, translates into a fair dispersion of Poles across London’s districts. Polish migrants employed in professional industries aspire to live in desirable, prestigious areas. Many of the migrants interviewed lived within or in close proximity to Kensington, Notting Hill, or London’s financial district.

London, furthermore, also plays an important part in the lives of Polish migrants who are not spatially concentrated in the city as it serves as the center for migrants to celebrate their ethnic identity by attending a variety of social, artistic, and/or religious
events organized by Polish centers and organizations. Despite the previously mentioned shift in diasporic activity, largely based on the changing nature of Polish migration and supporting technological solutions, traditional diasporic organizations embodied in formal organizations, as described by Koser, are still a vibrant and important part of the lives of Poles in the UK. (Koser 2007) Organizations such as: the Medical Aid for Poland, The Association of Polish Educators Abroad, The Association of Polish Students and Graduates in Great Britain, Polish Cultural Institute, Stowarzyszenie Techników Polskich, Polska YMCA London, British Polish Business Club are active institutions which aim at uniting Poles living in the UK and motivating them to keep close relationships between both countries.

Figure 5.1 - Mass Schedule at a Polish Church in London
Figure 5.2 - A financial services provider in London offering money transfer services
Finally, it is important to mention that Poles in London can also be analyzed in the context of how their relationships are structured beyond considering how they exist in physical space. Literature shows that ethnic communities do not necessarily need to be perceived as a defined space. In some cases members of an ethnic group can actually be spatially dispersed but linked by nationality, language, culture (Brimicombe 2007), and today by technology. While Polish migrants may live in different parts of London many will only socialize with other Poles (Ryan et al 2008).

Interview conversations have also provided insight into how settling into a place is not only related to the opportunity to stage national sentiments, or rely on the support of a cultural infrastructure. Stemming from the complexity of reasons for migration,
settling into a place in the case of Polish migrants often closely depends on achieving independence from previously experienced restrictions, experiencing the ability to pursue previously unattainable goals, or simply growing used to a comfortable routine which overshadows sentimentally or personally driven considerations to return to the homeland. Among all these stories, there is also one other constant – contemporary migrants are able to stay in touch with their families, networks, or sentimental connections in Poland. Thus, settling into place is not only easier because it is often driven by strong personal motivating factors, but also because the shock of migration can be mitigated by maintaining a level of consistency in the migrants’ lives.

Monika, a labor migrant from Krakow who moved to the UK to pursue a career-related employment that she could not find in Poland but also to secure the independence needed to start a family was working in London despite failing to achieve her professional goals. At the time of the interview, Monika worked as a waitress in a Polish restaurant in London. Not surprisingly, all her work colleagues (including the supervisor) were also Polish women. Monika explicitly stated that at first, she was looking for a job in a beauty salon to put her education into practice, however, it was rather difficult to find such a position due to the fact that large London-based beauty salons were requiring British certifications and licenses she had been unable to provide due to affordability issues. The smaller salons, often run by other Polish migrants, were frequently single-person businesses or salons run by a closely knit network of family and friends and were not hiring outside help. Monika decided to look for other employment opportunities outside of her formal degree and was able to secure a waitressing job in a Polish
restaurant. She enjoyed waitressing, and what came as a surprise to her, she was able to save money on monthly basis – a practice which many low-paid migrants report as achievable in the UK (see Galasinka 2009, Galasinska and Kozlowska 2009) and driving their continued emigration. Despite escaping from a suffocating family relationship, she maintains frequent communication with her relatives in Poland, reads Polish news online, and visits Polish businesses in London.

As I mentioned previously, many migrants expressed strong sentiments towards Poland, yet their comfortable daily routines swayed them towards continued emigration. Tomek and Ania, whose migrant story started with Tomek’s failed university exams and was initially planned as a temporary stay, at the time of the interview had been living in London for 7 years. They sincerely miss Poland, their families, and maintain communication via Facebook, online news portals, Skype, and frequent travel home. They try to participate in the important life events of their parents and families in Poland, and they also dedicate time to catch up on their favorite Polish sit-coms online. Nevertheless, when asked about plans to return to Poland, they are unable to definitely commit to that idea.

An important factor in the process of settling into London seems to be the opportunity for migrants to achieve independence – financial, personal, or professional. That opportunity often overshadows temporary inconveniences or cultural shock.

Jolanta, who moved to UK after an unexpected divorce and who has never worked in the past, is particularly appreciative of the benefits she receives from the
British government which she uses to supplement her income. This allows her and her children to lead a modest but happy, and most importantly independent life. Her children attend a local school, have made local friends, and have declared that they are not interested in returning to Poland. Her son wants to be a car mechanic and her daughter is considering a nursing career. Jolanta travels to Poland twice a year to visit her mother. She reads Polish news portals, buys Polish magazines, and consumes Polish goods.

Settling into London, while not without any challenges, seemed particularly easy for those for whom living in a place that is distant from Poland, Polish cultural norms, or personal situations was particularly important.

Agnieszka, who migrated to the UK due to lack of acceptance of her homosexuality, expressed a firm commitment to remaining in the UK. She mentioned that the process of settling in was quick as she felt accepted in the UK. She also identified those qualities within the British society which she liked personally. She likes the British sense of humor, and loves the town of Brighton where she currently resides. She visits her family in Poznan at least 3 times a year, reads Polish news, follows Polish traditions, keeps in touch with friends in Poland, but she plans to permanently stay in the UK.

Placing home at a distance has been particularly important for victims of domestic abuse, for whom settling in London signified starting a new life. Upon arriving to London, Alina quickly found a job in a hospital and has been continuing her employment at the time of the interview. Her poor language skills had limited her ability to seek alternative employment. In the hospital, she works with other Polish women and relies on
younger migrants and the previously described Polish male transporter for linguistic translation and assistance with paperwork. Alina is happy with her life in London but regrets the fact of needing to compromise in her employment status. She had truly enjoyed working as a sales associate, she liked the responsibility of having had to maintain store inventory, and the social interactions she had with the customers. She feels she could have done better in London but the lack of linguistic skills limits her potential. Most importantly, Alina is happy to be away from her husband. She still considers Poland as home, and visits Poland to spend time with her elderly mother. She follows Polish press that she purchases in Poland, or in the UK, and calls her mother regularly.

Monika, another of the interviewees who migrated to the UK to achieve independence from abuse rents a small room with other immigrant women and, although frustrating at times, expressed satisfaction with her life. She pointed out that any negative experiences in London are compensated by the comforts her daughter is able to achieve. She attends daycare and she seems comfortable and “at home” in the British culture. Monika is very proud of her daughter’s ability to speak English fluently and she dreams for her daughter to advance in the British society. Monika returns to her hometown once a year and although she misses her mother and her sister very much she does not regret her decision to leave. She stays in constant communication with her family, celebrates Polish traditions, and consumes Polish goods available in the UK. However, she also takes English classes and hopes to find a better job in a year or two and she is slowly beginning to entertain the thought of perhaps looking for a husband in the UK to build a new, more stable family.
Monika’s future plans point to the fact that romantic engagements are often strong anchors for continued migration, and, if encountered early in the migration process, can significantly impact the process of settling into place. Karolina and her sister Anna may seem to have experienced a difficult start to their migratory experience. Despite receiving higher-education, Karolina joined the countless other Poles working in London in the hospitality industry (see Janta 2009). However, her motivation to stay was found in her personal life. After meeting a partner they quickly started a family, and Karolina quit her job after learning she was expecting a baby. Karolina’s husband is a manager in a retail store so with the assistance of British maternity-leave benefits she was able to focus on her pregnancy and maternity obligations. After delivering her daughter, she did not return to work. Her sister, Anna, decided to move to the UK to join her sister and to start Japanese studies in London. After graduation she was unable to find employment corresponding with her degree. She married a Sri Lankan and became pregnant soon after the marriage. Thus London was not only the right place for her due to a romantic engagement, but also due the opportunities it provided her husband that he would not be able to find in Poland due to language or cultural differences. Both sisters regret not pursuing professional careers, but they seem to be content with their lives in general. In line with the other examples of how migrants ease the process of settling into London by maintaining continuity in at least a portion of their life, both sisters maintain close communication with their parents in Poland, and exchange visits in Poland and the UK. They maintain communication with their Polish friends via Facebook, and are happy to share their international, multi-cultural lives with those who remained in Poland. Their
lives are, nevertheless, focused on the UK, and are increasingly distant from Polish culture, media, and goods.

Finally, for other migrants, settling into a migrant location and maintaining continuity by strong connections with the homeland takes on another significance. Michal and Magda, who moved to London to pursue in-vitro treatments, are challenging the traditional migrant experience of isolation or longing for home. Michal is working in a transportation business which transports people and goods between Poland and the UK. The nature of his work provides him with a continuous reason to maintain a relationship with Poland, understand the needs of Polish migrants, and the expected quality of service from Polish travel consumers. They both also have families in Poland, read Polish magazines, frequently travel to Poland, and are closely embedded into the life of the Polish diaspora in London.

It is worth mentioning that settling into place often occurs differently for migrants representing global elites, who face little or no language barriers, and who lead similar lives across country borders. Financial security provided both professionals and students with the opportunity to maintain a certain continuity in their daily lives, despite a change in locations. Grzegorz, who moved to London from Warsaw by taking advantage of an internal transfer within his bank, maintains relationships with his work colleagues at the Warsaw branch of his bank, and occasionally explores employment opportunities in Warsaw. His daily professional life had not changed significantly, and London affords him the ability to continue many of his personal routines. Many of the Eurostar students
indicated that an important element of their settling-in was the ability for them to live in fairly luxurious accommodations financed by their parents. In that way, their daily lives did not deviate much from what they were accustomed to in Poland. Regular visits to popular dance clubs further fueled the perception of continuity.

The process of settling into place was particularly different between labor migrants and Eurostars when analyzed from the perspective of their approach to Polish services and goods available in London. For many labor migrants, like the group of men from Tooting, access to Polish speaking services was essential in their survival due to limited English abilities. While they lived far from the Polish cultural centers, they sought out Polish stores within close proximity, and used Polish services for money transfers, transportation, health, etc. Most of the Eurostars mentioned using Polish services in the context of occasional entertainment, satisfying a temporary sentimental need, or simply purchasing something of a perceived superior quality (car mechanic, hair design etc.). For a large number the interviewed Eurostars, their lives in Poland aspired to be international in nature. The food they consumed was not necessarily traditionally Polish, and the places they visited, entertained, or worked in were often international in nature, and closely resembled the internationally-focused places in London. For them, settling in was about acquiring cultural and social status, not about facing culture shock.
5.3 Daily Experiences of Polish Migrants in London

Interviews and participant observations have provided in depth insight into the daily experiences of Polish migrants in the UK. Nevertheless, I supplemented these interviews and observations with a mental maps exercise to gain insight into how migrants interact with their physical environment and which landmarks are significant in their daily lives. As mentioned previously, the majority of the participants in the exercise represented the group previously labeled as Eurostars – Polish professionals and highly educated individuals participating in London’s global labor market. In addition to the original maps in the appendix, below is a summary of the landmarks indicated by the exercise participants.

Figure 5.4 – Map of locations included in Eurostars’ mental maps
Figure 5.5 - Map of locations included in Eurostars’ mental maps (city center focus)

To retain the information presented in interviews and obtained via observations of service-sector labor migrants, I also created a map depicting the locations mentioned by the labor migrants during interview conversations. The map is featured below.
Figure 5.6 - Map of locations described by labor migrants in interviews

Figure 5.7 - Map of locations described by labor migrants in interviews (city center)
As the map above indicates, and interviews suggested, most of the labor migrants whom I interviewed lived in areas of London that have traditionally served as neighborhoods concentrating populations of Polish migrants, such as: Hammersmith, Acton or Ealing. Some of the interviewees also lived in other less expensive parts of the city such as: Tooting in South London. On the other hand, at the time of the interview, the Eurostars were living in more prestigious parts of the city such as Kensington, or in trendy and up-and-coming parts of London such as Camden. The particular neighborhoods were, nevertheless, concentrated mainly in the West and East London, with only one group of migrants living in South London (Tooting).

Ten migrants included the Thames River in their maps as a demarcation of the space within London which they considered to be a part of their daily lives, or as they described it “their London” – all but one north of the Thames River. Representative of the north/south divide within the city, the migrants did not include any references to areas south of the Thames in the descriptions of their daily routine with the exception of one drawn by a PhD student that referred to parts of southern London as the “no-go area”.

Due to a fairly limited sample size and an open-ended format of the mental maps exercise, the pictures provided by the migrants represent such a broad variety of perspectives, approaches, scales, and include such a broad range of landmarks and places it is difficult to identify clear trends and themes across all the mental maps recorded. The collection of images is much more useful for supporting the idea that, at the personal level, the migrant experience is complex and dependent on individual factors, preferences, and lifestyles. Before proceeding with an analysis of particular features of
the maps provided, I would like to point out that the variety in the way that the migrants approached the subject of drawing their personal spaces within London may in itself lead to an interesting conclusion. In a broad sense, the maps can be divided into two broad categories: the first category contains maps which are maps of recurring itineraries, listing the places migrants visit frequently; the second category are maps that seem to be drawn by migrants who are explorers and collectors of places. If these maps are representative of the way that migrants live their lives, it seems that some subject the city environment to the needs of their lifestyles – the maps focus on the home, and include shopping, work, and entertainment areas (parks, golf, bars); London is reduced to a small micro-city with selected destinations and landmarks. Others, however, approached the assignment as an opportunity to brag about their knowledge of the city, and the landmarks they have been able to visit and explore. It seems that these “migrants-explorers” are making an effort to take full advantage of the urban setting that in which their migrant choices have placed them, and their daily routine does not only contain the essential elements of daily life, but diversifying this routine is a point of pride for them.

Despite the variation in the approach to producing the images and the variation in the areas of London depicted, in addition to highlighting interesting qualities of the images individually, I would also like to focus on the few themes which I found recurring in some of the 19 maps completed by the interviewees.

First, 12 maps included a fairly specific reference to a place of residence. The reference was either included explicitly in the form of a house icon sometimes accompanied with the word “home”, or a drawing of an apartment building at the center
of the map. The importance of finding residence to improve the migrant experience has been well documented by researchers. Nevertheless, for the group of migrants that participated in the mental map exercise, the majority of whom were Eurostars, selecting the right residence has additional significance in London in terms of prestige and desirability. Several maps either specifically highlighted the location of the migrant’s home in a desirable location (two locations were next to Regent Park in central London, one in Canary Warf), or included indications that the home was close to prestigious districts or locations, for example South Kensington. It is interesting to note, at this point, how many maps actually positioned the home relative to a park. One of the maps included a detailed drawing of a single family home. While references to the geographic location of the home were not included in the map, the drawing emphasized the size of the home and the location of the home among green and mature trees – all extremely desirable and rare amenities in the crowded city. The pride in owning a big house in a rather expensive part of London may be strengthened by the fact that most migrants cannot even afford renting their own apartments in this expensive city. Another migrant drew a map which was primarily focused on her apartment as central place to her life. This particular migrant was very proud of a central location of her apartment as well as a prestigious building which included a security-service and amenities not available for many other renters. As explained in the interview, she was very satisfied with the location and did not mind spending a big portion of her income on rent. By renting in this particular building she believed to possess status not available to many Brits, not mentioning other labor migrants from Poland. Finally, having a home in London
regardless of the specific location may have particular significance to Eurostars motivated by aspirations to belong in the ranks of the global elite. One of the maps depicts a map on which London, home, is just one of several major European cities which are a setting for the life of one of the Eurostars interviewed. On the map, she included places such as: London – her home, work, and university, Zurich, Oslo, and Milan where her friends live, Munich which she considers to be an “amazing city” and where her friends reside as well, and Warsaw as a place to relax; a place where she spends her vacation. This particular young woman had lived in several countries with her parents as a child and attended international schools. Thus, she has many friends who lived in different parts of Europe. Although she considers London to be her home, she treats Warsaw as her second home, a place where she returns to relax, spend time with her family, and visit with relatives. Her map does not represent one central location and all countries depicted on the map seem to be of equal importance. She considers all places to have unique characteristics which she finds important at certain times and she does not believe she could choose one place to live her life in a sense embodying the aspirations of cosmopolitan global elites.

As mentioned previously, in light of the broad variation of perspectives and content present in the mental maps, few trends in migrant responses were identifiable. I would like to focus on two themes depicted on the maps that could be classified into one of the following broad categories: landmarks associated with lifestyle choices, and landmarks related to the migrant situation.
Among landmarks associated with lifestyle choices, many of the maps completed by the Eurostars (majority of the participants in the mental maps exercise) featured locations that, at least in the Polish culture, but also in the urban jungle of London, are places of prestigious activities. Two maps included a reference to a golf course, two others a reference to a tennis club, one included a reference to an equestrian club, and one included a reference to the Wimbledon. I believe that the inclusion of these landmarks is significant, due to the fact that they are present on maps that, otherwise contain little detail. The majority of the maps feature little beyond a place of residence, place of work, shopping area, and bar/club. In my opinion, the inclusion of a golf course on a mental map of London – a facility for playing a sport rarely played but highly revered in Poland - speaks to the aspirational nature of the migrants’ lifestyles, and may further confirm that Poland remains as the cultural and sentimental context for many of the migrants’ lifestyle choices. The Eurostars are not only achieving financial success in London, but also use London as a place to stage behaviors socially desirable not only by global elites, but often admirable particularly among Polish elites. The presence of shopping centers on the mental maps is less striking, as modern shopping centers are a very common feature of the Polish urban landscape. Shopping at the local mall has also become an important pastime for Polish families, and is a common Sunday-afternoon activity for the increasingly commercialized society. While not necessarily indicative from the information contained in the maps, I would like to suggest that shopping in London may have particular significance for migrants. On the one hand, shopping for luxury goods and in luxury shopping malls, similarly to playing golf, is an activity that may be
aspirational in nature for many young, successful migrants from Poland (as it may be for most luxury-goods consumers regardless of nationality). That shopping may extend beyond shopping malls, and also include diverse farmer’s and world-goods markets which, while expensive, literally offer access to goods from around the world not available in cities like Warsaw or Krakow. Purchasing goods in London can be particularly rewarding for Polish migrants who can buy something that is not yet available in Poland. The isolationist nature of communist rule in Poland has trained Poles to appreciate goods available outside of Poland as superior and indicative of a higher social status. For a yuppie from Warsaw who works in a bank in London, flashing the latest accessory from Burberry or a custom-made shirt from a famous tailor in one of Warsaw’s clubs may carry a particularly satisfying sense of achievement. Nevertheless, the significance of shopping for Polish migrants in the UK is not limited to Eurostars and luxury goods. As mentioned earlier, many of the Polish labor migrants have moved to the UK in search for “normality” (see Kozlowska and Galasinska 2009). Part of the normality that they are seeking is earning a wage which allows them to buy common consumer goods which would be out of their price range back in Poland. Thus, for a nurse, waiter, or cleaner, the ability to comfortably save for the desired consumer goods, and in some cases maybe the ability to buy something out of impulse, even if not a luxury item, is a significant lifestyle improvement over their experience in Poland.

Several of the Eurostars also highlighted universities as important landmarks in London. Many of the people whom I interviewed that could be classified as belonging to the global elites started their migrant experiences in London with attending a British
These landmarks are therefore particularly important to the migrants as gateways to their subsequent life in the UK. Interestingly, however, that significance is not only due to the British nature of the universities. In many cases, that significance is also related to the fact that British universities were places where the Eurostars were able to build support networks consisting of other Polish migrants who were relatable, and in that way different than many of the labor migrants coming to London from Poland at the same time.

Largely attributable to the fact that the majority of the mental maps exercise participants were Eurostars, several of the mental maps feature bars and clubs, with one explicitly identifying a place with the label “this is where I play/entertain” (“tu się bawię”). In my interviews with labor migrants, none of them brought up bars are venues that they frequent regularly, and for the group of men from Tooting, attending a bar in central London is not only out of reach due to the cost of drinks, but even due to the cost of public transportation to make it to the city center. For Eurostars, however, attending bars, especially the posh, private, or famous ones is again, an aspirational activity. Artur mentioned that his experience was sensational among his British friends, when he told them he was at a private club sitting at a table next to one attended by Emma Watson. Interestingly, however, bars are another example of venues and features of the mental maps which are difficult to attribute solely to the British experience. As the life of Polish elites becomes increasingly similar to that of global elites, similarly to shopping or golf, it is difficult to decide whether cool nightclubs and bars are significant for migrants due to their experience in the UK, or if they are also an extension of their life from Warsaw,
Krakow, Poznan, or another large Polish city. When analyzing the significance of places like bars in the lives of Eurostars, the real question becomes whether the value that they assign to this place and activity gains additional significance because they perform this activity in London. Like with purchasing luxury goods unavailable in Poland, belonging to a private club in London may be particularly more prestigious than being a member at an elite nightclub in Warsaw.

There are locations featured on several maps which, as opposed to bars or golf courses, are much more easily attributable particularly to the migrant sentiments that many Polish migrants share. Even if these places have a different significance for labor migrants and Eurostars, as I would like to suggest, these locations define the migrant experience.

The first sub-category of locations indicated on the mental-maps are locations of friends, family and support networks. Six participants marked places where their friends and family members live or where they used to live with their friends before moving to their own apartments. The need for support networks is universal among migrants regardless of social class or status. As indicated by one map, certain migrants have extended families who have lived or recently moved and live in London, further blurring the line between London as a migrant destination and London as home.

Seven maps included a specific reference to Polish districts or landmarks in London (Ealing, Acton, Angel Church). These areas may have a different significance for labor migrants and Eurostars. The former either live, or regularly shop, entertain, or work in these districts. Eurostars visit Polish districts with less frequency, but they are still
important for two reasons. First, the Polish populations in these areas define the stereotypical perceptions of Polish migrants in the UK, including the Eurostars. Second, these are still places where they go to get their fix of goods they miss from Poland – poppy seed cake, seasonal items for Christmas or Easter – or where they access services which they perceive as having superior quality (car mechanic, hairstylist, etc.). Nevertheless, as many Eurostars indicated, these visits are visits of customers, not members of a community. The exception to this approach and difference in attitude can be found in the Church. The Catholic Church plays an important cultural and traditional role in Poland. Not all Poles are practicing Catholics, but it is difficult to distinguish between Polish history, tradition, culture and religion. For the Eurostars who are practicing Catholics, Polish churches are a significant location for them to continue not only practicing their religion, but to have access to certain sentiments, cultural events, and services they are used to from Poland (i.e. blessing of the food baskets during Easter). Hence, several maps include an icon of a church, or, specifically, the Polish Church in Angel or Hammersmith.

Another recurring landmark featured on the mental maps which is an essential element of the migrant experience is the airport. Five of the 19 maps included airports. The airports featured included the standard service Heathrow, along with regional, economy service airports such as Stansted or Luton. It is important to emphasize that not all migrants, especially labor migrants, travel to the UK via air. There are multiple alternatives to flying which include private coach providers, and large bus service corporations. Nevertheless, the availability of low-cost air service providers has really
defined the migrant experience, and has become appealing to both labor migrants and Eurostars (see Burell 2011). Several Eurostars, in line with the aspirational nature of their lifestyles, mentioned that when possible, they prefer to fly full-service airlines from Heathrow to enjoy a higher class of service, and also to isolate themselves from the “masses of labor migrants”. Thus, it is difficult not to notice that for many labor migrants air travel has been an aspirational activity, a luxury and attribute of success. For them, Stansted or Luton are places that celebrate their newly-found success. At the same time, airports are gateways to their families left back in Poland, are facilities which they use to transport money and gifts back to their home towns (see Burrell 2011). For Eurostars these same airports, while in some cases offering a similar significance, are more often places offering a cheap weekend escape to party in Warsaw, or, in less extreme examples, an opportunity to lead double lives, Polish and British, or pan-European careers. Flying from Heathrow, and preferably gaining access to the Business/First Class lounge, is the defining aspirational experience.

This difference in the perception can be extended onto other landmarks and urban features on mental maps shared between Eurostars and labor migrants (but also real landmarks and city features discussed during interviews). I would like to emphasize that, unquestionably, many landmarks featured on the mental maps and discussed in interviews are the few places which are shared by both Eurostars and labor migrants from Poland. The previously mentioned Churches, airports, shopping malls, and Polish facilities/venues are not unique to either group. In many of these places, shared Polish sentiments, resulting from shared cultural traditions and upbringing in a communist
reality where many people shared a similarly low economic status bring people together regardless of educational attainment or social class. On the other hand, the most outstanding British features of London, such as museums, tourist sites, parks are other venues which provide similar experiences to all migrants. The migrant experience is also similar in the sense that both Eurostars and labor migrants place a similar emphasis of personal or familial networks, and rely on other migrants especially during the initial stages of their journey. Despite this overlap, as interviews highlighted, shared spaces do not translate into shared perceptions or shared lifestyles. The expense of certain activities pursued by the Eurostars simply places them outside of the realm of availability for labor migrants. One of the maps included a reference to an expensive Polish restaurant “U Kucharzy” – a London location of a similarly designed, fashionable restaurant in Warsaw. Five of the Eurostars mentioned that restaurant in the interviews as one of the few Polish businesses that they support on a regular basis. The restaurant was also mentioned by labor migrants: four of them cited it as a Polish space which they cannot afford to visit, whereas two mentioned it as a location where they celebrate special occasions. These differences in perceptions of locations are, however, deeper than limitations of cost and affordability. London serves a different purpose for labor migrants and the Eurostars, or, maybe at least serves similar purposes at different levels of sophistication. Labor migrants highly value areas of cultural and personal comfort; the former – important in a city filled with foreign cultures and languages; the latter – a product of their pursuit of “normality”. Many of these places may also be aspirational in nature to the labor migrants, even if they seem like ordinary features of big city life. The
migrants from Tooting were happy with their ability to rely on each other to secure jobs in London, but also excited about the possibility of including pizza in their regular diets (both for reasons of affordability and accessibility of Western fast food in remote villages in Poland). For Eurostars London is a setting for staging their global elite aspirations.

Like I mentioned earlier, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish, however, if their aspirations are truly fueled by global elites, or if they are deeply rooted in local aspirations of Warsaw elites. For example, in interview conversations, it became apparent that some of the Eurostars maintained strong connections with their social networks in Poland (both through technology and travel), and what they considered desirable was often described in the context of bragging rights among their friends and family in Warsaw. That said, I would also like to highlight that for other Eurostars, especially those who had lived in London for many years including college or high-school, their perceptions of the significance of landmarks with of a sentimental Polish nature was muted or skewed also because they truly achieved a fair amount of independence from national or regional norms.

As indicated in the interviews, the labor migrants chose their places of residence based on a few factors which often included: referral by other Poles, affordability of rent, proximity to Polish services. Thus they often chose Polish areas of Hammersmith and Ealing as the place of their residence. They commute to work using public transportation such as subway or the bus system.

As reflected in some of the mental maps, and emphasized in interview conversations, the Eurostars chose their places of residence based on the popularity and
affluence of an area as well as proximity to work, and they often chose to either walk or take a quick subway ride to their offices. Thus they prefer to live in the area of Canary Wharf in East London or South Kensington. Labor migrants, while reluctant to draw mental maps, resided mainly in “Polish” districts of London, or chose their residence based on affordability. Considerations regarding prestige or convenience of travel to the worksite were of secondary importance to social support networks and affordability. The differences in living locations were furthermore strengthened when comparing living arrangements among these two migrant groups. At the time of the interview, the Eurostars lived either with their spouses, long term partners, friends from college or on their own. In the interviews they described the importance of privacy, a desirable location, and comfortable living conditions. For example, Patrycja explained that in Poland she could be living in a beautiful house which almost resembles a palace; the thought of grand real estate at home makes it easier for her to compromise to live in a small apartment in London, but for her it has to be at least be located in a desirable location to make up for the lack of space she would otherwise have living in Poland.

Anna, Robert, Artur, and Marek all rented their own apartments which were located closely to their workplace. They previously rented apartments with roommates who were their college classmates, but soon after securing jobs, they decided to live on their own. Other Eurostars (Urszula, Andrzej, Tomek, Monika, and Franciszek) enjoy their experience of living with roommates and still share accommodations with the people with whom they shared their first flats; as their financial situation improved they simply upgraded apartments to larger and more prestigious locations. Natalia, Monika, Grzegorz,
Karolina live with their spouses/partners in their own apartments selected based on the apartments’ location, proximity to parks and other amenities.

My interviews also included Daria and Iwona – two women who migrated to London in the 1980s to escape the economic, political, and social perils of communist Poland. Their spouses and the two interviewed women both work in professional occupations in London and are both home owners. Daria, the owner of a big house in one of the more desirable Polish districts of London, explained that she can only afford this home because her husband was able to secure a well-paid position with one of the banks in London. Daria shares her home with her husband and two children. Although her home is located in a good neighborhood, Daria had chosen to send her children to a private school. Her desire is for her children to attend a school with a predominantly British student population as opposed to a public school in which classes are composed mainly of immigrant children, Poles included. She believes that in order for her children to be successful in the UK, she needs to provide every opportunity for them to socialize with Brits rather than other immigrants. Iwona is also an example of a successful Polish woman in London. She decided to purchase a small apartment in central London. Although very small, it offers her and her family an excellent location and access to one of the most desirable areas in London. Iwona’s daughter attended a public school in the neighborhood, graduated from university, and at the time of the interview was working as an intern with a big multinational corporation.

Indicative of the fact that many labor migrants cannot afford renting their own living space in London, the labor migrants whom I interviewed all shared their
apartments with roommates. The women who arrived to London with their children shared the fact that they are receiving housing assistance from the British government. At the time of the interview, Alina and Monika, who had young children, lived in social housing provided to them by the government but also recounted their past experience of living in crowded apartments that they had shared with other Polish migrants. They spent a significant portion of our interview complaining about the various issues they faced while sharing the living space with other migrants. For example, Monika shared that when she first arrived with her daughter to London she shared her apartment with two Polish families but quickly realized that she needs to move out and find her own place in order to comfortably live in London. She was very dissatisfied with the conditions of her first apartment and with the behaviors of her roommates. She especially did not like the language the men used around her daughter but she also felt cheated by her roommates. As an example she mentioned that every time she bought ham to make sandwiches for her daughter someone from the household always consumed it before she had the opportunity to use it for a meal for her child. Tired of a variety of roommate issues, she found another Polish female migrant and the two women now share an apartment. Both women have children.

Roommate issues also arise within families. It is not uncommon for migrants to join their siblings and share houses and apartments with them in order to save on rent. All migrants who chose this option admitted that they believed that sharing a house with their family members will allow them not only to save money but also to be safer and more comfortable than living on their own or with strangers. All migrants listed similar
perceived benefits of living with family members: safety, avoidance of theft, linguistic and medical assistance in times of distress, etc. All migrants also shared that their expectations did not meet the reality and that living with family members turned out to be a source of complex conflicts which often escalated and spread across the entire family, including those members who remained in Poland. Kasia admitted that living with her boyfriend Lukasz and his sister and her family has been more challenging than she had ever thought. She especially did not like the gossips and spying on her shopping and spending habits by her future sister in law. The conflict between the two young families reached a point where they are considering voiding their roommate agreement.

Separating from roommates is not uncommon especially after a few years of living in such arrangements. When migrants save some money, become familiar with the city and neighborhoods, and a variety of governmental programs they often choose to live on their own. For example, Michal and Magda tired of conflicts with Magda’s brother and his wife decided to rent their own flat. At the time of the interview, the young couple was moving out to a small town just outside of London. They believed that by moving to a smaller town they will be able to rent their own apartment and lead a more comfortable life.

The relationships between Polish migrant roommates are not always negative as conversations with eight of the participants of my study indicated. For these migrants, living with other Poles is the only way they can survive and exist in an English-speaking city. For example a group of young men I interviewed in Tooting said that only one of them speaks basic English so he is their only translator and without him their lives in
London would be very challenging. For others, the relationships they establish with their roommates fill the void left by reduced family interactions. Monika, for example, indicated that even though she would prefer to live with her boyfriend Michal she credits her roommates with making her British experience more pleasant and she feels they are like her family members whom she can rely on. Bartek and Marzena also shared that they enjoy living with another Polish couple. Although during the average workday they are all too busy for any real interaction, on a day free from work, the two couples grill food together and watch movies allowing them to enjoy social interactions that do not require a lot of effort or planning. Agnieszka and Marta shared a similar perspective on living with roommates. The two young women believe that their Polish roommates guarantee safety which otherwise could be questionable.

As the stories of Polish migrants to London indicate, the needs of migrants are often universal and Eastern European migrants seek support of one another regardless of national origin. Krzysztof rents a room with another immigrant who came to the UK from Romania. Both men have a good relationship and they became good friends.

5.4 Challenging traditional class dynamics within global cities

During my interviews with the Polish migrants to the UK, specifically those who came to London to work in service-sector jobs (“Labor Migrants”), I was told numerous stories and perspectives on their experiences in London which, when taken cumulatively, inspired me to challenge the traditional perception of a global-city as a setting for the
exploitation of working classes by global-elites. Abu-Lughod (2000), Clark (2003), Sassen (2001, 2005) and others portray the polarization of global cities not only in terms of incomes but also in special divisions. The London of global elites is not necessarily the London for labor migrants. Furthermore, highly compensated elites are often portrayed as taking advantage of cheap and highly competing providers of labor services relying on traditional class divisions and income inequalities. While the contrast between spatially isolated, underpaid migrants and glamorous global elites is definitely visible in London, my interviews have allowed me to explore the complexity of these relationships that may be challenging these traditional portrayals of class divisions and pointing to newly emerging, less-rigid class delineations within global cities.

First, in my interviews with female labor migrants, particularly those who have moved to London to escape domestic abuse, it became evident that the social norms present in this global city have enabled them to improve their lives. Along with that statement, I would like to highlight that I am aware of the fact that domestic abuse in all probability still occurs within migrant and non-migrant households in the UK. Nevertheless, the refuge for these women was not only a function of the fact that they moved far away from their abusers, but also a function of London’s status as a global city. These women were able to achieve independence from their abusers because, first, they had the opportunity to move to a city with a vast network of migrants from a similar cultural background, which provided a support network that made the move possible. Second, London as a Western city, but also one characterized by a culture of global elites, provides fairly equal employment and compensation opportunities to women. These
migrants were thus not only able to move to London, but also secure jobs that allow them to lead lives independent of their abusive spouses – a status achievable but much more difficult to pursue in Poland.

Second, many of the labor migrants interviewed, while concentrated in areas of London characterized by a large proportion of other migrants from Eastern Europe still enjoyed and took advantage of certain amenities which are available to London residents largely because of London’s global status. Krzysztof, a transporter at a hospital, specifically stated that he enjoys living in London because the street culture and multicultural ambiance of the city reminds him of New York. Monika indicated that she tries to take her daughter to as many internationally-renowned museums as possible, and she can do that because most of them are free to visitors. Karolina and Anna both stated that they attend theatrical shows organized by Polish cultural centers – venues which can only be supported by large migrant populations such as those found in global cities.

Finally, in contrast to the populist perception of the relationship between global elites and labor migrants as one where global elites exploit the availability of cheap labor from their unskilled national counterparts, I could not ignore the impression that in some cases, exploitation also occurs in reverse (i.e. “reverse exploitation”). This occurs in situations where labor migrants consciously target national sentiments of global elites to expand their customer base or develop and grow nationally-targeted businesses or services. I did not have the opportunity to explore the origin and ownership status of the countless companies offering travel, package, and money-transfer services to Polish migrants in London. Many of these services are, of course, used by other low-skilled
migrants, and do not necessarily target Polish professionals working in banks, but I am sure they also benefit from their support. Nevertheless, I encountered certain specific examples of conscious marketing to Polish elites by using the elites’ sentiment to the quality or specific characteristics of Polish goods. In my interview with Artur, a doctor at a hospital in London, he described using the services of Polish cleaning ladies to clean his apartment. As part of the justification for using Polish cleaners specifically, he mentioned, although their services are not cheaper than corporate cleaning offerings, his mother recommended that he hire Polish cleaners because she believed that the quality of their service is superior to others. Interestingly, in my interviews with Polish labor migrants working in the janitorial sector, they mentioned that they advertise to Polish doctors and health care workers in hospitals as a channel to generate business. A similar national sentiment is present among Polish Eurostars with regard to food, hair services, plumbing and carpentry, car maintenance and other areas. They frequently rely on Polish service providers not because their services are less expensive than those offered by British counterparts (although that may be the case in some instances), but specifically because of a perceived superior quality of the service or due to its uniqueness (for example: taste of baked goods or dishes). The labor migrants seem to be aware of this preference, and targeted advertising, such as the cleaners advertising to doctors is prevalent. As another example, I encountered a Polish hair stylist advertising at the top universities in London, and learned from Tomek, a Polish PhD student at a university in London that he only cuts his hair at a Polish hair salon that he learned about from a bulletin ad at school.
5.5 Poles in the UK: Challenges and Struggles

The diversity of reasons for migration, individual migrant characteristics and social capital translate into complex migrant experiences. The increasing Polish population in the UK demonstrates that for many the migratory journey has been successful and rewarding. Nevertheless, for others, settling in the UK is more challenging. Several researchers have highlighted some of the challenges resulting from Polish migration to the UK, particularly relevant to service-sector labor migrants.

Starkey (2008) reports that some of the new Central European migrants are not capable of establishing lives in the United Kingdom. He draws attention to the struggles that some of the migrants face. Some do not only struggle with finding employment but they arrive to London without previously securing any type of accommodation which virtually puts those migrants in a position of homelessness. Moreover, Starkey (2008) also reports that some Polish migrants have alcohol problems which, combined with the lack of employment and accommodation, becomes a serious burden on the British welfare system.

Iglicka (2009) points out that most of the Polish migrants are young and many of them are relatively well educated, often holding college degrees. The age and education would make Poles attractive employees if not the fact that they often lack the ability to speak fluent English. Consequently, many of the young, ambitious and educated Poles are underemployed in London. They occupy blue collar jobs thus losing their credentials and an opportunity for professional development. As Iglicka (2009) warns Polish
immigration in London is part of a brain waste as the migrants will be unemployable in the areas of their education few years from now.

Some of these struggles became evident in my interviews. The most striking example was provided by Andrzej, who dropped out of university in Poland due to a financial crisis in his family and the need to provide support. Although his financial situation had improved and he is able to assist his parents, Andrzej’s story is filled with personal frustration. He expressed the desire to pursue college and a professional career. He recounted the disappointment he could not overcome when he realized that that higher education in Poland is advertised as free but actual cost estimates does not account for rising living costs in a big city and the limited, unsustainable governmental assistance for students who come from smaller towns. He emigrated without a plan of what he would like to gain out of his emigration, and without any understanding of the British reality. Consequently, the quality of his life has not advanced in the last three years since arriving in the UK, and, without more training or education, he feels he is left without any opportunities for further success, whether financial, educational, or social. He maintains a close watch on all news related to Poland, hoping to see information which would offer him a promising prospect of securing employment closer to home.

Roman, who emigrated to the UK to escape a jail sentence, is also struggling with longing for home. His limited English skills do not offer him an opportunity to pursue better employment opportunities. At the same time, due to the fact that his legal situation was never resolved, Roman is unable to visit his parents in Poland, making him long for
home and his family. While he sends packages to his family in Poland, he asks friends to put their names and address on the package.

Migrant struggles, however, are not always related to severe challenges. Sometimes, they are simply rooted in a lack of satisfaction with the opportunities available, or the pace of personal growth. At the time of the interview, Artur had completed university, and worked as a physician in one of the London’s hospitals. Nevertheless, he was not satisfied with career prospects in the UK, and was researching the possibility of moving to another country where physicians receive higher compensation and a shorter specialization track.

It is important to remember that challenges and struggles related to migration do not affect migrants alone. The sheer number of people who have emigrated from Poland has also had an effect on families. These consequences have been widely discussed by popular media in Poland (Gazeta Wyborcza, Zwierciadlo) and, among others, describe the experiences of families separated when parents emigrate from Poland to secure a better financial situation for their children left behind in Poland with members of the extended family. This situation, leads to the creation of “euro-orphans”. Markowski (2008), in his article for a daily newspaper, claims there are 110 thousand Polish Euro-orphans – children left in Poland with grandparents or family members by parents who moved to the UK for an indefinite period of time. Nowak (2011) warns parents against potential consequences of leaving their children in Poland without parental involvement.
6.1 Introduction

As I have indicated previously, the traditional migrant experience is one where physical distance places a person in a new environment where he or she needs to not only learn a new existence, but also to stage their national and personal identity by recreating qualities of their life from home (see Burrell 2008, Burrell 2011, Kusek and Wise 2013). A large component of recreating a feeling of home relies on actually maintaining a connection with home.

Previous chapters have highlighted the profiles, stories, and experiences of Polish migrants to the UK from a broad spectrum of social classes, representing a varied educational attainment, and highly differing and personal reasons for migration. Despite this variation, as it will be explored further in this chapter, all migrants identified strong reasons for maintaining a connection with their homeland that include family, personal, economic, cultural, and even patriotic considerations. For many migrants, maintaining connections with the homeland is also part of the new migrant experience that eases settling into place, and provides for certain continuity. Most importantly, maintaining a connection with home is fueled by the fact that many migrants are not sure about the long-term duration of their migration. Even those who express strong desires to return to
the homeland or maintain a migrant lifestyle often point to complicating factors that may impact their decision. Thus, maintaining a connection with home is also a back-door to enabling a potential, even if highly undesired return. In today’s environment, maintaining that connection is particularly easy thanks to the accessibility of modern communication technology.

The extent and intensity of technology reliance by post-2004 Polish migrants to the UK is in sharp contrast to previous migration waves. Technology enables these migrants to seek emotional support through transnational communications (Kelly and Lusis 2006). Ryan et. al (2008) provide an example of a man who stays in a close touch with his mother in Poland receiving emotional support from her rather than from his friends that he has in London. Friends and relatives in Poland also serve as lynchpins (Williams 2006) for passing information to migrants so they are aware of what is happening at home. As Ryan et. al (2008) realize “new technology facilitates the continuity of transnational networks and many participants maintain close and regular links with Poland”. Following Madianou and Miller’s (2012) discovery that migrants use a multiple media to maintain diasporic networks with their homelands my study confirms that today’s Polish migrants also rely on a variety of technological innovations not only to connect with their families in Poland but also to establish new friendships in the United Kingdom, gain information about the host country, to find employment, or even to purchase items not available in London.
6.2 Growing the Diaspora: Future plans of the interviewed migrants

As it will be explored further in this section, the interviewed migrants expressed varying sentiments with regard to a permanent stay in the UK, returning to Poland, or moving to another country. Interestingly, while often impacted by longing for home or personal networks, labor migrants seemed generally much more likely to continue long-term, indefinite migration to the UK. Eurostars on the other hand, demonstrated a much more conflicted approach to their future plans. Despite this variation, both groups demonstrated a strong commitment to using modern technology to communicate with Poland, even if, to a large extent, that commitment was a result of continuing the technology usage routines they acquired in Poland.

6.2.1 Future plans of labor migrants

The academic community has been debating if the migratory movements of Poles after 2004 are long terms relocations or only a short term experiences. Burrell states: “if the reasons for migrating are fairly clear, the longer–term intentions of the migrants are less so.” (Burrell 2010, p.299). She also cites Fihel et al (2006) and Ruhs (2006) who report that it is difficult to assess if the migratory movements are temporary or permanent. Not all labor migrants whom I interviewed shared their future plans but to date my research indicates that although Poles often arrive to the UK with a definite plan to return to Poland, their perceptions on Poland change over time, and their willingness to
return to Poland decreases along with an increase in the awareness of low chances for a realistic, tangible opportunity in Poland.

Monika’s motivation to return to Krakow is her disabled sister. Although Monika feels comfortable in London she has a lot of regrets about not being able to help her parents with her mentally disabled sister. Monika came to London with her boyfriend Michal who is a chef in a British restaurant. They rent a house with 4 other Polish male migrants. Monika is very happy with Michal’s job because he makes significantly more than she does. He is well respected for his professional skills and is one day planning to open his own restaurant in London which translates to his definite desire to permanently stay in London. Monika, although very happy in their relationship, is, on the one hand, hoping for him to change his mind about staying in London, but admits that the chances for return to Poland are very low. To compensate for this lack of certainty, Monika stays in close communication with her sister and family in Poland, and uses the Internet to follow Polish TV programs, cultural events, and gossip.

Ania and Tomek, during the 7 year period they have been in London, made several attempts to return to Poland. Every time, they were unable to find jobs in Poland which would pay them enough money to be able to afford a monthly payment for a desired apartment, and allow them to live a stable life in Gdansk. The down payment that they had been saving for, never grew to the number they had initially hoped for and their families stopped asking when they will return to Poland. “London is not [..] their place on Earth” as they say, but for now it is the only place that allows them to live relatively
stable lives. On a daily basis, they are consumed by their lives in the UK, but spend a large portion of each weekend calling relatives at home, reading Polish news, watching Polish TV shows, or visiting Polish stores to purchase goods that remind them of home. They stay in touch with friends in Poland, and plan vacation travel to Polish destinations. Tomek works as a waiter at a franchised restaurant chain and fairly enjoys his job. He is aware of the fact that it is only a short-term job but the tips are high, and he can afford purchasing the basic items that he needs. Ania graduated from a two-year college with a degree in cosmetology. She works as a nail technician in a small salon outside of London. Although the young couple does not make a lot of money, they are able to save enough to travel internationally for vacation once a year. Last summer, they spent a week in the Spanish island of Majorca – a trip they would not be able to afford on a regular Polish salary. They also try to visit Poland at least once a year, and closely stay in touch with their families. Similarly to Ania and Tomek, the other two couples whom I interviewed: Kasia with Lukasz and Bartek with Marzena are satisfied with the opportunities that the UK presents and now call London home. Poland remains a sentimental place that they visit for entertainment, and where they have families, friends, and where they can celebrate familiar traditions.

Andrzej stated that his situation does not allow him to return to Poland. He still assists his parents financially through sending remittances without which they would be unable to purchase prescribed medications. The cost of life in Poland has been steadily increasing, leaving people like his parents in a situation where they strongly rely on monthly remittances sent from their children abroad. Andrzej does not think he will ever
be able to return to Poland and he is very motivated to look for a better job in London.

Although Marcin – Andrzej’s roommate - owns property in Poland, he is also unsure if he will be able to return to Poland and lead a normal life after his parent’s death. His plan is to sell the apartment in Poland and purchase a small place in the UK which will be present certain difficulty in the expensive British real estate market. Marcin’s roommate, Roman who has been avoiding a legal situation in Poland, believes that he has made the best out of the difficult situation he had found himself. He realizes that the legal threat will expire in a few years and he will be able to legally return to Poland. He is unsure what kind of a job he would be able to obtain after his return, but he also struggles to define a future for himself in the UK. During the first year in London, Roman and his roommates were excited by the opportunities that London had to offer and were satisfied with the jobs they were able to secure. They work in a restaurant as cook’s assistants, they work 10 hour night shifts six days a week. They are satisfied with their opportunities, but begin to notice the lack of time for personal interactions, the long commutes to work, long shifts, and their night schedules which limit the opportunity to meet other people. They support each other emotionally but they long for stable relationships. For Roman and his roommates, the biggest obstacle to progress in the British society seems to be the lack of ability to communicate in English. This also pushes them to rely on Polish services, goods, and media on a regular basis. At the apartment that they rent only Andrzej speaks basic English. The lack of linguistic abilities seriously limits the lifestyles possibilities of the migrants, the opportunities for better employment, and simple every day interaction with the British society. Despite this
limitation, when pressed for a decision, they all declare they are planning to stay in the UK.

Alina and Jolanta admit that they miss Poland very much and would like to retire there. At the same time, both women are aware of the fact that their children will not return to Poland. Jolanta’s daughter would like Jolanta to move in with her once she gets married and has her own children to help raise the grandchildren. Jolanta, like many other Polish female migrants in the UK is slowly becoming comfortable with the idea of staying in London permanently. Alina is also beginning to accept this idea. She is convinced she does not want to live far from her children yet she knows they will not return to Poland. Both women have spent such significant portions of their lives in Poland, that Polish news, services, and goods are a source of comfort for them, and they are excited about the opportunity to blend their British lifestyles with the ability to maintain a connection with home. Monika is very proud of her daughter’s success at the British school and she strongly believes she should stay in the UK to give her daughter the best educational opportunities she can. The women, similarly to the three male migrants described above, see their lack of linguistic skills as the biggest obstacle to their permanent stay in the UK and their social progress.

As mentioned previously, Agnieszka, who migrated to the UK due to lack of acceptance of her homosexuality in Poland, expressed a personal comfort with the British culture, but also at the local level – with the city of Brighton. She claims she has found her place on Earth and does not foresee returning to Poland in the future.
6.2.2 Future Plans of the Eurostars

The future plans of the interviewed Eurostars point to a dichotomy between pursuing or continuing successful careers in the UK and the desire to launch or continue successful family businesses in Poland. The dichotomy is also found in the nature of their connections with home – on the one hand they pursue global and international lifestyles and activities, but on the other Poland continues to serve as a point of cultural reference, and many of them are rediscovering qualities of their homeland they did not appreciate before migrating. Maybe it is in that dichotomy where one can find the true concept of Eurostars – those who lead lives beyond traditional European borders. Robert, Patrycja, Franciszek, and Marek expressed the willingness to return to Poland. At the time of the interview Robert and Franciszek, had already established businesses in Poland and were planning to return to Warsaw to focus on developing their business ideas. Patrycja and Marek are torn between their comfortable lives in the UK and their parents’ expectations to return home to take over family businesses which are relatively lucrative ventures. The two young Poles plan to stay in the UK until they get married and start families, planning to return to Poland at a more mature stage in their life to take over their parents’ businesses and have their parents serve as full-time grandparents for their future children.

Others are adjusting their plans to accommodate more international lifestyles that include the association and connections with more than one country. Andrzej and his Greek girlfriend hope to afford small summer homes in both countries so their future children can learn about the cultures of both countries and speak Polish and Greek
fluently. Tomek, a graduate student, hopes to extend his research project to include Poland in the scope of his work, thus allowing him to spend a few months per year in Poland. Anna is already leveraging her transportation business to lead a transnational lifestyle, maintaining two apartments – one in Poland and one in the UK.

A certain group of Eurostars maintains a strong Polish sentiment, but is driven to find their own path, independence, and career beyond the restrictions of national or EU borders. Natalia, Monika, and Urszula treat London as their home and Poland as a place with a lot of sentiment and a wonderful place to visit during the holiday season. Nevertheless, similarly to Artur, they are considering moving to another country to further advance their careers. They like London, appreciate the knowledge and experience they acquired in this global city but they do not believe they could spend their wholes lives in the UK. At the same time, Poland does not seem like an attractive option at the time, so they plan to find opportunities in other countries.

6.3 Maintaining connections with Poland via leveraging the Polish diaspora in London

The high influx of Poles to London not only brought many workers and professionals to this global city but also enriched the existing network of venues, organizations, and activities available to migrants to strengthen and maintain their national identity. Although there are hundreds of organizations of virtually every imaginable type, including professional associations, social clubs, leisure agencies, and
many more, I would like to focus on a few that the participants of my study specifically mentioned.

The Polish Social and Cultural Association (POSK), based on a mission calling for it to “serve the entire Polish Community, facilitate the retention and development of each individuals' sense of national identity” is a key organization for many Polish migrants and also provides support to researchers like myself. The organization was references by 30 of my interview and study participants, in a variety of contexts. The migrants also commented on the fact that they attend a variety of music concerts and performances of artistic groups which POSK hosts on a regular basis. The organization also hosts events focusing on the phenomenon of Polish migration itself. During my first trip to London, I visited a gallery for an exhibition on the artistic perceptions of Polish migrants to the UK – a collection of posters depicting how Poland-based artists but also relatives and friends of Polish migrants to the UK viewed problems, issues, and the nature of Polish migration to the UK. In addition to raising my awareness of issues which I explore in my dissertation work, this exhibition itself led to a focused publication (see Kusek and Wise 2013). Although this dissertation does not discuss the images I collected and analyzed in this co-authored article, the work enabled me to gain understanding of labor migrants, the perceptions they create, and issues they face in the United Kingdom. This enriched my own understanding of this group of migrants and helped me to prepare questions which I used in interviews during the two remaining visits to London.
Migrants also complemented the Polish Centre Club which hosts a licensed bar and restaurant that serves traditional Polish food. Thus, it adds to the broad variety of Polish bars, restaurants, diners, and gourmet eateries available to Poles and the broader London community.

Migrants can also leverage dedicated cultural venues in their quest to maintain ties to Poland and the Polish culture. The Syrena Theatre (eng. Mermaid Theatre, note: a mermaid serves as the mascot of Warsaw) serves as a very important place for Polish mothers whose goal is to familiarize their children with Polish culture. The theatre “stages productions of classic children’s literature, in Polish, involving children from Polish Saturday schools around the UK and professional actors”. Karolina also commented on the importance of making new friends with other Polish mothers and their children. She finds this theatre one of the most important developmental spots in London.

Older migrants commented on the importance of the POSK Polish Library which “is a research library specializing in the collection of Polonica, especially Polish émigré publications of all kinds: books, periodicals and newspapers as well as archives, manuscripts and photographs” (POSK library website). One of the participants shared that she visits this library not only to educate herself about the Polish history but also to meet people with similar interests to hers. Venues like this can also provide invaluable networking opportunities where Polish migrants can meet others and develop support relationships.
The broad and extensive availability of Polish cultural outlets is further
demonstrated by the activity of The Scena Poetycka (eng. Poet's Stage). It "is the most
recognized and popular theatre group performing within the Polish community in London
today” (Scena Poetycka website). Anna often purchases tickets for her sister and her
friends as birthday and occasional gifts. Migrants also mentioned visiting the Jazz Café
POSK on Saturday nights to stay current with the Polish Jazz music.

In addition to cultural, stimulating, and varied offerings available to Polish
migrants in London, it is difficult to discount the significance of the broadly accessible
network of retailers who provide migrants with access to Polish goods, newspapers,
magazines, and regional delicacies. The stores are widely spread in the districts of Ealing
and Hammersmith, but even the British international chain Tesco carries a fairly
extensive list of Polish products which range from dairy products and juices, to specialty
alcohol and seasonal items that can be used in traditional Polish celebrations.

6.4 Maintaining connections with Poland via modern communication technology

As I have discovered via interviews and participant observations, the first way
that migrants use technology to maintain connections with homeland is to use it as a
source of information and news to maintain awareness about political, economic, social,
and personal developments in Poland. That information is sourced from countless online
news portals. In my conversations with migrants, I asked them to list Polish websites they
frequently use. The most popular ones were gazeta.pl (8 migrants), wp.pl (7 migrants)
and onet.pl (9 migrants). Nevertheless, reflective of the diversity of information available online, the 35 migrants that I interviewed also mentioned using a social-gossip site pudelek.pl (6 migrants), a business-oriented news and information portal puls biznesu.pl (5 migrants), as well as regional news portals representing individual polish cities and regions, for example epoznan.pl (2 migrants) and Warszawa.pl (5 migrants).

It is important to point out that access to the Internet among Polish migrants is not limited to a personal computer. Fifteen of the migrants interviewed owned a smart phone, and while I did not inquire specifically about other devices, seven of the migrants I interviewed either mentioned having or brought a tablet computer with them to the interview. For many of the migrants interviewed, the phone had a double significance in reference to maintaining connections with the homeland. The first is more obvious – in addition to multimedia capabilities, the phone allows them to call and receive calls from relatives in Poland and their social network in the UK. Secondly, twenty-one migrants mentioned that they either own a second phone that is tied to a Polish mobile number, or that they carry a second SIM card from a Polish mobile phone provider allowing them to maintain a practical and symbolic connection to Poland.

In the modern age where Internet streaming services and satellite television dissipate the meaning of distance, information and news are also freely gathered by migrants from Polish TV and radio stations that they can easily access in the UK. Eight of the interviewees mentioned that they watch a Polish 24 hour news network daily, four migrants had access to a variety of Polish TV stations, and twelve migrants indicated that
they stream and listed to popular Polish news and music radio stations (Radio Zet and RMF FM).

The Internet also serves as a resource for migrants to participate in the Polish consumer market. Five migrants mentioned that they visit the Polish ebay equivalent allegro.pl to either purchase or sell items online, and three migrants frequently use an online flower store pocztakwiatowa.pl to purchase flowers for their relatives in Poland that are celebrating special occasions. Four migrants also mentioned that they use the Internet to purchase Polish books and reading materials not available in the UK.

Social media like facebook.com or youtube.com have dramatically reshaped the migrants’ ability to organize themselves, to maintain relations with their homelands, and to, practically, lead trans-border lives. Out of the 35 migrants that I interviewed 26 maintained an active Facebook account and used it to post updates about their life for their friends and family, but also to stay appraised about the lives of their social network in the UK and back in Poland. Youtube also serves an interesting purpose for the migrants. Three migrants mentioned that they use youtube.com in order to acquaint their children with Polish songs, cartoons, and art from their own childhood. Youtube is also a source for Polish seasonal music, like Christmas carols, that migrants play during family celebrations in the UK.

In the context of technology, and the previously mentioned concept of ‘media ecology’ (Slater and Tacchi 2004), I would also like to highlight airplane travel as a resource that migrants use to maintain connections with their homelands. While airplanes
are not a novelty for 21st century migrants, the availability of cheap airline providers, facilitated by Internet last-minute fare sales and alerts have made air travel accessible to a much broader group of migrants than ever before. Ryanair, the Irish cheap airline provider, alongside WizzAir, Aer Lingus, and even the full-service Polish LOT offer countless connections between Poland and the UK. The airplane has become incorporated into the lives of Polish migrants, which is also reflected in interview responses. Twelve migrants travel home at least once a year, fourteen flew to Poland at least twice in one year, six visited Poland three or more times in one year, and only three migrants remained in the UK.

It is also difficult to ignore the most important breakthrough in communication technology that has successfully bridged the distance gap between migrants and their homelands – VOIP service such as Skype or Facetime. Skype offers free voice and video calls between computers and devices that have installed Skype, but also enables pay-per-minute and subscription based calls to mobile and landline phones from around the world (Skype.com). Facetime, a video and voice calling service pre-installed on many Apple devices including the iPhone, offers similar functionality. There are also other options including Google hangouts, and Polish made communicators like gadugadu.pl. The main advantage of these communicators is that they have addressed issues with the cost and inconvenience of the phone. While using Skype-type services is not equally convenient between countries with a low multimedia infrastructure, most of the migrants I interviewed use Skype daily, frequently, and share connections with both young and older family members in Poland.
As outlined above, cumulatively, the 35 interviews with Polish migrants to the UK allowed me to explore several patterns of technology usage by the migrants. Nevertheless, like I mentioned in previous sections of this work, in my opinion, generalizations take away from the significance and complexity of the migrant experience. Consequently, I would like to highlight several personal stories of how migrants use technology in their daily lives, and what significance it has in their ability to maintain a relationship with their homeland, to stage their national identity in the UK, and to create a blend between their Polish backgrounds and English reality.

6.4.1 Usage of smartphones / cell phones

All of the interviewed migrants owned cell phones, without access to a land-line. The more affluent migrants bragged about owning the newest models of smartphones. Fourteen participants indicated that they frequently use the ‘Facetime’ platform to video-talk with their relatives, explaining that they like the fact that it is seamlessly integrated into their phone, without the need for their relatives to be “online” at a computer. The male interview participants pointed out that they mainly use ‘Facetime’ to connect with their mothers on the weekends to briefly exchange family updates and professional news. The men claimed their ‘Facetime’ calls are rather quick. On the other hand, female migrants use the same platform more often and for a more extensive time. They use it to recreate the same activities they had performed with their family members when they lived at home. For example, Patrycja shared that she uses ‘Facetime’ every day to talk to
her mother who is a business owner in Poland. They spend at least 30 minutes each evening to update each other on the events they experienced during the day. On the weekend, Patrycja goes out shopping and often calls her mom to show her the items she is considering to buy over the phone. The two women discuss purchases, share advice, comment on pricing. In fact, Patrycja feels like she and her mother go shopping together just like she used to do it with her mother in Poland.

Anna loves cooking and she recalls frequently cooking with her mother and grandmother when she lived in Poland. One of the activities that she really missed when she moved to London was the cooking time she had shared with her family members. She convinced her mother to purchase an iPad and all three women arrange ‘cooking dates’ every other Saturday. This way, the three women share recipes, share information about the activities they performed during the past couple of weeks, and they stay connected by closely recreating the activity they all enjoyed when Anna still lived in Poland. Anna also shared that during important family gatherings such as birthday or namesday celebrations, her mother uses the iPad to allow Anna to participate in the celebrations as well.

Karolina and Anna, two sisters, bought an iPad for their parents for Christmas. The iPad enables their young children to interact with the grandparents. Both women believe that their children learn Polish from their grandparents and that the grandparents actively participate in the upbringing of their grandchildren. Karolina expressed her satisfaction with the fact that her daughter knows many Polish songs which her father
sings to her via the iPad. The iPad also serves as a virtual babysitter. When Anna visits her sister Karolina, and the two sisters feel like they would like to spend some time one-on-one without distractions resulting from the children’s playtime, the women connect their children with the grandparents in Poland via the iPad and the grandparents tell stories, read books, and virtually babysit while the two young mothers chat sharing a cup of coffee.

6.4.2 Online Forums

Online forums are a more archaic form of communicating when comparing to Facebook, nevertheless, they allow people to gather around subject-specific topics of interest, transcending social status, education, or gender. There are two main types of forums that were mentioned by the interviewed migrants that I would like to highlight here. The first type, often focused on the Polish migrant community, provides the ability for people to discuss subjects related to migration, or share tips on improving their migrant life. Marzena, Monika, and Karolina mentioned using “Polacy.co.uk”. The forum provides a broad range of discussion groups, but some of the include “Emigrating Moms”, “Pregnancy in the UK”, and “Finding Love in the UK”, etc. These forums provide an ability for Polish migrants to strengthen and support their national identity, but also create a new setting for Polish migrants to explore and define their hybrid identity – one of a Polish migrant but also a British community member.
On the other hand, Artur mentioned frequently using a specialized forum – Skyscrapercity.com – an international website for people passionate about urban planning and city development. Despite a lack of urban-planning passion, Artur mainly uses one of the forum’s sub-topics to track construction and development projects in his home city in Poland. The forum-members meticulously describe, photograph, and visit current and proposed investment sites for future buildings in the city, allowing Artur to stay current on how his city is changing and growing. Artur also mentioned that his friend, Maciej, regularly visits and posts on a computer equipment forum he knows from Poland. While
the subject is not necessarily associated with Poland, the forum itself is Polish, and allows Maciej to continue the hobby he started when he still lived in Poland.

Figure 6.2 - Skyscraper City – an international forum with a sub-section dedicated to Poland, and updates about new developments and construction projects in Polish cities like Poznan; http://www.skyscraper.city/showthread.php?t=536458&page=389

6.4.3 Facebook

As I mentioned previously, Facebook was a very popular social network among the participants of my study. Twenty six out of thirty five participants maintained an active Facebook account with only the oldest interviewees without a Facebook presence. Twenty one of the interviewees estimated that they check their accounts at least once a day. Interestingly, when asked about the purpose maintaining a Facebook account, only
five migrants specified that they use Facebook intentionally to maintain relationships with their family members in Poland. Marzena said that Facebook is very important to her because this is the only way she can share her British life with her friends who remain in Poland. She regularly posts pictures of places she visited, items she purchased, or new friends she met in London. Marzena also admits that she regularly posts events from her life to let her family and friends know how her day looks like.

Kasia believes that Facebook enables her to create an image of a successful migrant. She comes from a small and very poor village where everyone gossips about everyone else’s life. She posts many pictures of her life in London so her friends from school tell their parents and others in the village how successful she has become. When Kasia visits her village she often hears from neighbors that they saw her new coat or a piece of furniture she recently purchased on Facebook. She creates the image of a successful young woman in order to make her parents proud and satisfied, but also to provide further motivation for her continued separation from home.

One of the young female migrants said that she posts pictures of her children on Facebook so her family can see her children grow up which makes her feel more connected to the family who remains in Poland. When she visits Poland during holidays her children feel comfortable around their cousins because they know them from Facebook.

Marcin admitted that he uses Facebook to show off in front of his Polish friends. He often posts messages that inform his friends in Poland about the recent purchases he
was able to make, or about exciting places he was able to visit. He uses Facebook as a platform to visualize his success and he even admitted that sometimes he fakes certain events in his life so his life seems to be more attractive than it is in reality. Marcin also shared with me that he accepts colleagues from work to his Facebook account to show his Polish friends he has international group of friends in London. He also shared that due to his limited ability to speak English he did not understand a comment one of his coworkers posted on his Facebook wall (a personalized page where other Facebook users can display comments dedicated to the page owner) and Marcin was forced to ask another friend to translate the comment for him and to help him respond to the comment in English.

Interestingly, for the majority of the interview participants, Facebook was not a tool or vehicle to achieve a specific purpose, but more a current and untargeted reflection of their current lives, often characterized by their increasing international footprint. Several participants mentioned that they enjoy using Facebook because it helps them maintain relationships with people who they met in London or in other countries that they visited. While more predictable in the case of Eurostars, many migrants stated that their friends are very international and all of the Facebook users admitted to having a very international group of Facebook friends. Patrycja and Robert specifically talked about a variety of trips across the UK and Europe during which they met friends. Now they use Facebook to stay in touch with their new acquaintances. Patrycja talked about a girl from Spain who she met in Brussels. The two young women connect through Facebook on a weekly basis. Robert met a young man from Germany during a vacation in Malta. The
two men keep in touch through Facebook as well. Andrzej uses his account to build and keep contacts with his Greek girlfriend’s friends and family and Natalia has a group of friends in Italy whom she visits once a year when she goes skiing in Northern Italy. Facebook allows her to keep in touch with her Italian friends but also to make plans and coordinate her skiing expeditions.

Migrants also use Facebook to familiarize themselves with social events that are happening in London and organize themselves to spend time together on weekends. As Agnieszka stated “Facebook is great to call on friends to gather together; you do not have to call everyone individually, you just post where you are going out on Saturday night and friends join you”. Artur, who is very busy working at a hospital, occasionally checks his Facebook account to find out about event that may be happening on a day that he has off work. A few migrants also mentioned Facebook accounts of certain groups/societies that they belong to such as the Imperial College Polish Society Facebook account.
Some migrants pointed out to the feature of birthday reminders that they find extremely helpful. Marek said: “I love Facebook for reminding me when my brother and other relatives have their birthdays; I am terrible with dates so I would always forget about all birthdays; I log in to my [Facebook] account every morning to see whom I should send birthday wishes – it saves my life”.

Figure 6.3 - Imperial College Polish Society [Facebook]; https://www.facebook.com/groups/icpolishsociety/
6.4.4 Online news portals

Radek discussed the importance of Polish news portals such as: gazeta.pl, wp.pl, onet.pl. or plusbiznesu.pl in order to maintain a professional competency in Poland. He believes that the news portals keep him connected with Poland and enable him to understand what is happening in Warsaw, and how the economy in Warsaw is changing. Another male migrant shared with me that he was in the process of establishing a small business in Wroclaw and that staying informed about the current events in Poland, allow him to plan and react to changes in legislation or market trends. He shared with me that he was tired of his life in England and he hoped to return to Poland as soon as his business took off enabling him to lead a comfortable life in Wroclaw. Anticipating his return to Poland, he mentioned that he solely relies on Polish news outlets to maintain knowledge about current events and that he no longer consumes British news.

Krzysztof does not own a computer but he visits a public library where he uses the Internet. On a weekly basis, usually on Saturdays, he visits the library to read Polish news portals. His goal is to stay informed about the real estate situation in Poland because he still owns a small apartment there. While is not yet sure whether he should rent or sell his apartment, he wants to be aware of changes in pricing or market demand.
Figure 6.4 - Puls Biznesu; http://pulsbiznesu.pb.pl/tag/27715,biznes-i-technologie
6.4.5 Online Shopping

Online shopping was a popular form of purchasing goods by the migrants whom I interviewed. Three men, who I classify as Eurostars, specifically shared that they use online shopping to send gifts for their relatives in Poland. Andrzej always buys perfumes online for his mother and ships the perfumes to her home on her birthday. Robert is in a relationship with a girl who lives in Poland therefore he often uses online shopping to send her a variety of gifts. Online shopping is also popular among the labor migrants who purchase cosmetics, clothing, and shoes online. The majority of these purchases are gifts
for relatives in Poland. Marta often purchases clothing for her disabled sister in online stores because they carry her sister’s size and are often less expensive. Tomek purchases sport shoes for his brother online and takes them to Poland when he goes to visit.

Agnieszka and Magda pointed out that for them, online shopping allows them to consume ultra-luxury, designer-branded goods thanks to the availability of used designed fashion online outlets. Magda recently purchased a use Gucci purse which was more than half cheaper than the price of the original item in store.

Kasia and Monika emphasized that online shopping is a great way of purchasing make up because it is not only less expensive but the variety of goods available online is often broader than goods available in-store.

Online shopping allows Polish migrants to easily access Polish items which are not available in the UK, and in that way bridge the gap between the Polish consumer market and their physical location. Karolina specifically enjoyed using online stores to purchase items for her children. She recently bought a book entitled “Lokomotywa” (train engine) and shipped the book to her parents’ home in Poland. She mentioned that they will bring the book with them to the UK when they visit her in a few weeks. Karolina also noticed that some baby items are much less expensive in Polish online stores and whenever she can purchase something cheaper she uses Polish websites as alternative sources of the same items.
6.4.6 Budget airlines

Budget airline service providers were mentioned by all migrants, but for many of them flying was a new form of travel that was second to automotive forms of transport. Two women whom I interviewed mentioned that before they explored the possibility of flying to Poland, and before they faced their fears of flying, they travelled to Poland using an overnight bus service. Six migrants admitted to driving to Poland once a year to bring a few heavy items back to the UK. Despite this reliance on automobiles or busses, flying has become the preferred mode of travelling for Polish migrants, in large part thanks to the availability of budget airline providers which offer service to many Polish cities. Robert, for example, flies to Poland every month. While he is a successful
professional in London and he could afford flying full-service airlines, the affordability of budget airlines allows him to make very frequent trips to Poland. Many migrants discussed the importance of flight schedules which enabled them to fly to Poland for a weekend and return to the UK on Sunday evening so their work schedules were not affected by the short visits to home.

Monika mentioned that she considers cheap airlines as the best method of travelling with her young daughter. Thanks to the flight-service, the trip from the UK to Poland is inexpensive and, for her, quicker than the route her family took during many summers while travelling from their village to the Polish seaside. Although Monika is still uncomfortable flying, her daughter really likes the experience and Monika is very proud of her ability to adjust to flying.

In addition to the flight service, the migrants pointed out that the convenience of online ticket purchases allows them to easily purchase airplane tickets online for their parents and relatives. It is an affordable way of inviting family members from Poland to the UK.

6.5 Emergence of the “Techspora”

Jennifer Brinkerhoff is one of the leading researchers of how modern technology, specifically the Internet has allowed migrants to redefine the meaning of the diaspora. As Brinkerhoff points out, the Internet creates a new environment where migrants can easily
stage their national and hybrid (homeland-host country) identities. The Internet is also a safe area where interactions among migrants from various social groups, and various national backgrounds can be controlled, more anonymous, and also more open.

I believe that conclusions parallel to the ideas put forward by Brinkerhoff can be identified among the Polish migrants that I had interviewed throughout the course of my three-year fieldwork in London.

The first one that I would like to highlight is that, like I mentioned previously, modern technology has dramatically facilitated the migrants’ ability to maintain connections with their homeland. Communicating with family back home, purchasing Polish items online, accessing Polish news and culture is easier than ever before.

Second, modern technology has allowed migrants to stage their national and hybrid Polish-British identities in new, easier, more dynamic ways. In previous sections I have shed light on how migrants use Internet forums to interact, find love, or seek babysitters with a similar cultural background. But technology has also provided Poles with an outlet to coordinate their presence in the UK. Portals such as londynek.net, mojawyspa.co.uk, polacy.co.uk are just three examples of countless media outlets where Polish migrants can not only talk about topics with Polish sentiments, but simply explore very British events and traditions. The portals allow migrants to exchange goods, cars, and services, learn about events organized by British communities, and simply enrich their local lives independently of their national Polish heritage. The staging of hybrid Polish-English identities is also particularly visible on Facebook. Several of the Eurostars
who have joined my network of Facebook friends often post pictures from very British events like horse or boat races that they attend wearing traditional British celebratory outfits.

I would also like to strongly emphasize that the virtual reality created by a combination of Internet forums, social media, and online stores has created a space where all Polish migrants equally participate. This virtual space is actually an area where all Polish migrants are similar, and labor migrants and Eurostars belong to the same community. This was evidenced by several observations. First, in terms of the use of technology both groups were technologically savvy and all migrants whom I interviewed relied on technology to a similar extent (with the exception of some older migrants who did not own smartphones, but still used Skype). For all these migrants, the Internet became a place where they could interact, even if their residences were separated by the Thames. But, more importantly, the symbolism and cultural significance of technology is shared. Listening to streaming Polish radio stations via the Internet brings about similar sentiments and becomes a shared quality regardless of social status or income. The use of Skype to call family in Poland also transcends class, and becomes a quality of migration itself, that all migrants can relate to. Thus, technology creates a common characteristic, a quality that unites all migrants via a shared experience and shared symbolism.

Finally, I would like to explore the idea that Polish migrants to the UK (and possibly other Eastern European migrants to the UK) use technology to such an extent, with such intensity and pervasiveness into their daily routine, that they may be pushing
the boundaries established by the term “digital diaspora”. While the sample size studied, and the detail of information received does not allow for definite conclusions, using this dissertation I would like to suggest the opportunity for further research in this space by suggesting the emergence of a new sub-group of the diaspora – the Techspora. After conducting 35 interviews with migrants from different social backgrounds, performing a broad range of professional and service functions in the British economy, I have begun to notice a couple main trends in interactions between migrants and technology. First, technology permeates all aspects of their life, and is no longer a passive presence. In the past, technology was available, but interaction with technology was started by the migrants. They had to turn on a computer, pick up a phone, message a friend. In the world of smartphones, tablet computers, and Internet-connected work stations, diasporic connections are active. Migrants get notifications on their phones when a discount on airline tickets to Poland is available, or when a friend posts a new picture. They can wake up to Polish radio playing on their phone as the alarm clock. They can also set up automatic, renewable deliveries of Polish goods to their doorstep. In other words, in extreme cases, they must consciously choose to turn off access to Poland, rather than actively pursue it.

Second, especially for the younger and more educated migrants, technology is no longer a tool that they use to support the staging of their identities; technology is actually a part of their identity. In this sense, access to technology and its universalism across borders provides for continuity in their life, regardless of location. They can use the same smartphone in Warsaw and in London. They can listen to the same radio in Warsaw and
in London. They can consume the same media in Warsaw and in London. They can contact their family via Facetime regardless if they are in Warsaw or in London. In that sense the Techspora is characterized not only by extremely strong connections with the homeland, but, even more so, by behaviors and identities which naturally transcend borders, and allow them to live at least portions of their lives as if they never left their homeland.

In that sense, technology has challenged the traditional collection of efforts aimed at re-creating and celebrating national and ethnic identities collectively referred to as the “Diaspora”. The Diaspora is a product of separation, referring to dispersed populations which bring with them and import elements of their cultural identity. Technology allows migrants to limit separation. As they physically change locations, technology still allows them to maintain part of their existence in the homeland, and maintain an ongoing, “live”, connection to their evolving culture, language, and social network.
Chapter 7 – Conclusions

7.1 Review of Research Context

This research has been focused on investigating the post-2004 EU expansion Polish migration to the United Kingdom. As academic research and even popular press has indicated, this migration wave has been unprecedented in size and intensity. In 2004, at the time of the largest member expansion in the history of the European Union neither the governments involved, migration specialists, academics, or journalists expected that the number of Polish nationals in the UK will increase tenfold, and that by 2014, 700,000 Polish residents will be living in the United Kingdom (Office of National Statistics: Five most common nationalities in the UK in 2012, 2008 to 2012. Accessed on 9/3/2013).

There is little disagreement pertaining to the visible intensity of this migratory movement. But, as I have indicated throughout this paper, this research is focused on a migratory flow that is not only interesting due to its size or intensity, but also because it is characterized by a lot of new qualities pertinent to the migrants themselves, and migration as a process. Post-2004 EU expansion migrants to the UK have little in common with WWII or communist-era Polish migrants, which affects why they migrate to the UK, and how they settle within their migrant destinations. This migration wave also occurs within a political and economic entity which is aspiring to challenge traditional perceptions of European nation-states. This is significant not only because, in many
ways, this movement of people is encouraged by the EU and is an embodiment of EU values, but also because it occurs between two fairly developed countries. While there is a significant economic gap between Poland and the UK in favor of the latter, Polish migration to the UK is characterized by a different economic and social capacity of the migrants as compared to post-colonial migration to the UK. In addition to that difference existing among “average” migrants, Poland is also represented in the UK by a growing number of financial and social elites, whose status translates internationally and leads to much different migrant stories and experiences. Furthermore, many Polish migrants to the UK demonstrate a high-degree of technological savviness, which translates into a unique shared virtual space which remains constant for the migrants despite the physical change of their location.

It is interesting, therefore, that most researchers studying this phenomenon have focused on the experiences of Polish labor migrants to the UK (Fihel et. al 2006, Iglicka 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, Janta 2009, Trevena 2009). Existing research has highlighted how migrants settle into place in London and other locations in the UK, how they seek out and pursue employment, what items they bring with them to the UK to stage their national identity, or, for example, how travel and long-distance relationships have become a common experience for many Polish families. Other research has also investigated the consequences of this migratory wave for Poland as a country in a macro-economic and social sense, and how what qualities Polish migrants rely on to settle into the British society. Researchers have pictured Polish migrants as a constructive and beneficial labor force for the host country. Poles are generally described as well-trained
with basic ability to use English as well as culturally more accustomed to the British
culture than a typical migrant arriving from former colonies (Fihel et. al 2006, Iglicka
2006, 2009, Janta 2009, Trevena 2009). Despite these qualities, Polish migrants are
concentrated in service-sector industry jobs, particularly in the hospitality industry, and
many abandon their educational attainment and pursue employment below their
qualifications for reasons which include a lack of sufficient language skills.

7.2 Contribution to existing research

Described above is a high-level overview of the existing research on Polish
migration to the UK. Much of this research provides further insight into details associated
with placemaking, staging national identity, or changes in lifestyle patterns initiated by
frequent travel or long-distance relationships. Cumulatively, however, existing research
on Polish migrants to the UK is lacking several perspectives. This research addresses
those deficiencies, and, in certain areas, invites further inquiry. It also provides
contributions to broader discussions related to migration and the diaspora.

First, existing research has highlighted only to a limited extent the fact that Polish
migrants to the UK are also represented by a group of well-educated, financially
privileged students and professionals who fit Favell’s (2008) definition of Eurostars.
These migrants often earn diplomas from British institutions, work for global-
corporations, earn internationally desirable salaries, and seemingly live the lives of global
elites. However, as I have demonstrated, it would not be sufficient to categorize these
migrants as people without a national affiliation who are simply members of global elites. Many of these migrants maintain a strong tie to Poland, and, what is most interesting, often plan their careers, evaluate their decisions, and organize their social life based on social norms or personal contexts specific to Poland. These migrants are also representative of the fact that Poland as a place has several meanings, and thus, by comparison, Polish labor migrants and Eurostars do not only experience parallel realities in London, but also refer to a different “Poland”. Eurostars mostly live in distinct parts of London from Polish labor migrants. They also generally work in different parts of this global city, their initial experiences are different and built on international experiences and linguistic proficiency, their social networks are global and multicultural, and they rarely rely on ethnic neighborhoods. They aspire to associate with other Eurostars and member of the global elites. Despite these sharp differences between Eurostars and labor migrants, as I will mention later, they often share virtual experiences and the virtual space offered by the Internet.

Second, this dissertation is challenging the generalization that Polish migration to the UK is driven by economic considerations. As I have demonstrated, the reasons for Polish emigration are very complex and cannot be easily generalized. The in-depth, quantitative analysis of reasons for migration would be required to draw definitive conclusions, however, this research already demonstrates that at the individual-migrant level, economic considerations are often secondary or at least parallel to social and personal reasons. Polish migration to the UK is not just a migration for financial gain. The UK becomes a stage for migrants to pursue personal ambitions, address or escape
from family issues, seek out or maintain romantic engagements, or simply satisfy international curiosity which remains an intangible quality of life in Poland and a relic of 50 years of communist isolation. When focusing on Eurostars it seems that the UK provides a unique blend of qualities which makes it the right destination for elite migrants. London, as a prestigious global city is attractive for elites who can take advantage of the opportunities that it offers for education-seekers, and professionals looking to pursue or grow their careers. Its proximity to Poland, coupled with familiarity of the English language, allows Polish elites to lead double-lives – gain the London experience, but also maintain social networks and connections in Polish cities. At the same time, it is far enough to allow them to gain independence from their parents or familial/business obligations.

Lastly, this dissertation casts light on the practice which Polish migrants use to maintain diasporic networks. Interviews have indicated that both labor migrants and Eurostars maintain strong relationships with Poland, and some are able to maintain a dual presence in two countries. The way these relationships are maintained is different between these two groups. For most labor migrants, the Polish cultural and consumer infrastructure in London plays an important part of their ability to stage their national identity. They rely on Polish service providers, importers of goods, and frequently visit or live in Polish neighborhoods. Eurostars are more self-organized and independent (for example the Imperial College Polish Society), but occasionally also visit Polish service-providers, particularly to acquire goods or services of a perceived better quality. What is common for both groups, is that significant elements of their personal lives are still in
Poland, providing important reasons to maintain diasporic networks – families, friends, property, businesses.

Most importantly, this work focuses on how modern communication technology plays an important part in how migrants maintain diasporic networks. Interestingly, the way that migrants use technology and its significance for settling in London differs in certain ways between labor migrants and Eurostars, but at the same time technology use seems to be a uniquely common characteristic between these two migrant groups.

Polish migrants to the UK use various forms of technology during all stages of their migratory path. They research their destination and look for employment or social networks before actually migrating. They use technology to communicate with family members or to follow updates on their towns or the politics in Poland while they are abroad. They also rely on technology to organize themselves and participate in migrant networks. Finally, they use technology to maintain a level of awareness about the homeland which can help them in a potential return.

However, the use of technology by Polish migrants has additional significance besides facilitating migratory transitions. It is the intensity and frequency of technology use that, in my opinion makes technology use by Polish migrants to the UK a unique phenomenon. For these migrants, technology is not only a tool that they acquired as a result of their migratory path, but rather it is a natural quality of their life, that makes the migrant experience between EU countries different from the migrant experience of people who move to the UK from certain locations in Africa or other post-colonial locations. The technological development of Poland furthermore allows Polish (and other
intra-EU migrants) to rely on technology in unique ways due to the variety of potential uses available. For Polish migrants, using technology as a tool is not limited to following news or communicating with social networks. Technology use is not only about maintaining a connection to Poland, but can also mean practically maintaining a presence in Poland. Thanks to Poland’s technology infrastructure, migrants can maintain bank accounts in Poland, shop at their local Polish supermarket and deliver goods to people within Poland, book hotels for vacation in Poland, and even watch their nephews or grandchildren in pre-school via a webcam.

More importantly, technology is relevant in the context of Polish migrants because it is not just a result of their migration, but a quality of their daily lives. As a result, while the physical location, the language environment, or the cultural context changes around them when they migrate, technology remains a constant that migrants do not have to modify or learn. Virtually all interviewed migrants relied on technology to some extent while still living in Poland (browsing the Internet, using email, using Skype to speak with friends etc.). Almost all migrants interviewed used some sort of VOIP communication regularly (Skype, Facetime, etc.). Virtually all migrants had a Facebook account before moving to the UK. The continuity of technology use was especially visible in the context of Eurostars. A simple example can be found in the actual physical phone used by the migrants. In the UK, many Eurostars used the same phone they used in Poland, or purchased another copy to use alongside another phone that they had that was still subscribed to a Polish cellular service provider. The continuity of technology use was less pronounced in the case of labor migrants due to the fact that many of them upgraded
the physical equipment they used after arriving to the UK. Nevertheless, while maybe transitioning from a desktop computer to a laptop computer purchased with their first UK paycheck, or buying an iPhone in place of an old Nokia signified a new quality of technology use, technology remained a constant function of the interviewees’ daily lives regardless of physical location.

The bottom line is the fact that technology usage is the most striking common characteristic between labor migrants and Eurostars. Besides the shared experience of using similar technology, modern technology also provides a shared space for these migrants to interact and to consume similar information. While labor migrants and Eurostars live, work, and socialize in different physical locations in London, they often visit similar websites, read information edited by a handful of Polish mainstream Internet news outlets, and purchase goods or exchange services by initially relying on commonly known migrant websites.

Recognizing that technology usage is an important shared characteristic between all Polish migrants, that technology is a virtual space used by all migrants to interact, and that technology is widely available in Poland leading to diasporic networks of increased intensity had led me to conclude that technology usage is a defining characteristic of Polish migration to the UK. The intensity and significance of technology usage allows migrants to maintain significant portions of their lives as if they never left Poland - potentially defining a new migratory experience – the “Techspora”. This phrase is significant because it highlights the fact that the term “Diaspora” – referring to the practice that migrants perform to re-create their national identity may be outdated. In a
modern world, migrants no longer celebrate their national identity by re-creating elements of home, but rather can actively participate in the reality of their home countries and counteract the effects of physical separation.

7.3 Future Research

The findings presented in this work help address some of the research gaps present in the existing academic coverage of Polish migration to the UK. Despite this contribution, I recognize that this research has opened the door for further, more detailed, and more focused analysis of themes, problems, and questions uncovered in the process. While the list of potential areas of further focus is extensive, I would like to highlight future research which I will engage in personally as a result of this work.

First, recognizing that economic drivers of migration are often secondary or complimentary to personal reasons for migration, I would like to dedicate more effort into quantifying and understanding the complexity of reasons pushing or pulling Poles to migrate to the UK.

Second, there are many questions pertinent to how the needs of labor migrants in the UK will change along with an increased comfort-level with the British culture, and familiarity with the English language. In that sense, I would like to investigate if their use of technology changes as they become more focused on their lives in the UK. Will they abandon their favorite Polish websites? Will British acquaintances outnumber Polish friends on Facebook? Will they be relying less on the Polish physical and virtual migrant infrastructure in London?
Finally, I believe that this research invites much further inquiry into the consequences of this intense reliance on technology to maintain diasporic networks. This unprecedented use of technology to communicate, to follow, to stay current on family and national/political events may have a strong impact on those migrants who decide to return to Poland. I would like to investigate if, for those who return to Poland, the perceived familiarity with current events in Poland translates into an easier transition into the post-migrant life. On the other hand, the intense use of technology also invites inquiry into how technology affects those family members and social networks who have remained in Poland, but who are linked to the migrants. For example, how have the perceptions of space and distance changed for Poles who communicate with relatives in the UK? More importantly, if would like to research whether the increased communication with the UK, the exposure to the British migrant reality, and increased awareness of events in the UK affected the personal spaces of people who have remained in Poland.

There are countless other examples of more detailed inquiries I would be inspired to perform as a result of conducting this research. For me personally, gaining insight into the experiences of Polish migrants to the UK has also enriched my own migrant experience, and I sincerely look forward to the opportunity to continue following their paths as I prepare for forthcoming research.
Appendix – Original Mental Maps:
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