

**Polish children in Wales:  
negotiating identities  
in school, church and neighbourhood**

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This thesis is submitted in candidature for the degree of  
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## Summary

This thesis is concerned with exploring identities of Polish children who came to Wales with their economic-migrant parents after European Union enlargement in 2004. As increasing numbers of Polish children enter British schools, it is important to learn how they understand their relocation and how they form their identities. Their identities must be understood within their family, school, church, home-neighbourhood, friendship-circle and transnational European space contexts.

To explore their identity negotiation process, a year-long ethnographic study was undertaken with a group of middle-childhood Polish migrant children living in an urban area in Wales. The research includes observations in two schools (Catholic primary and Polish supplementary), two churches, their family environment and neighbourhoods, and children's own accounts of their experiences.

The data reveal that these children live in multiple environments due to their families' transnational practices, and are developing multiple identities. Polish nationality is a valuable source for their identification. They also strongly identify with their mother-tongue, using it across daily contexts. Identifications with the English language appeared to be a source of aspirations. Polish identity reproduction appears to be very strongly rooted in migrant families' transnational practices and participation in Polish diaspora life in Wales. Roman Catholicism further emphasises their Polishness but, conversely, its practice and children's attendance in Catholic schools help embed families into local communities. Peer culture is a significant factor in children's identity negotiations. In the context of being a sizable minority in the Catholic school they employ various strategies to balance both their belonging to and independence from, home-culture and peer-networks outside their language group. The findings on children's experiences in Welsh schools show that they adapt well. However, they may benefit from assistance to develop intercultural competences that could help them with cross-ethnic exchanges within peer cultures in schools, the Catholic community and their home-neighbourhoods.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 The development and significance of the Research**

Poland's 2004 European Union (EU) accession gave Polish families new migration opportunities – which however brought them unanticipated challenges. Previous Polish migration within Europe was mostly short-term and circular (Iglicka, 2008), generally by young single people. From 2004, high unemployment in Poland combined with availability of jobs in the UK resulted in unprecedented economic migration. February 2011 migration statistics showed Polish nationals were the second largest group of residents born outside the UK, and 'Polish' the most common non-British nationality. According to Census 2011 figures, there are 546,000 Polish-speakers in England and Wales. In Wales alone, the most common main language after English and Welsh, is Polish, with 17,001 speakers (ONS, 2011).

Although Polish migration patterns are characterised by fluidity and unpredictability, parents typically claim they are seeking a 'better future' for their children (Eade et al, 2007). Poles transfer easily into the British job market (Garapich, 2008) but most stay in unskilled jobs (Dustmann et al, 2007). Although they may remain uncertain about their future, children's school enrolment marks a significant decision in families' settlement strategies (Sales et al, 2008; Ryan et al, 2009). Polish families' new modes of transnational life in Europe impact on children's childhood and

futures. As their parents' low socio-economic status and/or loss of value of knowledge may adversely impact their life-opportunities, Polish migrant children's wellbeing may be at risk (COM, 2008).

Such a large number of Polish children arriving in UK schools raises urgent questions about their identity negotiations. They add to the patchwork of migratory children in the UK. The nearly thirty children in my research are the first post-accession cohort to enter British schools, the 'one-and-a-half generation' (Crul and Schneider, 2010). Their identity and social negotiations are marked by where they now live: Wales, a part of the UK with strong policies on preserving Welsh identity and language (Scourfield et al, 2006). These children were born in one country and now live in another. Understanding their identity negotiations is crucial to understanding the human consequences of the EU's new free movement and citizenship regulations.

## **1.2 Aim and purpose of the study**

This study is at the crossroads of three vast areas in social sciences: migration, childhood and identity. Its aim is to contribute to understanding the identity-negotiation processes of one particular migrant group of children (Polish) in one specific place context (Wales) at one specific historic time (post-EU-enlargement). Wales, a devolved nation of the United Kingdom, has a distinctive national identity and two official languages: Welsh and English. Positionality – cultural background (Polish), location (Wales), age (middle-childhood), race (whiteness) and religion (Catholic) – are all specific. Nonetheless, what links these children to other migrating children is that all must pioneer new identities.

The purpose of the study is to contribute to current debates on transnational children's multiple identities. The 'new' sociology of childhood approach recognises the multiplicity of childhoods (Prout, 2005). There are migrant childhoods, minority-ethnic childhoods and diasporic childhoods. These children belong in all three categories. Over the last five years, knowledge about migrating children has significantly developed. In two special issues of *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS), White et al (2011) and Gardner (2012) presented research evidence challenging adults' assumptions that migrant children are passive agents and highlighted the crucial importance of gaining knowledge directly from children. The 2010 special issue of *Childhood* (Ní Laoire et al, 2010) focused on transnational childhoods, children's mobilities and identities:

“It is recognized that children perform multiple and intersecting identities, which are variously gendered, racialized, localized and commodified, and that these are contingent on context ” (Ní Laoire et al, 2010:157)

I share the view that migrant children's process of identity forming is fluid and dynamic. I attempt to contribute to current debates on children who move from 'East to West' (Ní Laoire et al, 2011). I recognize the centrality of mobility to any discussion, as these children are indeed 'on the move'. Intense travel and technological developments inevitably make their identities situated and under ongoing negotiation. My study contributes to challenging conventional views on migrant families' integral homogeneity and children's lack of agency in migration.

Polish transnational children may be seen as privileged. As EU citizens, they have access rights to education, health and state benefits. Unlike refugee or asylum seekers in the UK, their status as children is not abused or questioned (Crawley, 2006). Nor they are left without state protection like Mexican children in the USA

(Boehm, 2008:799). Polish economic migrants enjoy the right to work and settle and bring families to Britain. Inevitably, children's identity negotiations happen within the regimes of the working-class positions Polish families occupy in the UK. As White et al (2011:1160-1161) observe, the most vulnerable groups, like refugee, asylum-seeker or trafficked children, are most represented in migrant research. Polish economic migrant parents and children are less exposed, so less represented. This study contributes towards a better understanding of their migration experiences.

My research adds to the body of 'Child-Inclusive Migration Research', which challenges adultism in migration studies (White et al, 2011: 1163). I adopt children-centred perspectives and value children's subjective accounts and their own work (Greene and Hill, 2005). Like Smart (2011:101), I share the view that "children have their own personal lives and that their perspectives on their own lives are immensely valuable". I approach this study convinced of the advantages of interdisciplinarity in the study of childhood (Prout, 2005), and of ethnography as a tool for researching childhood experience (James, 2001). Although most of the fieldwork is school-based, this study extends beyond traditional educational settings, and also involves children's home and diaspora spaces.

This study aims to contribute to the emerging body of literature which explores the ways in which migrating children live their transnational lives and negotiate and develop their identities. I therefore pose four broad research questions:

1. How does being a Polish national living in Wales impact on children's everyday identifications?
2. How does being a Polish-speaking child impact on identifications in a multilingual context?

3. In what way do Polish Catholic family practices impact on these children's identifications?
4. How do children experience being the 'other' and how do they make friends?

### **1.3. Structure of the thesis and chapter summaries**

Recognising that identity is negotiated within several pillars based on ethnicity/nationality, language and religion, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are organised around these aspects. Additionally, Chapter 7 explores children's social worlds and their friendship-making in Wales. The chapters are organised as follows.

#### Chapter 1

As an introduction, I discuss the significance of this study and the purpose of researching young Polish migrant children's identities. I outline its aims and consequent research questions.



## Chapter 2

I review the literature on identity concepts within social sciences' migration research and school research. I locate my own work within current debates on transnational children and their identities. I review the concept of identity from a postmodern perspective. The relevant literature on identity, migration and childhood is clustered around core aspects of identity related to ethnicity/nationality, language and religion. I therefore start with the importance of national identity traces in children's identifications; then outline mother-tongue (L1) preservation and language acquisition (L2) issues and debates around migrant children's bilingualism, and discuss families' religious affiliation and practices. Finally, in the part on children's social worlds I concentrate on friendship-making issues.

## Chapter 3

I outline the methodology I used for researching children and their parents. I explain how I designed my ethnographic study, my ethical framework, field relations and how I approached the children, engaged them in participatory sessions and elicited their views on their migration experience. Then I explain how I analysed the generated data.

## Chapter 4

This opens the empirical part of the thesis. I provide evidence on how these children negotiate their identities. Nationality makes demands on these children: all were born

in Poland and are now being brought up in Wales. I present children's narratives on attachments to Poland. First, inevitably, to people, but also to places and even animals left behind. Mobility opens up new forms of attachment – they simultaneously experience longing, missing and thinking and worrying about people.

## Chapter 5

Children's cultural identity is embedded in Language. Speaking home-language is a powerful inclusion and exclusion tool, both in the domestic sphere and social life outside home. Being confident Polish-speakers, these children are all learners of English and, to some extent, Welsh. Parents consider the cultural capital and economic gain embedded in the English language justifies migration and living abroad with children. Although gradually gaining competence in English, these children are disadvantaged within the school domain and other social settings. Confidence in speaking English impacts on children's identity-building and the ways they approach people and places outside Polish diasporic space.

## Chapter 6

Religious upbringing in a Roman Catholic family inevitably depends on specific families' intensity of Catholic practice. Nevertheless, First Communion is a culturally-unifying experience for these children. How this sacrament is performed depends on migration circumstances. I observed three ways: undertaking it in a church in Poland, a Polish parish in Wales or a Welsh Catholic parish. The first two

embed children into distinctively *Polish* Catholicism; the third requires them to negotiate ‘otherness’.

### Chapter 7

In this last empirical chapter, I present the ways children participate in children’s cultures in Wales and make friendships. The first strategy is to make intense ties within their own ethnic group by having Polish friends. I present observations from St Luke’s community and show the power of Polish friendships there. Observational material and children’s work show how children extend peer-relations in cross-ethnic friendships. The last section focuses on barriers to extending their social networks migrant children experience.

### Chapter 8

In this final chapter, I bring together my empirical findings on these young Polish children’s identities. I supplement my findings with reflections and suggest recommendations for improving language-provision for migrant learners. Finally, I reflect upon how this research can contribute to policy and strategies for community cohesion.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Contextualising migrant children's multiplicity of identities**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter introduces and critically explores key concepts that provide the theoretical framework for my thesis. This introduces the reader to the perspectives and literature which influenced my own way of researching Polish migrant children's identities. I begin with setting the scene: post-accession Polish mass migration to Britain. Then, I present the major debates within migration theory regarding identity formation from the postmodern perspective. I define and discuss three major pillars which I consider points of reference in identifications for any individual embedded in the transnational way of life: nationality, language and religion. In the section on national identity, I review literature on children's awareness and feelings about national belonging. As the languages children speak are pivotal in their identity development, I start with mother-tongue preservation (L1) and how communities maintain their heritage and pass on language to the younger generation. Learning host-country language (L2) is the priority for children's education and future careers. In the section on bilingualism, I present debates around language retention and new language acquisition in relation to children's identities. In the section on religion, I review research on parental socialisation into religion, specifically into Catholicism. The final section of my Literature review concentrates on migrant children's social

networks. I focus on research literature showing the importance of friendships in the lives of children who migrate.

In reviewing the existing body of research on children's national belonging, languages and religion in their lives attention is given to children's social world's and their own creation of new attachments in their host country while maintaining those in their homeland. I focus on how the children negotiate their sameness and otherness in migration contexts.

The sequence of sections in this chapter unfolds the area of my interest towards children's identities. I focus first on concepts of national identity, then language identities in multilingual contexts, religious affiliations and children's social worlds. These four fields of inquiry make up the empirical chapters of my thesis.

## **2.2 The Polish economic migration phenomenon**

EU enlargement in 2004 caused unprecedented economic migration to UK. Its pattern is new: characterized by fluidity and unpredictability (Eade et al, 2007; Spencer et al, 2007). New Polish migrants are not traditional refugee victims, but economic migrants (Cohen, 1997) exercising freedom of choice and agency under EU citizenship rights (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk, 2009). In Britain, they utilize established post-war Polish diaspora networks within Catholic parishes (Garapich, 2008) and Saturday schools (Podhorodecka, 2009).

There is a rapidly growing body of research on post-EU-enlargement Polish migration to the UK (Burrell, 2009). Poland is Slavic, Catholic and mono-linguistic with very few regional accents: prolonged occupations have made the Polish

language a symbol of national unity (Duszak, 2008), especially for resisting Russification and Germanisation. Coming from a mono-cultural background, Poles lack experiences of racial diversity, so may have difficulties adjusting to the UK's multiculturalism. As with other Eastern-block migrants, their communist past may influence mindsets, making recognizable Eastern-European identities (Galasiński and Galasińska, 2007; Temple and Koterba, 2009). New migrants do not automatically belong to the Polish diaspora: some experience class or inter-generational tensions, some even avoid all association (Fomina, 2009). Research shows that Poles want to be accepted in Britain and see Catholicism and whiteness as assets (Garapich, 2007; Kohn, 2007).

### **2.2.1 Polish family migration**

As Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) observe, transnational families are typically of secondary interest in migration studies. In the Polish case, migration is discussed as a livelihood strategy for families' economic improvement (White, 2010); and social networks, in relation to migration-decisions (Ryan, 2009; Ryan et al, 2009).

Education is considered a factor influencing permanent settlement decisions (Sales et al, 2008). The 'better future' motive for family migration identified by CRONEM (2006) and Eade et al (2007) remains under-researched. These studies found 'stayers' chose long-term settlement for 'their children's future'. Studies are lacking on how families and their children adapt in Britain.

In migrant and minority children research, Polish children are 'scattered': sometimes presented as EU children, economic-migrants' children, European children or New Arrivals, and make up only a small fraction of samples. UK studies include Sime's

(2008a) and Sime et al's (2012) research on Eastern European 8-14-year-olds' adaptation in Scotland, *Home and Abroad*; and Reynolds' (2008) on experiences in English secondary-schools. In Ireland, Ní Laoire et al (2009) researched children's migration experiences. Devine et al (2008) and Devine (2009) focused on ethnic children's experiences of racism and 'otherness' in Irish primary schools.

Studies exclusively interested in Polish children include Sales et al's (2008) on adults' perceptions of Polish children in London primary-schools. In Scotland, Sime and McArthur (2008) researched Polish children's access to services; and Moskal (2010a), their schooling, home relations, language problems and belonging. In another study, Moskal (2011) focused on transnationalism and the role of family in the migration process. Trevena (2009; 2012) investigated schools' roles in 'new' Polish migrants' settlement and integration in Britain.

Some Polish children's identity issues were present in studies in Ireland (Ní Laoire et al, 2009; 2011). However, only Moskal's research in Scotland brings rich insights into Polish children's situation, their belonging and emerging identity formation. With this exception, there has been no major study on Polish migrant children's identity, neither in primary- nor secondary-schools. Few studies even differentiate Poles from other EU children. Most treat them as one group, underestimating cultural differences between, for instance, Slovak, Polish and Roma children. Other Eastern European children are often categorized as Polish (WAG, 2008). Nonetheless, Polish children comprise a distinctive new migrant group in the British education system (Pollard et al, 2008: 27). But about their growing-up, adaptation and identity-negotiation, hardly anything is yet known. This thesis explores this topic.

### **2.2.2. The context of Wales**

From 2004, many Poles migrated to the UK. However, Wales is a small nation of under 3 million people, economically disadvantaged compared to England, so less attractive as a migrant work-destination. According to the Worker Registration Scheme and National Insurance number allocations, Wales accounts for under 3% of all applications from EU-nationals in the UK. There were over 21,000 Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) registrations in Wales up to March 2008, two-thirds being from Poland (Home Office, 2008). Besides cities, Poles are visible in towns with production-line factories (e.g. Llanelli and Merthyr), to which British agencies recruit them. Although new Eastern European migrants tend to settle in well-established ethnic enclaves (Spencer et al, 2007), Llanelli demonstrates how work creates new Polish enclaves (Thompson et al, 2010).

ESTYN (2009b) report shows that by 2008, over 1100 Polish children were in Welsh schools: almost three-quarters of all pupils from all 12 EU-accession states. In the year of my research (school-year 2010-11), there were 1334 Polish children in Welsh schools: 774 in primary-schools, of whom 318 (41%) attended Catholic schools; 569 in secondary-schools, 271 (48%) being at Catholic schools. Consequently, almost half of all Polish school children in Wales were receiving Catholic education (SDWG, 2011). In comparison, the 2010 school census found 40,700 Polish children in England (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011: 237-238).

Polish children arriving in Wales are coming to a country that respects children's rights legislation. In 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) was the first in the UK to formally adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and outline its commitment to protect and promote the human rights for



all children (WAG, 2007). In Wales, children have Funky Dragon: the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales – the first UK charity with under-18s as trustee members. Funky Dragon’s main tasks are ensuring children’s views are heard and enabling their participation in decision-making at national level (Crowley and Skeels, 2010). In relation to migrants, WAG (2008) acknowledged risks of inadequate communication between newly-arrived families and communities, services and schools. Identifying poor knowledge about host-country, rights and responsibilities and language as the main barriers, it launched a Welcome Pack for migrants translated into minority languages, Polish included (WAG, 2006). The Charity ‘Children in Wales’ established a network for professionals working with asylum, refugee and migrant children (O’Neill, 2008).

Welsh policy on bilingualism creates a particular context for migrant children. The National Assembly for Wales Official Languages Act 2012 (WAG, 2012) requires the Welsh and English languages to be treated equally. This bilingual legislation supports the principle of valuing migrant children’s languages, in line with the 1977 EU Directive for provision for migrant children (EEC, 1977). This advocates:

“Promotion of the teaching of the mother tongue and culture of the country of origin of such children, along with regular education and in cooperation with the country of origin.”

These initiatives correspond with the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship’s principles (ESTYN, 2010). WAG provides funding through the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG, previously EMAG) to improve equality of educational opportunity for all minority ethnic groups including those for whom English is an additional language (ESTYN, 2010:5).

### **2.2.3 The group in focus**

The children and their families who took part in this study are introduced in detail in Chapter 3. At this point, however, I will note these families' important shared characteristics. I do not wish to homogenise the group: each child and family is different. These families, however, share some significant socio-economic, cultural and religious characteristics. One is parents' educational background (Appendix 4). Most have completed secondary education in Poland, including passing Matura. All, however, perform low-skilled jobs. (Chapter 4 gives examples). This conforms to Dustmann et al's (2007) findings on new migrants in the UK. Secondly, these parents aspire to bring up children as bilinguals. Apart from speaking Polish across social contexts (Appendix 7), most children attend Polish classes at Saturday school or St Luke's. (The complex aspects of maintaining mother-tongue and bilingualism are discussed in Chapter 5). Thirdly, those families demonstrate affiliation to Roman Catholicism either by the choosing of a Catholic school, church practice, or both. (Chapter 6 gives examples of children's socialization into Catholicism). Finally, almost all families are involved in various forms of participation in the Polish diaspora community.

All these identified features make these children's position specific: distinct from those whose families affiliate less with compatriots or build social capital outside diaspora networks (Fomina, 2009). These families' positioning significantly influences their children's identity negotiations. Being ethnically Polish and belonging to the Polish diaspora through parental practices, these children are subject to collective identifications. This is especially pronounced at St Luke's, where Polish children are a sizable group.

This thesis explores how these Polish-born, middle childhood children negotiate their identities as members of Polish migrant families that undertake a range of transnational practices, in the context of Wales. The next section reveals how globalisation contexts shape their identity-construction processes.

### **2.3 Identity in a time of globalization and migration**

Knowing ‘who we are’ and explaining identity has become a concern of many scholars. Until recently, the essentialist view about the ‘core’ of identity prevailed.

Ernest Gellner’s work on nations and nationalism argued (1983:61):

“In stable self-contained communities culture is often quite invisible, but when mobility and context-free communication come to be of the essence of social life, the culture in which one has been *taught* to communicate becomes the core of one’s identity.”

In migration studies, Smolicz (1981: 75), researching Polish post-war minority groups in Australia, identified language and religion as ‘core’ values for individual and collective identity. My work addresses the identity concept within the context of postmodernity and globalization debates. Jenkins (1996:4) defines social identity as an active process of being and becoming:

“It is the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference.”

In the postmodern view, societies are becoming more fragmented and social identities multiple and more fluid (Bauman, 2001; Woodward, 2002). Bradley (1996) considers that persistent social-class, gender, race and age inequalities further increase identity-fragmentation. In *The Age of Migration*, Castles and Miller (2009:

41) argue that increased mobility makes individuals' socio-cultural identities multilayered and under constant negotiation.

“Immigrants and their descendants do not have a static, closed and homogenous ethnic identity, but rather dynamic multiple identities, influenced by a variety of cultural, social and other factors.”

In the age of increased migration, identity-establishment becomes a lifelong activity.

Bauman (2001:146) considers intense migration has produced ‘disembeddedness’:

“Disembeddedness is now an experience which is likely to be repeated an unknown number of times in the course of an individual life.” He recommends (2001: 152):

“Perhaps, instead of talking about identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalizing world to speak of *identification*, a never ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged. There is little chance that the tensions, confrontations and conflicts which that activity generates will subside”.

Similarly, Stuart Hall's (1996: 4) influential essay *Who needs identity?* Focuses on ‘subjects in-process’, who are on the move and make use of:

“...the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being; not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. They relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself (...) not the so called return to roots but coming to-terms-with our ‘routes’.”

Throughout this thesis, I draw on these two theoretical positions. Bauman's forward-looking definition of individuals' *identifications* is helpful for researching migrant children's identities. The children in my study have been brought by their parents into an ‘open-ended’ activity of defining and re-defining themselves in Wales.

Regardless of where they will live in the future, defining their identities is a lifelong

project. Like Hall, I am also interested in children's 'routes': how they negotiate their identities in their everyday lives.

Anthias (2009: 9) considers identity a 'slippery concept', usually over- or under-formed:

“The concept of identity can cover on the one side notions of the ‘core self’ or the ‘aspirational self’ (e.g. Erikson 1968) and on the other side notions of how people are identified by objective measures, like country of birth or primary language. The notion also covers identification processes (with others or ‘groupings of others’) and relates to the construction of collectivities and identity politics (both of which insert the political into the arena of identity formation).”

Anthias (2011: 213) coined the concept of ‘translocational positionality’, advocating: “abandoning the lens of identity for understanding issues of difference and division and instead looking at processes of social location and positionality.”

As positionality may help understand children's identity-formation processes, my theoretical standpoint is close to Anthias' (2011: 213) theoretical framework. This is based on three principles. Firstly, “Our ‘location’ is always characterised by being within, and embedded in, relations of hierarchy within a multiplicity of specific situational and conjunctural spheres.” Secondly, “we experience simultaneously being and becoming, fixity and change.” Thirdly, “our positions and positionality are linked, but not in a mechanistic way: we take up positionings in relation to our locations depending on context and meaning as well as ‘interest’, and in terms of values, goals and projects.”

Conducting my fieldwork, I realised that children's identities are compound and defy simplistic labelling. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, the Card Choice exercise confirmed Anthias' (2009: 10) assertion that “how people label themselves does not always tell

us much about their practices”. I also learned that children may not find meaningful the question “Who are you?” Some would not answer this, even if asked in Polish.

Before discussing migrant children’s identities, I will briefly review several significant concepts: multiple and situational identities, cosmopolitanism and hybridity. The concept of multiple identities I have already introduced through Bauman’s (2001), Hall’s (1996) and Jenkins’ (1996) work. Anthias (2011) sees a coexistence of multiple identities, which intersect within individuals (e.g. British and Asian, member of an ethnic group and social class). Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) consider intersections of everyday inequalities further complexify multiple identities. Anthias (2011: 204) cautions that the multiple identity concept could imply identity is a possessed property not a process:

“There is no doubt that in many discussions culture is treated as a possessive property of individuals, as a free-floating signifier, as static and given and as a thing that we carry with us.”

Related to the multiple identities notion is the concept of situational identity. This occurs when individuals construct and present any one of several possible identities, depending on the situation and context (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007:162). Identities are socially constructed and negotiated in different contexts (Goffman, 1959). As context can impose or trigger different traces of identity to become prominent, the situationally salient nature of identity may cause multiplicity of identifications (Anthias, 2011; Scourfield et al, 2006).

Both multiple and situational identity concepts are relevant to studying migrant children’s identities. I observed children in Catholic primary-school and Saturday school classrooms, playgrounds, two Catholic churches and Polish diaspora social spaces. These different contexts typically determine choice of presentation,

producing situational identities. They may perceive themselves being 'more' Polish at Saturday school or English at the English-speaking Catholic church. When children's nationality, language, cultural environment and religion cross, multiple-identities predominate.

Cosmopolitanism is another concept present in identity studies. This term describes a new transcultural territory independent of national borders (Beck, 2002).

Cosmopolitanism connotes with well-educated, open-minded, broadly-travelled individuals. Migrants' children are well-positioned to build cosmopolitan identities as they can utilize both their parents' links and their own newly-established host-country roots. They can mix symbols from global culture with markers from two cultures: parents' and host-country's (Hall, 1996). For example, Colombo et al's (2009) research in Italy reveals how second-generation adolescents developed different kinds of self-identification. Young people may start from strong ethnic-group belonging, go through mimicry of the Italian youth culture (while still maintaining transnational ties with their native country), then finally develop hyphenated or cosmopolitan identities. In current debates about EU intra-mobility and new migration, many consider it important to see migrants as social actors not victims and their children as benefiting from migration (Triandafyllidou, 2010; Favell, 2010). Related to cosmopolitanism, the European identity concept is being investigated: why, when and where people may develop European identifications (Jamieson, 2005).

Alternatively, migrants' children may develop hybrid identities on the border between parental and host-society's cultural norms. Globalisation processes may lead to greater cultural hybridization. The hybridity concept has developed as an

argument against ethnocentrism and the mono-culturalist view of identity (Bhabha, 1994). In transnational space, young people exhibit complex cross-cultural practices. They may find cultural syncretization easy. In Griffiths's (2002) study, Kurdish children regard themselves as British residents, while maintaining strong ties with relatives in transnational settings across the globe. Kahin (1997), researching Somali children, found they balance their two different worlds. In Italy, migrant youths often maintain their transnational ties (Colombo et al, 2009). Cross-culturalism lets mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong schools simultaneously retain their original identity and adopt a new one (Ming-Tak Hue, 2008). Anthias (2008), however, notes hybrid identity development is threatened by othering and racism. Anthias suggests that migrants may identify with some dominant-culture cultural traits, but still remain marginalized as 'other' in society. As she explains (2008: 10):

“The pick and mix of cultural elements, denoted by the term hybridity, does not necessarily signify, however, a shift in identity or indeed the demise of identity politics of the racist or anti-racist kind.”

Having presented general concepts in the literature on migrant identities, I will now focus on migrant children's identities.

#### **2.4. Migrant children's identities**

Recent publications on migrant children's transnational way of life (special issues of *Childhood* (ed. Ní Laoire et al, 2010) and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (ed. White et al, 2011); Gardner (2012) reveal the diversity of their experiences, necessitating reconceptualising views on their identities. Ni Laoire et al (2010: 160) stress “the intersectional nature of children's identities, showing that they are also



gendered, classed and racialized in ways which intersect with or supersede any ethnic/national or migrant identities.” For example, while skin-colour remains an important marker of difference (Troyna and Hatcher, 1992; Devine et al, 2008), the new European migrants are ‘different’ despite whiteness. Ní Laoire et al (2009) notes that whiteness makes EU children invisible as migrants, as migration was often connoted with race. As Reynolds (2008) shows, when some ethnic/national migrant groups are more represented than others, the other nationals may be stereotyped into their groups, e.g. schools treating Roma children as Polish.

Recent research acknowledges children’s agency in their identity negotiations. Ní Laoire et al (2010:156) observe “It is now increasingly accepted that children are not passive recipients of culture, socialization and identity but that they are subjective beings and are actively involved in shaping their own sociocultural worlds.” Smart (2011) welcomes developments in childhood studies which recognize that children have ‘subjective’ and personal lives. Like Ní Laoire et al (2011:154), I regard my study’s children ‘not just as migrants’ but as children whose other aspects of identity are equally important. However, gender and sexuality identity traces are not my study’s focus, so not specifically researched as ethnic/national, language and faith identities appear strongly featured by these children, my thesis centres around these.

Some research on identity is constructed around ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary oppositions (Devine and Kelly, 2006; Devine et al, 2008). Poststructuralist views, however, challenge cultural essentialism and the view of immigrant children being trapped between two cultures (Mannitz, 2005). Olwig (2003) challenges conventional views on children’s identity crises, as do Ní Laoire et al (2010), arguing that performances of multiple and intersecting identities are contextual. Increased families’ and

children's mobility requires reappraisal of the importance of stability and fixity in family life and children's upbringing. Children's migration raises cultural blending and adjustment issues. Classic social capital theory, however, sees mobility as the first obstacle for rooting and gaining social capital (Coleman, 1994). Rutter (2006) argues that uprooting breaks crucial 'relationship web' links (Baker, cited in Rutter, 2006: 40).

Anthropologists, Olwig and Gullov (2003) consider place and locality important markers of children's worlds. Ethnographic studies researching migrant-children in urban spaces include: Bangladeshi children in East London (Gardner and Mand, 2009), first- and second-generation immigrants in Paris and Berlin (Den Bensten, 2008) and teenagers on Irish housing estates (Ní Laoire et al, 2009). The representation of 'home' was important in research on ethnicity. Much recent research emphasizes the situated and contextualized nature of migrant children's negotiations of home and belonging. Home may be conceptualised not as static, but in relation to movement and migration (Kozoll et al, 2003). Home may mean an abstract but crucially important family space despite geographical distances. In Bak and Bromssen's (2010) study, migrant children in Sweden accorded importance to places because the presence of kin gave those places their identity. They also distinguished (2010:120) between "home as a place of living and homeland as a place of family origin." In diaspora situations, children's longing is for people: kin and relatives, not for geographical places. Ní Laoire et al (2009) also found family members' presence are crucial to overcoming isolation; also that migration situations typically make families stronger. When the whole family is together, boosted by good experiences in making friends, life is satisfying and they feel 'at home' (Chow, 2007). Ní Laoire et al (2010: 159) argue that children's conceptualisations

challenge “powerful assumptions about the nature of migration, mobility and childhood, such as ideals of childhood based on notions of residential fixity.” As shown in Chapter 4, several children in the study counter these assumptions: the fluidity of mobile experience, and the frequency and intensity of attachments equalizes places’, people’ and animals’ importance, independent of distance. They experience belonging and robust attachments with important others so vividly and spontaneously that both worlds have simultaneous reality.

In relation to my research, one crucial aspect of identity negotiations is children’s age. Their age on migration also appears important. Age and maturity impact on how children identify themselves. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) consider self-identity is linked with children’s age and identification with family origin and homeland, so might alter in teenage-hood and adulthood. Children in my research are in middle-childhood and in Jenkins’ words (1996:54) are “entering society”, so are building their social identities in their ‘adopted’ society. They leave Polish-language domestic space and enter English-speaking social spaces: schools. The point of entrance is crucial for the development of literacy and numeracy competences, which form a base for future educational success or failure (Gage and Berliner, 1992). Therefore, in exploring these primary-schoolchildren’s identities, the issue of their school experiences seems of primary importance.

As non-dominant-language-speakers, migrant children can be disadvantaged in classroom and social situations (Carrasquillo and Rodriguez, 2002; Brandsma, 2000:34). In the UK, studies on refugee children’s underachievement (DfES, 2005) have attributed it to many factors, including economic deprivation, unemployment and poor housing (Power et al, 1998). As limited fluency in English and lack of

continuous support with English academic language deters children from continuing studying, poor children from minority-language backgrounds are disadvantaged (Cummins, 2000). The complexity of their disadvantage in multilingual contexts impacts on their learner-identities, motivation and self-image (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). The linguistic problems of 'lost voice' are sometimes revealed in adults' memoirs relating painful relocation and exile experiences in childhood (e.g. Hoffman, 1998). Poor adaptation is often blamed on 'big social distances', implying that some minority-ethnic children have problems, whereas white Europeans adapt easily in America (Suarez-Orozco, 2004) or Eastern-Europeans easier than non-Europeans in Spain (Zufiaurre, 2006). While the language-barrier is acknowledged as the first obstacle, the second, less researched, obstacle is children's lack of resources and social capital, e.g. friends. This combination of disadvantages causes many migrant children to be lonely (Kirova, 2001), which impacts on their self-perception and self-image. Those two factors I consider of great importance, as both relate to children's identity. These are discussed in the sections on language and friendship-making.

In childhood studies, there is the theme of the 'rational' and 'active' competent child (James et al, 1998; James and James, 2004). In migration studies, children are sometimes understood as 'bridges' between parents and host-country cultures (Evergeti and Zantoni, 2006; Devine 2009). For example, their growing linguistic host-country competences are seen as a resource for building a family's social capital. As the empirical material shows, parental narratives revealed expectations about children's bridging abilities in Wales. On the other hand, linguistic competence may help children to be more independent and renegotiate their position in the family (Rutter, 2006). It inevitably improves their self-esteem. Some children exhibited

growing confidence by approaching social worlds outside the Polish-speaking environment.

The literature on migrant children includes also a less positive discourse about identity confusion. Multiple-identity negotiations may mean being trapped between two cultures and undergoing identity crises. Suarez-Orozco (2004:177), writing about formulating identity in a globalized world, emphasizes that it is not a process of “achieving a stable identity”:

“The tension between the dominant culture and minority newcomers lies at the heart of the ethnic and cultural identity formation drama of immigrants and their children (de Vos, 1980). Youth are challenged to navigate between achieved identities and ascribed or imposed identities (C. Suarez-Orozco and M. Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Achieved identity is the extent to which an individual achieves sense of belonging – “I am a member of *this* group”. An ascribed identity is imposed either by coethnics – “You are a member of *our* group” – or by members of the dominant culture – “You are a member of *that* group”.

Suarez-Orozco (2004:192) gives the example of Latino students in the US who “creatively fuse aspects of two or more cultures” to develop a transcultural identity. This involves achieving “bicultural and bilingual competences that become an integral part of their sense of self”. Suarez-Orozco (2004:193) believes that:

“The key to a successful adaptation involves acquiring competencies that are relevant to the global economy while maintaining the social networks and connectedness essential to the human condition. Those who are at ease in multiple social and cultural contexts will be most successful and will be able to achieve higher levels of maturity and happiness.”

One of the negative outcomes of immigrant’s identity negotiations is identity confusion: particularly when there is a significant ‘cultural distance’ between country of origin and the new country of destination. This may produce a sense of alienation. As an antidote, Suarez-Orozco (2004: 197) advises developing a sense of belonging

to a global culture and ‘celebrating differences’. She, like many others, maintains that global economic competences start with English-language proficiency. The role of English proficiency in these children’s identity-development, I discuss in the part on language acquisition. The theme of Polish children’s global economic competences is exemplified by Polish parents’ trust that the British educational system that will serve their children’s advancement and social mobility. As their narratives show, many parents believe that, by learning English, children will automatically benefit from the global economy.

My study’s conceptual framework is based on the foregoing arguments about fluidity and dynamics in children’s identity formation. I also recognise that some traces of identity may be more important for some children than for others, and that these are more pronounced in specific contexts. In this particular group of Polish migrant children, three essential aspects of identity featured most strongly: nationality, language and religion. I have, therefore, organised my whole thesis around these areas of identity. The three sections that follow review relevant research which considers ethnicity, languages and religious affiliation as central factors in children’s identifications. I then gather existing studies on migrant children’s social worlds and, in particular, friendship-making.

## **2.5. National identities**

In globalization, many processes happen simultaneously. There is, on the one hand, a weakening of national identities in favor of cultural homogeneity; on the other, resistance to globalization and a strengthening of ethnic and national identity. Every

child has a right to a name, nationality and legal identity (UN, 1989). The country of birth defines our nationality.

In transnational space, nationality is an important identity marker. Anthias (2009) notices that in everyday discourse, minorities have 'ethnic identity' while the majority has 'national identity'. Anthias (2009:6) argues that identity concerns may be fuelled by fears about youths born elsewhere, their integration and social cohesion:

“The impetus lies in the threat from ‘hostile’ identities, embodied both in the war against terror but also in fears of unskilled, dependent migrants, asylum seekers and refugees whose culture and ways of life are seen to be incompatible or undesirable within Western societies, and the fear of social breakdown and unrest attached to these.”

In transnational space, individuals' identifications with national identity may be complex and contextual. Experience of national membership combines citizenship of, and emotional ties to, a country (Yuval-Davis et al, 2005). For example, speaking native-language may serve as a first marker of belonging to national or ethnic groups. Languages' importance for 'identity in making' is best seen when people of mixed heritage define themselves contextually (Nowicka, 2006).

In the literature on children's identification with nation and national identity, both developmental stages and psychological evidence are debated. Tajfel et al's (1997) findings from six countries revealed that preference for their own nationality is significantly stronger amongst 6-8-year-olds than 9-12-year-olds. In the UK, The British Psychological Society's Millennial Project researched children's views on Britishness. Barrett (2005, cited in Scourfield 2006: 44) noted the complexity of children's national identifications. Sociological studies on children's negotiations of national identity in the UK include Carrington and Short (1995) in England and

Scotland (1996) and Scourfield et al (2006) in Wales. As research shows, children and young people have varying attitudes to national and ethnic belonging. The boundaries between nationality and ethnicity are often impossible to capture.

In relation to questions of nationality and ethnicity, Scourfield et al (2006: 40) in a Welsh study of identity and place in middle-childhood, suggest asking children “Where do I belong?” and “Whom do I relate to?” Here, however, we must consider their level of cognitive maturity and remember that young children’s understanding may be limited to abstract geographical knowledge. Older children are more likely to express their nationality preferences based on experience. Scourfield et al (2006:49) noticed:

“In constructing national identities for themselves, children exercise their agency in negotiating the culturally loaded and unequal terrain of diverse heritage and in the maintaining of an identity that is at least potentially unacceptable to their peers.”

Similarly, Devine (2009), researching migrant and refugee children in primary Irish schools, noticed that children seek acceptance by minimizing cultural differences when negotiating positioning at school.

Evidence from research with various migrant groups shows that children resist ethnic categorization and actively construct their ethnic identities. Ní Laoire et al (2009) found EU children did not want to become Irish, even if they liked living there. They did not speak of hyphenated identities, like Polish-Irish or Lithuanian-Irish, as their own national identities were important to them. They mentioned their otherness: particularly regarding language, music and fashion. In Ni Laoire et al’s study (2011), some returned migrant children of Irish background showed a generic ‘migrant’ identity by relating to others of migrant backgrounds and signaling their



cosmopolitan identity. Some children (Ni Laoire et al, 2011: 149) “challenged the imagined fixed boundaries of national identities” and showed associations with more than one national identity. Studying children from Iranian families born in Sweden, Moinian (2011) found they resisted categorization based on ethnic backgrounds and, talking “beyond ethnic and religious identities”, exhibited ongoing identity construction and performance. One of the main findings was the salience of ethnicity in their narratives on extended relationships with family members both in Sweden and Iran. Children displayed the importance of their Iranian cultural identity even when they were not confident or less willing to socialize in their mother-tongue, Farsi.

An emerging body of studies evidence children’s awareness of ethnicity.

Researching European-American children’s views of African-Americans, Holmes (1995: 63-64) records a number of factors contributing to children’s prejudiced attitudes and behaviours; the most pronounced being colour. Exposure to parental and other adult conversations may also be influential. Van Ausdale and Feagin (2002) found that very young children (aged three) show racial behaviour, learning it from their social context and interactions. Researching 3-6-year-olds’ cultural and political awareness in Northern Ireland, Connolly et al (2002) found very young children develop a preference for their own group’s cultural events and symbols. Children are not passive recipients of their parents’ or peers’ national preferences but are active agents in learning from in-group and out-group views on nationality (About and Amato, 2001). Connolly (2007: 50), reviewing the evidence from studies on children’s ethnic awareness argues: “children can become aware of racial differences from about the age of 2 and that they are capable of developing negative attitudes and prejudices about these from about the age of 3 onwards.”

Many studies reveal how children's perceptions of race and ethnicity affect their behavior and social relationships. Research in school settings records the existence of stereotypes and prejudices in children's constructions of racism and nationalism. Troyna and Hatcher (1992:195) observe, in the case of black children, name-calling is the most common expression of racism in predominantly white primary-schools. Connolly's (1998) ethnographic study of 5-6-year-olds in a multi-ethnic, inner-city English primary-school and Connolly and Keenan's (2002) study in Northern Ireland evidence racist harassment of minority-ethnic pupils in schools. In Zembylas's (2010) study in Cyprus, Turkish-speaking boys' response to marginalisation, exclusion and name calling by Greek-Cypriot children is to fight back. Devine et al's (2008) Irish study on constructions of otherness and racism found evidence of racist name-calling. Devine (2009) reported strategies children employed to 'defend' their friends if they were racially abused.

As children can develop negative attitudes towards ethnic difference from a very young age, it is recognized that schools should proactively address racial harassment issues. However, the complexity of the problem starts with defining racial harassment. Connolly and Keenan (2002: 347) utilize the EU Employment and Social Policy Council (2000) definition:

“An unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin... ..with the purpose *or effect* of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. (emphasis added)”

As Connolly and Keenan (2002: 347) highlight, this definition “helps to move our attention away from a conceptualisation of racist harassment that focuses merely on the motivations and/or actions of individuals to one that also implicates broader structures and institutions.” Schools, therefore, are the primary institutions needing to

develop and implement anti-racist strategies. However, evaluating the effectiveness of one such programme in England for 6-7-year-olds, Connolly and Hosken (2006) revealed further problems. Teachers admitted avoiding dealing with ethnicity issues directly as they felt inadequate skilled. Connolly (2007: 51) advocates looking for innovative ways to tackle ethnic division issues and promote positive attitudes to ethnic diversity within schools and the broader community. He also observes that research on racism tends to focus on visible difference while less attention is paid to groups with no visible differences, e.g. Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland (Connolly, 2007).

In this study, the salience of national identity in these children's lives is very pronounced. As will be seen in numerous children's narratives, Polish nationality is a source of valuable identifications for them. As shown in Chapters 4 and 5, some children expressed prejudices against other nations besides national preferences. I will, therefore, present narratives by children who feel unfairly treated because of their nationality (Chapter 5) and by a boy who experienced overt racial harassment (Chapter 7).

## **2.6. Languages**

In this part I focus on the role of languages in constructions of children's identities. I start with mother-tongue, move to second-language acquisition, and then discuss bilingualism.

### **2.6.1. Mother-tongue**

For ethnic minority groups, first language (L1) is an important marker of belonging to both diaspora and homeland. The maintenance of mother-tongue depends on how it is valued and transmitted to youth. New communication technologies contribute to new ways of native-language retention and transmission within transnational communities.

The role of the home-language appears to be most significant in the early years of migration. Empirical studies show that native-language preservation is important for the first-generation of immigrants, but for their children who learn the majority-language (L2), it may lose its significance (Gibbons and Ramirez, 2004; Ming-Tak Hue 2008; Colombo et al, 2009). Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 114) notice second-generation migrants become less fluent in mother-tongue. Children often have difficulties in reading; they speak home-language with parents but use main-language with siblings and schoolmates. Parents power to control extra-family linguistic influences on young children ceases at adolescence (Caldas, 2006). Regarding native-language (L1) retention, empirical data show that: “the more advanced the age at migration and the stronger the integration into the relevant ethnic context, the more likely it is that the native language will be retained.” (Esser, 2006: 92).

The use of mother-tongue in many community life domains contributes to its maintenance (Fishman, 1966; Smolicz, 1981). Research on Polonia worldwide shows declining commitment to mother-tongue preservation. For example, second-generation Poles in Canada often do not value learning Polish (Lustanski, 2009). Second- and third-generation Poles in Australia exhibit similar tendencies

(Drozdowski, 2007). Leuner (2010) observed differences in attitude to the Polish language between two post-war cohorts of Polish migrants to Australia. Poles arriving in the 1980s appeared less concerned about their linguistic heritage than earlier ones. MacSwan (2000: 27) identified the inter-generational process of language loss. Over several generations, declining maintenance of native-language inevitably produces a cycle from mono-lingualism (L1) through bi-lingualism to mono-lingualism (L2). Stigmatized minorities' languages are particularly hard to maintain.

Amongst diaspora places which preserve minority-languages and -culture are community/supplementary schools. Ethnic-minorities' schools across Britain are well documented (Strand, 2007). Their curricula typically cover language, history, geography and religion. Several have been researched, including schools established by African-origin refugee (Rutter, 2006), Bosnian (Nadje Al-Ali, 2002), Chinese (Archer, et al, 2010; Clayton, 2011) and Polish (Podhorodecka, 2003) communities. In the Chinese complementary-school, Archer et al (2010) found notions of culture, ethnicity and identity are re-negotiated between generations of parents, teachers and pupils. Clayton (2011: 17) recorded Chinese parents' motives for "retaining their mother-tongue was related to future career prospects, especially due to China's growing global position". In Germany, Erel (2002:146) considers Turkish mothers make attachments to the national collectivity in class-specific ways. One mother, for example, could afford a Turkish child-minder, whereas most depend on community groups and Turkish schools.

Immigrant parents' commitments to pass on their heritage may be resisted by children. Researching second-generation Greeks in Australia, Tsolidis (2008) found

children resisted attending “Greek school” and identification with Greek cultural markers like church or folk-dancing groups. Researching Bosnian children, Nadje Al-Ali (2002: 92) found they want to play on Saturdays and don’t want to be different from the other children in their school. This supports Portes and Rumbaut’s argument (2001) that children with fluent majority-language (L2) identify with host-country culture and may resist a parental culture they feel distant from, or imposed on, them. Nevertheless, children’s first-language remains important in migrant families’ transnational way of life (Orellana et al, 2001). Maintaining transnational ties frequently happens in mother-tongue (De Block and Buckingham, 2007; Bak and Bromssen, 2010).

I consider Polish-language maintenance crucially influences my study’s children’s identities. As shown in Chapters 4 and 6, one important issue is cultural heritage continuity. After the Second World War, the Polish Catholic Mission in the UK established parishes with supplementary schools to preserve Polish language, history and Roman Catholicism (Podhorodecka, 2003:139-144). Post-accession Polish families found these schools already existing, but their and old Polonia members’ values sometimes clash (Temple and Koterba, 2009; Galasińska, 2010). *Macierz Polska* (the Association of Polish Supplementary-schools) considers some new migrant parents have ambivalent attitudes towards teaching their children Polish, risking “deprivation of their Polish identity” (Podhorodecka, 2009).

Length of stay abroad seems important for children’s identifications. None in my study have been in Wales longer than five years, so are likely to be strongly bound to their own ethnic group and native language: especially those who started education in Poland and have comprehensive Polish-language skills. Maintaining robust

transnational ties with Poland reinforces this strong linguistic embeddedness.

Additionally, situational context crucially affects language-maintenance: in St Luke's case, the concentration of Polish-speakers in one setting.

### **2.6.2. Learning host-country language**

Regarding immigrants' adaptation and acculturation in host countries, majority-language acquisition has always been a major concern. In English-speaking countries, transnational migrants clearly recognize that learning English improves children's life prospects. However, misconceptions about children's second-language acquisition abilities abound. One is that young children can 'soak up languages like a sponge'. Research has shown that second-language acquisition may take as long as seven or more years (Collier, 1989; Cummins, 1997; 2000). The length of time and eventual outcomes of second-language learning depend on a number of factors like individual characteristics, formal instruction, languages spoken at home, family socio-economic status, psychological conditions, ethnic/gender discrimination, motivation, peer-group language and socio-cultural adaptation (Ball, 2011:18).

L2 acquisition is a more-or-less intentional investment (Paludi, 2002). The process involves an interplay of motivation, access and efficiency. Other factors are: stay duration, prior contact with L2 in country of origin, continued media contact with society of origin and linguistic, spatial and social distances (Esser, 2006). Children who enter a host-country's educational system are expected to be motivated to learn L2 for several reasons. Gage and Berliner (1992:135) argue: "To succeed academically, children must make explicit their implicit knowledge of language." Esser (2006: 98-102) considers, "There is no integration without language." And,

seeing migrant children's future prospects through language-ability lenses: "As the most important component of human capital for employment and income, education interacts statistically with language proficiency on the *labour market*." Typically migrants' employment demonstrates the 'language penalty' (Esser, 2006), as Poles in the UK exemplify (Kyambi, 2005, Dustmann et al, 2007). One discourse, with roots in migrant parents' language deficits, links children's language-learning with compensation for parental sacrifices (Suarez-Orozco, 2004). Less researched, however, are language-barriers' psychological costs to adults, sometimes severe (Bryceson, 2002: 51).

Polish economic migrant parents bring their children to the UK to improve their life opportunities (Eade, et al, 2007). In Kaczmarek-Day's (2009) small-scale study, parental narratives described learning English as a motivation to stay in the UK. Parents value English learnt in Britain over that learnt in school in Poland (MEN, 1999). Unlike transnational families with a post-colonial past (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002), Polish families do not have the history of imposed English.

### **2.6.3. Bilingualism**

It is widely thought that children develop into fluent bilinguals with balanced identities. Such individuals benefit by being embedded in both cultures: family-origin and destination-country. As previously mentioned, Suarez-Orozco (2004:192) considers that to gain 'transcultural identity', children need to "achieve bicultural and bilingual competences that become an integral part of their sense of self." Rumbaut (1994) formulated this interplay of bilingualism, language proficiency and identity formation. He argued that minority language adolescents in California with higher



proficiency in English identify themselves more as Americans. Those who identify more with their minority nationality were likely to have a higher proficiency in the minority language. The fluent bilinguals were likely to identify as ‘hyphenated’ Americans. For achieving a balanced identity, therefore, it appears important to maximize possibilities of developing high levels of proficiency in *both* languages.

As research shows, bilingual language development can influence identity – both positively (self-esteem) and negatively (identity crisis). According to Cummins (2000) and Baker (2000), successful bilingualism occurs when children are taught subjects at school in two languages. Literature identifies many benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy: higher majority-language proficiency, cognitive flexibility and more positive self-image (Cummins, 1996, 1997). Minority-language maintenance is considered crucial for maintaining cultural continuity and identity (Ball, 2011). Others, however, identify problems with bilingualism. Gibbons & Ramirez (2004) write about psychological risk, conflict and discomfort; Esser (2006) about low self-esteem and suggests that there is little evidence that native languages (L1) help in the job market or career prospects.

In school-based research, disadvantage experienced by L2 learners entering host-country classrooms is widely recognized (Brandsma, 2000: 34):

“Bi-lingual children, certainly if they are ‘starters’ in the second native language, are in a disadvantaged position in this respect. Instructional situations within the school context lay a double claim on their cognitive processes. Apart from acquiring and understanding words and structures (on an elementary level), bi-lingual children also have to try to understand and acquire the concepts and conceptual structures that are taught.”

From an EU policy perspective, young migrant children’s language disadvantage is explained by differences in accessing early child-care (Zentai, 2009). Some ethnic

groups, like Roma, are usually highly affected by institutional discrimination or poor access to pre-school facilities (Brandsma, 2000). In schools, two main strategies are employed for non-native children's L2 acquisition: immersion in L2, and further development of L1 before developing L2 (Brandsma, 2000: 34). The first strategy, without adequate reception and guidance in their own language, is widely criticised and considered to add to bi-lingual children's problems. In the second strategy, attention is paid to further development of the first language while gradually introducing the second (Carrasquillo and Rodriguez, 2002). The problem of how to improve school provision for bilingual children is much debated. Bialystock (2001, cited in Brandsma, 2002: 34) maintains that the quality of the language offered and timing between the acquisition of the first and second language are irrelevant. Cummins's (2000: 23) Interdependence Hypothesis, maintains that both L1 literacy and knowledge of L2 are important determinants of successful L2 literacy development. Moreover, neglecting native-language development may lead to semilingualism.

In intercultural education, L2 acquisition is considered especially important for building positive identity. Clement et al (2003:196) used the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) model for researching interactions between L2 confidence and identity:

“It is predicted that L2 norms will moderate the relationship between confidence and identity. Those high in L2 confidence and low in perceived normative pressure are expected to have the strongest identification with the L2 group, particularly if they belong to the minority group.”

Clement et al's (2003: 196) findings would indicate that for confident L2 use, the interrelation of context, individual, and social factors is complex. A promising view

with regard to bi-lingual development, is the Functional Approach (Tomasello, 2000 cited in Brandsma, 2000: 34). This highlights the importance of “communicative actions through which a person expresses his/her intentions towards another person.” Supportive social interactions and contexts are crucial for successful language acquisition and identity representation. Social language development is strongly influenced by peer culture, so may need balancing. As Miller (2003: 4) observes:

“Functioning within a tight network of first (non-dominant) language speakers has real consequences for many of the students, whose identity work using English may be further complicated, delayed, or not even a priority.”

While linguists and pedagogy experts deliberate how best to help bilingual children, the gap in our knowledge still remains. This deeply distressed some parents in my study, as exemplified by one mother’s narrative in Chapter 5. From a parental perspective, a prolonged period of schooling without noticeable progress in L2 causes acute worry.

My research in Wales extends beyond typical bilingual debates due to Welsh policy on bilingualism (WAG, 2012). According to Census data (ONS, 2011), around 19 percent (562,000) of residents in Wales aged three and over can speak Welsh. In Wales there is improved bi-lingual Welsh/English provision and an increase in Welsh-medium education (Scourfield et al, 2006). In English-medium schools, Welsh is taught as a second language and became compulsory for all pupils in Wales at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 in 1990. Around a quarter of schoolchildren in Wales now receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Therefore any children arriving into the Welsh educational system learn Welsh as a second language, for some as a third language. A special issue for Polish children learning English in Wales is the Welsh accent. Scourfield et al (2006) notice the accent issue is hardly

considered in research. Many Welsh-speakers pronounce English vowels in the Welsh way and English-speaking is varied by distinct local accents (e.g. North Wales, West Wales, Valleys or Cardiff). Polish children may speak English with a locally-specific Welsh accent. As will be seen in Chapter 5, children talked enthusiastically about learning Welsh in school.

Children's identity- and bilingual-development is related to their age and metalinguistic awareness. Gage and Berliner (1992: 135-6) maintain this usually emerges by the age of six; and improves during middle-childhood (Kemper & Vrenooy, cited in Paludi, 2002: 100). To Gage and Berliner (1992: 135-6) "to laugh at a pun or a knock-knock joke requires the ability to be playful with sounds or word meanings." Similarly, Corsaro (1997) observes that preadolescent children value verbal games, chants and rhymes. The ritual of sharing these is important for participation in peer cultures.

I am not interested per se in children's development of academic language skills, as measured by the English as Additional Language (EAL) scale in English, nor in assessment of their Polish language competences. This is beyond the scope of my research. Its focus is Polish children's identity negotiations in multilingual settings – as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) describe. I perceive language as an important instrument of agency and power in negotiating identities. Bourdieu (1993:68) wrote about significance of linguistic exchanges: 'As soon as two speakers exchange utterances, there is an objective relationship between their competences, not only their linguistic competence (their more or less complete command of the legitimate language) but also their whole social competence, their right to speak, which depends objectively on their sex, their age, their religion, their economic and social status, all

of which is information that might be known in advance or anticipated through imperceptible cues (he's polite, wearing an insignia, etc.)'. Engagement into, and choice of, languages in various contexts impact on children's identity formation process. Their language choices show their confidence and willingness to communicate either in English (L2) or Polish (L1). These children's complexity of disadvantage as non-English-speakers, combined with the high value parents accord English, can cause them to experience pressure to learn English. Their English competencies and related identifications, however, may depend on exposure to L2 and, crucially, their social networks. The density of Polish usage in home and social space may limit spontaneous engagement in English-language play, fun, learning, friendship-making. Appropriate strategies for migrant children's bilingual development involve complex issues, often situation-specific. My findings I discuss in Chapter 8.

## **2.7. Religion**

This part discusses religion's contribution to children's identity formation. I examine how families socialise children into religion, describe the Polish Catholic community in Wales and the transmission of Polish Catholicism to children.

Religion, along with nationality, gender, social class and cultural background, is a major factor in identity negotiations (Smyth, 2009). Grant (1997: 27) considers that "For many people and peoples, religion is their primary marker. It not only prescribes their ceremonies, rituals, even diet; it also provides the basis for their social and moral values." Religion is important for ethnic minority groups (Smolicz, 1981). Belonging to religious networks helps immigrants build social capital and

define ethnic boundaries (Sanders, 2002). The religion children are raised in may be their primary source of identity (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Parental beliefs and practices may play a crucial role in children's identity-formation, as apparent with Muslim children (Scourfield et al, 2012).

Parents influence children's identity through socialisation into religion. Studying Catholic families' lived practice, Orsi (2004: 92) identifies ways parents teach children rituals, prayers, behaviour in church and about guardian angels. Children's awareness of religious affiliation can manifest very early. In Northern Ireland, Connolly et al (2002) found some three-years-olds can distinguish Catholics from Protestants. In a comparative study of Polish Catholic, Ghanaian Pentacostalist, Bangladeshi-Muslim and Tamil Hindu communities in London, Souza et al (2012) observed children' religious practices and language and literacy development. As in my study, children's work showed the importance of religious rituals and practice in their lives. As Rutter (2006 ) observes, however, although migrants' religious affiliation is regarded as crucial, migrant children's religious upbringing receives little attention. In the under-researched area of children's religious identities, Hemming and Madge (2012) advise applying concepts of complexity and agency both to explore the multifaceted nature of religious identities and foreground children's role.

One way parents influence children's identity through socialisation into religion is their choice of a faith education. Unlike community schools, faith schools provide instruction in one religious faith (Smyth, 2009). In the Polish migrant community in the UK, a distinctive marker is choice of Catholic education. Polish supplementary schools partially provide this. Where accessible, Polish migrant parents frequently

chose Catholic schools as these have values closer to their own than community schools (Podhorodecka, 2009). Statistical data confirm this. As already mentioned, almost half of all Polish schoolchildren in Wales receive Catholic education. Additionally, Poles in the UK typically manifest Catholicism by church attendance. This is in line with the Catholic Church's mission to take care of migrant families (Lynch, 2008). However, Polish and British Roman Catholic habitus and religious practice differ. (I use Bourdieu's (1977: 72) definition of habitus as a structuring mechanism: 'the strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations'.) Polish Catholic leaders in Britain insist on Poles seeking their own parishes instead of attending English-speaking services (Ecumenical News, 2008). Poles exhibit strong attachments to Polish Catholicism's mixture of nationalistic patriotism and religion (Mach, 2000; Trzebiatowska, 2010). As Trzebiatowska's (2010) research in Scotland shows, this causes mismatches between their, and local Catholic priests' and parishioners', expectations. Although Catholicism helps Poles' integration into communities where they live, in English-speaking parishes, this can hinder it. Regarding community cohesion issues, as Hemming (2011: 64) observes, "religion also has the potential to exclude." Chapter 6 describes Polish families' distinctive practices at St Luke's church and community settings.

Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Krotofil (2010) see religion as a significant coping mechanism in migration situations. Particularly through ritual repetition, religion gives the feeling of constancy and stability, helping people feel at home when abroad. The Roman Catholic Church system spans across European borders, providing framework continuity. Catholic masses and ritual provide an anchor for Poles struggling to fit into British multiculturalism and religious diversity.

Additionally, the familiarity of the Polish Church and Polish-language mass give collective support.

Polish diaspora life in Britain was traditionally concentrated around Catholic parishes: places where old Polonia and new migrants meet (Galasińska, 2010). In this diasporic space, Polish language, national history and Catholic religion come in the form created by the Old Polonia members. Newly-arrived migrants may accept this symbolic space as it is or contest it (Temple, 2010). Observing migrant Poles' informal networks, Irek (2011: 17) argues that the Polish family can be characterised as maintaining “almost religious hospitality extended even towards strangers, in accordance with the saying that ‘the guest brings God into your home’”. Secularized Western capitalist societies (e.g. the UK) rarely practice this.

As parents arrived in Britain with a specific set of religious beliefs and practice embedded in Polish Catholicism (Trzebiatowska, 2010), these may be passed on to their children. In my ethnographic observations at two Catholic churches and related settings, I particularly concentrated on children's First Communion ritual. It appeared that transnational mobility influences the way these families perform their religion. Nonetheless, Catholic religious experiences, particularly Polish church attendance and events at the Polish Club, may impact on children's identification as Polish Catholics even though they have migrated to Wales.



## 2.8. Children's social worlds and friendship-making

This part discusses the importance of friendship-making in children's identity formation processes. After describing the nature of friendship for middle-childhood children, I review research on migrant children's social networks.

In middle-childhood, children are building their *social* identities by "entering society" (Jenkins, 1996). Peers help children learn how to deal with a complex world and provide a sense of adult-free autonomy (Corsaro, 1997: 186-188). Friendship is crucial for wellbeing. The *Good Childhood Report, 2012*, found friends second only in importance to family for children (The Children's Society, 2012).

Young children's decisions about with whom to socialise happen within boundaries legitimised through ideologies of care, protection and privacy (James et al, 1998).

Scourfield et al (2006: 16) notice "quite limited spheres of social interaction; those of the family, school, clubs perhaps, and immediate neighbourhood." For this age group, mobility creates an additional dimension of social extra-space. Migration further complicates this: "the migrant is dynamically placed in three locales and their intersection: the society of migration, the homeland and the migrant group."

(Anthias, 2002: 500). Diasporic children's transnational networks cover home (host country) and homeland (Bak and Bromssen, 2010). As kith and kin networks encompass global space, migrant children utilize communication technologies to overcome spacio-cultural dimensions (De Block and Buckingham, 2007).

Negotiating friendships appears to be facilitated by the extent of social capital a family holds (Coleman, 1994). Although wanting them to have friends and be happy, parents of young children initiate, limit or expand the choice (Ladd, 1992:16-19).

Family economic circumstances impact children's peer-relations. Single-parenting

and residence instability can restrict contacts (Patterson et al, 1992). Additionally, divorce has further consequences on a child's situation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 94-97). Allan (1996:100) demystifies friendship-making patterns, arguing that our agency in selection is only free within a framework restricted by work and domestic situation. Choices "are constrained by aspects of social organisation" over which we have limited control. Young children's friendship-making is inevitably embedded in adult-controlled structures. Lareau's (2003) study, based on Bourdieu's framework of systemic inequality (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), shows how race, gender, religion and social class impact on children's lives, making childhoods 'unequal'. Connolly (2004) exploring underachievement, compares boys' experiences from working- and middle-class families.

Children's friendship-making often happens through school contacts. Gender, class and ethnicity are crucial aspects (Adler and Adler, 1998). As Corsaro (1997: 164) observed, preadolescent children want their own age- and gender-specific peer-contacts as friends. They want to control who their friends are and share interests with them. Thorne (1993) and Corsaro (1997, 2003) identify gender divisions' importance in play; Renold (2005) in children's interest in romance. Although children appear free agents when choosing friends, they tend to interact with children of similar social class, education, race, ethnicity, age, religion (Davies, 2011: 78-9), exposing limitations to their agency. Besides structural and social limits geographical proximity is also an issue (Adler and Adler, 1998).

In developmental tradition, researchers studying peer networks focus on 'dyadic relations' and clusters of children. The classification sociogram's categories are: popular, rejected, neglected, controversial and average. In choosing friends, children

seek “accepting, loyal, genuine, non-judgemental, and highly admired” qualities (Howe, 2010: 104). Dunn (2004) observes that young children value reciprocity and mutual respect. From a sociological perspective, children’s friendship-making choices can be explained as “Us within the Other”. Bauman and May (2001: 30) argue, “One stands for the group to which we feel we belong and understand.” ‘Us’ is experienced through Durkheim’s “togetherness” and “common bond”. Important aspects for choosing with whom to interact include cultural codes and signs: appearance and verbal, non-verbal, and body-language communication. Corsaro (1997: 181) notes: “when children who have spent most of their time in different sociocultural groups come together for play, they often misinterpret each other’s styles.”

This appears to explain ethnic-minority students’ friendship choices. In developmental social psychological theory, friendship groups in ethnically diverse classrooms are based on similarity (Howe, 2010: 95-96). In peer relations, minority-ethnic status along with class and gender may mediate children’s marginalization in classrooms (Reay, 2006). Ethnic-minority students’ numbers influence children’s behaviour: if few, they mix in socially; if many, form “discrete cliques and friendship circles” (Adler and Adler, 1998: 200). Quillian and Campbell (2003: 560) explain the homophily principle in forming ethnic friendships within small racial minority groups: “students desire several friends of their own racial group for reasons of social support and they alter their friend-making behaviour to achieve this goal when there are only a few same-race friends in their school.” Quillian and Campbell (2003) recommend maintaining mix and balanced racial proportions in schools to maximize pupils’ friendship choices.

### **2.8.1. Migrant children's friendships**

Child-migration research confirms that friendship-making is important for settling, adaptation and wellbeing (Ní Laoire et al, 2009; Moskal, 2010a; Ní Laoire et al , 2011; Szalai, 2011). Devine (2009: 526) finds migrant children mobilise and accumulate social capital through making friends, while balancing “recognition versus rejection”. In schools, Esser (2006) considers ethnic students numbers and ethnic composition matter. High ethnic-minority density may hinder children's social integration. In British secondary schools, Crozier and Davies (2008) record South Asian youths' self-segregation strategy. Research in several European countries, across diverse groups of migrant adolescents, found that mutual cultural understanding helps to build friendships across national backgrounds (Szalai, 2011).

Building new ties and friendship networks in a new country may be a painful process – as Hoffman's (1998) memoirs describe. Dislocation requires children to find their own place in new, often diverse, communities and re-identify themselves. For some children, relocation causes mistrust in new environments and loneliness (Kirova, 2001). Children from some ethnic groups experience more prejudice and marginalisation: Roma, for example, are notoriously negatively stereotyped (Liegeois's, 1998 ; Szalai, 2011).

In migration situations, having friends is crucial for children (De Block and Buckingham, 2007; Ní Laoire et al, 2009; Moskal, 2010a). Friendships help with “feelings of inclusion and belonging” (Devine, 2009: 529). They may develop through phases of transition, starting with shared ethnicity. In Irish primary-schools,

Devine and Kelly (2006) observed boys developed inter-ethnic friendships based on sport and shared interests, whereas girls stayed within ethnic groupings. For Eastern European migrant children, the period of same-nationality friendships may be prolonged (Ní Laoire et al, 2011). Migrant children enter existing peer cultures as newcomers. How they present themselves is negotiated by where they came from (ethnicity and pre-existing social identity), besides individual identity (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Migrant children may build a sense of togetherness and close bonds through their shared activities in their 'imagined community' (Rose 1995: 426 cited in Kjørhold, 2003). In migration, when the immediate links with next of kin, siblings and extended family are broken, there is a need to fill the emptiness with new relationships. In this context, new 'semi-family' relationships can become important. Chapter 4 shows their importance for childcare; and Chapter 7, for children's ethnic friendships.

Children's friendship-making is individual, situational and context-specific.

Scourfield et al (2006: 14) found 8-11-year-olds' "readiness to identify with particular national, local or ethnic collectives can be seen as a kind of performance." Corsaro (1997) and Goodwin (1990) note the significance of conflict and disputes in children's shared activities. Outgoing children may have more friends than those with a negative self-image or experiencing lack of acceptance. Although peer-relations evolve over time, rejected or ignored positions often persist (Harwas-Napierała and Trempała, 2006).

Research with migrant children suggests they negotiate their identities by avoiding stigmatisation as 'ethnic others' (De Block and Buckingham, 2007: 55; Devine et al, 2008; Ní Laoire et al, 2009). Children want to fit into the majority group, not

represent themselves as ‘different’. However, the way migrant children form and maintain friendships in their host country is hardly researched. Recognizing children as active agents (Ní Laoire et al, 2010), I investigated how these children make sense of their social worlds (Adler and Adler, 1998). To gain insights into, their friendship circles, I elicited their views and observed their emerging friendship-making strategies and their relationship to identity negotiation. Chapter 7 describes these contextually-specific and dynamic processes.

## **2.9. Conclusions**

This chapter locates my own research within existing research on transnational childhoods and migrant children’s identity negotiations. Concentrating on studies within Europe and the UK, I have outlined the conceptualisation of migrant children’s identity-formation processes in childhood, social sciences and migration studies disciplines. I have explored recent critiques in the light of transnationalism and globalisation, research on various migrant-children groups and debates around construction of essential identity-markers, like nationality, language and religion: pivotal issues for children’s identity development. Recent discourses show that traditional views on migrant children and families are contested.

Before moving to the empirical material (Chapters 4 to 7), the next chapter outlines my ethnographic research methodology and reflections thereon.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Ethnography with children and their parents**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter describes methodological approaches adopted in this study. I start with my epistemological standpoint, as this underpins the research design. I then describe the decision-making process that led to the choice of research settings and participants, then, as my study involves children, its ethical framework.

Researching children in two educational settings, two churches and specially arranged participatory sessions brought up many issues, some anticipated, some not. It was crucial to gain parents' and children's informed consent, maintain privacy and avoid harm and exploitation throughout the research process. This brings me to reflexive accounts of my field relations. My role was multiple: researcher, teacher and assistant. This influenced my identity and the way I presented 'myself'. I reflect on the additional stress and responsibilities of doing community research as an 'insider'; and on how my status as a middle-aged woman and Polish-trained teacher influenced children's and their families' trust.

The next section describes how participant observation generated data: how I wrote fieldnotes, recorded interviews and utilized participatory sessions with children. I describe child-centred methods used to generate visual data: charts, diaries, videos and photographs. I discuss children's decision-making agency, participation and data-production in this research – and its limits and potential ethical pitfalls. I outline

the process of analysing data gathered through fieldnotes, interviews and children's work. I discuss validity and reliability issues and in relation to my research findings. I conclude with reflections on the whole research process.

### **3.2. My epistemological stance, reflexivity and children's participation**

This research emerges from my own personal biography and interest in childhoods. My migration from Poland in 2005 provided a stimulus for researching transnational childhoods, as experienced by Polish children in Wales.

Approaching the study, I was guided by the belief that the 'real' material world is understood and represented by socially constructed discourses. As a qualitative researcher, I "seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:8). Through discourses we generate 'facts' and 'truths' about the environment we are embedded in. (The previous chapter includes discourses relevant to migrant children's identities.) These 'realities' are partial and fragmentary (Atkinson et al, 2003). Being at the core of the transnational worlds my study's children inhabit, globalisation, mobility and dislocation (Castles and Miller, 2009) contribute to a multiplicity of fluid and incomplete 'truths'.

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) observe, language affects how we see 'reality', but is not a transparent medium. Cross-language research (mother-tongue Polish and second-language English) adds diversity of meaning, increasing reality's complexity and fragmentariness (Temple, 2008a, b). My generated data are, therefore, an incomplete version of reality. Like Atkinson (1992:17), I believe "there is no complete record to be made". Instead of seeking 'objective' truth about Polish



migrant children's lives in Wales, therefore, my research explores their constructions of everyday identifications. Specifically, I seek to understand their perspectives on what it is to be a Polish middle-childhood child in migration space. Although partial, my data have value (Atkinson, 1992), by giving meaningful insights into transnational childhood experiences. Detailed accounts of social settings significant for children give 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973). My challenge is how to present the generated data and engage others in dialogue about it. Reflexivity about my multiple roles helps with this.

### **3.2.1. Reflexivity**

Besides being the author of this thesis I am a part of its research. Like Corbin and Strauss (2008: 10), I recognize that:

“Each person experiences and gives meaning to events in light of his or her own biography or experiences, according to gender, time and place, cultural, political, religious, and professional backgrounds.”

Making the design, I was aware that presentation of children's constructions of their worlds would be *our joint creation*. As Atkinson (1992: 9) observes: “The field is not merely reported in the texts of fieldwork: it is constituted by our writing and reading”.

Reflexivity is a constant imperative of my study. I am aware of my own close identification with participants. Being a Polish migrant, Catholic, a mother generationally close to some parents, and sharing experience of Polish education, their discourses about childhoods in Poland were familiar to me. However, my stance is opposite to the developmental discourses teacher-training and practice exposed me

to. In Polish schools, children's voices are peripheral. In Poland, there is no legislative obligation to do anything in relation to child participation (Hodkin and Newell, 2008). Moreover, school practice stems from different pedagogical traditions. The hierarchically-based authoritarian style of teaching is still dominant over democratic teaching methods that promote cooperation and child-friendly methodologies (Messing et al, 2010). My conceptualisation of childhood (and especially transnational childhoods) places the child at the centre of these discourses (James and Prout, 1997). I see children as competent agents, having rights to be respected and views to be listened to. That is why this research centres around children's constructions of identities.

### **3.2.2. Children's participation**

My commitment to engaging children in research was central to this study's design. The New Social Studies perspective on children conceptualises children as competent agents and respects their rights. Efforts are made to actively engage children into the research process and help them express their subjectivity and views on their experiences (Hill et al, 2004). Participatory research is recognised as a valuable tool to generate rich data. However, "it is more important to pay close attention to *how* participation is enacted" (Holland et al, 2010:373). My initial intention was to involve children as researchers (Kellet, 2003). This is appealing especially for research with disadvantaged and marginalised groups (Freeman, 2007). However, in my own research, I have to agree with Gallagher's (2008) assertion that often adults form a design and children are only involved as participants. I tried to synthesize "the ideal and the feasible" by being realistic when prioritizing aims and

goals (Bryman, 2004: 274). For example, I had to balance what was possible within the frames offered at both educational settings. The initial conversation with St Luke's Headteacher made me aware of time and space allocation difficulties and how additional activities would burden these children. Research with children at the centre of data production, analysis and dissemination would therefore prove infeasible. All this modified the research design into a more traditional form.

However, I managed to retain some elements of children's involvement in research and some control over dissemination. During my time with them, I explicitly reminded them that *they* had the power to decide whether to participate in prepared activities, and asked for their verbal consent. Children's participation in research raises both access and ethical issues. I discuss these below.

### **3.3. Research design**

As ethnography enables researchers to present children "as competent interpreters of the social world" (James, 2001:243), I considered ethnographic design best suited for holistic exploration of these children's identities and transnational childhoods (Punch, 2007). It helped address research questions about children's everyday identifications and belonging in everyday spaces. I utilized the typical ethnographic practices Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:3) describe; "participating, overtly or covertly in people's lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions." My ethnographic observations focused on core elements of a child's immediate microsystem: school, home and neighbourhood environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; 1992).

### **3.3.1. Selection of settings**

The study was conducted in two school settings in Pen-y-glo, an urban area of Wales: a Roman Catholic primary-school and a Polish community Saturday school. In two small-scale studies preceding my doctoral research, I identified the important roles of Polish social networks for families, and Saturday schools for children.<sup>1</sup> The findings from my previous research indicated that many Polish families' lives were revolving around the Polish Catholic parish and Polish Club. The statistical school census data for 2010 confirmed that nearly half of all Polish school-age children attended Catholic schools in Wales (see p.13, section 2.2.2). Therefore, it appeared most likely to find a significant group of children in one of the Catholic schools. Such choice limited the sample to families who value religious upbringing for their children. It does not therefore represent all Polish families. I observed that some migrant families' social life concentrates around the Polish Club, and that Catholic practice seemed important. I decided, therefore, to extend my observations to Polish community gatherings at Polish Club and two Catholic churches. I also used a local library for participatory activities. Below I present these settings' characteristics. All the names of participants and all five research settings: two schools, two churches and a library are anonymised.

#### St Luke's

This is a state-maintained Roman Catholic primary-school. Located in the most ethnically diverse part of Pen-y-glo, it serves socially mixed populations and is attended by children speaking 21 different home-languages. 15% of children are

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<sup>1</sup> In 2007 I interviewed newly arrived Polish adolescents for my MSc thesis, titled: 'How Polish migrant-worker's children experience British secondary school'. In 2009 I conducted a pilot study with migrant parents in Wales and Poland exploring their experiences related to their children's education.

black minority-ethnic (BME). Poles (also 15%), however, comprise the biggest minority-language group. In September 2010, when my fieldwork started, there were 38; two more arrived in November. Most are spread evenly across all years, but year 1 (six-year-olds) has ten in a class of 25: 40%. Two full-time Polish assistants are employed. This school is very well organized to cater for children of all ethnicities. The ESTYN inspection on the quality of education recognised this school's outstanding practice regarding inclusion of children who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds (ESTYN, 2009a). The school is proud of its multi-cultural image and diversity. Once a week, a Polish assistant teaches an after-school Polish language class. Discipline is a high priority and much stress is put on children's manners and politeness.

#### Saturday school

This is a Polish community supplementary-school. It serves children from the town and surrounding area, some being driven up to 20 miles. Like other supplementary schools, its distinctive identity centres around Polish-language preservation, Polish history and Roman Catholicism (Strand, 2007), so continues the heritage of the Polish Educational Society (Macierz Szkolna) (Podhorodecka, 2009), although its founders never registered it with this charity.<sup>2</sup>

The school year starts in September and finishes in mid-June. There are three lessons each Saturday morning. In 2010-11, there were three volunteer teachers, one assistant and 50 children. The children are divided into three age groups: 5-6, 7-8 and 8-12. Additionally, from October to April, a group of twenty children attend

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<sup>2</sup> I became aware that many newly established schools by new migrants from Poland across the UK are not registered with Macierz Szkolna. During a Conference at the Polish consulate in Manchester in December 2011 I learnt that the influx of newly arriving children from Poland have sparked controversies about Saturday schools' identity and future.

preparation classes for their First Communion. The building is too small to accommodate a large group of mixed-age children: there is no playground or waiting area for parents. Admission is on a 'first come, first served' basis, so several children were refused enrolment in September.

### St Luke's church

This Roman Catholic parish serves Catholic families in the area. It is attended by children from three Catholic schools – one primary and two secondary. Liturgy for primary-school children takes place during the 10am Sunday Mass. Polish parishioners can obtain information about the parish in Polish, on the Internet. The parish has a large active community with many groups and societies. The Parish Hall serves well for social celebrations throughout the year.

### The Polish parish

This generally serves the whole diverse local Catholic community in the area. As there are two Polish priests, services like confessions, prayers, First Communion and baptism are also available in Polish. The Saturday evening mass and 11am Sunday Mass are in Polish. Both old diaspora members and newly-arrived families belong to this congregation. Leaflets in Polish are distributed at the church and published on the Internet.

### The Local library

For one week in February 2011, I hired a room in a local library near most children's homes, so convenient for parents. Participatory sessions with a mixed-age and -sex group of ten children took place there. The premises comfortably accommodated all participating children. Besides table-based activities (writing, reading, painting and games) children could play on the floor. The entrance lobby allowed parents waiting to collect their children to stay indoors.

### **3.3.2. Accessing research settings and participants**

I started approaching research settings in early 2010, sending access letters to St Luke's and Saturday schools. In June, I applied for a CRB check, which I received in August. In July I wrote to both priests asking for permission to undertake observations in churches, then in September placed announcements. In early January 2011 I visited the library and was asked for a letter explaining my purpose.

(Appendix 2 includes copies of all letters etc.)

### **3.4. The study participants**

Within these five settings, 29 children were active participants (see Appendix 1).

Their parents gave consent for me to undertake observations of, and generate data with, them (see Appendix 2). Fifteen of these children attend St Luke's: eleven girls and four boys from Years 4, 5 and 6, aged 8-11. Fourteen attend Saturday school: six girls and eight boys, aged 8-12 (of whom, seven attend other Catholic state

maintained schools and seven community/local authority maintained schools). Twenty-seven are Polish-born, and have lived 1-5 years in Wales. Because they are an integral part of their groups, the sample also included two Polish-speaking non-Poles: Slovak-born Roma girl, Sara, attending EAL sessions at St Luke's; and a British-born boy with a Czech mother,<sup>3</sup> learning Polish at Saturday school. Twenty-two children have both parents in Wales; five, only single-mothers: their fathers (one excepted) live in Poland. All but one set of parents are economic migrants. Many (especially mothers) are educated to or above Matura level (equivalent to three A-Levels) in Poland. In Wales, most have menial jobs, e.g. production-line factory workers, cleaners, builders and care-assistants (see Appendix 4).

Although the central participants were children, some adults took part in the study. These included parents, St Luke's Headteacher and bilingual assistants, and Saturday school teaching staff, with whom I had formal and informal conversations and interviews.

### **3.5. Ethical framework**

Ethical considerations are crucial in research with children. I submitted an Ethical Approval form to the School Research Ethics Committee, secured permission to conduct research with children and their families (SREC/638) and followed their recommended recruitment and consent procedures. I was constantly aware of the need to protect both my participants and the generated data. The ethical issues I discuss in this section fall broadly into two groups: formal requirements and on-

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<sup>3</sup> He is the only non-migrant child, but I include him in this study because he was so eager to participate in all research activities.



going concerns during conducting the study. The first section concerns fundamental ethical considerations about conducting research with children (BERA, 2004; Wiles et al, 2008). The second is my reflexive account of how I dealt with ethical tensions during the research. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) call this ‘ethics-in-practice’. Informed consent, for example, is an open process, continuing long after gaining parents’ signatures (Renold et al, 2008).

### Formal requirements

Following recommended procedures, I sent letters outlining the research aims and ethical considerations to both schools (see Appendix 2). Obtaining these two institutions’ approval initiated a whole array of contacts with parents (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4). To parents, all documents/letters were in Polish.

The British Educational Research Association’s (2004) ‘Revised Ethical Guidelines for Research’ requires researchers to seek children’s fully informed consent. This allows them to form their own views, in accord with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Articles 3 and 12.

I approached this research intending to minimize the disproportionate weight given to adults’ consents. That adults direct children to participate raises ethical questions. I therefore designed a consent letter to children, which the University Ethics Board approved. However, in both educational settings, the combination of school guidelines and my multiple role (researcher, teaching-assistant and de facto Polish confidante) often made it impractical to ask children’s consent in the field. In these circumstances, parental consent had to suffice. However, I did not abandon the

practice of gaining children's consents. In the participatory sessions, I sought children's *ongoing consent*. I emphasized that participation in all sessions and choice of activities was voluntary.

At each participatory session at the Saturday School and Local library I asked for children's *verbal consent* and explained and reminded them that, although their parent(s) had given written consent for their participation in this study, it was up to them to decide which research activities they would be willing to participate in. I made explicit to children that being a researcher was an additional role to my role as their teacher (at Saturday school) and bilingual assistant (at St Luke's). During our sessions children did exercise their freedom as to whether or not to be involved in the research activities I had designed. All 29 participating children were informed that, as a Cardiff University student, I would carry out a study which would look into the lives of Polish children who live in Wales. Each child was given a ballpoint pen with the Cardiff University logo and leaflets about the university. I explained that the books I had given to them, disposable cameras, notebooks for diaries and all materials used during our sessions were funded by the university. Three paired-interviews took place at the university premises, which children enjoyed. However, time and resources precluded me from undertaking more research activities there.

Throughout this study, confidentiality and anonymity issues were paramount. I explained to children that their identity would be protected by pseudonyms. They could choose their own. (I used the comparison of pop stars' nicknames). I provided each child with an envelope with their name on and a card inside to write their pseudonym. Analyzing these, however, I realized that some had disclosed their pseudonyms to friends, as three children chose identical names. Additionally, several

boys' pseudonyms were multi-word computer-game-related names, combining upper- and lower-case characters. After discussion with my supervisors, I changed their pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, clarity and readability.

### Ethics-in-practice

In their participatory research with children, Renold et al (2008) identify four aspects of maintaining consent: consent is situated because it is locally negotiated; dialogic, because it depends on inter-subjective relations; political, because it is informed by a political stance; and always in process. In my research, parents' and participants' ongoing consent was required for data generation, analysis and dissemination. The negotiations of obtaining consent mirror researcher-researched power dynamics. I understand power in Foucault's terms: "a diverse, ambivalent web of relations, rather than a unidirectional force of domination" (Gallagher, 2008: 144). The power-relations in my research make children 'own their data' as they maintain their 'right to withdraw'. If children refuse to participate in activities, disengage from cooperative work or take work home before I could record it (as some did), data could not be guaranteed available for use.

Gaining and maintaining parental consent throughout my research required skillful balance: 'gaining trust' was paramount. The ESRC (2005; 2010) framework notes that fostering relationships which sustain ongoing ethical regard for participants should be favoured over highly formalized or bureaucratic ways of securing consent. In practice, this meant patience.

In both settings, I organized short introductory meetings and distributed letters and consent forms to parents. My first weeks in the field were a kind of a ‘probation period’ in which parents were making up their minds about me. Additionally, encountering parents only once a week made collecting consent forms difficult. Some parents forgot to bring them, two lost them so needed replacements. At Saturday school some children were absent for several weeks, leaving me worried that not enough children would participate in the study. Eventually, of the 18 parents I approached at St Luke’s, 15 gave consent; and at Saturday school, 15 out of 16 (although transport problems caused one boy’s withdrawal after a term).

In community-based research, data protection and confidentiality are major concerns. Inadvertent confidentiality breaches are always a risk. Fortunately, neither children nor parents reported any. However, despite explicit statements in the consent letter about anonymity related to data-collection and dissemination, some mothers had anxieties. One said: “You are going to judge us”. I explained this was absolutely not my intention. At the Library sessions, some mothers looked through their children’s ‘Book[s] about Myself’. They may have been concerned that other parents in their close-knit community might see their children’s photographs. I assured them that children would take all materials home on the last day of the project. Children generally appeared selective about disclosing information about family life. Unavoidably, I intrude into this privacy domain through children’s photographs. Interestingly, except by two families, I was not invited to visit homes. Although I stepped into several homes when collecting children, I did not want to cross parent-defined privacy boundaries.

My research was not concerned with looking into family relations. However, there were always possibilities that my research questions would trigger unexpected statements about children's family life or reveal issues related to parenting. In such an event, the priority would be safeguarding children. This required me to be vigilant, critical and reflexive when looking at particular family situations (Holland, 2011:206). When I processed children's written work, I found two children had written, amongst happy statements: "I am sad when my mum spans me" and "I am unhappy when she shouts at me". The first statement did not raise my concern as, based on my knowledge about this family, there were no indicators of abuse of the child. (As a teacher, I have been trained to spot these.) I had been conducting observations of the child and family in various settings for ten months, and had known the family prior to the research. Nevertheless, respecting the child's rights and dignity at first I considered approaching the child. However, as this had been written in February and I first read it in June, when starting to analyze child-generated material, I debated whether questioning the child after such a long period of time might cause harm. Without disclosing this information, I therefore asked the Polish assistant about both families' domestic relations. She assured me these were positive – which corresponded to my observations (e.g. the children's behaviour, evident happiness and physical wellbeing, and how the parents were with them). I concluded that the risk of abuse was virtually non-existent but the risk of harm from an investigation was high.

When I discussed the issue with my supervisors, I reflected on what might have been done differently had I encountered this situation on the day of writing the statement. Issues related to children's wellbeing and welfare – particularly physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse or neglect are clearly stated in Cardiff University

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy (2010:18). Maintaining the safety and welfare of a child was my core priority in line with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008). These judgements are always difficult and in this instance I felt that the circumstances did not merit further action.

In accordance with ethical guidelines, my intention was to enable them to maintain children's control over the involvement in the participatory part of the study. I wanted to *engage children not to pressurize them* into participation. My role was to balance *everybody's right to participate – or not*. I repeatedly emphasized the voluntary nature of their participation in any activities and that non-participation would bring no negative consequences: "This is not a school project to be assessed or completed. It is not a priority to accomplish a task." Some children, however, found this 'open choice' statement confusing due to my multi-role relationship with them. It may be that for some, my teacher role dominated their perceptions of me. This I discuss in the next section.

### **3.6 Field relations**

What happens in the research field affects the ethnographer (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Coffey (1999:116) notes: "Fieldwork is a site for identity work for the researcher." I share Jenkins' view (1996:2) that "Identity is often in the eye of the beholder". I unavoidably bring into my research my own identity: situated and continually negotiated. There is wide agreement that social researchers' biographies *do* matter and impact on their research. "The researcher's feelings, values, beliefs and social position are central to the creation of the ethnographic narrative." (Lumsden, 2009: 498). Smart (2007:3-4), doing family research, wrote about dealing

with inevitable “emotional tides and personal feelings”. However unique, my own biography parallels my adult research participants’. In the UK, we all belong to one social category: ‘Polish migrant’. Although there is a generation gap between most parents and me, we share Polish nationality, language and experience of migrant life in Wales.

Like my respondents, I am strongly bound to my first language, Polish. In research settings, shared mother-tongue, non-verbal communication, embeddedness in cultural details and dress-code ease acceptance by and communication with compatriots. Additionally, being a teacher, woman, mother and Catholic were all enabling factors opening doors to educational settings and to participants. My teacher’s identity and familiarity with school environments helped earn parental trust and access to children. My gendered identity helped in these schools’ feminized environments. Of St Luke’s 30 staff, only four are men; the Saturday school has none. With several mothers, my ‘single mother’ identity proved an ‘ice breaker’. Being Catholic let me fit comfortably into church settings and Catholic school symbolism and practices. Whereas English-speakers called me “Aleksandra/Alexandra”, most Polish participants used “Pani Ola”.

### 3.6.1. Multiplicity of roles: researcher, teacher and aunty

My researcher's role was supplemented by additional field roles. Pollard and Filer (1996: 294, cited in James 2001: 252) described the researcher as a 'stranger' in school settings: "Here was an adult who was often at school, but who did not behave like a teacher, a parent, dinner supervisor or classroom assistant". My multiple roles, however, combined *all of these*. At Saturday school, I was a *teacher*; at St Luke's, an *EAL assistant* in class and *supervisor* in the playground. In out-of-school settings, I was an *aunty*. I walked children to/from school, gave them lifts and went shopping with them. At Saturday evening social gatherings, I ate and danced with them. On Sundays, I prayed with them in church. Some children, mostly younger girls, called me 'aunty'. In Polish family culture, such non-blood-related 'aunty/uncle' relationships are quite common. Seeing me, some girls would hold my hand or want to be cuddled. This physical closeness, natural in a Polish environment, e.g. Saturday school, was thought odd, perhaps deviant, at St Luke's. The Polish assistant told me she also felt closely watched by other teachers when she started there.

My observer role allowed the necessary distance for collecting contextual material. My active teacher and facilitator role supported the children's generation of specific thematic data. My aunty role allowed me to gain intimate insights into children's cultures in everyday contexts. This multiplicity of roles and frequent and intensive social interactions contribute to the rich data I generated in the study.



### 3.6.2. Power relations

My role-multiplicity problematized power and authority issues in relation to both children and adults. My research was meant to be carried out with children but in the field I had to rely on adults: parents and teachers. Getting access to settings was not the only uncertainty. Commencement of fieldwork opened a whole array of power negotiations. On many occasions, I had to re-negotiate issues crucial for my research. These problems are foreseeable when conducting research in children's cultures because power differentials in adult-child relations are socially embedded (Greene and Hill, 2005: 10-11).

In the school settings, I was undeniably an adult in power, with a range of responsibilities. To deny this would be to dissatisfy those who permitted me access to schools, and some children themselves. In educational settings I was *expected* to assist and help the children. Often they themselves positioned me as a more knowledgeable adult when asking my help: "Can you draw this for me?" "How do you write this?" In the playground or walking to the sports centre I was a supervisor. In such situations, as an adult in power and Polish-speaker, I sometimes had to sort out disputes between children. Having me around, Polish-speakers felt empowered and often resisted my attempts to switch the conversation into English.

In the school settings, I tried to lessen my adult's power over children by being 'less teacher-like'. I was always with children, rarely with adults. At St Luke's, I withdrew from adult's responsibilities into my observer role whenever other adults were around. This detached, passive role let me focus on children's interactions. In school assemblies, mainstream classroom activities, Maths and Sports lessons, I could intensively observe children's bodily reactions, emotions, engagement, self-

withdrawal etc. If children interrupted my observations, I directed them towards a class teacher or other adult, saying: “I have to listen and follow what your teacher says”. This helped re-balance power as they perceived me as one of them, dependent on another adult’s decision; and made a comfortable niche for observations.

Nevertheless, despite my less powerful position in the classroom, children exploited my adult power: some asked me, not the class teacher, for permission to go to the toilet, or complained about headaches to stay with me instead of going to games.

### **3.6.3. Positive relations with participants**

While managing multiple roles and power relations, I constantly prioritized building balanced and positive relations with my participants. Although I could not expect children to regard me as a ‘friend’, our frequent encounters developed close relations. Two St Luke’s girls trusted me with secrets about boys and intimate thoughts. After the one paired-interview session at University, both were highly disappointed that we would not go again there. Similarly, two girls who attend both schools were more open to me than other children, as they saw me twice as often.

However, a boy whose house I often visited repeatedly withdrew from conversation with me. As for parents’ attitudes towards me, over the course of my research most progressed from cautious distance to relaxed familiarity. At both educational settings, I became accepted as a member of staff and a woman from the Polish community to share jokes with. Most mothers trusted me with gossip and even passing messages or money between people at St Luke’s and Polish Club.

#### **3.6.4. Presentation of self**

However exciting, community research involves approaching new people and may be stressful. Work in this field is both physical and emotional (Coffey, 1999). It starts with the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959). I wanted to look trustworthy so observed the schools' unwritten dress-codes. I observed how teachers dress and brought trainers for walking to games and a jacket for playground supervision. I always wore my wedding ring to school, church and the Polish Club.

In Polish society, first encounters can be stressful: should I address someone formally (Pani/Pan/Państwo) or informally? There is no clear rule, not even age-seniority, but it must be decided on the spot. Initial conversations with Poles in Wales usually progress through a similar sequence of questions about migration: length of stay in Wales, work, accommodation. During such first encounters, we control the extent to which we reveal our identity to strangers and try to make a good impression. In the field, this means I must constantly control emotions and think of the right thing to say. This makes me feel stiff.

It is also important to speak Polish that fits the conversational partner (Temple, 2010). Language is influenced by class and marks cultural differentiation (Bourdieu, 1992: 54). In their research with post-war Poles in the UK, Temple and Koterba (2009) found that generational-belonging and migration-period differentiated the language Poles used. Moreover, Temple and Koterba (2009) argue that research findings are influenced by how researchers use language. Meanings and even accounts can be translated differently.

When in the field, as I became aware of circles of belonging and power struggles within, and tensions between, groups, I found myself constantly thinking about what

to say to whom. As my priority was to build trust and credibility as a researcher, these tensions made me physically exhausted.

Although developing some degree of personal relationship with some adult participants, I had to maintain my status as a researcher (Graue and Walsh, 1998: 75). With two Polish teachers, we became friends, bringing confidential discussions and researcher's interest into potential conflict. I had to both control my generated data to protect *all participants* and think about *their particular* data. As both have children in my research, I had to distinguish knowledge given to a confidante from that gained as a researcher. There was also the matter of physical tiredness. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays were essential fieldwork days: community meetings, gatherings, informal events happen, also Saturday school and church celebrations. This left no time for personal and family life. Besides stressing my family, I was mentally exhausted before the week even started. This was the price for valuable ethnographic data.

### **3.7. Participant observation and interviews**

For my research, ethnographic methods of participant observation seemed most suitable (Hammersey and Atkinson, 2007). In this field, my role was multidimensional: an atypical adult/teacher/assistant/supervisor. Consequently, I could not employ a strict research strategy but used Corsaro's (1997: 29) "reactive method" of field entry': waiting for children to react to me, then observing. This required my withdrawal from (presumed) adult authority whenever possible. When children wanted me to act/react/decide on anything I would say: "I have to do what your teacher said". This put me more on the children's side, whereas other teachers

forced unpopular decisions on them. This technique enabled me to be “a part of children’s activities without affecting the nature or flow of their peer interactions” (Ahn: 2010:98).

**Table 3.1 Participant observation sessions**

<b>Settings</b>	<b>Days/hours in the field</b>
St Luke’s School	29/201
Saturday school	35/140 (including Participatory sessions)
Polish Club gatherings	11/35
St Luke’s Parish	16/23
Polish Parish	10/10
	Total: 101days/ 409 hours (some days cover two sessions during one day)

Over the school year, I carried out observations at two school settings: St Luke’s and Saturday school, supplemented by participation in Polish community gatherings at St Luke’s and Polish parish (see Table 3.1). Observations at St Luke’s parish included children’s Sunday masses, and special masses e.g. Day of Nationalities and First Communion. I participated in after-school children’s and mothers’ prayers and masses. Additionally, I made observations during social events at St Luke’s community hall, e.g. St Andrew’s Day/Andrzejki and Carnival Ball/Ostatki (before the start of Lent). An overview of gatherings at Polish Club I include in Appendix 5.

### **3.7.1. Fieldnotes**

My fieldnotes document the world ‘out there’: my construction of the children’s social world, so only one version of the field (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Technically, I was unable to write notes while doing my observation (Emerson et al, 1995). Even though children knew that I was a researcher, it would have been disruptive to take notes in the class or playground. I was never free to take even short notes in the classroom. Even more complicated was to capture children’s actual words in playground. During activities with children I attempted to create mental notes, and write down the phrases they used as soon as possible. The precise words and language used were a matter of great importance, so I tried to write down the exact dialogue: ‘the actual words’. During breaks, I was continually jotting words or verbatim quotes or names. However, it was not easy as the assistants’ room proved too public for note-taking: many people enter during breaks.

After each day’s fieldwork, with the help of my jotted notes, brief descriptions and materials brought from the field I would write an extended version of the day. I would recall and visualize the whole day from the moment of arrival in the setting. For example, at St Luke’s, from 8.30 am, the moment I parked the car: whom I met first, whom I walked to school with etc. Imagining being back there greatly helped me to reconstruct sequences of events and encounters with children and adults. To make my fieldnotes comprehensive and vivid, I meticulously noted people’s names and places, dates and times. I clearly distinguished between participants’ own words, kept in quotation marks, and my own reconstructions of conversations. I included context details and tried to convey non-verbal expressions, and hesitations. I ensured

that my fieldnotes were securely stored at home, so no third party would be able to read them.

I reconstructed the field mostly in my first language, Polish, unless participants used English. Unless interaction was all in Polish (Pl), I marked language used, e.g. English (En) or Welsh (Wel) in fieldnotes. My fieldnotes are on both paper and computer. Handwritten notes allowed me to include drawings of the playground or mark children's positions around their classroom table. With the paper notes, I could keep artifacts from the field, e.g. school newsletters, church announcements, leaflets, etc.

### **3.7.2. Interviews with parents and staff**

Over the school year, I interviewed parents and staff at their convenience (see Table 3.2). Parental availability determined the interviews' times and places, e.g. EAL classes in the local centre, a café, the university. In these public places, interviewees were not relaxed and there were severe interruptions during recording. Only for the Headteacher was the list of questions sent beforehand. The other interviews were semi-structured. Pre-prepared questions were on parental views on children's adaptation, language, friends and after-school time. The group interviews (four mothers at St Luke's and five at Saturday school) elicited their views on children's language(s) and adaptation in Wales. In two cases, the interviews took place at home, with children present. The atmosphere was more relaxed but as children were near, listening intently, mothers seemed selective in the topics discussed (Sime, 2008b).

**Table 3.2 Interviews with parents and staff**

Group interviews with mothers	2
Individual interviews with parents	6
Individual interviews with St Luke’s staff	5
Individual interviews with Saturday school staff	3
Total:	16

### **3.7.3. ‘Walking time’ and ‘waiting time’ talks**

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) write that ethnography is everything in the field. Indeed, although not anticipated in my research design, ‘walking time’ talks generated extremely valuable data. Ross et al (2008) used mobile methods in exploration of environments and life-space in home-neighbourhoods. In my case, these were non-recorded ‘walking conversations’ with mothers and children on the way to and from parking, school, after-school, shops and church. Outside school in the mornings, some conversations were just a few sentence exchanges; others were longer. Usually mothers paid attention to their children’s manners. If a child did not greet me, the mother would say “Co się mówi?/What should you say?” prompting a child to say “Good morning” to me. I learnt about younger siblings in prams, family care arrangements and what was important for children in the day ahead. Their faces indicated how they felt, e.g. smiling faces suggested they were anticipating something exciting. Walking from school, mothers would ask, “How was it at school today?/Jak tam było dzisiaj w szkole?” Children would briefly relate things



important to them. Sometimes mothers reflected on past issues related to their children, e.g. First Communion last year. Because of my migrant background and their presumption that I ‘understand’, they also sometimes brought up more delicate topics, like their family’s situation in Wales. These routine ‘walking talks’ were times of intense data collection. I could record, although only mentally, the normality, everydayness and attachments. These mobile methods allowed for encounters with children’s immediate and extended family members, e.g. grandparents visiting from Poland, collecting them from school.

Parental ‘waiting time’ had an immense value for me as I could quickly approach parents to talk, collect consent letters or issue/collect cameras. ‘Waiting time’ can be highly socializing for mothers. At St Luke’s where the sense of community is strong I could observe social relations within the group of five or more mothers. The ‘walking’ or ‘waiting’ conversations were less frequent at Saturday school. However, mothers’ waiting time for children was often extended. Some mothers would come early to collect children and after lessons liked staying for a few minutes to ask about children’s progress and behavior or just to chat. All of these adults knew I was a researcher. I do not include in the thesis any confidences they had shared with me.

#### **3.7.4. Parental questionnaires**

In spring term short questionnaires (in Polish) were distributed to parents: 24 were returned. The Parental questionnaires were designed to provide insights into these families’ background and socio-economic situation. Questions covered: number of children in family and their ages; parents’ education in Poland, their occupations in Wales, whether any attended English language courses, and plans about their children’s secondary education (see Appendix 3).

### **3.8. Children's Participatory data**

This part explains in detail how I encouraged children to participate in the study and what kind of data was generated. Participatory research methodology was well suited to this study's research questions, as it allowed me to explore both individualised and collective paths in these children's identity negotiations.

#### **3.8.1. Children's participation**

The whole array of data generated by the 29 children falls broadly into two categories: individually-produced (at home and in sessions) and collectively-generated (only during sessions). Individually, children created data at home in their photos and diaries. I was not able to assess how much parental input was in children's work. For example, one girl said: "my mum did take a good shot here". In the sessions, 'individual' generation of data happened within the group context. Except for the Library sessions, I was on my own with a group of children. This context may have made children associate our participatory sessions with school and classroom tasks. As I observed, the presence of other children brought both welcoming inputs and distractions. Some children became inspired by others: this is seen in choice of similar themes or colours for drawings. Sometimes however, children complained about being disturbed and expected my intervention: "Proszę pani ona ściąga ze mnie! (Miss she is cheating!)" Such reactions contrast to the sharing cooperation when children were collectively generating data (e.g. drawing maps) or playing on a floor (see Appendix 8).

I found that using participatory methods puts additional responsibilities on the researcher and demands more skills. This approach favours child-centred methods to encourage children's participation (White et al, 2010). Generally, my teaching experience helped me to obtain children's participation. A cognitive-developmental approach in participatory research is crucial (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000). Recognition of gender and age differences was important, e.g. an 8-year-old boy may participate in a task differently to a 10-year-old girl. In practice the dynamics of the group required me to constantly reassert all children's *right to participation*. Additionally, the generated data are more sensitive than that collected merely from observation and traditional interviews. Visual data in charts, diaries, videos and photos may hold highly sensitive information about children and their families. I was aware of such ethical issues, and utilized the frameworks and professional guidance for visual researchers outlined by National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) (Wiles et al, 2008).

The principle that children may (or may not) choose to engage in participation sessions made me more reflexive on power differentials and on who is 'in charge' in my research. As Graue and Walsh (1998) note, a researcher should provide a supportive and child-friendly environment. Thomson (2007: 210) advises that children need 'their space' during sessions. White et al (2010) observe that visual methods may bring elements of child-empowerment into adult-child relations. However, participating children may have their own agendas: they may just want fun and socializing. Therefore giving children freedom may risk *not* generating meaningful data (Gallagher, 2008; Holland et al, 2008).

My own experiences are of contradictory nature, due to my teaching experiences in Poland and multiple roles in this research. I facilitated the research both as a teacher and researcher but children might have perceived my role primarily as their teacher. On one hand, as their teacher, I had inevitably power over them – as embedded in school adult-child relations. On the other hand, as a researcher, I experienced the vulnerability of the participatory data-generation process. Indeed, being young children, participants had their own ways of taking over power during our sessions. As Morgan (1998:10) describes, each group had its own dynamics: “it is your focus, but it is their group”. My groups at the Library sessions and Saturday school consisted of 3 to 10, mixed-sex children, aged 8-12, with various spans of concentration, ability and personal characteristics, e.g. shy or dominating. The bigger the group, the more power was on the children’s side, and less on mine.

As the facilitator of participatory sessions, I had to make on-the-spot decisions to make every child feel comfortable within the group, so willing to participate. Not all children in working groups were close friends. They know each other so may be considered established groups. However, I noticed that close bonds at St Luke’s community appeared to significantly affect children’s conversations. I noticed that familiarity, being ‘close friends’ may make children disclose ‘secrets’ or even enable a friend ‘to finish’ a sentence when otherwise ‘silences’ would remain. Knowing each other’s families makes nondisclosure of personal material difficult or even impossible. For example, in a group commenting on the ‘most important photos’, someone spotted that one family member was missing in the family photo. The author of the photo reluctantly had to explain that her teenage brother had refused to go to the park to be photographed.

In my study, children's participation or non-participation is valued equally. Their choices expressed 'what was important for them': so what is of recognizable significance for my study. If they made a choice which meant 'I am not interested', I had to acknowledge this as an answer. As already mentioned, I insisted that they could *continually retain the option of non-participation* in research activities I had designed. Inevitably, this priority gave children power over me, substantially unbalancing child-adult power-relations in my study. I experienced the limiting aspects of freedom not to participate when, towards the end of my fieldwork, I compared the data generated by each child. As, on principle, children were not pressed to do any research activity, they could always opt out and play. As a consequence, the data are not complete. Moreover, some children decided to take their work home immediately after sessions so, apart from my observation fieldnotes, I have no record of what they were doing during the session. Additionally, children also influenced whether or not I could tape-record. When I said that I would like to turn on the recorder, put it in the middle of the table, it was up to them to agree. Some children were less willing to talk.

The next section presents the data jointly generated with children, in detail.

### **3.8.2. Card choice exercise and interviewing children: group and paired interviews**

#### Sorting Card choice

One of the activities which all children accomplished was a card sorting exercise. To learn about these children's individual and collective identities, I adapted Scourfield

and colleagues' (2006) card-sorting exercise (from their study on children's identities in Wales). All 29 children completed the task, working separately not to be influenced by other children's choices. Some of their comments were recorded. In this three-step activity, participants first were given cards with gender, race, religion, nationality and belonging labels. Then in the second part, person, pets and hobby cards were added; and finally, in the free choice part, there was an empty card for them to write something important. This activity allowed children to choose what is of primary importance for them (underlining the first choice – the most important – label), express their own preferences and, by choosing labels, point to primary traces of their identities. Some children, however, chose several 'most important' labels (see Appendix 7).

#### Interviews: group and paired interviews

On the outset of my research design I decided not to carry out one-to-one interviews with children. To elicit children's views, I instead facilitated focus groups and paired interviews with pre-existing friends. All interviews followed the schema of guided discussions to achieve a better understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs (Morgan, 1998). This method is based on three strengths: exploration and discovery, context and depth and interpretation. Children create individual meanings and, by participation and interaction with others, collective meanings.

**Table 3.3 Interviews with children: group and paired interviews**

	<b>Group Interviews</b>	<b>Paired Interviews</b>
St Luke's school sample	10	2
Saturday school sample	11	1
Total:	21	3

In the group interviews, I adopted a flexible and unstructured approach elicited by a main general theme (see Appendix 5). To initiate discussion I would start with an open question, e.g. "Tell me about your school". Usually, the group discussion was preceded by a few minutes' activity on a worksheet/drawing. Soon group dynamics would begin to steer the conversation: they were setting the agenda towards what they wanted to talk about, what was important and significant for them. By taking the position of an observer, I tried to facilitate but not lead focus interviews (Morgan, 1998). Sometimes the prepared charts were guiding more structured format, e.g. "On Sunday morning I..." I tried to maintain a permissive atmosphere so children could feel free to share their views. Sometimes I intervened to clarify or expand their thoughts, or come back to their narratives after having had their speech interrupted by another child.

Three paired interviews followed the same organisational procedure. On Sunday mornings, I collected children from their homes, drove to the university and showed them where "I go to school". Then we sat in the booked room. However, all three interviews were different. Two older boys were using their mobiles to make

arrangements with friends about the rest of Sunday while we were discussing charts. Conversation was very informal and not recorded. Two 10-year-old girls became very preoccupied checking every room at the student centre, looking at people. They were unfocused and chatty about everything as usual. I did not record this. The third interview with the youngest mixed-gender pair was recorded. They were as disciplined as in class, working on their tasks while carrying on conversation amongst themselves and with me. These paired interviews generated in-depth insights. They expose children's individualities and age-specific interests, for example, teenage addiction to mobile phones.

### **3.8.3. Visual data generated by children**

Visual methods are becoming increasingly popular in research with children. The visual methodology is widely used to portray childhood migration experiences (Punch, 2002; De Block and Buckingham, 2007; Den Besten, 2008; White et al, 2010; Moskal, 2010b). Visual data can capture what is fragmentary but important for children's understanding of their reality. This is a valuable tool to study children's identities in fluid, multiple and changing childhood. Most of the children in this research found it 'fun' to take part and were very excited about the prospect of choosing what is 'important for them'. The table below gives an overview of visual data generated by the 29 children in this research.



**Table 3.4 Overview of children’s visual data**

<b>Data generated by children</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Sets of charts and drawings	29
Sets of photographs	28
Diaries	12
Videos made in classrooms by children	11
Maps collectively drawn	2

Charts and drawings

The charts, mind-maps, diagrams and pre-prepared worksheets along with children’s drawings and photos all contribute to a ‘Book about myself’. This is a product of each individual child (see Appendix 8). I designed the pre-prepared materials (worksheets and diagrams/charts). I utilized interesting examples of work from other studies with children, for example by Ní Laoire et al (2009); Den Besten, 2008; Tatlow-Golden et al (2010), Wright et al, (2010), and books by Damon and Hart (1988) and Hobday and Ollier (2004).The materials were designed to focus on three categories constituting the development of child’s identifications: myself, my social-self and my place in the world.

The self-description categories: active, social, psychological and physical are presented and expressed by children in self-descriptions, e.g. “I am...” on the front page of the ‘Book about Myself’ or ‘This is my life’ (Events chart). The second group contains children’s expressions of social self, e.g. ‘My best friend’, ‘Birthday

lists and invitations cards' (lists of real and imaginary guests). The third group, 'my place in the world' is represented in work on, for instance, 'My home and places I visit' or 'My way to school' (see Appendix 8).

### Photographs

All 29 children were given disposable cameras (28 were returned). Giving them the status of a 'reporter', I asked them to photograph whatever is the most important for them. They were generally enthusiastic about this activity. Out of 28 sets of photos (497 photos) four general categories emerged: People, Places, Pastimes, Pets and a group of photos with special meanings distinctly related to transnational migrant childhood. The biggest single category was people (163 photos): a third of all photos, a similar proportion to those in While et al's (2010) study in Ireland. These 'People' photos include family and friends. Geographically, people 'here' in Wales and 'there' in Poland are very distinct. These photos also evidence children's material culture (Corsaro, 1997: 109). They capture the everyday texture of their childhood experience, e.g. the computer is a communicative tool for a child. Moreover, the type of a computer purchased by parents ('old fashioned computer', laptop or an Ipad) or the kind of game children play: Xbox or Internet games, indicate the ways parents introduce children to material culture, what they are able to purchase and what kind of encouragement of certain kinds of play these children are introduced to (Corsaro 1997: 115).

## Diaries

All 29 children were given notebooks and encouraged to keep a diary. Keeping a diary can be a creative exercise for a child, a means of showing feelings, expressing perspectives, and describing peer culture and the background to their lives (Punch, 2002). Compared to their photo-taking or drawings, this data generation is modestly represented in my study. I collected 12 diaries from children, photographed and returned them. The average diary entry is four pages: the longest being 13, the shortest just a few sentences. The majority of children wrote about everyday activities at school, after-school and visits to and by people. Some entries include highly sensitive material, e.g. feelings towards people, and often disclose names and places. Two are written in English, one with some Welsh words; the rest are in Polish (see Appendix 8). Some pages are decorated with drawings. Some have stickers or cut-out pictures from magazines about Poland.

## Videos

In this research, video material generated falls into two groups: videos made by me and videos produced by children. I made a record of children's performances and events at Saturday school, e.g. Independence Day, Nativity Play at Polish church and New Year Fancy Dress Ball. Videos made by children in both participatory sessions allowed them a more active role in data generation. The videos, however, seem of limited benefit in generating data that address the study questions, i.e. identity issues. Rather, they prove that, when given freedom, children at this age will go about things in their own ways. Children's videos document the friendships' importance in choice

of partners for this kind of play. Children found video-making great fun. I had to keep control over them as some teased others or ran away with the camera.

### Collectively-drawn maps

Children enjoyed drawing together (see Appendix 8). I facilitated two collective mappings of children's localities in two settings: one group of children from St Luke's, one from Saturday school. The latter was different as children are driven to the area in cars, once a week, so are unfamiliar with the neighbourhood and had to ask and guess what is around. The St Luke's group worked cooperatively, recognising and discussing elements on their way to school. These children, with a few exceptions, walk the route through their neighbourhood, daily. The group confirmed important places previously marked on individual children's charts, e.g. shops, churches, traffic-lights, bus-stops, petrol-station, etc.

### **3.9. The analysis process**

My fieldwork generated a considerable volume of material in both Polish and English, mostly hard-copy. Some I transcribed, photographed and scanned onto my computer, but much remained only as paper. I kept everything and created two file systems: hard-copy and electronic. To organize these, I made files for each child-participant. Within these, are children's work (including artefacts), photographs and diaries; pupil profiles; memos of how they present themselves in classroom, playground, church; and what was said about them by others: peers, teachers – all sorted by category. I also made files of each of the different types of data: fieldnotes,

interview recordings, interview transcripts and videos. These are sub-divided by subject category (girls, boys, mothers, fathers, class teachers, bilingual assistants, English-speaking assistants) and settings (school, classroom, playground, church, neighbourhood, home).

So much of the material is handwritten or hand-drawn that I found it easier to store and retrieve it by manual methods and only later transfer it to computer.

Consequently, I did not use any software recommended for recording and organising qualitative research data (e.g. NUDIST). I considered the advantages of close contact with original fieldnotes, children's work and unprocessed data outweighed the disadvantages: foremost of which was the considerable time needed for organising by hand. Once analysed, written and coded in memo form, materials were stored on computer, easily accessed using Windows 7. For safety, I keep a backup copy on an external disc, updated regularly.

In ethnography, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 6) describe: "The process of analysis should not be seen as a distinct stage of research, rather, it is a reflexive activity that should inform data collection, writing and further data collection." For analysis I employed the 'grounded theorising' method developed from Glaser and Strauss's (1967) 'grounded theory' (Corbin, and Strauss, 2008). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:158) distinguish 'grounded theorising' (an activity) from 'grounded theory' (a product of this activity), observing that "theory is developed out of data analysis, and subsequent data collection is guided strategically by emergent theory".

Generating concepts is a process requiring repeated detailed readings of the data material. Intensive coding and indexing help reveal meanings. In practice, phases tended to overlap. While reading, writing-up fieldnotes and transcribing audio-visual

materials, my analytic ideas were developing so I would also be writing analytic memos. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:151) describe, “The construction of analytic notes and memos therefore constitutes precisely the sort of internal dialogue, or thinking aloud, that is the essence of reflexive ethnography”. As Coffey (1999) recommends, I incorporated into my fieldwork journal analytic notes and memoranda as well as my own personal feelings as an ethnographer. (I actually started this journal prior to fieldwork and systematic data collection, and continued it throughout the whole process, including writing the thesis.) The analytic process included interactive reading of all the data gathered. For qualitative analysis, data can be read literally, interpretively or reflexively (Mason, 2002: 147-149). Reflexive reading appeared best suited to my research question.

Coding is the central process in data analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Emerson et al, 1995). Initially, I used open coding as I wished to avoid pre-established ideas and concepts. As all material was of potential interest, I had no pre-established categories. This method helped me remain focused on fieldnote data while developing linkages to published data from two social science disciplines: migration and childhood studies. This open-ended approach, however, led in so many different directions that it threatened in-depth investigation. I therefore focused on ‘key’ themes (e.g. patriotic performances at Polish Club). Concurrently, reflexive reading and coding helped me to start developing initial theoretical memos. The initially unrelated incidents and patterns of events now began to develop into broad analytic themes.

This coding and memo-writing brought me to the next phase: more focused and analytic themes. I identified a set of core themes for further analysis. First, I broke

down the body of fieldnotes into manageable sets. I grouped segments of data on each theme so I could explore what was said and what the meanings were. This helped identify emerging issues. I now started to integrate memos from analysing children-generated data in relation to contextual and background information from fieldnotes. I then began adding other sorts of data collected, particularly children-generated data: charts, writings, drawings, diaries and photographs. Visual materials constructed by children, are *their* images to represent what is important for them (Rose, 2001). By engaging the children in interpretation I was able to learn about the meanings attached to their visual representations. I could therefore look at children's generated data through their eyes.

I now had to decide which themes to take as primary focus and which to exclude. As the amount of data collected, especially children's work from the several settings, was growing rapidly, I had to step back and decide: what is my larger question? How can I identify, then clarify, the story these children need to have told?

At this point, due to being deeply involved in fieldwork, my focus was on looking for evidence of how children manage 'sameness' and 'difference'. I began to look for children's specific representations of sameness and difference within their varied school, church and home-neighbourhood settings. Having already had collected rich children-generated data, I was able to start triangulating this with my ethnographic notes and interviews. I focused analysis on how nationality/ethnicity, Polish-language use, English-language competence and Catholic upbringing shape these children's experiences.

In my thematic analysis, I scrutinized how these young children construct their identities, and how their identities are constructed by others, in various settings.

What specific identity traces (e.g. Polish-speaking, Catholic churchgoing) do they manifest? I sought to identify participants' routine activities, repertoires, strategies, performances and rituals. Another section of analysis addresses unusual and problematic events and unexpected outcomes (e.g. children's responses to adults' expectations or stereotyping). Thematic analysis also involved understanding patterns of action and the norms and rules, both official and informal, which guide the everyday conduct of children's upbringing. Some are culturally distinctive. The analysis of children's and parents' actions included analysis of their spoken actions: what they said, how they talked to me and to each other and what language they used. Although I did not undertake narrative analysis, I use extracts from participants' talk as illustrative quotes.

To sort and organise my data I often used diagrams, charts and cognitive maps. This strategy proved fruitful as it both helped diversify the data produced and generated rich insights. Diagrams and charts, in particular, greatly helped in analysis of children-generated material, as it produced consistent and easily comparable data (see Appendix 7).

This use of multiple data collection methods is an example of triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The variety of methods employed in this study permitted approaching data with multiple perspectives in mind. "The central strategy here is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call the 'constant comparative method'." (Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:165). I made sure I did not privilege any method over another (e.g. narratives in interviews over participant observation or children's work). Similarly, I analysed people's comments in interviews, spontaneous conversations, overheard during observations and in different social situations (e.g.



children and mothers walking to school) in the same way, and accorded them equal value.

By triangulating data collected from several sources, I was able to cross-check the characteristics of specific social phenomena. For example, to learn about children's social worlds, I triangulated children-generated data (e.g. "My best friend" charts, "A list of children for my (imaginary) birthday party" and "My favourite activity") with information about friends revealed by children's diaries and photographs. This was contextualised by my fieldnotes and (in several cases) parental interviews. Anthias (2011: 213) recommends analysis of social processes on several levels: experiential, inter-subjective, organisational and representational. The combination of children-generated material, observations and narratives enabled me to do this.

For example, to map children's social worlds I mapped the social spaces they occupied into four platforms where social acts happen: school, after-school, family and transnational space – where their long-distance friends are (see Appendix 7). Mikołaj's social-world chart, for example, lists several classmates (including three Polish) as "school-friends". Of his five "after-school friends", three are Polish. "Family" consists of his parents: he is the only child. He has a long-distance friend in Poland, his cousin, Romek, with whom he talks daily on Skype. This mapping of children's social worlds helped to explore children's practices and outcomes: *how* and with *whom* they spend time. It also identified their several ways of friendship-making.

Besides being a cognitive activity, ethnographic analysis is a form of writing (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:190). In this study I consider the theory emerging from the analysis to be of equal importance to the ethnographic

descriptions and explanations provided. The production of text is also important. In presentation of data I use excerpts from the original fieldnotes as illustrative material and in vignettes, as Emerson et al (1995) and Atkinson (1992) recommend. Although I had to translate them from Polish to English, I hope these preserve the flavour captured from the field. I incorporate fieldnote extracts into polished text in a visually distinct way.

Using visual methodologies in research with children generates visual materials, like children's photographs or diagrams with names on, which could compromise anonymity. Their incorporation into text must therefore be very selective. Anonymity protection is paramount. Consequently, although looking at children-produced videos helped give a general picture, I felt they could not be disseminated so were a low priority for my already pressured time. Similarly, although evidence from children's photographs reinforces my findings, in some cases, ethical considerations prohibit their inclusion into text. Altogether, nearly 500 photographs are collected. I am not interested in their technical or aesthetic aspects, but their subject matter. From *whom and what* these children chose to photograph, important themes emerged.

Doing ethnographic study with children means to "employ children's own accounts centrally within the analysis" and seeing children as "informed and engaged social actors" (James, 2001:250-1). One of the limitations of my study is that, due to restricted time and resources, children were not involved in analysis. However, I did involve children in the selection of material. I asked them, for instance, to choose the three most important photographs out of the twenty they had taken; and to distinguish their first choice in the card activity about identity traces (see Appendix 7) with the first choices underlined.

Identifying what was a primary importance for children was crucial for my analysis, but without their input I could only partially interpret the import of their photographs. These photographs show the everyday background texture of their childhood experience: from people (parents and, especially, younger siblings) to things (e.g. computer, bicycle, sports equipment). The importance of computers both evidence material culture and emotional contact with friends and relatives in Poland. In such ways, photography proved a particularly effective tool for children to communicate feelings hard to express in other ways. Systematic analysis of visual material, especially photographs, was very time-consuming. I soon realised that due to time constraints and the huge amount of data I already had, I could not analyze videos as well.

### **3.10. Validity, reliability and generalizability**

In qualitative study, reliability is unproven (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The research report should enable informed readers to draw their own conclusions about the findings' validity. Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to make explicit the methodology, report my research in full and maximize transparency in the conducting of this study. In the methods chapter I therefore included statements and descriptions about sampling decisions, sample sizes, data-collecting operations, data-base summary, analytic strategies and software used. I also included the key data displays supporting main conclusions (e.g. tables, charts and children's work). As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) observe, triangulation gives a broad overview of the topic issue in question but does not guarantee its validity.

I attempted to validate emerging findings by consultation, discussion with EAL assistants and Saturday school teachers. This fits within the tradition of ‘respondent validation’ (Bryman, 2004: 274). These people recognised their practice from my descriptions and the settings, and our discussions helped clarify some of the ideas. However, this was not able to assure full reliability as individuals could unintentionally influence the process of conducting this thesis, so distort it. The practice of involving assistants in analysis is controversial and two-edged. On one hand, I had to control my generated data to protect *all participants*; on the other hand, think about their particular data. I had to distinguish knowledge I had gained as a confidante from that gained as a researcher. However, these consultations greatly helped me to sort the abundant data and turn my material into a thematic analysis.

I consider the children’s oral accounts and the artefacts they produced add special value to this research. They provide information about events and their lives in Wales, revealing what is important for them. I examined them as evidence of social phenomena and their shaping by particular contexts. They are therefore ‘valid in their own terms’ as they add to sociological knowledge (Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:120).

Only recently is the term ‘Polish migrant children’ appearing in the literature on new migrant or EU children in the UK. My study, however, has specific interest in identities of Polish children who live in Wales, so generalisation is not of primary concern. As the settings for observations are specific, general representativeness is not assured. However, as I attempted to develop theoretical insights, the strategic selection of cases to maximize relevance was of primary importance.

Participants are children brought up in Polish families, so exposed to Polish language and heritage by participation in the Polish diaspora community in Wales. By attending a school with a sizable group of Polish children, Saturday school attendance or Polish-speaking churchgoing and involvement into diaspora life, these children may be more exposed to collective national identities than other Polish children who do not have these experiences, or whose parents prefer other cultural values. However, these children may be representative of other Polish migrant children in the UK who are brought-up in similar circumstances.

### **3.11. Conclusions**

This methodological chapter has outlined and explored the theoretical framework which informed my research methodology and the way I have conducted research with children and their parents.

I began (sections 3.2 -3.6) with outlining my epistemological stance and the importance of reflexivity, then described how I approached the participants in the several research settings. I explained the way I incorporated ethical principles into my on-going practice. I described how I commenced my fieldwork in September and continued it for the entire school year. I discussed the complexity and implications of my multiple roles and responsibilities – researcher, teacher-assistant and ‘aunty’ – in these various research settings.

In sections 3.7-3.9, I gave an overview of the process of generating and analysing ethnographic data, starting with explaining how I conducted my ethnographic participant observations, interviews and fieldnote writing. I reflected on the

participatory and child-centred methods employed in this research; then explained the way I analysed the comprehensive data generated by both children and myself.

Having explored the several means of gathering data about these Polish children's lives in Wales, I now move to the presentation of my findings. The next chapter opens the empirical part of this thesis.

## Chapter 4

### Being a Polish-born child in Wales: negotiating multiple belonging to Poland, Polish diaspora and Wales

Who are you?  
A young Pole.  
What is your badge?  
The white eagle.  
Where do you live?  
Among my own [people].  
In which country?  
In Poland.

‘Catechism of a Polish Child’ by Władysław  
Bełza<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with exploring the salience of nationality in these migrant children’s lives. It examines children’s and parents’ narratives about negotiating lives as Polish nationals in Wales. Being born in Poland and living in Wales makes a special context for these children’s identity-negotiation process. The concepts of nationality, homeland and territory, national memories and patriotism have different meanings for children who are brought away from their homeland. Children’s thinking and feelings are filtered through the lenses of the migration context: life in another country. By living abroad, their ethnic trace of identity is realised in a different way than were they living in Poland. It may be less or more exposed,

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<sup>4</sup> I have started the chapter with a quote from a ‘Catechism of a Polish child’ by Władysław Bełza (1901). In Poland, this old poem is still present in both the obligatory school curriculum and popular culture. In Wales, it is recited at patriotic celebrations. This shows the continuity of national, religious and patriotic tradition in Polish children’s upbringing.

experienced as an asset or liability and a source of pride or shame. These children deal daily with ‘otherness’ in their new Welsh environment, and at the same time feel emotionally connected with their homeland through visits and transnational networks.

In this chapter, I explore how these children construct being Polish in their everyday lives and how parents’ practice adds to their transnational identities. I start by setting the context and describing parental constructs about family migration, prioritization of ‘work’ and networking within the diaspora community. Next, I explore how children feel about *being Polish* in the context of Saturday school and Polish community national and patriotic celebrations. I discuss how they deal with their Polishness in school and public-space contexts and construct – and sometimes try to minimize – their ‘otherness’. At St Luke’s school, the Polish group is sizable: easily distinguishable as a national group. I supplement children’s accounts with my observations in this setting. Finally, identifying nationality as a pivotal trace in these children’s identities, I focus on how they describe their relationship to Poland as a territory, their birthplace and where many of their ‘significant others’ live.

#### **4.2. Polish parents’ constructions of their new lives abroad: work, diaspora networks and children’s futures**

Belza’s poem (above) states that a ‘Polish child’ lives in Poland “among my own [people]”. I will therefore explore parental constructions and rationales about why these children are growing up in Wales, not Poland. The ‘Polish migration phenomenon’ (discussed in Chapter 2) is well represented in parental narratives about their rationale to leave Poland and stay in Wales. Most consider family



migration offers their children a 'better future'. The majority of families in this study conform to the typical migration scenario: father/breadwinner comes first, wife and children follow (Ryan et al, 2009; White, 2010). However, in two cases, mothers initiated the migration chain, not fathers. In this study, there are five single mothers. Ryan's (2009) comparative study of Irish and Polish women's use of family networks found families act like magnets for migration, women sometimes being pioneers. My study confirms this.

These parents' decisions were based on access to migration capital (networks) and assessment of their household needs. Kaczmarczyk (2005, cited in Kicinger and Weinar, 2007: 27) considers the individual's position in the labour market the most important influence on deciding to migrate. Most parents I spoke to consider their decision forced upon them by poverty: "I had to leave Poland, I didn't have any choice", "didn't have a chance to get a job", "I wouldn't be able to earn enough to buy a flat". Some talked of job scarcity in their professions in Poland and lacking connections to get them. ("Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" is widely prevalent). Some thought the Polish government had failed its citizens. ("There is no future there"). These parents' construction of the push to leave Poland challenges the so-called 'voluntary economic migration' notion. Consequently, many take their destiny into their own hands and migrate. The risk is low and the gain clear: earning more than in Poland. As some parents confirmed, their family's migration to Wales required neither lengthy preparation nor accumulated resources. Throughout the data, the theme of work availability is consistently present. ("I am in Wales because of work"). This pull economic factor is overriding. Many parents talked about how they value having jobs and better family incomes in Wales (see Appendix 4).

As data show, several mothers emphasized the ‘family staying together’ aspect motivated their coming with children: as Ryan et al (2009), White (2010) and Kaczmarek-Day (2009) found. This interview extract confirms this:

“I came to Wales with our children two years ago, because my husband *had been working* in Wales for three years already and he thought he’d *have the job* here for many years to come. But... (with sarcasm) you know, I came here so the family stays together... but now I’m on my own again, just the same like in Poland, because he *lost this job* in Wales. The company offered him *work* near Manchester, so he comes home every Friday night and goes again on Sunday night... (laughing) But it’s still a bit better than when I lived in Poland and boys could see him just twice a year!

...When I came I didn’t know anybody here but I know English so I’m independent, some [Polish] people were surprised when I myself went to school, enrolled children without asking anybody for help.”

She also described managing daily family life with three children in Wales, especially schooling, housing, shopping and arranging social benefits. They sold their flat in Poland to buy a house in Wales as the return option is closed: “I can’t keep on changing children’s schools”. Although ‘work’ pulled them from Poland and now separates them in the UK, she constructs the family situation as ‘better than it was’. Ironically, family reunion kept her in a single-mother role, as in Poland, and increased her everyday struggles. Paradoxically, the EU job market makes reunion *possible* but *insecure*. Moskal (2011) argued that EU social rights focus on workers’ mobility but pay less attention to supporting migrating family members. Children’s migration does not ensure family unity as employment is the unavoidable priority, and is precarious (Standing, 2011).

During the course of my fieldwork, I observed how unregulated and unsocial work-hours impact on childcare arrangements and children’s after-school socialisation. Many parents have work-agency jobs, with unknown hours: “robota na telefon/work on the phone.” This precariousness makes family life very vulnerable. One

afternoon, when I was walking from St Luke's with a mother and daughter, her hotel manager called. She turned to her daughter:

“You will go straight to Kasia, I just got a call. I have to go to work now.” (Turning to me) “I am so tired, I was there already in the morning, got back home at noon, cooked something then came to school to collect her. And now I have to go back. The hotel is full this weekend but there won't be any work for the next week. So I have to go now.”

This mother works unfixed hours, often afternoons and evenings. Although affecting childcare, she manages this. She knows, without telephoning, that her Polish friend Ala is at home with her three-year-old, so takes for granted that her daughter would go there for the afternoon. Subsequently, I learned from this girl that she does not enjoy going to Kasia, as she is “very spoiled” and “we only watch TV”. But when necessary, she goes; her father collects her in the evening. (Children's after-school time is discussed in Chapter 7). This mother has to prioritise ‘work’ over family life. If she refuses, she may lose the job. Although tired and complaining about her hectic day, she adheres to the socially-expected ‘efficient Polish housewife’ role: “at home, dinner has to be cooked, the house cleaned, washing done and clothes ironed”. Heath et al's (2011) study on Polish transnational families practices and women's roles notes that the time-consuming practice of cooking traditional Polish food (from scratch) adds to emotional labour. This mother's everyday practice exemplifies Standing's (2011:126) observation about women being under multitasking pressure: being available at short notice for precarious out-of-home jobs and caring for family. As I observed, Polish networks around St Luke's play a supportive role in childcare provision under migration circumstances. Only some of these network relationships are family bonds. In this community, clusters of families, who work together, send children to the same school, buy food at Polish shops and go to church, form

networks. Informally ‘popping in’ for coffee and ‘having a laugh’ and children staying in each other’s houses overcome isolation and help morale. Over this research, however, I learned that home can be a secret space: open only for some. I was not invited into many of the children’s homes.

The St Luke’s community network helps strengthen families’ identification. Bonds are built by mutual understanding (e.g. people ‘like *us*’) and reciprocity (e.g. providing childcare). One single-mother, heavily reliant on others’ help, told me how special her new relationship with another Polish family is. The thick bonds in this community are especially pronounced during celebrations like Imieniny (Name Day) or Christmas. One father told me “There were *so many of us* at Christmas Eve that we couldn’t fit all the chairs around the table in my living room and the children had to eat upstairs.” He said that, unlike the first years of post-2004 migration, more families now stay in Wales at Christmas because over the festive season travel to Poland is expensive; also better-paid jobs are available. These newly-built but dynamic bonds contribute to strong identification with this Polish migrant community. In one father’s words: “we are all the same, we have the same money, nobody is getting more or less.” This may imply that the community gives him a sense of ‘shared identity’, and that background from Poland is less salient than ‘how we live now’, as ‘work’ and migrant identity define who we are: members of the migrant class.

Nonetheless, the St Luke’s Polish assistant told me which children come from families who “don’t stick to us” or “moved away from the neighbourhood”. This may support Ryan et al’s (2008: 686) assertion that Polish migrants who gain confidence through a high level of cultural capital, especially linguistic skills and

qualifications, move away from exclusively Polish networks. Fomina (2009) found that those possessing cultural capital intentionally distance themselves from compatriots to bridge with local English people. Clearly, relationship to ethnic social networks may change over time (e.g. having children and school-enrolment) or families may settle in Wales away from Polish networks.

Polish people in this town do not form a homogenous community. Interviews with parents revealed differences between people in the Polish diaspora community.

These echo the divisions between Old Polonia members and post-accession migrants that Galasiński and Galasińska (2007) and Temple and Koterba (2009) identify.

Being established, post-war and pre-2004 migrants are perceived by the newly-arrived as having better social and economic resources. One mother, ashamed of her rented accommodation's poor condition, said: "You know, I don't invite you to my house to visit me now, as I am ashamed, only when we move, you will visit us."

Competitiveness within the community (e.g. comparing incomes or cars) – also found by Ryan et al (2008:680) in London – cause wariness.

Like Ryan et al (2009), I observed social network reconfigurations when family members joined, left or temporarily provided childcare. Being cared for by aunts and grandparents also feature in children's accounts. Not all researched families have made firm decisions about settlement. Many keep options open. Many women in my study talked of migration-related strains, like missing people, especially elderly parents. One family returned to Poland in June (end of school-year) and some mothers were considering doing so in the future (e.g. "we will go to Poland for sure, but I don't know exactly when"). However, only one mother verbalised resentment against the migration decision. When she returned the questionnaire I had distributed

to Saturday school parents, I noticed she had written: “might return to Poland”. I asked when.

“I don’t know what to do. I wish we had never come here, now it is more difficult to go back. Obviously, here is better money; boys each have their own rooms. But I miss my family, I come from a big family, they are all together there. Sometimes when I am standing in the kitchen, I am thinking about Poland: now they are going to sit together and will have coffee together and everybody is there. It is so hard for me to be away.” (Fieldnotes: 21/05/11)

For this mother, the losses migration incurs outweigh the ‘work and better money’ benefits. Her husband works long hours and she feels trapped at home with three children. She does not drive, which deepens her isolation as they live outside town. She comes from a big family and acutely misses her siblings in Poland. She does not speak English. Thompson et al (2010) identified this as the main obstacle to migrants’ integration in South Wales. This family’s spatial isolation and limited access to Polish networks further deepen her marginalisation.

Satisfied or not with their migration decision, the majority of parents constructing new family lives in Wales talked about ‘investments in their future’. The ‘better future’ notion (discussed in Chapter 2) is an important concept in family migration. About this, parental discourses fall into two broad categories: families’ economic betterment and children’s educational futures.

The contrast between parents’ childhoods in communist Poland and children’s in a capitalist European country is striking. Mothers’ conversations in two settings exemplify this. In the first (in St Luke’s schoolyard), children are constructed as global consumers; parents as providers of commodities and travel.

Eight-year-old boy's mother: Yesterday I bought him the game he asked me for ages. ...He has got everything! I don't know, I always buy it in the end, he will badger me, and I am breaking my back. .

Eight-year-old girl's mother: Because you let him do it, I don't buy children everything they want!

Eleven-year-old boy's mother: You know it depends I prefer to say to him. OK, we are going to Poland, collect the money you will buy things cheaper there...

Eight-year-old girl's mother: They have everything we didn't even imagine when we were children. They travel here and back. I remember when I was a child when somebody was going for holiday to Bulgaria it was a big deal, you know abroad, they were going abroad! (laughing) Now we want to give them the moon, if we can, but do they appreciate it? I think they don't understand now, but maybe in the future.

For these mothers, their children's 'better future' is seen through a material culture lens: commodities (e.g. computer equipment). One constructs children's futures as being built thanks to parental sacrifices, particularly the decision to live abroad. This makes a strong rationale for being here as migrants: we are doing this *for our children*. Another deals with her son's wishes in a pragmatic way. She uses the 'what is more profitable?' strategy: comparing commodities' costs in the UK and Poland to maximize the benefits of frequent travelling. The remark about previous travel restrictions in Eastern Bloc countries contrasts with the travelling these children now enjoy: unthinkable in these mothers' childhoods.

In this extract from a discussion at Saturday school about children's educational futures, parents mirror Sales et al's (2008) findings in London: school-enrolment effectively closes the return-to-Poland option.

Twelve-year-old boy's mother: I won't take him back to Poland now, what for? There's nothing for him there, he started school here, and here we live now. I can't do that.

Eight-year-old girl's mother: My girl wouldn't make it. She doesn't want to write in Polish at all!

Twelve-year-old boy's mother: Yes, they started here and have to finish, then they'll chose where they prefer to live, they will know

English. They can live anywhere, they can go back to Poland, I think, if they want to.

Eight-year-old girl's mother: They will choose. I can't get used to here but they're OK, you know 'you don't replace old trees' but with children, they don't mind.

Eleven-year-old boy's mother: ...with English they can go anywhere, Canada, Australia, they're already Europeans, we live in Europe, it's not like when we were children and had to live only in Poland and learn Russian!

Concerns about educational discontinuity and not fitting into the Polish system make these mothers reject the idea of returning to Poland. One asserts children's knowledge of English will increase their future options. Another goes even further, saying that speaking English will give their children global opportunities. They believe their children will become 'citizens of the world' with cosmopolitan outlooks. This corresponds with Suarez-Orozco's (2004) notion of cosmopolitan bilinguals, benefitting from both worlds of experiences. One mother constructs children's migration as non-problematical for them, "they don't mind"; whereas parents' ("old trees") wholehearted transition to Wales is virtually impossible. They construct their children's futures as profiting from parental investments: migrating from Poland will give children unlimited choices throughout their lives due to knowing English and living abroad.

Throughout this study, parents consistently view migration as a means of providing opportunities for their children to improve their social position, not for themselves. They accept that children profit from parental sacrifices: as the first generation abroad, they gather resources for the second generation (Kicinger and Weinar, 2007: 25). Reflecting on 'better future' conversations, I realised parents found questions like "What do you think about your child's future? Do you think your child will have a 'better future' here than in Poland?" hard to answer. They often looked puzzled or



thoughtful. Possibly their own decisions about family migration were still unsettled or they were uncomfortable talking about this issue. They often vacillated between “I can’t” and “I must”. Both constructions show parents feel responsible for children’s futures because of their transfer Wales. Both also imply they feel trapped. These concerns are all related to the question: who will their children become in the future? I realised my study’s question about children’s identities was also a primary concern of parents.

### **4.3. Children’s constructions of migration and Polish identity**

I talked to children on numerous occasions about how much leaving Poland matters for them. That migration was a huge jolt is vividly represented in their work. For example, in the ‘Important events in my life’ chart, almost all marked the departure year from Poland (see Appendix 8). In this activity, as in many others, their level of cognitive maturity differentiated the work they produced (Scourfield et al, 2006). For example, older children could write the dates and places of their birth in Poland, while some younger only put ‘I was born in Poland’. In another activity – showing their birthplaces on a map of Poland – the youngest could not locate these on the map. Age differentials were also evident in confusions about geographical boundaries. Marking their year of arrival in Wales, most children wrote “came to Wales”; but three younger girls, confusing Wales with England, wrote: “I came to England”. Other linguistic confusion happened when I asked about visits to Poland. Four children wrote “powrót” (came back) instead of “wizyta” (visit). This mistake might be partly due to the ‘myth of return’ as some children may be exposed to family debates about whether to stay or return to Poland. Those older children in the

sample who had started preschool or school in Poland marked this event on their charts. Those who had started in Wales marked this as important, all writing things like “now I am in year...”.

Children clearly distinguish pre-migration and post-migration stages of their lives. Their comments about family gatherings and visits show how important are family members, both left behind in Poland and those visiting them in Wales. Some children experience stronger relations to Poland than others. As I observed, the length of time abroad does not necessarily ease the experience of transition. Darek, for instance, has lived lives in Wales for four years. His ‘most important photos’ were his home in Wales and a well-known public building. I asked why he had chosen the latter. “I remember the place because I came here four years ago. It was at night. I was on a coach for thirty hours.” His photograph is not of the building but the coach-stop beside it, where his journey from Poland ended. This emphasizes the traumatic strength of his relocation and transition experience.

Before presenting how children experience their national belonging while living in Wales, I present how these children self-identified themselves in relation to their nationality (see Appendix 7). In Bauman’s terms (2001:152), national identities are inherited from country of birth and primary language. In a card choice exercise, which I adapted from another Welsh study (Scourfield et al, 2006), I explored how these children position themselves with respect to their ethnic/national identity. All 29 children in the study did this exercise. Of the 27 Polish-born children, girls outnumbered boys, 2 to 1. Two thirds expressed strong links with Polish nationality and ethnicity. One third found choosing national identity complex. The children’s identification with their Polish nationality fell into three categories, which I call:

fully-connected, hyphenated and denied. Fully-connected was the strongest group: 17 children. These chose labels exclusively linking them with Poland, like “Polish person”, “I am from Poland”, “I am from Warsaw”. The hyphenated group numbered 8. These children labelled themselves as Polish but also added: “English, Welsh or European person”, or “I am from Wales”. Two boys did not choose any Polish identity label, describing themselves solely as “from Wales ” or “European”.

While conducting my fieldwork, I realised the limitations of this exercise for my study’s findings, because I noticed that children’s identities are compound and cannot be simplistically labelled. My Card choice exercise confirmed Anthia’s (2009: 10) assertion that “how people label themselves does not always tell us much about their practices”. For example, one Polish-born girl, Martyna, 8, who has lived four years in Wales, chose three nationality labels starting with English, then Welsh and Polish. This could indicate that English identity is the most important for her; or these three labels could be hyphenated. Subsequently, I found out that she writes her diary about daily practices in English (see Appendix 8). Every day after school, she stays with her Polish aunty and baby who live next door. Martyna’s family-care patterns, social-networking and her position in the Polish diaspora community as an eight-year-old girl may mean that Polish inherited identity is imposed on her, so she resisted it in the label choice. However, from my ethnographic observations, she always seemed comfortable within the Polish diaspora contexts of church or Saturday school. She enjoyed the company of Polish-speaking classmates even though she struggled with Polish literacy.

This brings up the issue of socialising into the specific environment in which young children grow up. As Anthias (2002: 500) argues, migrants live in three spaces: “the society of migration, the homeland and the migrant group.” In the next section I will explore how some children may be more exposed to Polish identity than others, as their families participate in the cultural life of the diaspora in Wales. I will discuss the Polish community’s and Saturday school’s roles in transmitting national identity to children.

#### **4.4. The role of Saturday school – lessons in patriotism and Polishness**

This part looks into how the Saturday school curriculum and community patriotic celebrations may impact on children’s collective and individual identifications. The curriculum at Saturday school (as explained in Chapter 2) has three main strands: teaching Polish language, history and religion. In the first part, I explore the straightforward impact of community patriotic celebrations on how children talk about their own belongings to Polishness. I present a description of one patriotic celebration I witnessed (and, as a teacher at that school, participated in preparing). In the second part I look into the meanings these children attached to ‘being Polish’. How they identify themselves as ‘Polish’ appears to carry different meanings from being identified as ‘Polish’ by other people. As discussed in Chapter 3, group discussions (despite their many limitations) appeared to be fruitful in talking about abstract concepts like national belonging.

During my fieldwork at the Polish Club (see an overview of gatherings at the Polish Club, Appendix 5) I observed children's participation in the community events. Two of them, Independence Day Academy (see Vignette 1) and The 3<sup>rd</sup> May Academy had an exclusively national and patriotic character. In the social space of the Polish Club, children's attention is directed towards Polish history and patriotism (see pages 188-189). On one occasion, I observed that a talk given by a Second World War veteran inspired the oldest boys to become interested in Polish history. For example, they showed me their Internet searches and Youtube images of the military equipment of the Polish army. The commemoration of Polish historical events celebrated in this community may bring these children closer to their national identifications.

### Vignette 1. Akademia: Independence Day (11 November)

One Saturday evening in November, a patriotic performance (akademia) was presented to people gathered at Polish Club. The ceremony was opened by a member of the Polish Combatants' Association. He said that we celebrate National Independence Day (Narodowe Święto Niepodległości) on 11 November to commemorate the anniversary of Poland's assumption of independent statehood in 1918 after 123 years of partition by Russia, Prussia and Austria. He asked everybody to stand up to sing Polish national anthem, Mazurek Dąbrowskiego (Poland is Not Yet Lost). The room was full; most of the parents were taking photos or filming.

Around thirty children from Saturday school were standing in front of the audience: the youngest were five; the oldest twelve. Most of the boys wore white shirts and dark trousers; the girls, white blouses and dark skirts. In the background were the symbols of the Polish nation: a white-red flag, a coat of arms: a white eagle.

In the centre of the stage, there was a girl in Polish traditional country clothes and wearing a golden crown sitting on a throne. She symbolised Poland. Later in the performance, the crown was taken from her head by three boys symbolising three powerful neighbours: Russia, Austria and Prussia. The boys then put on chains on her: Poland's loss of freedom. At the end of the performance, the chains were taken off her by another girl: Freedom.

The performance consisted of poems and songs about Polish patriots who rebelled several times against the partitioners. Older children recited poems (some from memory, some by reading). Together, they sang patriotic songs. Some of the pieces, like 'The Song of Warsaw' or the poem 'A little Pole', are known by all Poles.

The celebration was closed by the same man who opened it. He said: "Let's give a tribute to our country and together sing the Oath ("Rota,)" which starts:

"We won't forsake the land we came from,  
We won't let our speech be buried.  
We are the Polish nation, the Polish people,  
From the royal line of Piast.  
We won't let the foe Germanize us.  
So help us God!  
So help us God!"

Several months after this patriotic event at the Polish Club, as a part of the curriculum I spoke to children at Saturday school about being Polish. Later, in our participatory session, I asked them about meanings they attach to Polishness. In this part, I present three extracts from discussions with children about being Polish.

Me: How do you feel about being Polish?

Ola: I am happy.

Me: Why?

Ola: I am happy ...because I was born in Poland.

Me: When do you feel that you are Polish?

Ola: (silence)

Wanda: I don't know yet...

Łukasz: I always feel that I am Polish when I perform in an *akademia* here at Polish school.

Bartek: Yeah, ...when I speak Polish.

Ola's response to my question was quick: she gave her very first thought: happiness. She values being born in Poland and feels attachment to territory (as does Wanda). She does not explain this further (a common problem, discussed in Chapter 3). Frequent visits to her family and cousins in Poland give Ola joy. (This theme is developed in the next part where children talk about this attachment to place of birth, e.g. 'my town'). The two boys' responses confirm the influence of patriotic celebrations in children's lives. Łukasz recited two poems in this patriotic performance and states that this makes him feel Polish. Bartek was another participant: for him, performing in Polish was challenging. Patriotic poems use a vocabulary unrelated to everyday speech and unfamiliar to young children. Additionally, performing in public in front of many Polish people makes it a powerfully memorable experience. These four children construct their Polishness through attachments to territory and language. Sharing national memories by

reviving historical events appears to be powerful for children's national identifications.

Later in this session I asked about what they positively associate with Polishness.

Me: What do you like about being Polish?

Łukasz: I like Polish music the best because I am Polish ("jestem polski"), English music is very weird indeed ... (interrupted)

Bartek: I listen to English music!

Me: What else do you like?

Bartek: The flag, it is easy to draw.

Łukasz: Yes, me too, I like the colours of the Polish flag.

Me: What else do you like?

Martyna: That Poland is big... I am going to Poland on holidays to.... Zakopane.

Łukasz: (excited) We are going too. I will go by car to England, then on a ferry to France, across through France, I may see the Eifel Tower, then through Germany and *finally* to Poland.

Bartek: I don't like France!

Łukasz: Why?

Bartek: France is wrrrrrr (he makes a face like being very angry at something)

Łukasz: I don't like Germany.

Me: Why?

Łukasz: I don't like the German flag very much.

Bartek: Why?

Wanda: Why?

Łukasz: (doesn't answer, shrugs his shoulders)

Bartek: (loudly) I hate France the whole France is stupid!

Giving his music preferences, Łukasz said "jestem 'polski' (I am Polish)": incorrect grammar. He should have said: Jestem Polakiem (Using a noun form). The use of an adjective suggests more than just being of Polish nationality but being "truly Polish". (This language mistake is often apparent in other children's speech.) It could be either just lazy translation or a deliberate choice of extended meaning – as it seems to



be in Łukasz's case. Three children agree that the Polish flag has positive connotations: it evokes positive feelings, has 'nice' colours and is easy to draw. In contrast, Łukasz dislikes the German flag, although cannot voice his reasons. Children draw on available resources and reproduce what Billing (1995 cited in Scourfield et al, 2006: 50) calls a 'banal nationalism'. However, being outside their birth country, they may associate 'the flag' with stronger meanings, rooted in experience not nationalist symbolism. During this conversation these children gradually progress from saying "I don't like" to "I hate": hostility towards another nation. The children's constructions of belonging to nations are polarised: only positive feelings towards the in-group (Polish) and only negative to the out-group (Germany, France). To self-identify, these children use the construct of imaginary opposition, which they need to secure feelings of their own group's cohesiveness. Unexplained prejudice is present in Bartek's persistent comments on France. It is possible these children's dislike of Germany is due to exposure to anti-German patriotic songs. This, however, cannot explain Bartek's strong dislike of France. One possibility is that the car journey from Wales, through England, France and Germany towards Poland provides the motive. Łukasz describes this as an odyssey. Interestingly these children attach their negative feelings onto two European countries they transit through.

These children's comments reveal that they are proud of being Polish and somehow prejudiced against two other nations: Germany and France. In the final part of this session, I asked why they were proud of being Polish.

Me: Why are you proud of being Polish?

Martyna: Because I know three languages: Polish, English and Welsh

Me: Oh, yes.

Łukasz: If I was a German I wouldn't know so many languages and I wouldn't be so clever, ...and then I would like Germany more than Poland.

(several voices together, indecipherable)

Łukasz: ....because Hitler killed many Poles.

Ola: When I was travelling to England we stopped in Germany and we had to pay for the toilets, ....but I didn't pay in the end because I was a child!

Bartek: You have to pay for toilets in Germany?

Łukasz: Yeah, you have to pay.

Martyna's comment on speaking three languages echoes parental narratives

(presented in previous part) about the linguistic advantage their children have.

Parents construct speaking languages as an asset. They believe that if their children are educated as global citizens, their career opportunities are increased and they will have a 'better life' (Suarez-Orozco, 2004:195-6). However in the children's words, being 'Polish', in the context of life in Wales, means 'being clever' because of 'knowing' three languages. This cosmopolitan advantage reoccurs in Łukasz's words. However, he develops an interesting construct. By saying "If I was a German...", he implies that he would not possess so many virtues (knowing languages): therefore it is better to be Polish. However, by 'putting himself into somebody else's shoes', Łukasz imagines himself in the position of another child and agrees that he would love his (other) country. The logic is: as I am Polish, I love my country. Łukasz, in fact, expresses the simplest attachment and loyalty because of heritage and place of birth. "I wouldn't be so clever..." denies any virtues any German may possess. This denial could be seen as expression of national prejudice (Bauman and May, 2001:32). Łukasz justifies his feelings by bringing a strong argument about "Hitler" – which is, of course, outside his parents', probably even his grandparents', experience. Ola contributes to this conversation by relating her

memories of travelling by car from Wales to Poland and gives the example of being charged for toilets in Germany. The other children seemed to relate it to their own experiences of travelling with their families across Europe. From these children's comments, it appears that a number of factors contribute to children's prejudiced attitudes and behaviours. These include exposure to parental and other adult conversations and behaviour.

In these three extracts from Saturday school sessions, the children identified themselves as Polish, and expressed how they feel about being Polish while living in Wales and travelling through Europe. Moreover, they said what they positively associate with their Polishness. The situational context of the Polish Club makes a special space for these children's identifications. (The aspects of nationalism and Catholicism at Saturday school are discussed in Chapter 6). At this point I will only reflect that this Polish Club in Wales needs to be seen as a designed area where distinct ethno-cultural identities are developed – just as Drozdowski (2007: 853) observed in the study of Polish diaspora in Australia. In such a special place, these children are exposed to the idea of nationhood as defined by Gellner (1983:7): a nation's members share the same culture and they recognize each other as belonging to the same 'nation'. As seen in the academia example, Polishness, patriotism and nationality are all intertwined and performed both by and for children. When children attend gatherings at the Polish Club they enter a very fertile terrain for experiencing emotional ties with their 'nation' (Yuval-Davis et al, 2005).

#### **4.5. Managing difference as Polish nationals at schools and home neighbourhoods**

In this part, I explore how children deal with their national identity within the context of school and public spaces. I look into how they feel about being newcomers. I trace whether they have been bullied at school and their comments on other nationals. I conclude with comments on what I observed at St Luke's school where they are labelled as a 'Polish group'. The core of this part is how they deal with and manage their national trace of identity. Especially, how children identify and position themselves when they are identified by others as Polish nationals. This is important, as most of the children in the sample had chosen 'Polish' as an important identity-marker in the card choice exercise. I therefore asked children at Saturday school about how proud they are of being Polish in Wales.

Me: Can you think of any examples when you were proud of being Polish?

Bartek: Aaaaaaaaaaaaaa, rather not. (quietly)

Me: Any moment that you were ashamed that you are Polish?

Bartek: No. (louder)

Wanda: But I was. (firmly)

Me: When?

Wanda: At school

Me: At school, when?

Wanda: (silenced, whispering something to Ola)

Łukasz: I wasn't.

Bartek: I haven't said that.

Me: I know that, Wanda said.

Wanda: (she is whispering something to Ola)

Ola: Maybe when I started school? Hee ,hee, hee ... (giggles nervously)

Me: What happened then? Was it two years ago?

Ola: Yes.

Wanda: She was crying!

Me: Oh, and you still remember.

Bartek: I don't, I was sitting like that. (He sits rigidly still straight and turns his head from side to side)

Łukasz: Me too!

It appears that my question about feelings related to their Polish nationality made them talk about the experience of otherness, especially, as newcomers in schools. These children's responses suggest that 'being Polish' means for them 'being different' and that this is not a good experience. Answering my question about national pride, Bartek was unsure about 'being proud' but firmly states that he was not ashamed of being Polish. Łukasz echoed him. In contrast, Wanda, who was usually very quiet and unresponsive in group sessions, unexpectedly said she was ashamed. She does not explain it further but withdraws into whispering with Ola. It appears that both girls locate their uncomfortable feelings of 'being different' at the time of starting school. Their 'crying' was a defence and this is well remembered. As close friends they shared and understood this.

Like these girls, Łukasz and Bartek started school at the age of five, but they talk differently about the experience. There are clear-cut gender differences in describing the same experience of dislocation and being new to the school environment. Bartek did not cry but his bodily expression showed how uncomfortable and awkward he felt. Again, Łukasz echoes him. These boys' 'otherness' was mediated by typical behaviour for their age. These children constructed their roles along stereotyped gender attributes: girls are weak and seek relief in tears; boys show how strong they are, boys do not cry. In this extract, gendered positions are polarised: these girls and

boys reacted to, and managed, entering school settings as ‘others’ completely differently. The feelings described by these children, however, are identical: feeling ‘an outsider’, relocated from one space and language to another. As the children’s conversation concentrated on the time of starting school, their feelings as outsiders may be understood as initial feelings. On many occasions during this research, children recalled memories from their early days in Wales. They mainly talked about unfamiliarity and linguistic distance. The stories varied between individual children but nevertheless this appeared to be the most memorable experience shared by most of the children. This is related to national culture but not necessarily to national label.

Nevertheless, children are *aware* of their national difference. During a library session in February, I took the chance to ask the children where, apart from school, being Polish nationals made them feel different. (This session was filmed. Sylwia, being 11, had chosen to sit on a chair, the rest sat on the floor.)

Me: Do you feel different because you are from Poland?

(all sit in silence, look at each other, tension can be felt)

Sylwia (very quietly, hesitantly): Sometimes at shops, everybody stares at you. They stare at me when I am talking to mum.

Me: How do you feel then?

Sylwia: I don’t know (shrugs her shoulders).

In response to my question, Sylwia, as the oldest participant in the group, may have felt responsible to say something in the awkward silence. As ‘almost’ a teenage girl she may be more aware of exposure in public space than the younger children.

However, she does not know how (or want) to expand the issue.

I assumed that their Polish nationality may be a potential source of problems at school. As Troyna and Hatcher (1992:195) observe, in the case of black children, name-calling is the most common expression of racism in predominantly white primary-schools. Existing research records the existence of stereotypes and prejudices in children's constructions of racism and nationalism (Connolly, 1998; Connolly and Keenan, 2002; Devine et al, 2008; Zembylas, 2010: 313). I therefore asked (another) group of children whether they have been bullied at school.

Me: Have any children at school ever behaved badly towards you?

Iza: I told you before about the girl who is always pushing me.

Me: Did she say anything to you?

Iza: She teases me because I'm from Poland.

Me: Did she tell you that?

Iza: Yes, she says, for example.... (mumbles quietly) er, because I don't know, I don't understand everything but Gosia, *she told me* because she understands English better than me because I was ill for three weeks, I wasn't going to school... (interrupted)

Maciek: Miss, I am glad that there are not any French in this school.

Me: Why?

Maciek: Because I don't like *such* people, I would be covering myself with a hand when passing one.

Me: French people, how are they different?

Maciek: I don't know. I just don't like them.

(Focus group, Participatory session, day 4)

Iza felt bullied by the girl I had once witnessed pushing her. This suggests racial harassment as Iza believes that this girl's hostility is nationality-based (See the definition of racial harassment Connolly and Keenan (2002: 347) use). No St Luke's children reported experiences of overt racism like, for example, Turkish-Cypriot children did in Cyprus (Zembylas, 2010: 324). Polish assistants have responsibility to immediately respond to disputes or name-calling in the playground. However, more

subtle forms of harassment may create an environment in which some children feel treated unfairly because of their national difference, as in Iza's case.

To defend herself, she seeks support from her Polish friend, Gosia. However, as Iza depends on this friend's 'translations', this may establish the vicious circle of "he-said-she-said" (Corsaro, 1997). Iza's linguistic vulnerability makes her rely on 'more knowledgeable' Polish friends who may exploit this or themselves misunderstand what was said. (The issue of playground disputes is discussed in Chapter 7). Iza's situation is complicated, as not speaking English adequately means being confused in any English-speaking context but speaking Polish in St Luke's multi-lingual social setting contributes to the exclusion of other children, so causes resentments. (The issue of language use in this playground is discussed in Chapter 5). Maciek's remark about French people also relates to this school's multi-ethnic context, however, just like Bartek in the previous extract, he does not explain the reasons for this national dislike.

St Luke's setting is a particularly good place to observe a national minority group within the social context of a whole school. The size of the Polish group (40 children) makes their incorporation into this social space extremely difficult. (In contrast, the other EU migrant children (Hungarian and Lithuanian), being sole nationals, minimize their difference more effectively.) In terms of children's own agency, redefining themselves in this situation is virtually impossible. Belonging to a strong group, the children cannot detach themselves from the Polish-national label. During the course of my fieldwork, I observed that teachers call them 'Polish children' and separate them out for team tasks. For example, when the Polish assistant was preparing the group for performance dances, they were practicing



during lunch-breaks. The classroom space is an example of how ascribed national identities make these children subjects of categorisation by teachers. The extract below comes from my Fieldnotes (12/11/10).

I was taken by another teacher to a class where there are five Polish children. There were two English-speaking student-helpers and myself in the room. The class-teacher explained the team's group task. "You have to build two towers, one as tall as possible, from the materials given. This is a competition between groups." I had difficulty understanding what he meant (only later did I learn that it was another task in a series of competitive class activities)

Then the teacher turned to me: "Can you help the Polish (sic) group? I put them together because they communicate better amongst themselves in Polish."

The three girls and two boys used only Polish, but did not work cooperatively together. They seemed not to understand the strength of their materials. When the teacher started counting down towards the end of time, their construction collapsed. They were in panic, as their other task (a small tower) had already been used to support the bigger one. This group scored nought out of ten points.

As I participated in the lesson, I observed that this teacher segregated the Polish children as a team of five in the classroom space. The group I observed did not show any resistance to this practice. The children were not surprised to be put into one language-group and used Polish in this mainstream classroom exercise. They seemed content to be singled out as a Polish team. This teacher may have used segregation by nationality and language as a coping technique to maintain better discipline during classroom tasks; or may have decided to use me as translator for the group of five Polish-speaking children in line with the school's bilingual policy. As Devine (2005) found in Ireland, teachers' responses to migrant children needs vary from inclusionary to exclusionary. Teachers differ in approach to creating classroom environments for language-minority students in mainstream classrooms (Carrasquillo and Rodrigues, 2002: 176). Strategies for managing multi-language classrooms likewise differ. Ní Laoire et al (2009) identify grouping and segregating children

according to English-language proficiency as a problematic aspect of school practice. Ni Laoire et al (2009:60) give as an example, 'a Polish table' in an Irish school. Grouping the five Polish nationals makes a distinctive 'team'. As the whole class is 25, it divides easily into five working groups. Children seemed comfortable with this practice, as it was familiar to them. Although disappointed with the score, they did not react emotionally or blame each other for the failure. In this classroom example, the Polish children's failure to minimize their national difference is evident and largely beyond their control.

To sum up, this section has explored how children talked about the realisation of being Polish in various social settings: school, shop and classroom. Children have shown their own individual strategies for managing the fact of being another national. This requires their ongoing negotiations of their sameness with, and need to belong to, the larger group of children in classrooms and playgrounds; and at the same time, deal with their own otherness as other nationals. In these negotiations, positive and negative emotions are involved. However, these children are not ambivalent about being non-majority nationals. Polishness matters to them. Moreover, as observed in St Luke's classroom practice, in the case of Polish children being a sizable group, the school's bilingual principles may differentiate them as a national group. On the whole, they may prefer to work in a mixed-language group instead of being singled as a 'national team' in a competitive classroom tasks.

#### **4.6. In-betweeness: simultaneous attachments to Poland and Wales by ‘thinking’, ‘having’ and ‘worrying’ about people and places**

In this final part, I focus on how children are connected to Poland while living in Wales. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the literature on family migration, missing homeland is a common theme. I present extracts from several children’s narratives, which show that, besides missing Poland, they use Skype and Poland’s accessibility (short travel distance) to maintain active attachments. Contact frequency (both Skype and travel) and normality (many people around them do so) seem to maintain and intensify attachments to Poland. These transnational families’ practices contribute to and reinforce children’s Polish identity. In their photos and drawings, these children frequently showed or made links to Poland. This supports White et al’s (2010: 151) assertion that “Objects or symbols can be used to ‘stand in’ for or represent absent people or places, and in this way to be part of the child’s process of constructing an identity”. Several children verbalized their strong emotional links with Polish families and visiting people. Sylwia wrote: “I am happy when somebody from Poland visits us” and Łukasz, “I am sad when my [visiting] family is going back to Poland”. In her diary one girl wrote: “On Sunday my aunty was supposed to go home (by coach) but she overslept! She can only go next Sunday. She was a bit sad but I was happy”. Moreover, all children, boys and girls, position themselves as experienced travelers in their narratives. For example, eight-year-old Martyna expresses her preference for plane over car travel.

As the data reveal, the degree to which children expressed missing their family members differs according to the strength of attachments with particular people left behind in Poland. This was especially evident in the case of four children who have

fathers in Poland and live in Wales with their mothers. One of them is nine, and joined his mother in Wales when he was five. On the front page of the 'Book about myself', amongst other things he wrote (In English): "I wish I be 16", "I want to come back to my dad in Poland" and "I never want to live [leave] my family again". Interviewing his mother, I learnt that he keeps regular contact with his father on Skype (talking in Polish) and every summer goes to Poland to stay with his father and grandmother. Last year his father visited him in Wales for the First Communion celebration. He acutely experiences physical separation from his father. Migration has intensified the emotional strains his parent's divorce put on him.

The data reveals that separation from relatives is greatly eased by frequent contacts and, especially, going on holiday to Poland. As I observed, children look forward to these visits for months, and talk about them excitedly with joy in their voices. (The Maths teacher and Polish assistants at St Luke's also talked about children being very excited whenever Polish visits are mentioned). This extract comes from a Saturday school lesson in September. Children's memories were still fresh with details after the summer. Magda, who went with her mother and little brother, and Adam, who went with his parents, were talking about their holidays: excited, interrupting each other, talking fast as though trying to say many things in the short slot of time.

Magda: This is a photo my mum took this summer, when we were near Olsztyn, on a boat. It was cold. I was wearing a sunbathing costume but it was cold. I went to Poland to see my father in Warsaw ...So, first I was at his place, then Radom, then near Gdynia. I have a friend there ...because my mum and dad when they were together they lived there when I was little, so I have a friend there when we go to Poland we visit and sleep there sometimes. We were in Gdynia then (interrupted)....

Adam: I was in Poland too, in Tomaszów, and somewhere else  
eeeeeeeeee, *but I live in Tomaszów.*

Me: ...you live in Wales.

Adam: ...but in Poland in Tomaszów

Magda: I am going to Poland for Christmas!

Adam: We are also planning to go for Christmas...

Magda: Miss, it is soon my birthday. I got an early present from my grandmother, an I-pod!

Me: Nice, I am sure it was a lot of money for your grandmother to pay.

Magda: Yes, I know, a lot.

Both children are strongly attached to, and in good contact with, Poland. Magda visits Poland regularly and sees people her mother feels connected to. She constructs her belonging to Poland as strongly rooted in the past, present and future. She visited a place of memories, which has a value to her as “my parents lived there where I was little”. She spent time with her father and (paternal) grandmother. Magda appreciates her grandmother’s expensive birthday present (although unaware that it possibly cost half a year’s pension). The future had been already planned and she eagerly awaits it. In three months’ time, she will visit for Christmas. Magda is well rooted in Poland by strong emotional links to people and places there. Poland puts a strong mark on her identity despite leaving when she was four. Adam also visits Poland regularly and said he “*live[s]* in Tomaszów.” He used the present form “I live” to emphasize his attachment. (Some other children also frequently used the present form when talking about places in Poland). On another occasion he said that he sleeps at “my grandmother’s house, in my room”. Frequent physical presence in a place gives continuity to his experience. Adam’s construct “my room” suggests simultaneity of experience: Wales by living here, and place of birth by having material possessions there. As White et al (2010:152) noticed, this study’s findings also confirm that “migrant children’s households are often constituted across national borders”. These children’s intense experiences of transnational networks and belonging inevitably impact on their identities.

The data reveal that many children marked their physical attachment to homeland by possessing something there. It appeared that it could be reflected through reference to animals. Many children frequently talked about animals which they used to have in Poland. After several weeks' fieldwork, I was surprised by the number of dogs children mentioned. Then I realised that when someone said "I have a dog" it may not mean in Wales but in Poland. These children construct their attachment to homeland by links to their loved animals. This supports the view that pets are highly emotionally important for children. Tatlow-Golden et al (2010:558) suggested that pets may relate to social-self as some children in their research drew a pet as their "favourite person or people". The importance of pets for children in the study is seen in their choice of photos. Many children photographed their own pets in Wales: dogs, cats, birds or fish. Some took photos of dogs in the park or other animals like swans and ducks.

In the below extract, Olek and Alicja talk about possessing animals in the context of their migration to Wales. Both children used to have many pets prior to migration.

(Alicja had just talked about her dog in Wales)

Me: Olek, you would like to have a dog too?

Olek: I *have a dog* in Belarus, because I can't have one here. In a flat you can't have a dog here, the owners say you can't.

[...]

Me: Do you like living in Wales?

Alicja: So, so.

Olek: Not so much

Me: Why?

Olek: I don't like because there isn't any snow here.

Alicja: I don't like because here you have to take rabbits every week to the vet. My dad wanted to buy me one, it was ten pounds for a rabbit

but you would have to pay twenty pounds every week to take it to the vet...

Olek cannot have an animal in Wales because of rented accommodation restrictions.

This is a big issue for him, so he talked about one in Belarus he can see twice a year when he visits his mother's family. Alicja, an animal-lover, complains about expenses related to having animals in Wales. She cannot have as many animals as she probably would have in Poland and this seems to affect her perception of Wales as a whole. Alicja's complaint has to be seen in the light of her loneliness she was frequently talking about (see pages 224 and 240). By her desire to have more animals, she appeared to try to compensate for her lack of friends in Wales.

Olek's dislike of Wales seems to be more weather-related as the climate is too mild for snow. Nevertheless, in these children's lives, possessing an animal is regulated by the family's migration situation and this, in turn, may make them feel losing something important for them.

Over the course of my fieldwork, children became more trusting. Some revealed more intimate issues to me. Only talking one-to-one about relationships exposed how deeply some children miss their 'important others' left behind in Poland. The previous extracts showed how frequently some think about places and people there. In the extract below, Danka (during her card choice activity) talked to me not only about simultaneous thinking but also about worrying.

Danka: My grandmother is important for me. She had an operation....

Me: Here?

Danka: No, in Poland.

Me: You are worrying about her?

Danka: Last week she had a back operation. My mother's mum died before I was born and her father died too because he was ill and didn't want to take medicine so he died.

[....]

Me: On this blue card you write what is the most important to you.

Danka (reads aloud from the card): “The most important for me is my family”

Danka is in her first year in Wales. Doing the card activity made her reflect on the importance of family for her. She misses her only grandmother who is in hospital in Poland. Her thoughts are there with her. She constructs her experience as simultaneous and split-attention. Her family keeps in touch by mobile phone and Skype, so Danka is immersed in this constant flow of information and worries exchanged by adults around her. The separation makes a powerful experience for her of being away from her loved family member. With only one grandparent left, she is aware of the scarcity of generational representation. She, being eight, worries about possibly not having any more grandparents.

To sum up, it appears that for these children, the experience of leaving Poland is intense. The intensity depends on attachments to people and things they love. Writing about Third Culture Kids' (TCK) mobility, Pollock and van Reken (2009: 74-75) argue that in every transition loss and grief are involved. We may experience grief through denial, anger, sadness, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Some children in my study, however, despite their obvious grief, described visiting Poland and living in Wales as ‘normal’. It is a question whether their specific experiences of intra-European migration (cyclical visits and being visited, use of communication technology) add to and perpetuate their losses or ease them by turning their lived experience into ‘normality’.



#### **4.7. Conclusions**

This empirical chapter has been concerned with how Polish migrant children manage their difference as Polish nationals in Wales and how their strategies may impact on their identification process. Certainly, the majority of children in this research expressed their national identifications very strongly through belonging to both local Polish diaspora networks and to Poland.

I began with parental constructions of their children's identities as cosmopolitan travellers whose identities are viewed through an 'opportunities and life-chances' lens. These were echoed in children's narratives about the perceived advantages of speaking many languages and travelling throughout Europe.

Specifically, I have explored how the perception of unproblematic adaptation that many parents hold differs from children's everyday experience. They have to manage their difference on a daily basis and identify themselves not only as other nationals in Wales but also as 'others' within more intimate settings: classrooms, playgrounds and social spaces.

Many of the children in this research admitted strong identification with Polish nationality through connections with territory, language and people. Some children viewed their nation in terms of binary opposition to other nations. Constructions of national pride based on virtues contrast strongly with other nations' perceived failings. Some children's portrayal of other European nations seemed to reflect prejudice.

I documented how these children are subject to control and ascription of Polish identity by the Saturday school curriculum. This reflects the national pride and

prejudice against specific other nations which history has written into the national scripts. These were echoed most strongly by some boys.

In the specific space of St Luke's setting, I highlighted the impossibility of escaping the 'otherness' label, as the large concentration of Polish children make up a society within a society. Additionally, children they are powerless over institutional arrangements which classify them as a 'Polish group' and frequently detach them from the general pupil community.

I have looked into the world of intimate family relations to see that all these children maintain simultaneous relations with many significant others left behind in Poland. They are much in their thoughts and usually contacted daily. Some children use present verb forms when talking about possessions and physically being in Poland. Their bodies are in Wales, but their thoughts and longings are in Poland. The intensity and frequency of children's skilful use of hyper-connectivity through mobile technology appear to make the experience of simultaneous attachments and emotional connections with both 'here and there'. Throughout this chapter, I specifically reveal how Polishness – both as 'otherness' and in these children's daily life-patterns – is a significant trace. All these factors shape these children's identifications.

## Chapter 5

# Being a Polish-speaking child in Wales: first-language preservation, second-language acquisition and learners' identities

“Polish, in a short time, has atrophied, shrivelled from sheer uselessness. Its words don't apply to my new experiences; they're not coeval with any of the objects, or faces, or the very air I breathe in the daytime. In English, words have not penetrated to those layers of my psyche from which a private conversation could proceed.”

Eva Hoffman (1998:107) *Lost in Translation. A life in a New Language*<sup>5</sup>

### 5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the studied children's experiences of languages they live with: Polish, English and Welsh. In their migration situation, they live within a diverse linguistic space. This inevitably impacts on their identifications. Children can find themselves in situations where one of these languages is *imposed on them* or in situations where they can *choose* which language to use to suit the context. Their chosen language is their way of *manifesting their identity*.

For the youngest children in the sample, use of mother-tongue is natural but with age language may be contested. Older children may want more control over the way they

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<sup>5</sup> This extract comes from Hoffman's autobiography showing importance of language in her immigration experience from Poland to Canada. Notably, Eva Hoffman dedicated her book to both words of her childhood: 'To my family, who has given me my first world, and to my friends, who have taught me how to appreciate the New World after all'.

express themselves. Their language choice is often limited but may be encouraged, for example by Wales's bilingual school policy.

Starting with mother-tongue, I show children's vivid identification with the Polish language by the use of words associated with traditional food. I focus on how these children are comfortably embedded in this language, are competent speakers and practice it in various social spaces of the Polish diaspora in Wales. I explore the Saturday school setting as a special space for language preservation and language teaching to children. However, this is also a site of struggle, as some children resist coming to school, learning Polish and, especially, developing Polish writing skills. The migration situation forces parents, especially mothers, to think about their children's cultural continuity and whether and how to control their cultural identity. In the St. Luke's setting, I explore how non-Polish children perceive those speaking Polish, and the oldest Polish children's changing nature of affiliation with other Polish-speakers. In contrast to this, I identify two non-Polish children who use Polish as a vehicle to belong to the school's Polish group.

Related to parental discourses on English as cultural capital, I explore how children enter the English-speaking environment. I highlight how difficult, prolonged and confusing the conflicting experiences of different social classroom environments can be for them. I describe St Luke's institutional practices in provision for non-English-speaking children at school, including English as an Additional Language (EAL), materials used and spatial segregation in organizational practice. I reveal how children who receive language-help use coping techniques, like withdrawal from, and non-participation in, mainstream practice with English-speaking children. In contrast, I show how learning Welsh rebalances linguistic power: for these Polish

children, learning Welsh as a ‘second’ (actually, third) language is a positive experience.

Finally, I show how four Polish girls utilize both their newly-acquired languages and mother-tongue across the different contexts of school, church and home-neighbourhoods. These girls’ identities are shaped by their experiences of learning languages and confidence in employing their bilingual language skills.

## **5. 2. Mother-tongue use in home, Polish diaspora community and Saturday school spaces**

The previous chapter showed how Polish identity was strongly represented in children’s narratives about Poland. Being tied to the Polish nation has a direct influence on children’s language competency. In this part, I investigate how children’s identities are shaped through speaking Polish in Wales. In the ‘Languages used’ card-activity (see Appendix 7), most children declared that they most frequently use Polish in everyday life. They speak it at home, playing with friends and siblings, and reading, watching TV and using computers. This contrasts to Moinian’s (2011: 42) study, which found that Iranian children born in Sweden were less willing to socialise in Farsi, their mother-tongue. Children in my study, being Polish-born and a relatively short time abroad, appear to socialize mostly in Polish. I start, therefore, with exploring how being born into the Polish language but living in Wales is shaping their identities.

Observing children in various settings, I realised that particularly vivid identifications with language and Polishness happen when they talk about food. They

use language rich in meanings attached to culture and tradition. I noticed that food associations may influence their moods. For example, Ola wrote that she is happy “when we have stuffed cabbage [‘gołąbki’] for dinner” and Marta that she is sad “when my mother is not baking cookies”. Homemade food and traditional recipes are also very important for two other Polish girls. This extract comes from my observations at St Luke’s. It shows the salience of culturally-embedded meanings shared by two Polish-born girls, Asia and Ania. Polish food-related cultural codes are not fully grasped by Polish-speaking, but Slovak-born, Sara. The situational context in which this conversation happens is an example of how, by conversing wholly in Polish, children exclude an English-speaking girl, Kate.

Fieldnotes. 11/02/2011

Going to games. Sara and Asia were walking together. Ania behind them, with Kate.

Asia: I am going to have ‘pomidorówka’ for dinner today! Ooo.... you know ‘pomidoróweczka’ yummy, yummy....

Sara: I know ‘tomato soup’ [English words]

Asia: No, no it isn’t like that! My mum makes it with home-made batter dumplings and cream! [‘lane kluseczki’ and ‘śmietanka’]

Ania: Yaah, my grandma makes mushroom soup [‘pieczarkowa’] with home-made batter dumplings and cream!

Sara: I like pizza, and best is ice cream!

Asia talking about ‘pomidorówka’, or its diminutive form ‘pomidoróweczka’, does not mean British ‘tomato soup’, which Sara mentions. For Asia, these are two different worlds of tastes, consistencies and colours. In this conversation, words connected directly with Polish food are understood by Ania, a user of the same code. When these two Polish girls talk about “kluseczki i śmietanka”, this cultural code is meaningless for Sara, who can speak Polish, but was not brought up within the discourse of Polish food. She seems to be outside the conversation. Asia’s and Ania’s

mothers cook fresh soups in the way their grandmothers do in Poland. Beyond evoking pleasant memories, food makes evident the transmission of cultural tradition through intergenerational acts – as when Ania says “my grandma”. These two girls are tied comfortably to the tradition of their grandmothers and mothers by recognizing Polish recipes. This is an example of how total immersion in the Polish language transports these two girls into another cultural space, one Sara cannot enter. She makes efforts to contribute to this conversation by referring to food everybody understands and likes: pizza and ice-cream.

These children’s embeddedness in Polishness extends beyond home life to the Polish diaspora community in Wales. During the course of my research, I observed how strong everyday attachments can be. For example, on the same occasion, Asia said: “I am going to Polish hairdresser tomorrow. My mum’s friend is working there”. Such everyday necessities, like going to the hairdresser, are arranged to utilize Polish-speaking contacts. This is a very common experience for Polish children at St Luke’s. As they can meet Polish-speaking people at school, church, shops or in the street, these children are immersed in the Polish language and its rich signs and messages. In these various settings, children seem to be comfortable within this Polish diasporic social space because they are proficient language-speakers. This on-going language practice helps them enrich their vocabulary and prevents their language fossilizing. These children’s experiences appear to differ from Hoffman’s (1998: 107) “atrophied or shrivelled” experience with Polish-language use abroad. Fishman et al, (1966) and Smolicz (1981) consider the use of mother-tongue in many diaspora community life domains assures its maintenance. The researched children are exposed to a continuous flow of vibrant Polish. I noticed that speaking Polish is taken for granted and any limitations in children’s vocabulary can surprise parents.

For example, one mother said with astonishment: “At the Polish shop she [her daughter] asked me about ‘pieczywo’. She knows bread (‘chleb’) but she does not know ‘pieczywo!’” (‘chleb’ means bread in general, but particular kinds of bread are ‘pieczywo’). This everyday language of food shopping (in Polish shops) broadens children’s spoken language and maintains attachments to Polish identity through Polish food names. Additionally, food associations may evoke emotional reactions, as in Ola’s and Marta’s case, when talking about food that made them happy or sad, or trigger memories from Poland, as in Ania’s reference to her grandmother’s food.

Another space where the oral form of Polish is commonly used is Saturday school at the Polish Club. This is a significant social diasporic space where two ‘different’ Polish languages and discourses meet: those of the old diaspora and the new migrant Poles (Temple, 2010). In this setting, children are exposed to both forms. For example, the old-fashioned, patriotic language and nationalistic discourse around the Independence Day celebration influenced two boys’ national identifications (as presented in the previous chapter). The Saturday school curriculum (as discussed in Chapter 2) emphasizes teaching Polish language and culture to children who live away from Poland (Podhorodecka, 2003; 2009).

Although these children’s mother-tongue speaking competence is taken for granted, some parents were concerned that this did not reach the standard necessary for educational settings (presented in Chapter 4). As their Saturday school teacher, I focus therefore on children’s experiences of being taught Polish. Development and maintenance of reading and writing skills in mother-tongue require practice, time and effort from all involved: child, parent and teacher (Baker, 2000). The extract below, from one of our lessons, exemplifies how some children find writing in Polish fairly



easy but others struggle. These children disliked the written tasks and sometimes even refused to do them.

Then we had another writing task. I brought some leaves. Children had to describe the shape, colours, feeling when touched, etc. First, they had to choose a leaf for themselves. There was some disagreement about who takes which one as three boys (Mateusz, Paweł and Adam) wanted the same leaf: the biggest, greenest one. Finally, Paweł took it and sat down separately at the small table.

[...] Martyna asked me about several words in Polish (e.g. edge, sharp). She said she hasn't used such words yet as she uses only English at school. She wrote each word with great difficulty. Adam was working hard writing Polish words, letter by letter, with the help of Maria. All took their notebooks home to finish the task.

(Fieldnotes 9/10/ 210)

From this example of classroom practice, it can be seen that Polish-language competences vary across the group. In this group of nine children, aged 8-12, abilities vary with age, level of maturity and, most particularly, migration length and where they started education (Esser, 2006). For the oldest, Mateusz and Paweł, writing in Polish is fairly easy as they started education in the Polish system. For example, describing the leaf, Mateusz writes whole sentences starting with a capital letter, uses constructions like: "brownish-red" and describes the leaf's shape. He generally makes few spelling mistakes, e.g. 'colorowy' (colourful) with an English 'c' instead of Polish 'k'. Observing children's classwork and analyzing their written work, it is apparent writing is hard for Adam and Martyna. Both started education in Wales at the age of four without Polish experience of literacy. They find reading and, especially, writing in Polish very difficult. They are particularly stressed by differences from English: different alphabet, soft consonants and digraphs. Martyna just writes clusters of words, no sentences. Most of the words are phonetically written or misspelled: e.g. 'guatki' instead of 'gładki', 'bronzowy' instead of

“brązowy”. Being aware of these difficulties, I always prepared vocabulary prompts and dictionaries. Sometimes Maria, one of the mothers, helped children with writing.

By making the effort to bring children to Saturday school, parents maintain children’s cultural identity. Their motivation to preserve children’s Polish linguistic competence is more ambiguous. Some mothers expressed this, while others saw the school’s role as a socializing place: “to meet other Polish children”. Their reasons for children’s attendance varied from “to learn something” through “not to be bored at home” to “better that he comes here than plays his computer games all day”. My multiple roles in this research enabled me to hear experiences from both parents’ and children’s sides. Parents spoke about their children’s resistance. I learnt why every Saturday morning I would hear: “Miss, I forgot my homework!” In fact, written homework was rarely brought back to school by *any* of the children. As many mothers explained, children resist writing in Polish. For example, one mother expressed frustration as her son rebels and openly refuses to do Polish homework. She buys him presents as inducements.

I asked children about why they came. Their motivations to learn Polish appeared polarized. Some children constructed it as “the right thing to do because I am Polish” or “to be able to talk to grandma and granddad”. By this, they expressed the value of learning Polish at this school. Others, however, told me they “don’t want to come here”. This conforms to Tsolidis’ (2008) and Nadjje Al-Ali’ (2002) findings that children may resist attending ethnic schools. Some children told me directly that their parents had forced them to come there. It was not that they disliked the school but rather that they are stressed by the multiplicity of roles and expectations imposed on them. For example, coming to school may mean forgoing other more desirable

activities. Several boys, for example, said that they would rather play football on Saturday mornings than go to school. These boys' agency is limited: they cannot make their own choices but must follow parental decisions.

Over my year of teaching at Saturday school, I learnt that it is mostly mothers who facilitate children's home learning. This conforms with Esser's (2006) and Erel's (2009) findings about mothers' role in migration as transmitters of language. From two girls, I heard that their mothers facilitated learning primary literacy skills.

Danka, who came to Wales when she was seven, without writing skills, constructed her mother's role as a teacher. She said "My mum taught me how to write, I was only in pre-school in Poland" (Polish school age starts at 7). Similarly, Ola and her mother went through the Polish Primer ('Elementarz') last year and this year continues to have reading and writing sessions with her mother at home: "we are playing with my mum, pretending that we're at school."

At this complementary school, some mothers emphasized language preservation issues; and some, the importance of socialization in the Polish-speaking environment. In contrast, in Archer et al's (2010) study with second- and third-generation British-born Chinese children, the parental agenda was "preservation of Chinese culture" (2010: 411) and making children more 'Chinese' by attending language classes. In their study, however, the majority of interviews with children were in English, while these Polish children, being first-generation migrants, are confident in their mother-tongue.

During interviews and informal chats with mothers, there were very emotional moments when mothers expressed their feelings of being overwhelmed by powerlessness over their children's loss of mother-tongue. One mother said: "It's

terrifying that my son is not writing in Polish but I am trying not to think about it. I hope that he will not come back to Poland when he is older.” This mother feels the load of preserving her son’s Polish is impossible to carry. She perceives this as the undesirable outcome of the choice she made when she brought her son to Wales. Therefore, she constructs his future as “not in Poland” as she is aware that his limited Polish-language skills may be a problem for him in the future. As discussed in the previous chapter, some mothers worried that on return to Poland, their children would not fit into the Polish school system. This mother extends the issue of linguistic competence beyond schooling and reflects on its possible consequences for his future cultural identity and belonging. It is impossible to predict what will happen to these children’s Polish language competences. For example, for the second generation of Poles in Canada, Polish-language is of less importance than identification with co-ethnics (Lustanski, 2009). In Australia, Leuner (2010) records that the post-1980s cohort of Poles is less concerned with mother-tongue preservation than earlier migrants. My findings, however, suggest these researched families in Wales *are* concerned with Polish-language preservation. Moreover, none of the adult respondents denied the importance of the transmission of Polish heritage to their children.

To sum up, it is apparent from the above examples that mother-tongue is used successfully across most of the everyday social spaces of children’s lives, at home and within diasporic space. Speaking Polish by these children is taken for granted by parents and diaspora members. However, development of mother-tongue competences is more complex than simply speaking the language. As it is mostly mothers in this study who have taken on the responsibility for maintaining these children’s cultural identity, *mother-tongue* is an appropriate term.

### **5.3. Polish speakers at St Luke's school setting**

From the fertile ground of the Polish diaspora, where children identify strongly and comfortably through Polish language, I now move to St Luke's school. At this school, children freely use Polish. I therefore first explore how Polish-speaking children identity themselves within this school setting and how some parents think the size of the Polish-speaker group affects children's identities. I will then present how two English-speaking boys feel about Poles speaking Polish at school.

St Luke's school makes interesting observational terrain for observing children's multiple linguistic interactions. It incorporates bilingual education principles in policy and practice (Ball, 2011; EAL, 2008). In an interview, the Headteacher emphasized its ethos of inclusion, multicultural values and linguistic diversity. That is why he supports Polish-language lessons at school. In classrooms and corridors throughout the school, notices are displayed in the six most-spoken languages, including Polish. He pointed out the sensitivity of staff and teachers who, in his opinion, are very aware of children's linguistic needs and problems. Throughout this study, I noticed that children appreciate teachers' efforts to learn Polish words, greetings and correctly pronounced children's names. Children's statements show St Luke's teachers respect Polish students' cultural and linguistic background. Teachers make efforts to establish good relationships with students for what Cummins (2000: 44) calls 'collaborative relations of power'.

St Luke's school is unusual because of its sizable concentration of Polish children. Although over twenty linguistic groups are represented at this school, over my year of fieldwork, it was striking that across all settings (classrooms, corridors and

playground) I could only hear one foreign language spoken in the playground: Polish. However, over time, I noticed that some older Polish children appeared to keep more company with English-speaking children so spoke more English instead of Polish. These older children's attempts to fit into English-speaking peer groups (discussed in detail in Chapter 7) concurs with Kanno's (2004:321) observations about minority pupils in Japan, that older children "seem increasingly drawn to identities that are in line with the dominant values of society". In St Luke's playground, younger and older Polish children's behaviour differs noticeably. Whereas younger children enthusiastically expressed their linguistic belonging, the oldest children (sixth-year) were sometimes hesitant to express their Polish affiliations within this school space. During lunch-breaks, Polish sixth-year boys played football in the designated area instead of playing in the area where the younger children were. Towards the end of the school year, the Polish assistant said that the sixth-year pupils were no longer coming for Polish lessons. These older children may want to take more control over the way they express themselves (Ni Laoire et al, 2010).

I also heard some older children parent's comments on the number of Polish-speaking children in the school, that there are "too many Polish children". Two parents of sixth-year pupils considered it problematic. This concurs with Esser's (2006) assertion that a large concentration of ethnic children in one school setting may be a source of problems. The comments below come from an interview with a sixth-year (11-year-old) boy's father.

Me: "This year your son goes to xxx High School."

Father: "Yes, many children from his class will go there. He will need to rely on his English much more, maybe not one hundred percent, but much more than in this primary where there are terribly many Polish

children there. They speak Polish, which is natural, but in this new school there will be only English children and also some from other countries, but as far as I know there are few Polish children there.”

He considers the sizable group of Polish-speakers makes it impossible for his son not to speak Polish at school. This, he sees, creates consequences for his son, as he “does not rely on his English” but uses Polish instead. Attending this primary-school lets his son speak less English than he will need to in his next school. He did not criticize the school (none of the parents did) but just suggested that something is “too much” and may interfere with the development of his son’s English. One explanation of his concern is the imminent transition to secondary school. Parents, whose children need to rely on English during school exams, may reflect more on their level of academic English. For this father, as for other parents, English-language proficiency becomes the priority when further education is considered.

His reflections on his son’s predicted identity in secondary-school are built on his belief in the legitimacy of English. He wants his son’s identity to be more tied to, and empowered by, English-language. He believes that less Polish speakers in a new setting will lead to better English skills. He may have internalized the host-society’s dominant value: English has more value than Polish. This supports Bourdieu’s (1992:165) model of symbolic domination showing that ideologies of language are socially situated and embedded in power relations. In Bourdieu’s view (cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 168) ‘Any symbolic domination presupposes on the part of those who are subjected to it a form of complicity which is neither a passive submission to an external constraint nor a free adherence to values...’.

This parental negotiation of his son's hoped-for identity concurs with Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004: 15) view that identities are embedded within local and global power relations.

Interestingly, while some older Polish native children may want to escape from Polish ascribed identity in this setting, there are two non-Polish children who *want* to belong to the Polish group: Olek (dual nationality: Polish-Belarusian) and Sara, (Slovak, from a Roma background). Both speak Polish, but as a second language. Polish, Belarusian and Slovak, however, are similar Slavic languages. Unlike Sara, who identifies herself as Roma, Olek wants to be Polish more than he 'officially' is. For example, in the card-choice exercise he twice underlined that he is Polish. He has a Polish – but absent – father but lives with his Belarusian mother. The linguistic similarity of Belarusian and Polish, his frequent visits to Poland to see his father (on the way to and from Belarus) make him a fairly confident Polish speaker. Olek wants to belong to the large group of Polish children but is not always successful. His attempts to belong are grounded in acute isolation experienced on multiple levels: single child of a single (working) mother, isolated national, a religion uncommon here (discussed further in Chapter 7). Sara is highly motivated to speak Polish to maintain her friendship with Asia and to overcome isolation as the only Roma girl in the whole school. This friendship-tie facilitated her Polish language skills. She is socially active with Asia, and outgoing, so quickly learnt to communicate. Although Polish-speaking, Sara distinctly maintains her own Roma identity. (The friendship between her and Asia is discussed in Chapter 7).

Reflecting on the process of identity negotiation, Cummins (2000: 44) argues that 'coersive relations of power' often exist in schools' policies and practices. This



happens when students are expected to suppress their linguistic and cultural identity and internalize the message valued by the dominant group. At St Luke's, I observed the staff's commitment to the official discourse of valuing pupils' languages and linguistic capital. However I also observed how some English-speaking pupils resented this, which may indicate that they have internalized the valuing of cultural identities differently than adults in this setting. Unlike Kanno's (2004: 331) study, on several occasions I observed dissonance between the ethos of valuing cultural difference and children's interactions with Polish-speakers. This is apparent in English-speaking children's comments on their experience of Polish-speakers. Below I present two extracts in which, instead of being included, Polish-speakers were negatively labelled and criticized for using Polish.

I encountered negative perception in a mainstream classroom where two girls were using Polish. At the end of the lesson, when everybody moved, I asked Matt, a sixth-year boy, whether he would like to learn some Polish words to understand what the girls were talking about. He answered: "I don't want to learn any Polish as I don't want to be laughed at for the rest of my life." (Fieldnotes: 27/05/11). For this English-speaking boy, speaking Polish and possessing Polish identity does not bring positive connotations. Nor is speaking Polish a desirable skill: it is perceived as a negative attribute. The other comment comes from a sixth-year boy of African origin, Patrick. He entered our learning space when I was having a withdrawal session with Asia and Sara.

We were having our weekly session in the small storage room when Patrick entered the room holding a hanger with a priest's gown to leave it after their class mass. Asia started giggling (in Polish): "Sara, look at his shoes!" Patrick turned to me (in English) "What did she say? Can you translate it? I said (lying), that just she said something about the lesson. He said angrily " It is not fair that they are talking in Polish. It's rude. If I went to Poland and started talking English, it would be not

fair”. And he left. Then Asia explained: “When we speak Polish they think that we talk about them. But they *always* are shouting at us [here in English, she is mocking him]: “Look at your shoes!”

(Fieldnotes: 20/05/2011)

This micro-situation portrays the dynamics of children’s cultures in this multilingual setting. Patrick reacted angrily because he felt excluded and intimidated by these girls’ use of Polish. He demanded a translation and explanation. Connolly (1998: 94) noticed that teachers’ discourses on black boys may construct them as ‘disruptive and aggressive’. As Corsaro (1997) observes, boys are more direct, whereas girls typically avoid face-to-face confrontations. In this situation however, girls, feeling strengthened by possessing a ‘secret’ language, challenge this boy. Asia used the chance to get revenge on him, probably feeling more confident because I was in the room. She was indirect, but achieved her point. She and Sara could withdraw into their own world of other-language communication and exclude him. In this situation and social setting, speaking Polish proves a powerful exclusion tool. However, both examples show that these two boys have their own perceptions on linguistic diversity in this setting: both preferred communication in English and have negative perceptions of Polish use. Matt rejected Polish; Patrick reacted aggressively and constructed speaking Polish as ‘unfairness’. As such examples demonstrate, Polish children may cause their self-exclusion by speaking Polish, which makes non-Polish-speakers feel unfairly excluded.

Having discussed these Polish speakers’ identifications with their mother-tongue in various settings, I will now move to the issue of learning new languages in a migration situation. In this Welsh context, these Polish migrant children are acquiring not one, but two new languages: English and Welsh.

#### **5.4. Learners of English: second-language acquisition**

In the previous part, I showed how parental construction of English-language is a pivotal aspect of children's lives in Wales. Parental narratives about children's futures position knowing English as a desirable currency and portable cultural capital. In Bourdieu's (1986: 243) words: "cultural capital, which is convertible on certain conditions into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications." Just as Devine (2005; 2009: 530) found researching migrants families in Ireland, these migrant parents exhibit a positive orientation to education. One of the most common themes raised in parent interviews concerned the development of children's English skills. Two Polish assistants at St. Luke's described children's English acquisition process as a very individual path. From their experience, success depends on many factors, including age, gender, abilities, family's commitment and attachment to Poland. This conforms to Carrasquillo and Rodriguez's (2002:64-67) assertion that children's second-language learning is attributable to multiple factors due to individual differences in aptitude, personal dispositions, social skills, attitude, motivation and learning style.

The school's annual language-assessment on these children's progress as second-language learners, I present in Appendix 1. However, I am more concerned with exploring individual parents' perspective on the experience of language acquisition. The road towards English proficiency can be very painful for both children and parents. In the extract below, a mother talks about her eight-year-old son's four-year stay in Wales.

Mother: I am proud of him, he is good at school, he got all ‘A’s last year. Yes, he has made a huge progress, but it took him so long, so long to click, but at some point he clicked. He didn’t speak any English for one year and a half. I was thinking about getting additional English lessons for him. I remember when I talked to a Headteacher who said “we give them up to two years” and it was like that. He didn’t speak any English at all, he came to school in January and then the whole next school year he didn’t speak any English.

Me: He didn’t talk to anybody?

Mother: No, he was talking to Polish assistants. So almost two years, and then he clicked.

This mother constructs his son’s English-language development over the last four years as a success story. Now he develops his academic abilities – a relief for her. But all the first two years were filled with such anxiety about lack of any progress in English that she even considered arranging additional English language support for him. From her perspective, his transition into the English-speaking school environment took too long. However, from the Headteacher’s comments, it appears this was not an unusual scenario: some children need as long as two years to start speaking English in school. Indeed, Collier (1989) and Cummins (1996: 2000) found second-language acquisition may take seven or more years. This two-year case may therefore be a common experience for many migrant parents, which raises questions about language-assessment and support for parents. (This I discuss in Chapter 8).

This mother also worried about social adaptation into the learning environment: “His teacher says that in the classroom my son is shy, he never puts up his hand up when he knows the answer!”. This disappoints her as she used to be a very bright student herself. This interview took place straight after our Library session and appeared to strikingly contradict my observation of his participation there. I said that I found him extremely active, if not overactive, and responding often. She commented: “I know he is exactly like that at home. It might be that he felt confident there.” It seems that

being with Polish children in the library, he felt as free to express himself as at home, unlike being in a classroom environment. Children could choose their language of expression: he was writing in English, but speaking in Polish. However, I am far from making any generalization about the influence of environment on any other children. For example, Darek is also very shy and quiet at school. His class-teacher told me he hardly speaks any English in her classroom, despite being four years in this school, but his writing skills have improved. In the Library sessions, although using Polish, he was still shy, quiet and only rarely answering. However, he seemed more relaxed than in the school playground. In this boy's case, his quietness seems imprinted in his nature. What seems to be good for one pupil may not help Darek. However, shyness at school is common in literature on non-dominant language-speaking children. Devine (2009: 532) writes about the importance of children's investments into overcoming shyness in school. Dachyshyn and Kirova (2008) describe an intercultural education project in Canada, which gave sensitive support to shy Sudanese children entering peer groups, who need help with social, cultural, and psychological adaptation.

As highlighted in the literature review, the issue of how best to support non-English-speaking children is a major challenge for schools. (Discussion of how St Luke's arrange EAL provision, I present in Chapter 8). Cummins (2000: 7) repeatedly stresses that educators should challenge the "persistence of coercive relations of power hiding behind meaningless multicultural rhetoric". My multiple role at St Luke's let me both observe children and be part of the EAL team. I observed that children whose first-languages are not English may be marginalized by the school's power structure and organizational arrangements. On my first day, for example, I

observed migrant children being homogenized as ‘New Arrivals’ or ‘EU children’, instead of being recognized by linguistic difference (extract below).

I was introduced as a Polish volunteer. The class-teacher asked me to wait in the helpers’ room. Soon four nine-year-old girls arrived. Two were Polish: Asia and Ania. The third was Roma, Sara. She said she is from ‘Czechoslovakia’. She can speak Polish partly because her family stayed some time in Poland before their arrival in Wales, partly because she lives next door to, and has made friends with, Asia. The fourth girl was Hungarian (Jana). I used mostly English as Jana could not understand us and was confused. Three of them answered in Polish. After one hour the headteacher came and took Jana to class.

(Fieldnotes: 09/09/10)

As a Polish-speaking adult assistant, I was left on my own in the room with these four girls. The two Polish girls, Asia and Ania, seemed happy to see me. They were at ease, ‘chatty’ and laughing with Sara who contributed to their conversation in Polish. However, although speaking Polish, Sara is Slovak, so was not able to fully comprehend nuances when I told them about the Polish school I used to teach at. When four of us spoke Polish, no communication was possible for Jana. Hungarian does not resemble Polish or Slovak at all, these are Slavic languages: Hungarian is not. Over this hour, Jana looked tense, puzzled and uncomfortable, as though asking “what am I doing here?” Whenever I tried to turn the conversation into English, so she could participate, the other girls pushed it back to Polish.

In this situation, institutional arrangements were based on these four girls’ ‘sameness’, they being labelled as newcomers to the UK from the same part of post-communist Europe. The fact that they come from three different, linguistically-distinct countries was not taken fully into consideration by staff. As I observed over the following weeks, the Eastern European children in the school themselves resist this homogenisation and negotiate their difference as distinct nationals. Jana, as the

only Hungarian, does not choose to belong to the Polish group in the playground. In classroom practice (Maths) she was placed at the Polish girls' table for two months, but in November was moved to an English-speaking children's table. She always sits next to her teacher and is a very diligent student. (The Polish-speaking girls sit together, away from their teacher). There are two Lithuanian children in the school. At the start of term, one, a ten-year old girl, told me clearly (in English): "*I do not speak any Polish*" when I approached her. As I observed, this girl's outgoing personality and good English help minimize her national 'otherness' attributes.

One of the main challenges in educational provision for children without the language of instruction is how to organize their learning. In practice, this depends on availability of rooms. At St Luke's, scarcity of space mean additional lessons, like music, reading sessions and EAL, routinely take place in the corridor or a small isolated storage room. In time, I became familiar with the practice of withdrawing girls for EAL sessions. I also came to realize that some teaching materials for these are not intellectually stimulating for nine-year-olds, and some are too linguistically demanding. This led Asia to direct her anger at me (one-to-one session extract below).

I was working with Asia in the corridor, outside the classroom. She was doing spelling for half an hour (matching words e.g. deck/duck, suck/sack). (The mainstream children had an English lesson and were writing 'My autobiography' (plan: about me, nursery-school, interesting facts and memories.) Then came Religion. Teacher came to us and gave me a short text simplified from the Gospel about God's love, along with a list of questions. Teacher said: "Asia, you don't have to write answers, just underline words in the text". I read it to her, she was listening. I was sure she would not understand it, as the text was difficult. Then I asked the first question from the list. At this point she burst with anger: "Why do you ask me? I don't understand it! I am not long in this country; I am not here for long! How can I know?"

(Fieldnotes: 03/12/10)

Asia's outburst of frustration seems due to the overload of expectations imposed on her. Within one learning session with me she was exposed to two language tasks of greatly different difficulty-levels. The EAL-resources materials we first used made her bored and disinterested: she mechanically copied them into her notebook. In contrast, mainstream teacher's task assumed fluent comprehension of an extensive vocabulary, far beyond her language ability. She felt comfortable enough with me to express her frustration and anger. However, her anger might be also reinforced by an unintended marginalizing practice. From the corridor, we could hear everything going on in the classroom but could not participate. I noticed that, while copying into her notebook, she looked interested in what was going on there and was following the lesson. 'My autobiography' was clearly an interesting topic for a girl of her age. Moreover, in the second part of this lesson, Religion, Asia would have benefitted much more from being inside the classroom with me as a translator. Instead, although doing the same task as all the others, we were spatially segregated. We obviously, in her eyes, 'did not belong' in there. (Later in this chapter, I present a profile of Asia. Reflections on withdrawal for EAL sessions, I discuss in Chapter 8).

Over the course of my fieldwork, I mostly supervised three girls: Asia and Ania (Polish) and Sara (Slovak); and occasionally other 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year Polish children. During Maths or Art in the mainstream classroom, I translated when necessary. They enjoyed Art activities and participating in shared tasks with other children. However, I sometimes observed them sitting far back on the carpet when assistants wanted them to move closer to the group. These girls' self-withdrawal from classroom tasks was frequent. Being so often segregated from mainstream activities may contribute to that. Probably this withdrawal-session practice influences the behaviour of all children in the class: the girls subject to language-support feel



outcasts, and the English-speaking children do not know how to involve non-English-speakers into cooperative work. The extract below, from my third month of observations at St Luke's, exemplifies Sara's self-withdrawal when she was expected to participate in group-tasks with four English-speaking children in the mainstream classroom.

Teacher explained the team task: make an animation. Teacher asked me to stay with a group of two boys and three girls including Sara, to translate for her. She looked surprised to be in the group. The first 10 minutes children were exchanging ideas, writing down details, what should be drawn, cut, coloured, etc. None of the children addressed any question to Sara. She did not talk to them, only to me (in Polish) asking: "Why am I here? Why not with Asia? Can I go to her now?" She started to move her chair, look around the shelves, tried to grab a book from a shelf behind, waved to Asia across the room. "Can I go to her?" "Sorry, you are in another group." Sara: "Sitting here is like a punishment. I would rather be punished than sit here!" The teacher came: "Children have you involved Sara?" One of the girls said: "Yes, she will be colouring the houses on our picture." Later, Sara did do some colouring.

(Fieldnotes: 05/11/10)

From the outset, Sara's belonging to this group and her participation were questionable. The teacher organised the class into team groups and Sara, Asia and Ania were put into different groups with English-speaking children. The situation was clearly unusual for everybody: often Polish assistants take them away from the class. In Sara's group, the four English-speaking children at her table did not involve her in the group task; there were no indications that any of them was willing to do so. They may not have known how to involve a non-English speaking child in a teamwork project. To escape this uncomfortable situation, Sara defended herself by self-withdrawal. Her body language indicated that all she wanted was to escape. She felt entirely alienated from the group and constructed her position as being 'punished'. Being excluded from discussions and not being able to contribute

meaningfully, she was not interested in trying to do anything with the group. All she wanted was to be with her best friend, Asia. (In the next section, I examine Asia's self-withdrawal practice and how this impacted her identity negotiations).

## 5.5 Learners of Welsh

As presented in the literature review, Wales has a clear policy on bilingualism, so all children, including migrants, learn Welsh in school. At St Luke's, the Headteacher noticed that Polish children like learning Welsh and learn it quickly. This conforms to Devine's (2009:529-30) findings in Ireland that migrant children 'pick up' Irish quickly and moreover that the language "was viewed as an important symbolic marker of national identity ('being Irish') and belonging". These Polish children did not talk about Welsh in relation to their identity but as a welcome challenge in learning it as a second-language. Children identified themselves positively as Welsh-language learners. This may be a way for them to counterbalance the negative self-esteem associated with learning English. The extract below comes from a Saturday school session when we were talking about their schools. Three children, each from a different school, spontaneously started talking about learning Welsh.

Martyna: I know Welsh. I am learning every day.

Me: Do you know many words in Welsh?

Martyna: I can say: "Mae llygaid glas gyda fi." (I have blue eyes), "Mae gwallt melyn gyda fi." (I have blond hair) ...and I also know "castle", and I know many colours.

Me: Can you count?

Martyna: Yes, up to twenty.

Łukasz: I can count up to thirty!

Martyna: Un, dau, tri... [1,2,3.... in Welsh]

Me: Ooo, difficult!

Wanda: Easy! For me it's easy, I can count too.

These three Polish children construct their learning Welsh in schools as an enriching linguistic experience. Martyna initiates the conversation and from memory gives examples of whole sentences in Welsh. Łukasz, who was listening, shows off by adding numbers he knows. The Welsh language, being Celtic-root, is very different from other major languages. Many people, myself included, consider it difficult, but Wanda classes it as “easy”. These children constructed their identity as learners of Welsh in very positive terms: exactly opposite to the negative experiences many have of learning English.

One possible explanation for this contrast is that these children portray themselves as *equal language-learners*. Polish children are learning Welsh *like any other child* in the classroom. As English-language learners, most of the children around them are native speakers so have advantages over them. Learning Welsh, however, there is no power imbalance. In other words, by starting from scratch as Welsh-language-learners, Polish children do not start out disadvantaged, do not automatically feel worse. They are, at last, not constructing the experience on *deficit identity* terms.

Learning Welsh as an additional language allows them to rebalance the unfavourable power dynamics in their classrooms. They can re-establish their self-esteem, as equal language-learners. When they compare themselves with other children in this English-language-dominated class environment, they can prove how good and clever they are by how many words they are quickly able to remember, recite and show off to me. The positive aspect of this experience counters the position presented by one English assistant at St Luke's who constructed Polish children as victims already struggling with English-language and now burdened by having to learn an additional

language: “It is unfair that these Polish children have to learn Welsh on a top of everything.” What these three children told me completely refutes this position.

Learning Welsh gives these Polish children an easiness and positive identity, as they are now just *other-language-learners*. This bears a resemblance to the positive identity associated with Polishness while being a student in Wales and “knowing *three* languages” (discussed in the previous chapter). That was another example of how children positively identify as language-learners and how the important trace of identity is interrelated with speaking home- and second-languages. I will now explore this further in relation to learner’s identities by giving insights into how children manage their difference as learners of several languages.

### **5.6. Children’s constructions of identities as language learners**

This thesis’s limited space precludes presenting how all 29 children’s identity negotiations are embedded in linguistic practice. I therefore present portraits of four girls only. This gender bias has reasons. My data contains richer ethnographic details on girls: perhaps being a woman made them more open to me than boys.

Additionally, when comparing children’s profiles, I discovered that some children develop a more positive identity related to languages than others. These migrant children’s, attitudes and confidence-levels vary. These four girls represent identity-types spanning linguistic-confidence (Martyna), searcher identity (Zosia), insecure (Sylwia) and negative second-language-learner’s identity (Asia).

Presenting these portraits, I understand, like Hall (1996:4), that “identities are discursively constructed, produced in specific historical and institutional sites within

specific discursive formations and practices”; and Miller (2003: 42), that identities are processual and never completed. These girls’ identities are imbued with gender aspects as middle-childhood-age girls and their status as EAL-learners and Polish-speakers within their ethnic community. These girls’ identity negotiations are related to representation. Van Dijk et al (1997:145) cited in Miller (2003:43) noticed “the ways members of one ethnic group speak among each other are of course related to their position in the society, and how they are spoken to and about by dominant group members”.

Second-language learning being a field where identities are constructed (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2000), this section reveals its importance in these girls’ individual identity-negotiations. I describe their different routes towards English proficiency. As Cummins (2000) considers children average seven years to master a second-language to an academic level, these girls are mid-way: all four having been at least four years in Wales. Apart from their individual linguistic talents and learners’ dispositions, English-language ability seems to be related to their different levels of confidence, self-esteem, and motivation and their attitudes: being happy in or ‘hating’ school. These girl’s portraits show that extending linguistic boundaries extends their social agency.

Tomasello (2000 cited in Brandsma, 2000: 34) recommends considering children’s perspective on communication. The examples below suggest that motivation to communicate with other-language users may stimulate motivation to learn the language itself. Further, the different ways each of these girls approach English-speakers and utilize their already acquired linguistic knowledge may impact their identities. Therefore, I consider a child’s social conditions may influence her self-

image as a learner. The process of acquiring English depends not only on character and self-esteem but also on social stimulation and encouragement. For example, whether these girls' are happy about extending school-curriculum knowledge in after-school activities in an English-speaking environment. As shown in the section on mother-tongue, there is a strong correlation between Polish-language proficiency and being immersed in a Polish-speaking environment. In relation to learning English, therefore, exposure to after-school environments, whether English-, Polish-speaking or mixed seems to be salient. In Social Context and Willingness to Communicate models, this relates to predicted identity (Clement et al, 2003: 196). Whether a child feels capable of managing language difference and new challenges, and exhibits resilience and confidence or shyness and withdrawal depends on such an interrelation of factors. By definition, they will never be 'native' English-speakers: despite apparent competence, their ability to vocalize emotions precisely will always be limited by cultural-linguistic differences. Nevertheless, how children develop their linguistic competences and confidence is crucial for their identities.

### Martyna

Martyna is eight and exhibits an identity of linguistic confidence. In the chapter on nationality, I have described how she values learning languages. Her linguistic confidence is a strong indicator of her national identity. Martyna constructed her 'proud of being Polish' identity because of knowing three languages. In the previous section, she talked enthusiastically about learning Welsh. This strong value she accords to languages seemed to influence her identity-labels in the Card exercise. In her first card-choice she chose "English person" as the most important label, next

come: “White”, “Girl”, “Polish person” and “Welsh person”. This may suggest her various linguistic identifications. From my observation at Saturday school and other social contexts, she successfully switches between spoken Polish and English. However, as seen in the section on children’s work at Saturday school, writing in Polish puts stress on her. Consequently, for spontaneous expression, she chooses English and also includes some Welsh words in her diary about her intimate small worlds – from which comes the extract below. Overall, she appears a confident user of three languages (see photo of diary in Appendix 8).

“I gone to Agnieszka and Agnieszka went to Poland for one week. She came back yesterday. Agnieszka is my aunti. She had a baby named Małgosia. Małgosia wants her car so Agnieszka gave her car and I am driving her car. Her car’s colour is pink and white on it.” [And so on.]

Martyna’s written English is better than her Polish: longer sentences, better flow. (See her work at Saturday school). In this diary entry, she writes about her after-school time. This is embedded in Polish diaspora life: she likes spending her afternoons visiting her baby cousin next door and other Polish relatives. From the parental questionnaire, I learnt that she is an only child, her parents work long hours and arrange childcare by Polish relatives who live close by. Martyna has a positive school experience. At Saturday school, she wrote that she likes her local primary and especially her EAL-support teacher. Learning English connotes a special value for her.

Martyna’s linguistic resources play an important role in defining her identity. She utilizes her inherited Polish cultural identity and language in Polish contexts. In Wales, she uses the opportunity to learn other languages: English and Welsh. Both second-languages add valuable traces to her new complex identity: a competent cosmopolitan child, who travels across Europe and speaks several languages. This

linguistic competence is building her new identity and seems a very positive feature of her migration from Poland.

### Zosia

A year older, Zosia, also an only child, has a ‘searcher’ identity. Unlike Martyna, she spends more time out of the domestic sphere. Lareau (2003:68) shows the importance of gender differences in daily life: “girls are more sedentary, play closer to home, and have their physical bodies more actively scrutinized and shaped by others than boys”. Zosia defies this gender stereotype. She utilizes her linguistic resources to build new attachments and belongings in Wales. The extract below, from an interview with her mother, describes one afternoon’s search for an extra-curricular activity.

Mother: “She was talking about this karate class, that she wants this. So yesterday we were going here and there looking for this karate class for her. *She heard* that it was in the community centre here but when we went there somebody *told her* to go to the other place in xxx. So we went there, on foot. Then we had to wait there and it turned out that it is only on Tuesdays. But *she wants* to go to these karate classes. I don’t know.... This is more for boys than for her.”

Zosia’s mother constructs the situation as being ‘taken’ by her daughter on a journey around in their neighbourhood. This mother does not use a passive form herself but active verbs are related to Zosia, who ‘*heard*’ what somebody had ‘*told her*’. This indicates that the agency and communication was on her daughter’s side. This mother may not know how to utilize the community setting (Ladd, 1992:15). Devine in Ireland (2009:532) found that migrant parents with fewer cultural resources (especially fluency in English) may make limited investments in building social



capital in the community. In this example, Zosia compensates for parental lack of English competence by utilizing her English skills to take the initiative. She *wants to* extend her social world and meet new children through karate classes at her local sports centre. Although still a child, so needing adult consent to attend them, she is already independent in this English-speaking world.

Zosia shows resilience and agency not only in linguistic terms. She also breaks a gender-stereotype barrier. She chooses to participate in a sport, which her mother considers “more for boys”. Zosia is an example of a resilient migrant child (Rutter, 2006): she confidently utilizes her language skills and takes initiative to widen her social contacts. This lets her adopt a ‘searcher’s’ identity. Thanks to linguistic resources she is developing at school, in her immediate environment and community she lives in, she bridges successfully into her neighbourhood. Children who know English when their mothers do not gain agency, reversing their subordinate family role. In the above situation, the nine-year-old daughter becomes the ‘organizer’, while the mother, although the adult facilitator, remains ‘without a voice’.

### Sylwia

Despite being older than the previous two, eleven-year-old Sylwia is a less confident English-speaker. She came to Wales at the age of eight, after one year of Polish education. As a second-language learner, her identity appears insecure. At St Luke’s, she tends to withdraw from social situations whenever peer-interactions require language proficiency beyond her ability.

This extract comes from my fieldwork observation during games.

The children from grade six entered the pitch. The girls were leaving their stuff in the shadowy corner where the midges were. Sylwia left her things and quickly stepped out of the shade into the sunny spot on the green pitch and turned to the girls:

“Guys, come here, here is fine, there are no midges!”

Jane: “Have you heard? She said: ‘Guys’!”

Kate responded immediately: “So what, it is *just one word!*”

Sylwia said nothing, turned away and ran towards the group of children on the pitch.

(Fieldnotes: 13/03/ 2011)

In this social situation, Sylwia chose to leave the group without defending herself. She had felt belittled because the linguistic power lies on the side of the native-speaker girl. Jane’s comment was an unpleasant reminder of Sylwia’s linguistic difference. Sylwia, who had only good intentions, felt rejected and foolish. Over the course of the year, however, I observed Sylwia developing a distinct new identity, building on her strengths, not her linguistic weaknesses: a ‘good at sports’ identity. Children recognized this. When playing, they often shouted “Sylwia, Sylwia!” because she was the one most often with the ball. During lunch-breaks she always played football with boys from her class. This footballer identity is obviously important for her: most of her photos were taken at the Football Club where she plays football on Saturdays. This boyish activity brings her closer to boys’ circles in her class but may further distance her from ‘girly’ topics. She cannot confidently chat with girls in her class *about* boys, but she is *with* boys and herself more like a boy: wearing jogging-pants and trainer-shoes. She utilizes her natural disposition well and uses the language of sport for good communication. Unlike verbally-negotiated games, like skipping-rope (discussed in Chapter 7), football does not require much talking or explanation. This allows her to exist comfortably with peers, mostly boys, and by so doing this she crosses stereotype boundaries. In contrast, at

home, she occupies a highly feminine, in fact motherly, role, possibly to balance her boyish football-player identity at school. After school, she stays within the domestic domain with her two-year-old cousin, her 'best friend' as she wrote.

Within her peer world, Sylwia uses her agency and resilience to build a distinct identity, easily recognizable by other children. This suits her and builds her self-esteem. Additionally, she is slowly building on her English skills: for example, she takes out books from the local library. By belonging to the boys' world as a tomboy, Sylwia seems to be more than compensating for her lack of a social language to talk to other girls about boys. Although sport is traditionally a boys' domain, she successfully crosses gender boundaries.

### Asia

Ten-year-old Asia has spent most of her life in Wales: she arrived aged four, started school here, but when she was seven, the family returned to Poland for one year, then came back to Wales. From my observations, Asia develops a second-language learner's negative identity. The extract below comes from an EAL withdrawal-session with Asia and Sara. That day, the girls were more rebellious than usual. Both were postponing doing their writing task: Sara started singing, and then they just chatted. At some point, feeling powerless, I said that next week, instead of our coming to this room I will ask to stay in their mainstream classroom. That is what followed:

Asia: Miss, next time we're going to be quiet, we will write. We prefer to stay here...

Me: You don't write what I told you. Do you misbehave in the classroom too?

Sara: No.

Asia: No, we work normally...

Sara: ...and we talk.

Asia: In the classroom we have to speak English. Miss splits us up, we don't sit together. When we talk, Miss shouts at us. When we are with you we can talk about everything and you don't shout at us. Miss, please next time we're going to be quiet.

In this situation, I used my power as an adult in authority, their 'teacher'. Asia's immediate response to my threat was because she feared losing the opportunity to be out of the mainstream classroom. By saying 'we', she implied Sara shared her opinion. She constructs the mainstream classroom and EAL room as spaces with different degrees of discipline, class arrangements and opportunities for expressing feelings. In the classroom she is expected to (and does) work, speak English and sit separately from her friend, Sara. The EAL space, she associates with no work pressure, relaxed atmosphere and speaking Polish. For English-language acquisition, the sessions with me seemed largely a waste of time. On the other hand, Asia's negative perceptions about their work – and being shouted at – in the classroom, make her not want to be there. Indeed, both girls prefer the EAL-room's separated space. This self-segregation preference may result from a perception that being with English-speaking children in the mainstream classroom is a worse situation.

I have described both girls' experiences of EAL help: Asia's angry reactions and Sara's self-withdrawal from the group of English-speaking children. Possibly, frequent withdrawals from mainstream space, social-context and syllabus-continuity contribute to these girls' not wanting to be with English-speaking staff or children. Paradoxically, teaching practice intended to help their English-learning may actually hinder it. The situation promotes insecure and self-segregating identities. On several occasions during English or Maths lessons, I heard Asia ask: "Miss, why am I so

stupid?” This shows lack of belief in herself. Her learner’s identity is negative. The family’s mobility may be responsible for discontinuity in her education. Unlike Sylwia, Asia is not good at, and seems bored by, sports, and not eager to participate in group activities.

To conclude: Each of these four girls’ English-language acquisition is different: as are their characters, abilities, and utilization of language resources and already-possessed linguistic capital. Consequently, they construct their identities differently. But, as I show, English and/or Welsh play an important part in how they build their new second-language-learner identities. This, in turn, affects motivation to develop language and how they choose to belong to (or avoid) English-speaking peer-groups and their wider community. How they are perceived as second-language learners and their communication with other people reciprocally impact each other.

## **5.7 Conclusions**

In this empirical chapter, I have focused on children’s experiences as Polish-language users and learners of second-languages: English and Welsh.

I began by showing the value of Polish-language in these children’s lives. Children make positive connotations and emotional attachments to food culture and intergenerational tradition continuity. I showed that their use of mother-tongue is successful across everyday spaces, although mostly in its oral form. The migration situation forces parents, especially mothers, to think about their children’s cultural continuity and whether and how to control their cultural identity.

In the specific context of St Luke's, I have shown that its laudable policy of valuing linguistic diversity may, in practice, sometimes exhibit what Cummin's (2000: 44) calls 'coercive relations of power'.

Specifically, I have explored how newly-arrived EU children may be homogenized or spatially marginalized. I have shown that withdrawal-session practice leads to self-withdrawal by those receiving EAL language-support. This may also be responsible for dominant-language children's lack of social skills with second-language children. Instead there are tensions, resentments and excluding practices: Poles switch into their own language and English-speakers exploit the superiority of English. Language is a powerful tool for inclusion or exclusion and is used actively by both Polish and English-speaking children across the setting – as exemplified by why two English-speaking boys resent Polish-speakers.

I have shown how negative experiences with unsuccessful language-acquisition lead to rejection of the whole idea of learning or being taught by English-speaking staff. This was exemplified by two girls preferring to stay in a separated space designated for second-language learners instead of joining mainstream children.

I have revealed the fact that Polish children who feel linguistically disadvantaged as second-language learners of English can reposition themselves as equals when learning Welsh. Learning Welsh boosts their confidence in class and rebuilds their self-esteem.

I have looked into four girls' identity-building processes as second-language learners and Polish-speakers. I have shown how their differentiated attitudes towards belonging to their school, home-neighbourhood and peers are related to their self-reliance in utilizing language resources. For example, linguistic confidence

significantly influences self-image, hence the way they approach (or avoid) people, which in turn affects their further linguistic development.

I have explored the emergence of older children's subtle withdrawal from affiliations with Polish-speakers as they drift towards English-speakers over the course of time. They seem to become increasingly uncomfortable with the 'uniform' St Luke's imposes on them. My observations were supported by parental discourses about how English proficiency becomes a priority when children get ready for secondary school.

## Chapter 6

### Being a Polish child in a Catholic migrant family in Wales

“Catholic education is personal, communal and spiritual at every level, and that our schools are to be imbued with a Christian spirit which is rooted in the Gospels and expressed in the celebration of Mass and the sacraments, liturgies and assemblies, the classroom, the staff room, the dining room, the sports field and the playground – every aspect of their lives.”

The Right Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP, Bishop of Nottingham<sup>6</sup>

#### 6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how being a child in a Polish Catholic migrant family in Wales impacts on her/his identifications. Religion is one of the most important aspects of identity negotiations along with social class, cultural background, nationality and gender. Parental religious beliefs and practices can play a crucial role in children’s identity-formation. Polish parents influence children’s identity through socialisation into Catholicism by churchgoing and school choice. These young children’s agency is subordinate to parental authority: and particularly so while acquiring traces of religious identity.

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<sup>6</sup> *‘The Future of Catholic Education’ The Fundamental Premise of Catholic Schools: A Catholic Attitude to Education.* A Presentation by the Right Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP, Bishop of Nottingham, Chairman of the Catholic Education Service to the Catholic Voices Academy, 22/11/2012.



Like Eleanor Nesbitt (2000:141), researching 8 to 13-year olds' children's perspectives on their experience on religion, I also posed myself questions about: "the age at which children can articulate a perspective on religion, and to what degree they are able to articulate a perspective other than that learned from parents and influential elders". My findings revealed that these children clearly self-identified themselves as Catholic children. The second question - to what degree their perspectives are independently formed - remains unanswered in my study. This is partly because I did not ask questions about children's interpretation of their religious affiliation or children's agency in families' religious habitus. Unlike Bales (2005) I did not look into children's understanding of the religious ritual of First communion and the meanings they attached to this. This is a limitation of my study. In this research, the main question was: "In what way do Polish Catholic family practices impact on these children's identifications?" Consequently, sub-questions focused on children's self-identification and the way Catholicism is practiced and passed on within these migrating families. A limitation of the study was the lack of space for addressing the issues of children's own agency within the Catholic paradigm. However, the study design did leave opportunity for children to reflect on 'what was important for them' and some children themselves brought up the theme of Catholic practice in their conversations. This chapter is predominantly based on my observations and parental accounts. I do not undervalue children's voices but, as data show, they discuss religion much less than nationality, language and friendships themes.

I start the chapter with these children's constructions of their religious belonging as they define themselves as Catholics. Then I concentrate on particular sites where Catholicism is present in children's lives, starting with observations of children's

experiences in St Luke's. At this setting, children are socialised both by formal structures (e.g. mass attendance as an obligatory part of the curriculum) and informal messages imparted by teachers' attitudes and behaviour (e.g. making signs of the cross in class). Then I present observations of migrant families in a Polish-speaking parish, and of children being socialised into a patriotic Catholic discourse in the Polish Club. Attendance at Polish-language masses and events at the Polish Club impact on children's identification as *Polish Catholics*. Celebrating Polish festivals such as Wigila (Christmas Eve), Wielkanoc (Easter) and Polish National Days creates attachments to Polish tradition and immersion in Polish Catholicism's blend of nationalistic patriotism and religion (described in Chapter 4).

After setting this religious scene in Wales, I describe religious practice in these families' lives, and specifically the sacrament of First Communion. I describe how migrant children return to Poland for this and how it is celebrated there; then how this differs when families choose to arrange it in a Polish-speaking parish in Wales. Thirdly, I present observations of this sacrament in St Luke's English-speaking parish.

## **6.2. Children's constructions of religious belonging**

From ethnographic data, Catholicism appears to be well transmitted to, and received by, these children, and an accepted part of their everyday experience of migration. Firstly, most of them self-identified as Catholic children. Secondly, I could observe children's religious behaviour, which indicated contented belonging to Catholic rituals in schools or churches. None of the children refused, criticised or opposed attendance at any of the religious settings. These children's parents arrived in Britain with a specific set of religious beliefs and practice embedded in Polish Catholicism (Trzebiatowska, 2010). Their families' transnational practice means travel to Poland for religious holidays, like Christmas or Easter, is common. Children and parents talk about visiting families for religious sacraments like Baptism, First Communion, weddings or funerals. This embeds children's experiences of Poland in Polish religiosity, which differs from their Welsh Catholic experience. The Roman Catholic Church spans across European borders. This framework assures continuity of Catholic religious experience in migrant children's lives.

It seems children from both school settings are well aware of being Catholics. Connolly et al (2002) found that children as young as three-years-old distinguish religious categories. From my ethnographic observations it appears that children are thoroughly immersed in their families' religious practice. However, except around the time of First Communion, children rarely spontaneously talk about religious aspects of life. In research design, therefore, I devised explicit questions to examine Catholicism's importance in their lives. Some children's responses strikingly revealed the impact of Catholic upbringing on their identities. For example, Marta wrote the name of 'Jesus' as her 'best friend'; and Alicja's 'Three wishes', include

“more pilgrimages”. During our interview she described her family’s pilgrimages to Częstochowa sanctuary every August: “I was there even in my mother’s womb”. Clearly, some family’s religious practice is stronger than others, which may make stronger impacts on individual children’s identities. As I observed, the effect of Catholic symbols seems to depend on a child’s gender and individual characteristics. Girls were more prone than boys to talk about, for example, dresses for First Communion. Attendance at masses, frequency of exposure to religious experiences and being at Catholic school further widen children’s social contacts within the Catholic environment. These particularly depend on the intensity of parental engagement in Catholic rituals.

In my study’s card-choice exercise, of 29 children, sixteen chose the Catholic identity label: twelve as important and four (two in each school group) as the *most* important. In their ‘Important events in my life’ charts, most children marked Catholic sacraments (see Appendix 7). Six of the ten children at the Library sessions wrote “I was baptized”, “I had First Communion” or both. These marked their ‘First Communion’ sacrament as of equal importance to ‘coming to Wales/England’ (many children confused Wales with England) or ‘starting school’. Being taken at the age of eight, however, First Communion was more recent, which might have influenced their prioritization. In ‘Important photos’, one boy presented his First Communion ‘Pamiętka pierwszej komunii świętej’ (devotional picture); and three children, photographs of their church. In the ‘Important places I visit’ and ‘My favourite things to do’ charts, eleven children (seven at St Luke’s and four at Saturday school) marked church as a place they visit or go to on Sundays. Observational data and children’s work generated in this study strongly suggests that Catholicism may be an important trace in their identity-formation.

### **6.3. Children's experiences of Catholicism at St Luke's school and parish**

The data show Catholicism is present in both children's and parents' narratives. That parents often repeated the phrase "We are Catholics", suggests Catholicism is a major influence on their choice of schools. They want to pass Catholic beliefs and values to their children (Orsi, 2004). This is in line with the mission of the Catholic Church to care for migrant families and help parents to integrate into school and parish communities (Lynch, 2008). Podhorodecka (2009) observes that Polish migrant parents frequently chose Catholic schools as these may appear closer to their own values than non-faith schools. Some believe that sending children to Catholic schools keeps them apart from Muslim children, which community schools do not (Kaczmarek-Day, 2009).

The concentration of Polish children at St Luke's is largely due to Polish social network activities: announcements at church, informal discussions at the Polish Club and shops, family chain migration, advertising on the Internet and enrolment of younger siblings. Prevalent amongst parental narratives is the issue of utilizing social capital e.g. knowing people ("We worked together and she told me about the school"), chain family migration ("Now my brother's children are also at the school") or convenience due to language barrier (e.g. having Polish-speaking assistance and translation). Additionally, the Polish community has grown around the school over five years, as the Headteacher told me. As described in the chapter on nationality, Polish parents value education, and especially learning languages, for their children's 'better future'. It may be that these parents recognise Catholic

education, and this particular school, as an avenue for their children's educational advancement.

I was aware of St Luke's reputation in the Polish community: "It is a good school". The Headteacher emphasized the school's Catholic inclusion ethos:

"We remember that we have one thing in common, which is a massive help to us, is the fact that we come to a Catholic school. And the word Catholic means universal, so wherever we come from, whatever the language, background in the school; the vast majority are Catholics, that's what holds us, what binds us all together. "

This message may be particularly appealing to newly-arrived Polish migrant families. The St Luke's setting reassures parents with familiar Catholic symbolism: Jesus on the cross, Mother Mary (there is a special cult of Matka Boska, Mother Mary, in Poland), a portrait of the Polish Pope, John Paul II. Catholicism's visual symbolic language does not require speaking English to understand. Furthermore, in line with her support teacher responsibilities, the Polish assistant is active in establishing relationships between the school, church and Polish community. She plays a vigorous role in sustaining the 'Home, School and Church' triad which many parents recognize and value from their own upbringing in Poland (Wychowawca, 2011).

St Luke's daily school life is embedded in Catholic practice. My fieldnotes describe the September 'Welcome Mass'.

In the Main Hall, all school children were sitting on the floor, in rows, facing the table/altar with a picture of the Pope, Benedictus the XVI. Teachers made sure that children were sitting straight and were attentive during the mass [...] The mass was led mostly by children. A sixth-year boy started: "We will be asking God's help with our work and friendships, sports and hobbies and with everything that is part of school life as we begin a new school year." [...] Singing "Bread of Heaven" started and class after class of older children (8+) moved

towards the centre where the Priest and one male teacher were both giving out holy communion wafers. Some approached with hands crossed across their chest (this means: I don't take holy wafer) and were given a blessing, a cross on the forehead.

The school's calendar is marked by whole-school or class masses. Religious rituals build a cohesive school community and sense of belonging (Hemming, 2011: 59). I observed that children are excited before school and class masses as these require preparations and rehearsals, and the priest visits the school.

However, not all children in this school are Roman Catholics: some are of other faiths (e.g. Hindu), some of none. The position of a child who is not of the setting's dominant religion is complex and may be difficult (Smyth, 2009:7).

During my spelling session with two girls, Asia (Catholic) started asking Sara (Roma) about her first communion.

Asia interrupted Sara's reading, saying that today at mass everybody will take a holy wafer. She asked Sara whether she had had her first communion and would take a holy wafer. Sara said something evasive, but Asia asked again: "Did you have a white dress in church, guests and presents?" Sara said "Yes" quietly. But Asia: "No you didn't have it, you didn't take the holy wafer! You can't be a saint!!!"

(Fieldnotes: 20/10/10)

These two girls are best friends. In this conversation, however, religious distinction creates an acute barrier between them. The sacrament of First Communion two years previously (in Poland) was as a pivotal event in Asia's life. In her understanding, taking communion is an important act. She notices that Sara does not take a holy wafer nor make crosses during class prayers. Being a practicing Catholic makes her feel superior to Sara. Asia appears to thoroughly internalise the church teachings about the importance of having the sacrament, salvation and becoming a saint (Orsi, 2004). This may lead her to think that taking the holy wafer makes her *better* than

Sara. This shows how, despite being at the same school, religious practice can create a symbolic divide between even the closest friends.

In relation to religious identity, Sara's position is complex, as she is Roma (Liegeois, 1998). In this short conversation, she is evasive and tries to avoid answering Asia's question. Interestingly, on many occasions later in the year, I observed that Sara learnt how to locate herself in this school's Catholic practices by repeating: "I am not a Catholic". This may be because she is constantly exposed to bodily declarations of faith she cannot make, e.g. making crosses. She, like the few other non-Catholic children at St Luke's, needs to find a comfortable niche at those times when other children make signs of belonging to Catholicism. It seems the way she felt most comfortable with is just clearly saying: "I am not a Catholic".

At St Luke's, Polish children form a visible national group. This collective-identity factor influences how they are embedded into this Catholic school and parish life.

The Headteacher considers that Polish identity is well incorporated into the school's English-speaking parish's practice:

"I think within our school it is more than just the link between parents and the school, it is the strong link we have as a Catholic community, between the parents, church, catholic community and the school. [...] I was in church on Sunday, and I saw the Polish families there. The children were not only following the service by reading in English but also at the end of the service meeting there as the Polish community and talking in their home language, Polish. For them to be secured in both ways is a great thing for, me as a member of this community, to see."

Such an observation confirms that the Polish group fits well into the rhetoric of inclusion and ethos of cultural diversity. This I witnessed when the Day of Nationalities was celebrated at church: all the school's over twenty nationalities (and home-languages) were on display. At the mass, Polish children, two girls



and one boy, headed the procession through church in their national dress carrying the white and red Polish flag. The Polish assistant spoke some words in Polish, as did other parents in their other languages (Fieldnotes, 21/11/2010). As the biggest linguistic minority in this school, a group of eight Poles represented the school at the European Day of Languages (Fieldnotes, 27/09/2010) and, on another occasion, danced in their national costumes (Fieldnotes, 15/03/2011). In such ways, Polish national identity is embedded into Welsh Catholic schools' promotion of inclusion, celebration of diversity and institutional arrangements.

On the other hand, attachments are built differently when Polish nationality and Polish Catholicism are reinforced by Polish-language use, and Polish Catholicism is performed in the way it is in Poland. This distinguishes the "Polish group" from others. Besides language-barrier difficulties, English-speaking congregation members might find Polish rituals strange. For example, food is blessed on Easter Saturday: families, especially girls, bring willow baskets containing eggs, bread and sausages to church. Another exclusively Polish Catholic practice that I participated in was when the Polish Assistant and several mothers took children straight from school to church to pray in a traditionally Polish mode. She, or one of the mothers, conducted these weekly sequences of particular prayers in a side aisle of the church. This happened twice during the school year: 'Różaniec' in October (Fieldnotes 22/10/2010) and 'Majówka' in May (Fieldnotes 13/05/2011).

The exclusiveness of national identity is particularly conspicuous in relation to Polish patriotism and Catholicism. One Saturday evening, close to the anniversary of John Paul II becoming Pope (16 October 1978), the Polish

assistant organized Rosary Prayers (Tajemnice Różańca). Over twenty primary- and secondary-schoolchildren and their mothers attended. In the church's central nave, powerful national symbols were displayed: two portraits of John Paul II on a Polish flag with lit candle. The prayers lasted one-and-a-half hours. The children wore festive uniforms: white blouses or shirts and dark skirts or trousers, as for the Polish Akademia festival (see vignette 1 in Chapter 4). They sang hymns to taped music. The Creed (Skład Apostolski), Hail Mary (Zdrowaś Mario), Lord's Prayer (Ojciec Nasz) and prayers were written in both Polish and English. The Polish assistant told me this was "in case somebody from the congregation came to the church" but doubted that any English-speakers would come. None did. "Typical" she complained. It appears that the non-Polish congregation regards such events as solely for Poles.

In this situation, the construction of 'different' religious identities is largely due to the way Polish mothers practice prayers. Orsi (2004: 102) sees prayers' role as "making and substantiating the religious world adults and children constituted and inhabited together." In this particular context, ethnic, linguistic and national belonging is reproduced, through the way these children are disciplined to pray in a particular way on national occasions. Disciplining children into prayer practice strengthens bonds with the Polish-speaking community. This fusion of nationalism and Catholicism, however, exacerbates otherness.

Discussing community cohesion, Hemming (2011: 64) argues that "religion also has the potential to exclude." In his study, "the Catholic school was better at bonding social capital than bridging social capital". Although, through their children's participation in St Luke's community, Polish families build

connections with English-speaking congregation members, Polish mothers' specific religious practice may send self-exclusion messages. For children, patriotic and national symbolism makes them 'different' in the setting. This symbolism centres on the great Polish Pope. Being a role model, however, he may contribute to their positive identity. Children may struggle to locate themselves within Polish Catholicism's contradictory messages.

In St Luke's church community, however, children were at ease and seemed to enjoy themselves. For this mixed-age, mixed-gender group, this was another opportunity for social interaction. It appears that belonging to this parish is one of the platforms where Polish friendships are developed (see Chapter 7). Further opportunities to extend children's social networks occur during social events for Polish families at St Luke's church hall. I witnessed two community celebrations: Andrzejki (St. Andrew's Day) on November 30 and Ostatki (before the start of Lent). Everybody brought food, some children performed. Both were attended by Polish-speaking and English-speaking parish priests and St Luke's primary and secondary Headteachers, but no other parishioners came, except the canteen staff. Although the children were happy to be there and enjoyed the Polish-speaking company, the Polish assistant said fewer families come each year.

These children's attachments to this parish develop in a climate of specific collective religious practices. The group of Polish families is sizable, making it socially autonomous. The "Polish community" distinctiveness within the parish community may contribute to Polish children's 'otherness'. These children's religious identity-negotiations might be influenced by the 'Polish group factor' (e.g. Polish prayers after school). However, the parent's group is not

homogenous and has inner social dynamics. Some families actively belong, some distance themselves from activities and some have withdrawn completely.

Parents' attitudes to Polish identity vary widely. Some overtly display their national identity and Polish Catholicism by attending any Polish-specific gatherings at St Luke's. As time passes, however, others come to believe that such Polish-speaking environments may limit children's social contacts (see Chapters 5 and 7) so attend less frequently.

Teaching Polish is part of St Luke's 'valuing languages' ethos. However, the assistant observes changing attitudes towards learning Polish: fewer children attend each year. Parents negotiate their own ways of transmitting Polish culture to their children. One day, the Polish assistant complained in astonishment: "One mother, after the Polish lesson, asked me not to use reading materials about John Paul II, and she said to me, this is a Polish lesson not Religion." This mother felt the teacher's use of religious materials inappropriate for her daughter's Polish reading practice. In this setting, exclusive Polish national and Catholic identity-boundaries are in flux. Both are contested in the field of the national-language learning and seem to evolve over time.

#### **6.4. Children's experiences of Catholicism at the Polish parish and Polish Club**

In the diaspora, post -accession migrant families are anchored by Catholic Poles. After the Second World War, the Polish Catholic Mission's priority was to embrace reunited Polish families and establish Polish parishes with supplementary schools. To bring up children in Polish and Catholic values, these

schools taught religion and patriotism. Often their founders were priests (Podhorodecka, 2003; 139-144). After 2004, Polish Roman Catholic leaders insist new migrants seek Polish parishes and priests instead of attending English-speaking services (Ecumenical news, 2008).

Coming from Poland, migrant parents have their own set of religious beliefs which they want to pass on to children. In Poland, children's upbringing is traditionally governed by an inflexible triad: Home, School and Church. The Polish Catholic church has a long-established authority embedded in the Polish traditional patriotic values of God, Honour and Motherland (Bóg, Honor i Ojczyzna) and holds a monopoly on teaching moral values (Mach, 2000). Even in contemporary discourse, the Romantic-era poet, Adam Mickiewicz, is still routinely cited: "Only under this cross, only under this badge, Poland is Poland, and a Pole is a Pole." This nationalistic discourse, based on duality and confrontation, ensures the non-existence of pluralistic dialog within the Polish Catholic church. The post-war absence of religious diversity reinforced Catholicism's role as a symbolic bulwark against Russification. This combination can produce a homogenised religious outlook. Coming to the UK, migrant parents meet religious pluralism for the first time. Few had ever imagined it. Churches of different Christian denominations, and even of other faiths, coexist in the same street (Kaczmarek-Day, 2009). After mono-religious Poland (and an education which admitted to little outside Poland and the USSR), this religious pluralism can be confusing. Parents can perceive religious diversity as a threat: dangerous for their children. If they withdraw into the security of their familiar mono-religious culture, they may stereotype people of different religions and not let their children socialize with them. (This is discussed in friendship-making, in Chapter 7.)

For many parents in this study, Catholicism may therefore appear as their *anchor*. In the migration situation, Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Krotofil (2010) consider religion has a coping mechanism role. Attending Polish-language mass gives collective support and is a symbolic moving of borders. As I observed in the Polish-speaking parish, the priest starts every mass with: “We especially welcome our countrymen, who came from our motherland”. This is a constant reminder of being a newcomer but embraced by the Polish church. Both easier language and familiar Catholic habitus and practice may encourage Polish families to belong to Polish parishes. As Trzebiatowska’s (2010) research in Scotland shows, local Catholic priests’ and parishioners’ expectations are mismatched to Poles’. Although some Polish mothers at St Luke’s are active in the school’s church during the week and at special Sunday services e.g. ‘the Day of Nationalities’ (for which they bake Polish cakes and dress children in national costume), on ordinary Sundays, they and their families usually attend another parish’s church, where two Polish priests conduct services in Polish. Full participation in English-speaking services may be easy for children (as St Luke’s Headteacher emphasized), but uncomfortable or impossible for parents because of the language barrier.

From my observations, the Polish parish church offers Polish-language services and pastoral care exactly like in any church in Poland. The cycle of church sacraments covers all families’ religious needs: Baptism, First Communion (at the age of 8), Confirmation (for adolescents) and Weddings. Each of these is preceded by a sequence of meetings and preparations (e.g. six months preparations for First Communion; courses for couples before the marriage ceremony). These regular practices help to establish formal and informal links between Polish families and within the community. The Polish-language masses are important in many ways. The

announcements give information about the Polish community or Saturday school events: vital for new migrants as they may arrive in Wales knowing nothing about either. Informal post-service social gatherings create a sense of community; and the chatting and gossiping that occurs there includes exchanging practical information (e.g. about jobs). Another important role of the Polish-speaking parish in Wales is linking with the Church in Poland. Religion lessons at Saturday school are accredited in Poland, as are pre-marriage classes for couples who live in Wales but marry in Poland. This maintains *religious continuity* and links with Poland. Besides its culture-confirmative value, it is especially important for migrant parents undecided about whether to stay permanently in Wales.

For children's religious identity formation, Polish church attendance and visits to the Polish Club appear to be of significant influence. The Polish Club is where old Polonia and the new migrants meet (Galasińska, 2010). In this diasporic space, Polish language, national history and Catholic religion come in the form created by the Old Polonia members. Newly-arrived migrants may accept this symbolic space as it is or contest it (Temple, 2008).

Children who attend Saturday school are exposed to Polish Catholicism in its distinctly national form. They enter the symbolic platform where traditionally-understood core aspects of identity meet (Smolicz, 1981). From the moment they enter the Polish Club, they are under the influence of Catholic and nationalistic symbolism. First, they see a powerful symbol, the big portrait of Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II). This 'Polish Pope' (Polski Papież), beatified in 2011, as the Polish spiritual leader, is the symbol of the anti-communist church. He is often cited when it comes to moral guidelines and the imperatives of the 'Home, School and Church' triad. In

Poland he was called ‘the Pope of the youth’ as his warm personality helped establish good contacts with young people around the world during his frequent pilgrimages (Mach, 2000). Another strong Polish Catholic message is in the main classroom: the ‘Black Madonna’ (Virgin Mother holding the Christ Child) icon from Jasna Góra Monastery – the symbol of Polish Mothers (Matka Polka). Heinen and Wator (2006:206) notice that “ the mother is an incarnation of cultural and religious values”. There are crosses in every room. Then, immersed in this Catholic background, there are national symbols: the Polish flag, emblems, and the maxim “God, Honor and Motherland (Bóg, Honor, Ojczyzna)”. On walls there are photographs of Second World War veterans, an Anchor (Kotwica) from the 1944 Warsaw Uprising (Powstanie Warszawskie) and, prominently displayed in the common room, the words of ‘Rota’, the patriotic song sung by the whole congregation during the Independence celebration. Exposure to this mix of religious and national symbolism cannot but influence children’s construction of identity. This is exemplified in this community’s Independence Day celebration (see Chapter 4).

Just as two worlds – nationalistic and Catholic – meet and fuse in the Polish Club, so do they in Macierz Polska’s (the Polish Educational Society) Saturday school curriculum, as this was created by, and for, the post-war cohort of escapees from Stalinist liquidation (Podhorodecka, 2003). The Polish patriotic upbringing is intensely represented and taught through stories related to Catholicism over the ten ages of the Polish nation. For example, in the book I used to teach from (O’Driscoll, 2008), the first page contains ‘Important events in Polish history’. These start with Poland’s acceptance of Christianity in 996, and end with Pope John Paul II’s death in 2005. The patriotic poems children are taught link strongly with the nationalistic Catholic image. One example is



Bełza's (1901) well-known 'Catechism of a Polish child', always recited during the Independence celebration. In the form of a child's interrogation, this poem starts with the question: "Who are you?" and finishes with the response that, as a Polish patriot, you owe your own life to your fatherland.

This is the background of two settings where my study's children are immersed in religious discourses: St Luke's community and the Polish parish community.

Observations in two churches and participation in various Polish community gatherings (see Appendix 5) generated rich material on these families' Catholic practice. The sacrament of First Communion at the age of eight seems especially significant: a meaning-laden expression on what it means to be a migrant Polish Catholic child in Wales. I have identified "white dress, guests and presents" as a significant theme in children's, parents' and teachers' narratives about First Communion. This seems an easily identified symbol of Polish Catholic ritual. This phrase is also symbolically significant as all participants can locate themselves by positively relating to it, contesting it, placing themselves outside the experience or even devaluing it. Recognising its significance for my study's participants, I organise the coming sections around this theme. First, I present a mother's narrative: for her, the traditionally celebrated First Communion in Poland has great meaning and importance. Then I compare this sacrament and associated celebration to its practice in the Polish-speaking church in Wales. Finally, I explore how some participants at the St Luke's setting criticize and contest the value of its demands.

## 6.5. Celebrating the First Communion in Poland: one mother's narratives of the whole-family and community affair

For some of the children in the sample, being raised as a Polish Catholic child in Wales means also to experience religious practice in Poland. This is the case for Alicja who goes on Pilgrimage to Częstochowa every year and had First Communion in Poland. Over the course of my research, I learnt that several children who were attending religious lessons at Saturday school went to Poland for their First Communion. I interviewed one of the mothers in the Polish Club. She enthusiastically told me about the family celebration in Poland:

“The priest gave me the letter confirming that my daughter attended First Communion preparation classes here. But *our priest in my parish* knows everything, because *he knows us* and we were on the list there. So she already has everything waiting for her in Poland, my sister bought her a white dress, gloves, a white bag, a religious medal (medalik), little prayer book, a candle, everything. No, no, only shoes I bought here. [...] We're going to Poland on Saturday but my sister has already organized everything. A few months ago she booked the restaurant there; you know you have to do it months in advance: everybody wants to go when the family is big. We have sent her money for that. I come from a family of five, so many people come for communion: two of my brothers with their families and three of us, I mean sisters and a godmother and godfather with their families, my parents and my husband's, it's lots of people, and of course the children. The restaurant reception is for forty people. At church the ceremony starts at ten so finishes at noon, then photos at church, so we booked dinner at one o'clock; we shouldn't be late there. Then we will have a supper as well at the restaurant. (Excited) You know, my daughter, she doesn't even imagine how it would be to have her First Communion in Poland: lots of presents, lots of guests.... Yes, she knows about the presents (laughing). You know we will not save on that, it is just once in her lifetime. But... I'm only sad that she won't stay in Poland for the 'White Week' (Biały tydzień) and won't go with these children to Częstochowa monastery as we have to come back to Wales immediately afterwards, as my husband has only ten days of holidays.”

In this migrant family's case, the First Communion happens in Poland. The Catholic Church spans the national boundaries. Despite living in Wales for four years, this mother declares that her family's religious affiliation is in Poland, as "*our priest in my parish*" knows everything about their migration, he received a report from the Polish parish priest in Wales. This mother does not feel detached from her homeland: she still belongs to her old parish in Poland and wants her daughter to have First Communion there. As she is physically absent from Poland, her sister undertakes the organising role

As she explains, the ritual of First Communion in Poland has been planned well ahead. Substantial resources of money were allocated for that day. Her phrase "guests and presents" reoccurred many times in other participants' narratives. This implies the commonality of the celebration. This way of celebrating is a memorable 'once in a lifetime' experience for a Catholic child, as this mother stresses, which will be treasured and recorded in photos and devotional presents. It is also evident that children expect and are excited about presents and money.

This mother's use of the phrase "she doesn't even imagine..." relates to the child's special experience on that day. Children are on display during the liturgy (Orsi, 2004). This, however, she does not relate only to the sacrament and religious experience but also to the impressive family and church gathering. Children feel special because they are in the spotlight: given special attention, admired, photographed and given presents. This commercialised aspect of the First Communion celebration in Poland is strongly present throughout the data. For example, the 'White dress' - as mentioned in Asia's narratives at St Luke's - has strong symbolic value. Children's high visibility by wearing special dresses

and the show's exceptionality puts strong pressure on parents to spend a lot of money on the celebration. Additionally, parents have to buy many sacrament-specific accessories for their children, like candles, religious medals, etc.

The First Communion in Poland, typically in May, is celebrated primarily on a family level but usually exceeds family and time boundaries. This is a whole-community affair and the ritual is prolonged by church and school organisations. Before the event, parents are expected to attend meetings and pay for presents and church decoration. After it, children's attendance at evening masses during 'Majówka' (the 'White Week') in May is obligatory. Many schools arrange day-trips to the Sanctuary of the Black Madonna in Częstochowa. The mass and collective experience may be repeated in June during the Corpus Christi procession, when First Communion girls in white dresses and boys in suits join local parish processions down the streets. Then, the following year, there is the anniversary of their first communion when they attend church with the candles blessed at the previous year's celebration.

As this mother told me, her childhood memories make her familiar with all these associated celebrations, as this is the old tradition in Poland. Mothers recall their own Polish church memories and the importance of "white dress, guests and presents". For her generation, the sacrament was incorporated into the whole-life tableau of memories, e.g. the framed picture/Souvenir from First Communion (Pamiętka Pierwszej Komunii Świętej) was kept on display for many years. (In contrast, in my study, only one boy presented this as an important photograph.) She is very emotionally involved and regrets that her daughter's religious ritual will be cut short as the family must return to Wales due to work. She feels that because of migration

her daughter's ritual is incomplete. In Poland, all the associated events are important and written into the script of being a Catholic, hence fully Polish, child.

She, like two other mothers to whom I spoke about First Communion in Poland, constructed it as a milestone in children's life and stressed the importance of it being experienced in Poland. However, one mother admitted that intergenerational family pressure influenced her decision to travel to Poland: "My mother said that she organises everything so we didn't want to argue about that, at the end of the day it's for her only granddaughter." These narratives show how Polish migrant families in Wales adhere to their religious heritage, but create new transnational practices.

I will now describe how the ceremony differs in a Polish-speaking parish in Wales.

### **6.6. First Communion in a Polish parish in Wales**

Twenty children were prepared for First Communion for several months at Saturday school. They attend community schools, not Catholic schools, for a variety of reasons: the foremost being unfamiliarity with the educational system when they arrived in Wales (WAG, 2008). Precarious employment, indecisiveness about stay-duration and lack of social-network advice were other reasons. One mother said: "When I came I didn't know nor think about school but in a year she was five. We sent her to the nearest school. But I'll change it for Catholic in secondary." Similarly, Mateusz's parents moved him to a Catholic school after a year in a community school. This postponed his communion in the Polish parish. As 'Important events in my life', he wrote, "I had my communion later, when I was eleven." As many

mothers work at weekends, bringing children to these religion classes requires especial effort. This demonstrates how important Catholic ritual is for these families.

Some of these children take First Communion in Poland; some, in the Polish-speaking parish in Wales. Here, parents must accommodate the celebration within their scanty migrant resources: little money and limited accommodation for visiting family members from Poland. A Saturday school religion-teacher described this experience:<sup>7</sup>

“We didn’t have many rehearsals: just the day before, on Friday, and Communion was on Saturday afternoon. Children were singing, somehow. It’s all very different when you compare with Poland. First, is the church decoration, here it’s very poor. Second, children are singing much more in Poland. And the third, in Poland the church is overcrowded and here the church is empty. In Poland you can see girls wearing white dresses and *everybody walking to church*. Here they get into the car and go away, there’s a lack of family spirit. Here, there isn’t any atmosphere, nothing, only you go to church and that’s it! [...] At my church in Poland the church is blaring, people are singing at full volume, bursting with energy, here without any life. [...] The First Communion souvenirs I always buy in Częstochowa. Parents were satisfied this year; they liked the rosary, little prayers books and candles I bought. We always take a group photograph with candles in front of the altar.

She finds the church decorations, children’s performance and, especially, lack of collective experience disappointing. The scarcity of guests leaves the church empty, compromising the ‘solemnity of the moment’. She makes a great effort to transplant the religious habitus of First Communion from Poland to Wales. She follows the same curriculum (although shorter) and buys devotional souvenirs in Częstochowa (helped by parents’ frequent travel to Poland). In Poland, as one mother commented, religion-teachers can have a decisive voice about children’s

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<sup>7</sup> I did not witness the First Communion at Polish parish because I was at The Twelfth Mediterranean Research Meeting Conference, Florence, 6-9 April 2011, presenting a paper ‘The fluctuating boundaries of sameness and difference: Polish migrant children in Wales’.

clothing, souvenirs and flowers for church decoration. In Wales, however, parents appear to contest this power. For example, they resisted paying for church decoration. Having already bought the ‘parish present’, they did not want to spend any more.

This suggests the migration situation may change parent-church power-relations and modify the Polish version of First Communion. These families’ mobility and transnational practices mean their religious habitus cannot be taken for granted. They can exercise individual preferences over where, how and when to celebrate children’s communion. Unlike the group Trzebiatowska (2010) studied in Scotland, parents in this Welsh study do not automatically adhere to the stereotypical image constructed for them as Polish Catholics.

Having children and belonging to a Polish parish may cause the traditional Polish Catholic upbringing to collide with the more liberal ways of life parents meet abroad. Escape from learnt behaviour patterns, however, may not be easy. One single mother told me she is happy with her life in Wales as she can choose how to live. She rarely goes to masses at the Polish church with her son because she feels under community scrutiny.

“It’s stupid I know but I can’t help it. I can’t escape the feeling of guilt there [in church]. I have the feeling that everybody knows about my non-legalized situation. It stays, it’s imprinted at the back of my mind that I’m ‘incomplete’, not up to church teaching about a happy family, you know a church-married couple with children.”

Being divorced and living with another man, the Polish congregation makes her feel: “my life is not well-ordered”. Another mother is in a relationship with a non-Catholic, making church attendance on Sundays a matter of negotiation, not

a priority. When her daughter pressures her, however, she feels responsible and goes to church.

At the Polish-speaking parish, I witnessed several attempts to control families' Catholic practice. For example, at the Sunday mass following First Communion, the Polish priest counted that only half the children were present. In his sermon, he cited this as an inappropriate parental attitude to children's upbringing. Attempts to pressure parents to attend Sunday mass are exemplified by one teacher's judgment on one mother: "She said they go to Welsh [Catholic] church masses but I know they don't. Sometimes children themselves say that they don't go to church or that their mothers work on Sundays." Another teacher expressed similar sentiments: "Some parents don't attend any of the masses, *neither in the Welsh [Catholic] nor the Polish church.*" These comments from two religion-related settings suggest that mobility may make parents increasingly independent agents in their religious affiliations and practice, weakening the church's control. These empowering practices seem to appeal to many parents in this study. One example is choosing St Luke's church for the First Communion celebration.

### **6.7 First Communion at a Welsh parish**

Saturday school teachers, the St. Luke's Polish assistant and mothers from both settings, confirmed that Polish children who attend Catholic schools usually take First Communion in their school's English-speaking parish. First Communion preparation is incorporated into school Curricula. Despite exceptions each year (for example, Alicja took hers in Poland), the data show a consistent practice. Most parents share the view that "it is better when the child goes with her class at school."



St Luke's mothers' narratives commonly state that being with 'other children' (their English-speaking classmates) is to their children's benefit. Their rationale is two-fold: this lets children feel part of their peer-group, and they belong in the school's Catholic parish.

I witnessed the First Communion mass at St Luke's church. There were three Polish girls in the group of over twenty children from the school.

Sunday Mass at 2 pm. In front of the church I spotted some of the parents from school. I entered the church. I did not notice anything special, apart from more people than on an ordinary children's Sunday mass. I immediately saw Headteacher who greeted me, as usual, in Polish: *Jak się masz?*/How are you? Then, standing in front of the altar, he told us which hymn we will start with and when to clap. The church was slowly filling up. I could see many teachers and teaching assistants from St Luke's. I joined the Polish assistant. I could recognize many faces of Polish children from school with their parents. Some people looked very festive in their best Sunday clothes, some had flowers. A few days ago, I had learnt that some families were going to join two girls' Communion party in a hired room at the Polish Club. [...] When the congregation started singing the entrance Hymn: "The spirit lives to set us free", the group of children started walking, one after another, through the church. Girls were wearing white dresses and many had veils. Boys were in suits. I noticed that the three Polish girls were not wearing veils, but had professionally done hair. One of them gave a wide smile when passing me. I noticed hair was done in a bun. [...] When the Hymn: "This is my body" started, children one by one, with their parents went to the altar to take the holy wafer from the priest.

(Fieldnotes 12/06/2011)

The atmosphere in this church was festive but resembled that of a normal Sunday. As usual, the congregation seemed very familiar with the Headteacher. He, teachers and assistants have the role of linking the school and church. This embeds school and church into each other: a uniting experience for children. The Polish community was well represented in the congregation, not only by families of First Communion girls but also other Polish families from the school and former students. Like other First Communion children in the church, the three Polish girls looked and felt special:

excited, happy to be in the spotlight and admired in their beautiful outfits. The only visual difference was their lack of head-cover as Polish mothers prefer girls not to wear veils. By regular participation in parish life, these girls are familiar with how the mass is organized in Wales. For example, First Communion children sit together with their parents. In Poland, they sit in a group and are supervised by Religion-teachers.

I asked some mothers how the First Communion experience differed between Poland and Wales. A single mother talked positively about how Welsh Catholicism is practiced. She described the experience of inviting her daughter's father (whom she had divorced) from Poland.

“In Poland many things would not be possible for me as a single mother. I wouldn't know how to do it but here it was different. Her father came for one week, stayed with us at my flat. It was good, my daughter was so happy. I feel that we passed the exam as parents.”

She feels that Poland's reality would preclude certain behaviors, e.g. letting her ex-husband stay with her. For her it is a liberating experience: you do not need to be a married couple to care for your child. She values the Welsh parish's practices as, unlike in Poland, she does not feel stigmatised for being a single mother. Her transnational practices and increased self-esteem make her feel secure enough to invite him.

Another mother talked about how stress-free the atmosphere felt. She compared this celebration to those in Poland:

“I didn't feel it was very special from other masses I attended like Christmas Carol singing or the end of the school year mass. Yes, there were some rehearsals before that Sunday. But there weren't any strict rules about the clothes children have to wear. For example I remember girls were wearing very different dresses either long or short, and boys various suits, and everybody seems to be very relaxed about it. In

Poland, as a parent, you have to go for church meetings, on strict dates. If you don't go you're in trouble, while here this is much more relaxed.”

Another mother also made comparisons; however, she is primarily concerned with her son's religious experience:

“I'm glad that my son had the communion at St Luke's. Here is modesty. Here in the church children can better concentrate on the sacrament, not on all these circumstances/otoczka, like in Poland. No guests, so not all the hassle with food and invitations. Here after church it was just us, and my parents. Nobody else.”

She highlights differences between First Communion practices in Polish and Welsh Catholic churches. She prefers 'modesty' and rejects the 'circumstances' related to the traditional way of celebration in Poland. She focuses on the religious experience, the church sacrament as the core of the day, not the festive social side. She constructs the experience as stripped of the non-religious additions that she negatively associates with Polish celebrations. She spurned inviting 'guests' – referring negatively to the main theme running through most participants narratives: 'white dress, guests and presents'.

Although her view differs from those who prefer to celebrate in a bigger family group, it echoes other mothers' concerns about the difficulties associated with providing for family members invited from Poland. Children are always excited when family members visit them (as presented in the chapter on national identity). From an adult's perspective, however, short-stay visitors for this occasion, often elderly grandparents or Godparents, cause stress. They may not understand the reality of migration life so easily disrupt everyday school and work routines. After such a visit, one mother commented:

“My mother in law, she was complaining, she didn’t understand any English so at church it was hard for her. Then next day we had to go to work, she didn’t go anywhere on her own, only with me. It was a strain on her and on me. She was simply bored, she cooked and then ...the only thing she could do was to watch [Polish] television”.

The English-language service and participation in an unfamiliar church environment may alienate elderly guests; and the most commonly invited guests are grandmothers. Their presence, however, is generally highly appreciated, despite the cultural mismatches their visit may cause. Their attendance at First Communion ritual in Wales assures Catholic religion is passed on to children as an inter-generational continuity. But foremost, as I witnessed, grandmother’s visits are a source of immense joy for children.

## **6.8. Conclusions**

This empirical chapter, based on ethnographic observational data, parental narratives and children’s work has discussed how Polish migrant children brought up in Catholic families manage their sameness and difference, and how this may influence their individual identities. Parents influence children’s identity through socialisation into Catholicism by churchgoing and school choice. Young children’s agency, in particular, is subordinate to parental authority, so they may have less agency to resist acquiring traces of religious identity.

I began this chapter with describing the religious field where parental constructions of children’s upbringing based on Polish Catholic habitus (Trzebiatowska, 2010) and everyday school and church practices occur. I looked into these children’s families’ religious practices. They either attend a Roman Catholic church with a Polish-

speaking priest or the school's English-speaking parish. Despite regular attendance, however, some parents modify or contest the Polish form of Catholicism they were brought up in.

I have specifically examined how children's experiences of Catholicism at St Luke's school and being brought up as Catholics at home impacts their identities. Analysis of the data shows that Catholicism appears to be well transmitted to, and received by, these children and is an accepted part of their everyday experience of migration. For example, choice of Catholic school ensures children are regularly exposed to religious routines and symbols.

Parental religious experience is embedded in Polish religiosity, but the Catholic religion spans across European countries' borders. This continuity of the Catholic framework in Wales means these religious experiences strongly influence children's identities. Unlike in Poland, however, the migration situation introduces Polish parents to less hierarchical forms of Catholicism, so widens their choices for their children's Catholic upbringing. The data clearly show that this allows parents to re-negotiate it to some extent. This is specifically seen in the variety of ways they approach children's First Holy Communion: a major identity-formative event for Catholics. These Polish migrant families celebrated this in one of three ways: in Poland, in Wales in the Polish-speaking parish or the Catholic school's English-speaking parish.

Despite migrating to Wales, some families celebrate the First Communion in Poland. Parental narratives were related to the distinctiveness of the traditional Polish communion as a whole-family and community affair, which boosts the ritual's meaning and importance. This choice demonstrates the fluidity of Polish

families' intra-European migration experience and the strength of transnational networking.

I have looked how parental negotiations of their children's belonging happen through various forms of participation in religious life in Wales. These include regular church attendance. Depending where they live, local church services are in Polish, English, or sometimes both languages. Attending Polish-speaking services appears to be connected to attendance at Saturday school at the Polish Club. Events at the Polish Club expose children to a specific Catholic and national discourse within the Polish diaspora in Britain. This is different from British Catholicism, so impacts on children's identification as *Polish Catholics* embedded in nationalism and patriotism. This is only one route by which children negotiate their Catholic belonging. It is particularly represented by those families who decide to have First Communion in the Polish parish in Wales. Their experience, and the consequent influence on identity-formation, may differ from those who have First Communion in Poland.

I have also explored how Polish families negotiate their children's belonging to a Welsh Catholic parish and their rationale for having First Communion there. This choice has led some to contest Polish religious customs and criticize the traditional way of celebration. For these parents, the Welsh Catholic practice appears better suited to their needs.

For children in this study, Catholicism appears to be a significant identity-marker because most are embedded daily into various forms of religious ritual. The majority categorised themselves as Catholics, either by choosing a Catholic label or giving evidence of their family's Catholic practice, e.g. Baptism or First Communion. The strength of religious traces on individual children's identity inevitably varies.

Foremost, it depends on how the parents value Catholicism and the way they want to pass on their religious beliefs and values to their children.

## Chapter 7

### Being a migrant child and making friends in Wales

“...these other worlds, these other cultures, are mirrors in which we can see ourselves, thanks to which we understand ourselves better- for we cannot define our own identity until having confronted that of others, as comparison”

Ryszard Kapuściński (2008: 249) ‘Travels with Herodotus’

#### 7.1. Introduction

Having explored children’s accounts on how nationality, languages and Catholic upbringing impacts on their identities, I now examine their friendship-making in Wales. Suarez-Orozco (2004:183) writing about children’s identities in a globalising world uses the construct of child’s sense of self (Winnicott, 1971 cited in Suarez-Orozco, 2004: 182) which is shaped by reflections mirrored back to him by significant others. In this chapter, therefore, I reflect on these children’s peers and friends as those who contribute immensely to identity negotiations.

Friendship-making acts may be seen as the field where children’s agency comes to the fore, as it is understood that children themselves make friends (Adler and Adler, 1998). I argue that these Polish migrant children undergo restraints on friendship-making and that their choices are limited, sometimes severely. This is because of their difference due to their migration situation: being ‘other’ nationals, other language-speakers and influenced by their families’ specifically Polish Catholic practice. Being children in migrant families limits both the social capital on which they can build when approaching non-Polish children and their freedom to range.



Additionally, the intensity of contacts with Poland and the fluidity of intra-European migration impact the intensity of contact with their Welsh peers.

I highlight that although children's agency in friendships appears more pronounced as they can choose whom they play with, aspects of identity like nationality, language speaking or Catholic practice must be taken into consideration when looking into children's friendship choices. For example, ascribed attributes like nationality or mother-tongue are non-negotiable. Catholic practice and religious affiliation are not to be negotiated by children themselves but solely by their parents. Nonetheless, despite such limitations, children's agency and free choices do exist.

In this chapter I explore children's and their parents' accounts of making and having friends in Wales. I start with exposing parental views on their children's friendship-making, because parents are enablers and organizers of these young children's new social networks in Wales. I then describe the power of friendships within Polish diaspora children's circles and especially those at St Luke's. Identifying the school and especially the playground as a main place the children can make new friends, I give examples of how friendships are made at St Luke's. I explore how being migrants facilitates similarity-based friendships and how friendships on the boundaries of ethnicity are maintained. Continuing the theme of belonging and children's attachment-making in Wales, I give examples of crossing boundaries of ethnicity. Finally, I present examples of when migrant children's positioning and other family factors obstruct some children from making friends, either Polish or English-speaking.

## 7.2. Parental views on friendships: ‘Us’ – having friends within the Polish group

Parents of young children want their children to have friends and be happy but nonetheless initiate, limit or expand the choice (Ladd, 1992:16-19).

Negotiating friendships is facilitated by the extent of social capital the family holds (Coleman, 1994). In this migration situation, parental social networks in the Polish diaspora in Wales appear to have an immense impact on their children’s friendship-making. This extract comes from an interview with a mother of an eight-year-old boy.

Me: What can you say about your son’s friends?

Mother: With *these English children* I can observe him when he’s playing football. I don’t know, maybe it’s something also about them. Maybe ...[she pauses] some children from school who he likes, he talks to, when we’re on a bus he’ll go and sit with them. I haven’t noticed that he has got problems with contacts with people or children. But friends are only Polish, *only Polish*, it’s Arek and Radek who are his best friends. Radek is from his class and Arek is older, 12, now in secondary. They live here, us in xxx, but we visit each other, I’m friends with the family, so we visit often. *It depends on with whom I am friends with.* [...]

Me: So he plays mostly with Polish friends?

Mother: *Only with Polish.* With *these from Bangladesh*, who are my neighbours, this is nothing special, but with Polish you can see this is *a true friendship*, they are close, all of them indeed, and with Arek they’re really close, they care about each other, this is great, super. He will go to the same secondary where Arek is. I want my son to be with his friends.

This mother constructs her eight-year-old son’s field of peer relations as three distinct groupings: “Polish children”, “these English children”, “these from Bangladesh”. The consistency of these categories in parents’ responses throughout the data led me to analyse material by category: ‘Us’ – Polish children – and ‘Them’ – other children. (Sometimes ‘Them’ descriptions were supplemented by more specific characteristics, like nationality. The practice and nature of parental and

children's approaches to intra-ethnic friendships, I discuss in the next section.) She clearly states that "true friendship" is with Polish children. Only these are "true friends". Other parents and the Polish assistant evidently shared these feelings. They classified school peers as 'classmates/*koledzy*', in distinction to 'friends/*przyjaciele*': friends who are Polish. These nationality-based distinctions – Polish and English/Welsh – can be partly explained by differences in common practice in children's upbringing and how they spend after-school free-time. For example, 'friends' in Poland "stay at each other's houses every day" and "spend afternoons together". This was perceived as very different to occasional overnight stays 'sleepovers', which some children experienced in Wales.

This mother saying: "*It depends on with whom I am friends with*" indicates the extent to which children's agency is limited to parental social contacts. Their ability to initiate and maintain friendships in Wales is curtailed by these limits. Moreover, in many cases, the family's social capital is limited to Polish networks, which restricts children's agency exclusively to these networks. Parents are in power and decide when, where and with whom children stay after school. This mother's views are consistent with those of other parents who are 'the enablers' of social contacts and friendships. Zosia's and Martyna's afternoon activities (described in Chapters 4 and 5), for instance, were dictated by parental work patterns and the childcare available within Polish diaspora networks. This conforms to working-class mothers' tendency to organise their networks around kinship ties (Lareau and Shumar, 1996, cited in Theodorou, 2008: 255). As Theodorou (2011: 4) observed in Cyprus, migrant parents' tight ethnic and kinship ties ensure mutual economic, social, cultural and emotional support.

The other principle way of making friendships is through school contacts. Children's closest relationships often develop between school friends or classmates (Adler and Adler, 1998). The data generated by children in this study (presented later in this chapter) confirm the prevalence and strength of Polish friendships at St Luke's setting. In the extract below, the mother of an eight year-old girl talked about three Polish girls from the school and their daily routine. She confirms the view that friendships are common within the Polish community and suggests that these are an inevitable outcome of children's migration from Poland.

Me: What about your daughter's friendships?

Mother: I think somehow, maybe it's too big a word and a slight exaggeration but I think it's a *kind of small ghetto*, they're stuck onto you, they speak Polish, this is their environment, in some sense this is their destiny. We brought them here and they're condemned to be here. My daughter's best friend is a Polish girl, they are together in one class at school. One day they're playing, the other they're not talking to each other! (laughs). It happens a lot and then if this happens then there's an alternative: Wanda. But Wanda is a year older, in another class. I know that they'll be together till the end of the school, there's only one month between them, they've been here for four years and are always together.

Her perception of her daughter's social contacts in Wales leads her to say that these Polish children are locked in 'the Polish ghetto'. She observes that bringing children to Wales has led them to be inevitably condemned into the Polish-migrant environment. These limitations make her predict that her daughter's friendships will remain within Polish circles for the foreseeable future. Her view supports Ryan et al's (2008:679) observations from researching Polish networks in London, that Poles typically socialise and work within exclusively Polish groups. As for friendship choice in such social contexts, it confirms Allan's (1996:100) argument that people's choices of friends are "constrained by aspects of social organisation over which they have relatively little control".

This mother observes that tightly-knit Polish networks have an impact on her daughter's friendships. Later in the interview, she identified what she perceived as another barrier to inter-ethnic friendship-making: the density of Polish children at St. Luke's school.

Mother: Sometimes teacher makes my daughter and Kathryn sit together. She's a good student, she likes sitting with her. She would be happily playing with Kathryn. However, her Polish friend is limiting her saying: "You're playing with me, not with Kathryn". My daughter is complaining about it: "I wanted to play with Kathryn!" So at some point when they know English, Polish children would play with other children but are limited in this. My daughter is somehow in a trap. [...] If there hadn't been so many Polish children here, if they didn't have Polish children in the classroom, obviously, they would be sitting with other children...but yes (she quietens). But I'm not restricting this, yes, there are too many Polish children, but they have to manage, we can't cut oneself off from this... We are Polish."

She recognizes that her daughter also wants to make friends with non-Polish girls, and that the Polish group's size at St Luke's may hinder her daughter's options of friendships beyond it. Negotiating friendships outside the national group is constrained by its power-dynamics. In such ways, the large concentration of children in one social setting imposes situational limitations on friendship-making (Adler and Adler, 1998; Esser, 2006).

### **7.3. Parents' role in establishing and maintaining peer contacts in their home-neighbourhoods**

In this section, I look into how parents facilitate children's peer contacts outside the Polish national group. My generated data show that these parents facilitate their young children's social activities and this plays a major part in whether they are able to meet non-Polish children outside home. Both analysis of children's work and my

observations indicate that only the oldest children exhibited any degree of freedom in how they spend their after-school time. Asia and Sara, for instance, talked about visiting shops or the local playground independently, whereas younger children are confined within domestic space. From data, it appears that parents encounter situations in which their children could make friends in their neighbourhoods but do not always develop these. The extracts below reveal parental power over children's agency: parents enable, facilitate, control, encourage/discourage and monitor children's contacts.

The most frequently recurring theme that Polish parents express is their wish that their children have "English children" as friends. In parents' narratives, children's English-speaking friends are talked about in terms of social and cultural capital investment, especially in relation to learning English – as Devine (2009) recorded. St Luke's Polish assistant commented that some children are 'lucky' to have their schoolmates as neighbours, as this increases chances for social contact. This corresponds with Adler and Adler's (1998: 125-127) findings that neighbourhood contacts forge close friendships.

The extract below shows a father's commitment towards widening his eleven-year-old son's social contacts and friendship-making outside Polish networks. In the first part of the interview, he told me about the extra-curricular activities his son participates in at school (chess club) and in town: football club and swimming. Then I asked about his friends:

Father: He's still looking for friends. He would like to have close friends, maybe it's because in Poland he had very many close friends. He is still seeking for friends and now *more amongst English children*. Maybe earlier, before, he was afraid of English children because of the language barrier and he was seeking friends only amongst Polish. Now

it's half and half, he realised that he can look for both: Polish and English children.

Me: So, now he has some English friends?

Father: Maybe *more acquaintances than friends*. Two of his English friends visited him and *he also visited them at home*. So this is positive. But I didn't think before that there would be such a cultural difference in another European country. Here people have different habits, are more reserved and very different from us. We are sometimes too open to them. They keep aloof; it's not possible to make a close friend with them in the beginning."

He, like other Polish parents in the study, initially blamed his son's unsuccessful peer contacts on lack of English proficiency. However, over time he has begun to realise there might be other reasons, for example, cultural reserve and distrust of openness – which he himself experiences as an adult. As Sales et al (2008: 37) identified in London, Polish families' and children's adaptation to their new environment is not unproblematic. This father's awareness of social mismatches parallels the previous mother's comments that there is "maybe something about them". These parents' comments contribute to evidence of Polish families' attempts at bridging in Wales, but, in their eyes, this is not fully successful. This father expected all European countries to be more or less the same. This led to his disillusionment. After several years of living abroad, he seems to realize that there are social and cultural barriers between English- and Polish-speaking families. He resents the fact that British people are not open enough. He is disappointed in the slowness of building personal attachments with English-speaking parents within this school community. He does not, however, identify sources of social mistrust. He believes that attachments have now been made and that his son's friendships are "half and half". His son is highly motivated, self-disciplined and responds well to demands placed on him at school and at home by the middle-class habitus, e.g. involvement in a variety of extramural activities (Connolly, 2004: 160). (Habitus understood in Bourdieu's terms (1993:86)

as: ‘The habitus, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions’) By participation in these activities, he is building symbolic capital (Devine, 2009: 528). This form of concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2003: 110) by participation in extracurricular activities inevitably supports his English-language development. This family makes intentional investments towards successful bridging in Wales (Evergeti and Zantoni, 2006).

As I identified, Polish parents’ ideal type of friend for their child is an English-speaking, white, middle-class child from the same school. The lived experience in neighbourhoods shows that parents may restrict ‘undesirable’ contacts. Interviewing a mother (from the previous section), I asked about her eight-year-old son’s neighbourhood contacts.

Me: Are there any children around the house he can play with?

Mother: Yes, but he can’t play with them.

Me: Why?

Mother: *These children* swear horribly and – I’m not hypocritical, I know that he knows bad words - but these children are insolent! That’s what I don’t like, children can be rude, it’s normal but those children are insolent and their parents don’t pay any attention to them behaving insolently. *There are also Bangladeshi children*, but...no, he goes with them when they come to us, I let him go, so he visits them... but this happens mostly in summer, not now.

This mother is very critical of the neighbourhood she has been living in for three years and restricts her son’s contacts with children there. She distinguishes between two groups of available children in the area but considers both unsuitable. She considers the neighbourhood environment unsafe, and criticises white working-class parental habitus. Although reluctantly, she accepts Bangladeshi children as she prefers them to the neighbourhood’s white children. She does not encourage cross-



ethnic relations because of cultural incompatibility but tolerates Bangladeshi children when they initiate play with her son.

Perceived lack of safety in the neighbourhood also appears to influence the social contacts that another mother allows her eight-year-old daughter.

Mother: We live in a quiet street so I let her go outside. *Sometimes* she goes to run outside with *these children*. She speaks English to them. *There was a moment* that she was playing with a typical Welsh girl. She went to her house, she even slept there overnight. She heard about this overnight stay, she wanted it, to try it, so *once* she stayed there, it wasn't a problem, then the girl stayed at our house.

She permits her daughter to play with local white Welsh children but carefully monitors her contacts. She values these contacts because her daughter speaks English. She did not enlarge on the phrase "a typical Welsh girl", nor explain why the visits stopped, but obviously the contacts did not develop into a friendship, so did not bridge cultures successfully. She tolerated the girls' contact but it was only a brief encounter, just 'checking the waters'. She neither disapproved nor encouraged their play, but in the interview I sensed a degree of mistrust and distance towards the other girl.

To sum up both sections, from my observations, interviews and numerous encounters with parents and staff, it appears that the friendships parents most value are within the Polish community and those with English-speaking white children. However, the above examples do not represent all parents' views. Not all parents were interviewed or directly asked their opinion. As I learnt from children (and will be shown in the next sections), some parents seem more relaxed about their children's after-school free-time, for example letting them be socially involved with neighbours' children.

Others, however, are very strict and do not allow children to visit or be visited by other children.

Having explored parental involvement and views on children's socialisation now I will move to children's accounts on their own peer worlds in Wales.

#### **7.4. Observations from St Luke's playground. Visibility and difference: the Polish group**

Chapter 4 shows how, in St Luke's organisational practice, teachers categorise 'Polish children' by singling them out as a 'Polish team' or homogenising all Eastern-Europeans. Being a sizable group, Polish children also position themselves separately. Chapter 5 describes their relationship to language. Linguistic confidence in English markedly differentiates them from English-speakers. The younger ones mostly speak Polish. The older ones gain confidence in speaking English, but some choose to use Polish to enhance their identity. Some non-Polish-speaking children perceive this negatively. All these aspects come together when children negotiate friendships.

Polish children's distinctiveness as a group makes their work on defining/redefining identity more complex and intense than for those migrants who are sole nationals in the school. However, my particular concern is what makes them 'different' in this particular social setting. Unlike most migrants, Eastern-European children, including Polish, do not have a distinctive skin colour or appearance but are marked out by cultural differences (Devine et al, 2008:378). They are white, but non-English

speaking: language is the main ‘otherness marker’, followed by culture and lifestyle, clothes, food etc.

In the playground, the Polish group is distinctive. First, despite over twenty different languages being represented in this school, I could hear only two: English and Polish. Additionally, although Polish children may participate in general playground activities, after a while, they usually become distracted and seek each other out. They appear to lean towards each other because of shared attributes, the foremost of which is language. Sometimes they run to the Polish assistant, sometimes just gather together, or sometimes start playing exclusively in their Polish group.

#### Vignette 2: The Polish group’s visibility in St Luke’s playground

Visual distinctiveness: Although white, Polish children are conspicuous in winter: they wear warm coats, hats and gloves more often than other children.

Sizable group: around forty children speaking Polish.

Interactions within the Polish group: regardless of gender, Polish children play, or participate in table activities mostly within their own language-group. They frequently run to the Polish assistant to complain about something or just talk in Polish.

Girls’ caring roles: girls take on ‘older sister’ roles: responsibility for younger siblings, relatives and friends.

Physical proximity: Polish children hold hands and hug each other (and some adults).

Group solidarity: when disputes happen, Polish-speakers back each other up.

As Miller (2003: 8) argues, “for many immigrants and refugees, visible and linguistic differences constitute grounds for discrimination”. This is not so at St Luke’s. Polish children are not visibly different. Their linguistic difference is supported by the

school's policy on bilingualism and valuing languages (see Chapter 8). What is apparent, however, is that "identity is discursively constructed, that is through speaking and hearing practices" and "Once someone speaks, the discourse marks the person as an insider or outsider." (Miller, 2003: 7). As shown in Chapter 4, two English-speaking boys negatively valued having Polish-speakers around. Children's culture in this setting shows the whole array of interactions which support Miller's (2003:8) argument that identity representation and negotiations in multilingual school contexts is exceedingly complex.

St Luke's vibrant playground exemplifies what the sociologists write about differentiation by gender in play (Thorne, 1993), children's peer-power (Adler and Adler, 1998) and grouping around situated activities (Corsaro, 1997). Polish children, like all newcomers, enter existing peer-groups and cliques in the school setting. The most popular children have the greatest impact on defining and drawing groups' membership boundaries (Adler and Adler, 1998). The gender nature of differentiation of children's groupings is at core of making new friends, but in middle-childhood co-mixed groups are also often maintained (Thorne, 1993).

As shown in Vignette 2, the Polish group is easily distinguishable in St Luke's playground because of its size (the largest minority group) and linguistic difference. This combination encourages mother-tongue use, which self-segregates Polish children and makes non-Polish-speakers feel excluded. Polish children's difference is also visible in the way they express affection, and girls' caring roles and performed 'duties'. Additionally, whenever disputes occur, kin ties are activated so they club together.

Other important aspects of peer-group interactions, which impact friendship-making are cultural codes and signs, including appearance and verbal, non-verbal, and body language. In relation to conflict and cooperation in children's play, Corsaro (1997: 181) observes that "when children who have spent most of their time in different sociocultural groups come together for play, they often misinterpret each other's styles". Bauman and May (2001:130) argue that "to know the code is to *understand* the meaning of signs and this, in turn, means knowing how to go on in a situation in which they appear, as well as how to use them to make such situation appear". I observed, for instance, pronouncedly different behaviour regarding physical proximity, touching and contact.

Polish children are used to much more physical contact than English-speaking children. For example, they not only hold hands and hug each other in the playground but express affection towards the Polish staff (and an African-origin mother who volunteers during lunches) the same way. Often, both my hands were held by two children at once. The Polish assistant commented that in her first weeks she felt watched by other teachers. They appeared to suspect the physical contact she had with Polish pupils contravened the normal code of conduct: in Britain, teacher-pupil physical closeness should be at arm's length. On one occasion children were queuing to enter the building. Asia was shocked by the reaction of an English-speaking girl she was standing beside: "Miss, she flinched as if I was a leper when I touched her!" The girl beside Asia, may feel physical contact is inappropriate. Asia, however, interpreted this girl's flinching as a personal affront indicating unfriendliness. Her non-understanding of the code led to misinterpretation and frustration.

### Vignette 3: Examples of Polish children's playtime interactions

Ball games: older boys (8-11), regularly participated with non-Polish-speaking boys their own age.

Sharing/swopping stickers: mostly girls, but also some younger boys, gathered around tables looking at each other's collections. They usually sat in ethnic groups e.g. African-, Asian-origin and Polish.

Skipping-rope games: some mixed-gender Polish children participated but left as soon as disputes (in English) started.

Sharing a 'Fortune Teller': older Polish girls used 'Fortune Tellers' written in English to approach non-Polish children.

Chasing/running around: mixed-gender children did this, spontaneously and randomly.

All children want to participate in the shared experience of play (Corsaro, 1997). As shown in the Vignette 3, Polish children enter play with non-Poles but there are some difficulties observed. Not understanding English, for example, means not understanding games' rules. Polish girls feel responsible for younger siblings, so sometimes withdraw. Perceived exclusion can cause ethnic groups to self-segregate. Nonetheless, shared interests and dispositions gather children together. For example, the same group of mixed-ethnicity and mixed-age boys would play football every lunchtime. While many girls may dislike ball games, some joined in. Table activities mostly attracted mono-ethnic groups, but 'Fortune Tellers' (Corsaro (1997: 177) with their shared secrets, proved popular across ethnic boundaries. Although Polish girls made these, they wrote them in English.

Skipping-rope is an activity in which children *must cooperate* (Evaldsson, 1993 cited in Corsaro 1997:173). Its rules, however, are verbally negotiated, so second-language children are unable to defend themselves when disputes arise. Consequently, Polish children did not maintain interest for long. While all the children enjoy free play, preadolescents develop more specific play patterns. Corsaro (1997: 164) identifies “verbal activities that involve planning and reflexive evaluation” as a growing factor in preadolescents’ play. Jokes and language ambiguity start to come to the fore. All this disadvantages non-dominant-language children.

Language and differences in play and games are two markers that children at this age are able to capture and talk meaningfully about. Over the course of my observations, I noticed Polish children’s spatial separation in the schoolyard. Sometimes they run towards the Polish assistant, sometimes just gather together, or sometimes start playing exclusively in their Polish group. This conforms with Zembylas’ (2010) findings that ethnic-group children stick together: Turkish-speaking children in Cyprus feel more comfortable among other Turkish-Cypriot pupils. Polish children appear to feel a group solidarity, which cuts across kinship ties and is intensified by national-group identification and language. This is especially apparent in disputes, where they feel a duty to back each other up. This occasionally leads to situations which the Polish assistant must resolve. As the children express their outrage in Polish (as in the incident below), other teachers cannot negotiate with them.

I saw a group of Polish girls and boys running into the building and towards the toilet. I followed. Two boys were already banging on one of the doors. I asked them to stop and knocked on the door: “Who is there?” A girl opened it and said (in English): “I didn’t take the ball. I wanted only to borrow it for a while”. Some children were shouting (in Polish) “No, no, she took it from us.” The girl ran away, so the rest went out into the field with the ball.

(Fieldnotes: 22/10/10)

During my year's ethnography, I could observe children's routines and choices of peers for various activities. The weekly walk to the local sports centre for games was particularly revealing: who walks with whom? Unless teachers intervened (rare), children themselves decided. The unwritten code is 'best friends' walk together. As I observed, Polish children walked with their Polish friends whenever possible and spoke Polish. The extract below comes from one of the journeys, when I was walking next to such a pair.

We were coming back from games. Ania was walking with Asia. At some point she calls me (in Polish) with tears in her eyes:

"Miss, she – and points to a girl in a pair behind them - is *always* teasing me, she makes funny faces at me all the time. She laughed when I was drinking water from Asia's bottle, and mocked me, saying: "gobble, glug, glug, glug". And then she said [in English, here she changes her voice to mock the girl] "This is disgusting, disgusting!" Miss, *they* also share water from their bottles but *they* laugh at *us!*"

(Fieldnotes: 04/02/2011)

In this situation, Ania was expecting a Polish-speaking adult's intervention in what she perceived as unfairness. She feels that she is being bullied by a particular girl but transfers this to the whole field of social agents: 'Us' means Polish, 'Them' are other children in the school. By speaking Polish to me she excludes the blamed girl, who cannot understand what Ania said – except the mocking part in English. Moreover, involving an adult with authority who can be seen as a member strengthens the 'Us' group.

Children regard it as a serious offence when somebody mimics them or talks about them behind their backs. Goodwin (1990), observing American black female preadolescents, documented the salience of 'he-said-she-said' confrontations. Additionally, in this situation, the phrase 'they always' comes up often, indicating a perception that there is a persistent conspiracy against 'Us'. My positioning in this



conflict magnifies barriers within peer relationships. Being a Polish-speaking adult, I bring imbalance into what would otherwise be sorted out by the children themselves *in Polish and English*. I often felt that my intervention was inappropriate because children felt intimidated and under pressure, as in this situation, the English-speaking girl did. This pattern I observed many times when the Polish assistant sorted out things in Polish only. Not explaining what was happening in English created yet more barriers between children. English-speakers may feel doubly disadvantaged by (seemingly) biased adult power and incomprehensible language. This situation does not help peer relations within the school's diverse population. As other minorities have no language assistants, Poles can be perceived to be favoured and privileged. As I presented in Chapter 4, two English-speaking boys seem to resent Polish-speakers.

In St Luke's diverse and multi-language children's culture, Polish children's language struggles include contacts with both British children and children of other linguistic backgrounds. As Corsaro (1997) observes, preadolescent children value verbal games, chants and rhymes. The ritual of sharing these is important in peer cultures. However, in this multi-linguistic field, I did not observe any other national language group to play in their own language. On one occasion I asked Polish children:

Me: Do you play with other children at school?

Maciek: (indistinctly) Rather not.

Gosia: Rather not.

Iza: At lunch I always meet a small boy, he looks like from China, and he is always spying on us. [she laughs]

Me: So you play with other children?

Maciek: No.

Me: Why not?

Iza: The thing is: we don't understand their language.

Maciek: ...or we don't know how to play their play their game. One day we made a circle at lunch-break and we were singing in Polish and half the children came to us...

Me: Were they singing with you?

Maciek: No, they were just only playing.

Me: And do other children from different countries show their play?  
[silence]

(Focus group, Participatory session, day 5)

These children's comments point to seeing linguistic differences as an obstacle in play, not as enrichment by cultural exchange. When I asked children about specific aspects of their culturally diverse environment, I was often met by silences. In their 'Children at my school' charts, they describe their peers from other ethnic backgrounds on the basis of racial difference, but often do not know their nationality nor the languages they speak. They apparently feel this neither makes them more friends nor gets other children involved in their play. Polish songs and games in the playground, encouraged by the Polish assistant, might attract other children's curiosity for a while, but not sustained interest or admiration. In this example, ethnic difference appears not to be utilised as a strategy to build peer relations. This confirms Ní Laoire et al's (2009) assertion that in everyday school life children do not want to be exposed as other nationals.

The size of the Polish group makes power dynamics within it more pronounced. This can affect children's choices of friends. For English-learners, school time is valuable for social language development by participation in peer cultures (Miller, 2003: 4). This makes exchanges with English-speaking children in the playground very important. This was talked about by one of the mothers who considers the size of the Polish group hinders her daughter's options of extending friendship beyond it.

Sometimes this daughter complained to me that her Polish friend resents her playing with other children in the playground: “She is so touchy”. In her case, ethnic loyalty may obstruct widening social contacts in the playground. Teachers putting children of different ethnicities to sit together can stimulate making new friends across ethnicity boundaries. However, except for spatial and cooperative classroom arrangements, teachers do not appear to have much of an influence of children’s choices of friends.

In contrast, another Polish girl, Ewa, (not in the sample) also eight years old and four years in the school, has a strategy that allows her to successfully maintain her belonging to the Polish group but at a distance she decides on. One day she approached me showing a red heart:

“I got this red heart from Alicja because I helped her younger brother who is in reception class. Yesterday children were putting sharp bits of plastic under his shirt and she called me to help her. I told them to go away, and they listened to me. And Alicja brought me the heart. Do you like it?”

From my observation, Ewa only occasionally speaks Polish at school as she is always with English-speaking girls during lunch-breaks. However, she used her Polish and English resources to help Alicja and her little brother. Ewa, as a more competent English-speaker, is in a better position to liaise and communicate efficiently. The red heart she received from Alicja, who has the ‘older sister’ responsibility role, sends her a message that ‘a friend in need is a friend in deed’. Alicja feels desperately alone in this playground (as described elsewhere). Ewa helped her; and the ‘red heart’ carries a very powerful meaning. Inspired by those two girls, in my activities with children I used the shapes of red hearts as symbols children strongly associate with friendship (see Appendix 8).

As shown in this part, Polish children's friendships in this school are affected by the Polish peer group's distinctiveness in the setting. Their Polish national identity is marked by language and specific behaviour in various situations. The size of the group further reinforces their Polish identity.

### **7.5 Making friends at St Luke's community: Us**

Through participation in peer cultures, children learn new values and behaviours. They construct identities collaboratively in reference to others (Connolly et al, 2002). As James (1993: 201) notes, friendships are crucial for negotiating both social-identity and self-identity. Friendships are most successful when mutually created and reciprocated (Dunn, 2004). In this study, Polish children define themselves in the playground both by reference to their group's shared values (Polish, like 'Us') and by emphasizing differences from those outside their group ('Them'). This conforms to Ní Laoire et al's (2011: 87) findings on Eastern European children in Ireland, that shared nationality is important when building friendships.

As the social self is a crucial aspect of children's self-identification and identity negotiation, I designed numerous activities: oral, written and visual, asking directly about friends (see Chapter 3). The data that children generated is supplemented by parental views and my observations, already presented. There are significant differences between the two groups of children. Those at St Luke's see each other daily, and belong to tightly-knit school, church and neighbourhood communities (as already presented). The children at Saturday school only meet there, and at Polish church masses, once a week and, occasionally at Polish Club social events. Except

for two girls, who attend both schools, friendships are established and developed in very different situational contexts (see Appendix 1).

Not surprisingly, St Luke's children talked about having Polish friends more than Saturday school children did. As parents describe, school, church and Polish-community contacts facilitate children's friendships. This conforms to Adler and Adler's (1998) findings that children's closest relationships often develop between school friends or classmates. Three St Luke's girls' daily routines exemplify this. As their diaries and photos record, they spend time together in, and after, school. Their shared activities in the Polish-language environment include lifts to and from school, shopping, watching films at home or going to the swimming pool, parks and church on Sunday. Besides time spent in the domestic sphere, they also participate in social gatherings, e.g. at St Luke's parish hall and the Polish Club. These broader social settings allow for mixed-gender and -age socialisation: children from primary- and secondary-schools meet and do things together. Shared activities build close bonds and a sense of togetherness in the Polish diaspora's 'imagined community'. Rose (1995, cited in Kjørholt, 2003: 203) defines this as "A group of people bound together by some kind of belief stemming from particular historical and geographical circumstances in their own solidarity." This exactly describes the community of Polish children around St Luke's.

The dynamic of Polish friendship-making is intensified by family ties or by newly-established semi-family relations in Wales. For several children in the sample, grandparents, aunts, uncles and/or cousins live with them or close nearby. Children spend time together, which strengthens bonds. The pattern of having exclusively Polish friends is more pronounced in the younger children in the sample. Eight- and

nine-year-olds' friendships, especially, are facilitated by close-knit kith and kin bonds. Extended families play a crucial role in childcare and provide reassuringly safe environments for children, as shown in Martyna's diary (Appendix 8). However, newly-established contacts are also important for children. In migration, broken physical links with next of kin and extended family create a need to fill the emptiness with new relationships (Baker's Relationship Web in Rutter, 2006: 40). In this context, new 'semi-family' relationships can become very important. These are well represented in my sample. Their significance was evident in parents' narratives. Bonds can be strong: despite not being related by blood, children often call these new family friends, "mój wujek/my uncle; moja ciocia/my aunty", and their children, "mój kuzyn/my cousin".

Polish social networking appears to affect peer groups' age and gender structures. In my sample, all groups are mixed-gender, mixed-age: probably because of migrant networks' role in providing the care and transport arrangements that work necessitates. This increases the level of closeness to certain families. Additionally, some families share accommodation. As I have shown, networking's kin-and semi-kin structure impacts on children's friendships. Especially for the youngest children, parents' priority is 'keeping children safe'. As parental narratives often centre on perceived danger in their home-neighbourhoods (Kaczmarek-Day, 2009), and the children are young, playtime outside home is limited. In such a closed family environment, there are few others of their own age to make friends with, so children often listed siblings or young babies (both blood-relatives and 'semi-families') as their 'best friends'. For instance, eleven-year-old Sylwia listed her two-year-old cousin.

The dynamic of friendship-making is led by both parents and children but, being the facilitators of contacts, parents have the leading role. Parents directly influence children's peer relations as designers, mediators, supervisors and consultants (Ladd, 1992:16-19). Children, however, want to control who their friends are and share interests with them (Corsaro, 1997: 164). Gender is salient. Preadolescent children want their own age- and gender-specific peer-contacts as friends. In this study's sample, however, children often play in mixed-gender groups, suggesting gender's importance in friendship choice is diminished. Interviews with mothers revealed concerns about gender-specific limitations on children's interests. Boys have more activity options (e.g. sports) than girls, who are traditionally expected to stay more within the domestic sphere. However, children are not passive recipients of parental limits to their social spheres. Some, as Sylwia (football) and Zosia (karate) have shown, contest their mothers' gender-stereotype prejudices to widen their socialization opportunities and develop less simplistic identities (Chapter 5).

Data generated by children reveal the Polish friendship group at St Lukes' includes both leaders and more peripheral, less popular children. Children value loyalty, sharing things and having fun (Howe, 2010: 104). Their friendship choices reflected this. The most popular children were often talked about and their names written on 'Lists for (hypothetical) birthday parties'. The mixed-gender peer-groups within the Polish group facilitate heterosexual relations. Romances are present in their writings. For example, Maciek declares whom he is in love with, and Gosia, Iza and Wanda all love the most popular Polish boy.

These children also have friends in Poland. Adler and Adler (1998: 148-150) define 'long-distance friends' as living in different geographical places, visiting for holidays

and ranging from casual to very close. As children's photos and writings reveal, attachments to left-behind friends and relatives can be robust. On-going maintenance of these friendships is eased by communication technology but remains emotionally demanding. Mikołaj, 11, for example, named his cousin in Poland as his 'best friend'. He photographed a computer as his 'most important thing' because it is a vehicle for daily communication with this cousin on Skype (see Appendix 7). This research shows how mobile technology, Skype and, for older children (aged 10-12), networking via Nasza Klasa and Facebook facilitate friendship maintenance. For example, 'Me and my computer' charts, children's drawings and comments like, "I used to visit her but she now lives in Germany" and "I am daily on Skype with my cousin" reveal the strength of such long-distance attachments. For these children, such contacts are 'real' and part of their social networks. This aligns with other research, like Bak and Bromssen's (2010) description of diasporic children in Sweden encompassing global space and building transnational networks; and De Block and Buckingham's (2007), of migrant children's engagement in communications.

In the specific context of St Luke's, some children exercise their agency by making efforts to choose non-Polish friends and building their individual identities relatively independently from group expectations. In the next section, I look into examples of how children extend their friendship networks in their migration lives in Wales and look for friends outside their ethnic group; how they cross the boundaries of ethnicity to extend their social worlds beyond 'Us'.



## **7.6. 'Us and Them': making friends outside the Polish group**

In the previous part, I discussed children's friendships within the Polish language group. Now I focus on how children cross the boundaries of ethnicity and more or less successfully make attachments outside the Polish ethnic group, both in their schools and home neighbourhoods. I first describe a friendship between a Polish and a Slovak girl I observed over the course of my year at St Luke's. Then I present accounts of two boys at Saturday school who talked about their English-speaking friends.

As the Vignette 4 below shows, friendships on the boundaries of ethnicity can be made and maintained if similarity is more pronounced than difference: in this case, being ten-year-old girls in the same class at St Luke's, from Eastern Europe, having minority status and speaking similar languages. This confirms the homophily principle about students' friendship-formation (Howe, 2012: 95-96; Quillian and Campbell, 2003: 560).

#### Vignette 4: The power of cross-ethnic friendship: Asia and Sara

Asia comes from Poland, Sara from Slovakia, from a Roma background. They take every opportunity to spend time together. In the mornings when Asia is late for school, Sara is sitting on the bench in the corner, waiting. In both class and breaks, they are always together. For Sara, friendship with Asia is a serious matter. She wrote that it is equal in importance to “mum and Slovak country” for her. Sara has become a confident Polish speaker during their two-year friendship. Asia also listed friendship and spending time with friends as important for her. She wrote that she made friends with Sara when she was eight.

They have lots in common. They both come from nuclear families and are the oldest of siblings. Both have one -year-old baby brothers, whom both adore and who feature heavily in their photo albums. Both come from migrant families who maintain strong intergenerational and transnational links. Asia has a cousin and an aunt in Wales; Sara has extended family across the UK. This can be seen from their birthday-party invitation lists and their use of Internet and Skype for maintaining contacts with people in their home countries.

Both hold a traditional view of a mother’s role. Asia explained, “My father is earning money but my mum is busy too, she has to cook dinner and manage many things every day”. The home environment is important for both. Most of both their photos showed them or siblings in their own rooms. Both dislike school. Asia said that she is not going to university because her mother didn’t go either. Sara openly states, “I hate school, I want to stay at home”.

They love going shopping, looking for ‘ciuchy’ in the local Peacocks and going to the town shopping centre, where Primark is. They spend time in each other’s homes and in the local playground, “plac zabaw”. They know each other’s’ secrets about boys and dreams of “having a boyfriend”.

As this vignette (and examples in previous chapters) show, these girls are close friends. Asia and Sara come from two different ethnic backgrounds but what they

have in common outweighs their cultural differences. They seek every opportunity to link together everything that separates them, like their nationalities. Their favourite pop singer is half Polish, half Slovak. For this friendship, Sara has learnt Polish or rather: this friendship has developed her Polish-language skills.

As strong as their friendship is, it has undergone crisis. Once inseparable, they were separated for three weeks in February. Corsaro (1997) notes the significance of conflict and disputes in children's activities. This is an example of how gossip and small disagreements between individual children may grow into group disputes. In this example, what started as a trivial matter soon shifted to nationality, then reached a point when Sara told Ania, another Polish girl, that she "hates Polish." Ania told Asia this, and Asia and Sara then stopped talking to each other. These children's actions prove how important national traces of their identities are for them. Gender characteristics are also significant, as the conflict happened between girls. In this girls' conflict, the mix of trivial and serious issues grew into a huge and prolonged dispute. The friendship-rift lasted three weeks and was acutely experienced by Sara who missed school for two weeks. When she finally came, she looked miserable, complained of a headache and refused to go to games. It was a painfully lonely experience for her, as she told me. Apart from Asia, she had never had any Polish – or indeed any other – friends in this school. What had happened had left her completely alone in this social setting. She said:

"I like Polish people who are nice and are telling truth, not lying. For example, saying that they have laptops but they don't. We have three laptops. Ania said that I was lying and said bad things about me so I said that I don't like Polish people. But I didn't mean Polish people who say the truth! Ania made me angry so I wrote that, but I like Polish who are nice.... So now Asia isn't speaking to me, she must be offended. She makes faces at me; she doesn't want to play with me any more. It's because of what Ania had told her!"

While passionately saying this in Polish, she was using more Slovak words than when they were both with me. (Fieldnotes18/02/2011)

This conflict ended during half-term. They came back to school together as best friends laughing, again inseparable. At this point, Asia was the coordinator, trying to make the friendship work between three of them as they and Ania are in one class. From my observation, this did not work: Ania drifted back to another Polish girl, Celinka, from year six. Sara's two weeks non-attendance at school may confirm Liegeois's (1998) description of Roma children as not valuing education and defying any educational rules. But viewing it through the lenses of emotional rejection by peers, her absence at school can be seen in another light. This also underlines her marginality in the school: she is not only a migrant but in a linguistic group of one and her situation is even more precarious because she is Roma. These friends' conflict exposed how national identities play a vital role in peer relations. National identifications and belonging to different ethnic groups both magnified a trivial dispute about possessions into a long-lasting conflict and hindered reconciliation.

Looking closely at children's narratives about their peers and friends, the data reveal that children talk passionately about having friends. This is even more noticeable when it involves crossing the boundaries of ethnicity and having English-speaking friends. From the vast array of data generated by children on their friendship-making in Wales, I have chosen two contrasting accounts. Both boys, Adam, 8, and Paweł, 11, talked (on different occasions) about having English-speaking friends in front of their Polish Saturday schoolmates. The first extract comes from a participatory group session. Adam was sitting with Jan, Jarek, Karol, Jagoda and Magda and commenting on his 'most important photos'.

Adam: My class is very important for me. I've got two friends: James who is the brightest in the whole school and Matthew – he is the second brightest boy in our school.

Me: How do you know that they are the brightest in the school?

Adam: Matthew can solve difficult maths problems but James is solving even tougher ones, for example  $0.75$  by something, by something, equals 12. I don't know how he did it!

Me: So you are friends?

Adam: Uh-huh.

Me: Do you meet after school?

Adam: No, because he lives far away from me.

Adam is very proud of having high achievers as friends at school. He admires them, values their intellect. He wants to be like them and wants them as friends. He is a bright student himself and aspires to middle class achievement (Connolly, 2004: 214-18). His school experience is generally very positive and he talks enthusiastically about his class trip to the Brecon Beacons and his other classmates. He bridges the cultural divide very successfully in his class and school's English-speaking environment, where there are few Polish children. What appeared to be his concern was that his friendship contacts are limited to school-time and class trips.

The other example of successful friendship-making is very different. Paweł told us that he has made four friends in his Welsh school and neighbourhood. When talking about his school experiences, he was aware of the negative picture he was giving, so said: "You will be disappointed when I tell you".

Paweł: I have four best friends at school, one has a name which sounds Polish, but he's not Polish. They're all English.

Me: What is his name?

Paweł: "xxx" (he says friend's first name)

Me: Oh, yes, sounds Polish.

Paweł: I don't like some schoolmates because sometimes they curse me.

Me: How do they curse you?

Paweł: For example they say: “You Polish something...”

Me: Did you have any problems with them?

Paweł: You will be disappointed when I tell you. When they were getting my goat, we stuck together with my friends and when we were leaving school and they were picking on me then we kicked them... And later our teacher said that we had done the right thing because he himself can't manage with them. And the other thing was, let me think... (he pauses) ...I don't know, but I don't like some of the teachers.

Me: Do you still have problems with these bullies?

Paweł: No, not any more, they aren't picking on me anymore.

[.....]

Me: Did you talk to your class teacher?

Paweł: Yes. I went to her but nothing happened.

Me: What can you do then?

Paweł: I don't know.

Me: Did you tell your parents?

Paweł: Yeah.

Me: What did they say?

Paweł: They said nothing.

(Participatory session: Paweł, Jagoda, Magda, Łukasz, Iwona, Jarek, Basia)

This is the only statement in this study of racial harassment experienced in an educational setting (Connolly and Keenan, 2002). This boy talks about racial harassment based on nationality. He starts his story by exposing his Polish identity, which is very important for him and which he considers the prime reason why he had been bullied at school. As a Polish migrant child, he entered this school and its existing peer culture four years ago. To be included into peer networks he must perform culturally accepted behaviour. Violence seems to be the norm in this school and neighbourhood. His friends protect Paweł by resolving disputes through violence and punishing bullies according to gang rules. Their teacher clearly tolerated such

working class masculinities and Pawel has internalised this working-class habitus (Connolly, 2004:193).

As his narrative reveals, he considers himself a boy who gets into trouble and challenges authority. His parents' reaction is passive: they may have neither the expertise nor confidence to approach teachers. However, the situation is not clear, as I did not interview them. Nevertheless, he is in a vulnerable position in this peer field. This situation reveals the negative connotations of national identity, the vulnerability of ethnic children who are exposed by their nationality and the existence of overt racist harassment in this school. (Due to interruptions, we were not able to discuss this issue further.) Zembylas's (2010: 324) study in Cyprus, Turkish-speaking boys' response to marginalisation, exclusion and name calling by Greek-Cypriot children is to fight back. In boys' cultures, verbal abuse is common in games. Devine et al's (2008: 380) Irish study found evidence of racist name-calling when boys played football. Children's friends "'defend' them if they were being racially abused" (Devine, 2009: 529). Pawel's strategy in these circumstances is to belong to a group of boys who resolve conflicts through force. Belonging to this peer group gives him the feeling of protection. Additionally, participation in, and acceptance by, this group gave him new English-speaking friends with whom he likes to spend time.

### **7.7. Being alone: 'shy and quiet' children without friends**

In this part, I discuss children who lack friends in Wales. Family transnational mobility requires children to find their own place in their new community. As I have shown, economic-migrant families' limited social capital, combined with other

aspects of family life, may make some children severely lonely. Ewa Hoffman's (1998) autobiography captures the essence of exile: how a child's re-identification is embedded in feelings of nostalgia, 'lost voice' and deficiency. For some children, relocation causes mistrust in new environments and loneliness (Kirova, 2001). Uprooting breaks 'relationship web' links (Baker cited in Rutter, 2006:40). It is reasonable to assume that in their homeland, family and neighbourhood networks increase children's chances for contacts with others of their own age outside school. In a destination country, these networks are restricted. Children who find second-language acquisition difficult are further marginalised. These combined factors mean such children risk having neither Polish nor English-speaking friends. This is severe isolation.

My exploration of these children's friendships made me aware of the importance of feelings. Gardner (2012: 905) noticed "The issue of separation from significant others leads us to a centrally important reason why feelings and emotions may take centre stage in research on transnational children, as separations over long distances and long periods of time may mean that their emotional and physical needs are not being met". For some children in the study, a combination of individual dispositions and characteristics (e.g. shyness, passivity) and family circumstances (e.g. geographical isolation, single-parents and/or disabled or elderly household members) appears to position them at risk of isolation. They can be well-protected by their family within the domestic domain, but in the public domain, are on their own. From my observations, some children have little contact with others their own age outside school. Because they do not actively develop social skills through play, the gap between them and their schoolmates also widens over time. As there is a scarcity of



children of their ethnicity and speaking their language, their choice of peers with whom to develop meaningful friendships is severely limited.

Whatever the combination of individual and family circumstances, isolated children exhibit common characteristics, as I observed. They are shy and quiet. They rarely asked me for anything, never complained and were undemanding. At school, they sometimes gave the impression of being emotionally withdrawn from their social setting. Because they do not engage much in free play or few children want to play with them, they are unpopular amongst other children (Adler and Adler, 1998). In children's generated data, these children are peripheral; no others mention them on hypothetical birthday-party invitation lists. One Polish boy at St Luke's especially fitted the description: typically alone and often teased. The Polish assistant commented: "He remains very quiet, he does not even complain to me." He was the only child in my study who marked as 'close friends' only three names, all from his old Polish school; and as 'other friends', two Polish classmates.

To explore these children's friendship-making, I supplement my observations with material generated from interviews. Below are some extracts from a paired interview with Alicja and Olek. This long three-way conversation took place towards the end of school year. It confirmed my previous months of playground observations about these two children being at risk of social isolation.

In the first extract Olek talked about his birthday party and friends.

Me: What about your birthday party this year?

Olek: I'm not having my birthday here, sometimes I'm in Belarus, this year I had pizza here. [He looks confused]

Me: Who came then, many children?

Olek: I'm not having a party here because I don't have acquaintances here... [Inaudible, talking to himself, quietly]. I'm only getting money.

Me: Who are your friends with?

Olek: Maciek and Janek, you know, from my class. [two Polish boys]

Me: Whom would you like to invite to your birthday party?

Olek: Maciek and Janek.

Me: Any girls?

Olek: Maybe also Alicja and Zosia, [two Polish girls] I don't know. But from 'English' I'm not able to say them all [laughing]... more than ten: Mark, Thomas, Maggie, and Jacquie.

Me: Who is the coolest?

Olek: From 'English'?

Me: Yes.

Olek: Mark.

Me: Why?

Olek: Because he's very good to me, he's always sharing snacks with me, and everything.

Me: You would love to have him at your birthday?

Olek: Yeah ....but, but ....I may be in Belarus, I always, I always get money, and everybody knows about my birthday, at church I'm getting money too, ten pounds.

He would like to have a birthday party in Wales with lots of friends, both Polish and 'English'. However, the way he was talking about this imagined birthday showed how unfeasible this is, due to his position as a migrant child and his single mother's lack of resources. He appears to be undemanding and understands his family's transnational economic practices. This conforms to Theodorou's (2011:11) observations on migrant children's discourses in Cyprus about money and goods which families are able to purchase. He is longing for 'English' friends and mentions one boy at school. By this he emphasises the value for friendship-making that children accord to sharing (Howe, 2010:104).

Olek's belonging to the Polish group is complex. In Chapter 5, I described his claims on Polish national identity. To belong, he chooses to identify with a group (Bauman and May, 2001: 30), in this case, the Polish group. He holds a Polish passport, speaks

good Polish but his mother-tongue is Belarusian. His mother does not belong to the Polish mother's supportive network around St Luke's, so he does not part take in the Polish children's group's activities. After school, he meets no Polish, English-speaking or indeed any other children. This was revealed later in the interview.

Me: Which places do you visit most? You know, I mean places you go to, people you visit. Do you go to visit Alicja for example?

Olek: .... [he shook his head, meaning 'no']

Alicja: Why do you say "not"? You do come sometimes.

Olek: Yes, *sometimes*, but not always, sometimes once a week, but sometimes only once a month!

Me: But somebody visits you, Olek?

Olek: No.

Me: And you, where do you are go?

Olek: Tesco, shops...

Me: Do you visit your mum at work?

Olek: Not often, because we're not allowed to, maybe once a month. [She works in a residential home as a carer, four days' shifts.]

Me: When your mum is at work, whom do you stay with?

Olek: On my own.

Alicja: You mustn't stay at home on your own here.

Olek: And you stay with whom?

Alicja: With my dad.

Olek: I stay on my own sometimes, and sometimes when my mum goes shopping, but I'm sitting quietly.

Olek's social network is empty. This concurs with Baker's web (Rutter, 2006) already mentioned, exemplifying the lack of supportive networks to ameliorate his migrant experience. Apart from school time, he mostly stays on his own. He has a computer, but his mother restricts use of the Internet. On Sundays, at church (not Catholic), he meets mostly adults. He even conspires in flouting the regulations about adult supervision of children, as he is only 9. His hopes of visiting Alicja's house more often only expose the loneliness of his solitary life in Wales.

Unlike Olek, Alicja openly bewails her scarcity of friends. On several occasions besides this interview, she complained: “I don’t have any friends here.” In the extract below (from my playground fieldnotes), she talks about her lost, non-accessible friends – those left-behind.

I was sitting on a bench when Alicja came, sat next to me and put her head on my shoulder. I asked her about her winter holidays in Poland.

Me: Did you enjoy your visit? What were you doing in Poland?

Alicja: I’m sad because I didn’t meet any of my friends there.

Me: Why?

Alicja: It was very cold so nobody was playing outdoors. I couldn’t meet any of them because I couldn’t go to their houses, my mum wouldn’t let me.

Me: What did you do then?

Alicja: We were sitting at home with my brother because it was cold.

Alicja goes to Poland several times a year. As mentioned in Chapter 6, she had taken her First Communion there earlier this year. Talking about her prolonged holiday in her home town (she stayed for three weeks) she was visibly sad. In Poland, in summer, many children hang around, mixing freely with others living nearby or who come to the playground/‘plac zabaw’ (usually located in-between blocks of flats), wholly unrestricted by adults. In winter, such adult-free activities are impossible, as nobody stays outside for long because of the weather. She was bitterly disappointed that her mother overrode her wishes to visit friends’ houses this time. This sadness of not meeting friends dominated her memories of the last visit. She verbalises her loneliness in Wales too. As I observed, during play-breaks her older sister role is absorbing, as her brother is often crying or fighting with other boys. These duties interrupt her only time with other children at school. As could be seen from the red heart she gave Ewa, Alicja is searching for friends and feels she has none in school. She has friends in Poland but could not meet even these. She does, however (as

described in Chapter 4), have animals: a dog, a parrot and a fish, about which she always talks eagerly.

## **7.8. Conclusions**

This last empirical chapter has been concerned with children's friendship-making in Wales. Specifically, I have explored how the migration situation impacts on their friendship networks and availability of friends. As these children recorded, most of their 'best friends' are other Polish migrant children. Both parents and children shape the dynamics of friendships in the Polish group, but parents have the leading role. Migrant families' limited social capital and resources impact on friendships choices. Most of the children in the sample, especially the younger ones, appear to only play with available Polish children, regardless age and gender. Playmate availability is restricted by childcare provision, family networks and parents' working patterns. Children's agency in friendship-making is severely constrained by the circumstances they find themselves in, due to migration from Poland.

The concentration of Polish children at St Luke's maximizes divisions between 'Us', the Polish-speaking group, and 'Them', English-speaking children. This specific context seems to delay children's cross-ethnic friendships. The barriers are due to power relations within this sizable group of Polish-speaking children, and the everyday complications this creates in children's cultures in the playground. This is a specific space where Polish behavioural-culture and Polish-language-speaking immensely impact these children's choices and make it impossible to detach themselves from their ascribed national identity. Specifically, I explored how Polish

children's friendship-making is constrained by the two aspects of their identifications: national belonging and Polish-speaking.

I explored how being migrants and sharing similarities facilitates making friends. Friendship on the boundaries of ethnicity is maintained when similarities are more pronounced than difference, as exemplified by a Polish-Slovak friendship.

Continuing the theme of belonging and children's making attachments in Wales, I give examples of children who cross ethnicity boundaries. I highlight that, to be accepted and make new friends, children entering a new English-speaking environment must conform to existing power relations in the field.

In the last section of the chapter, I presented examples of how migrant children's positioning and other family factors combine to make some lonely. Some children admitted difficulties in making friends, either Polish or English-speaking. Some told me that they have no friends in Wales but have them back in Poland: they only have long-distance transnational friendships.

## **Chapter 8**

# **Multiple negotiations of identity in school, church and neighbourhood**

### **8.1 Introduction**

In this study, I have attempted to contribute to current debates on fluidity and dynamics in migrant children's performances of their identities. I began the study with a broad research question about children's negotiations of identities through their everyday encounters in school, church and the community. As the study progressed, my research questions have developed into these:

1. How does being a Polish national living in Wales impact on children's everyday identifications?
2. How does being a Polish-speaking child impact on identifications in bilingual/multilingual contexts?
3. In what way do Polish Catholic family practices impact on children's identifications?
4. How do children experience being 'other' and how do they make friends?

The previous four empirical chapters presented evidence and demonstrated the importance of nationality, language, religion and children's networks in middle-childhood children's identifications. In the following sections, I present the main

findings on these children's identity negotiations in school, church and neighbourhood. As languages were identified as a crucial aspect of this, I discuss EAL provision at St Luke's and its complex implications in this setting. Finally, focusing on evidence gathered through these children's experiences and perspectives on their new lives in Wales, I close this last chapter of my thesis with recommendations towards making a positive difference in these children's lives. My final thoughts I address to both the Polish community and to the wider community in Wales.

## **8.2. Key empirical findings**

Overall, the findings suggest that the Polish children in this study are developing multiple identities. This is hardly surprising as they live in multiple environments, due to their families' transnational practices.

Regarding the question on national identity, Polish nationality is a valuable source for their identification. They also intensely identified with their mother-tongue, using it at home with parents and siblings and across other daily contexts. Using Polish reinforces children's belonging to both the diaspora community in Wales and to homeland. Identifications with the English language appeared to be a source of aspirations. Children who came to Wales at a younger age displayed some traits of bilingual identities. Speaking languages, including Welsh, is a source of pride for them. Some children connote being bilingual cosmopolitans with their Polish identity, implying that leaving Poland opened up opportunities for learning languages.



Regarding religion, most children in this study identified themselves as Catholics. Catholic religious practice is a source of identity for many of them. They experience First Communion as a milestone regardless of whether this happens in Poland or Wales. Those families who belong to the Polish-speaking parish or Polish Club provide a distinctive Polish Catholic upbringing to children. In the Welsh parish, mothers and staff sometimes position children as *Polish* Catholics by distinctive prayer and mass practices, emphasizing their otherness in this setting.

From observational data on these children's social networks, it appears that children perform their identities in front of peers. Children want to be accepted into peer networks in the various social contexts they find themselves in: school, playground and church communities. Younger children embrace the availability of Polish-speaking children for play. Only year-six pupils showed some reluctance to be associated with their distinctive Polish identity at St Luke's.

Children in this study constructed Polish identity positively; the majority did so unquestionably. Some, however, expressed situational discomfort about being categorized as Polish by others. Overall, Polish identity-reproduction appears very strongly rooted in migrant families' transnational practices and participation in Polish diaspora life in Wales. This successful transmission is due to hyper-connectivity, large numbers of Polish-speakers in Wales, high mobility and Catholic practice. These families pass on their cultural heritage and maintain strong attachments to people and material culture in Poland. The study revealed that 'left-behind significant others' often themselves practice circular migration by providing childcare in Wales. Children's constructions of Polishness are vividly represented

throughout the study, while their new belonging to Wales is less pronounced. It may be that for displaced families, some aspects of Polishness become more important.

Children's worlds are constrained by their parents' working regimes. As these parents occupy a working-class position in UK society, these children may form working-class cosmopolitan identities. Their identity negotiations in multi-lingual settings are embedded in language and social barriers. These impact on their social networks, which appear to lean more towards Polish diaspora children. Social barriers in participation in children's cultures in Wales were identified. School-time is crucial for learning English and integration, but cannot fully compensate for poor parental social and economic capital in Wales. Families' different practices regarding investments towards children's socialization, integration and networking in Wales were also identified. Some aspects of social lagging are related to these children's young age and parental control; younger children are kept within the domestic realm. The main source of disadvantage is migrant parents' limited resources and intentional investments. These vary between families. Overall these families' practices indicate social-capital bonding is stronger than bridging because they are part of a Polish diasporic community in Wales.

### **8.3 Multiple identifications in school, church and neighbourhood**

In my empirical chapters, I distinguished between parental constructions of their children's identities and children's own identity-constructions. Parents do not contest their children's Polish identity and cultural belonging. In narratives, it was frequently repeated: "We are Polish". Although some parents expressed worries about Polish-language loss, this was mainly on the literacy level. Polish-speaking abilities are

robustly maintained. Parental narratives reveal the existence of a ‘predicted identity’: what a parent wishes for a child. This is related to the identified ‘better future’ discourse (Chapter 4). Identity predictions are related to cosmopolitanism – which Polish parents value. Examples of this can be found across the empirical material. Parental narratives frequently express hope that their migration and transnational way of life has broadened children’s opportunities. Moreover, these parents expect their children to bridge better than their own generation does (Chapter 7).

As apparent from their narratives, Polish parents believe in enhancement: that is why they migrated with their families. Their children are negotiating multiple identities as cosmopolitans (Anthias, 2009). Children do indeed have a sense of gain from becoming travelling bilinguals with increased access to material culture. They express this especially when talking about telecommunication technology. Their photographs showed computers, laptops, televisions, toys and sports equipment in their rooms. As in Theodorou’s (2011:11) study, discourses about money were present in their narratives, proving their awareness of everyday household economics, including financial limitations (Chapter 7). Children also revealed their expectations for First Communion (Chapter 6) and birthday (Chapter 7) presents. Older children could compare the prices of goods in Poland and Wales.

Because of their parents’ economic migration, these children belong to European flows of transnational exchanges. Due to maintaining transnational ties, they construct transnational identities. They are embedded in intense, circulatory and cyclical moves between Poland and Wales. It appears that they access both worlds simultaneously. In Anthia’s (2009:24) words, they have “a capacity to live in multiplex environments and have multiple identities.”

Anthias (2011) argues that we experience being, becoming, fixity and change simultaneously. These children are negotiating identities on the move, while being transnationally active. This would indicate that they develop a kind of transnational habitus (Guarnizo, 1997, cited in Moldenhawer, 2005:59). In Poland, they experience the excitement of their cosmopolitan identity as ‘children living abroad’. In Wales, there is another stream of negotiations: they have to build their positive self-identity from scratch and sometimes resist ascribed identity as ‘Polish children’. Their new belonging in Wales is built under simultaneously-experienced attachments to Poland by ‘thinking’ and ‘worrying’ about significant people in their lives – who may themselves be engaged in transnational networks (Chapter 4).

For these children, it appears ‘normal’ that they go to Poland and come back. Their identities are under a constant bombardment of ideas, values and attachments to significant Polish others, who are themselves on the move. From numerous comments I heard from children, it appears that a transnational lifestyle is the norm, ‘normal’ for them. Anthias (2011) observes that time and context are crucial for identity construction. These children do not talk about past memories as forced migrants or pre-1989 cohorts might have done. Nor do they mention the ‘myth of return’ (Bak and Bromssen, 2010). They may be missing left-behind friends but there is no expression or thought of loss. Their image of reality is not in terms of broken links or detachments from national identity. On the contrary, when talking about national belonging, they are emotionally engaged (Chapter 4).

Transnationalism can be observed from their close material attachments to Poland. It appears that some children comprehend the world of Poland as materially tangible

and real. They may say ‘my room’ and ‘my dog’ because they can see the dog daily on Skype while talking to a grandmother sitting by the computer in ‘their’ room in Poland. The boundaries between the materiality of the two worlds – host- and home-countries – are blurred. Hyper-connectivity helps with vivid attachments and intergenerational connectivity via mobile phones and Skype. All children in the study have access to global mobile culture. All evidence Internet activity and knowledge about mobile technology. Older children use social sites like Polish Nasza Klasa (NK) or global Facebook, easily belong to the virtual world and are globally networking individuals. It appears that hyper-connectivity, as discussed in the report on future identities in the UK (The Government Office for Science, 2013), has a “positive impact on migrant communities in maintaining social connections with family and friends”. This is already evident in these children’s lives.

In this study, there is evidence that these children construct cosmopolitan identities. They presented themselves as buoyant travellers and users of many languages (Chapter 4). Children’s comments on the route from Wales to Poland reveal awareness of geographical distances, time spent in the car and countries passed through. As presented in Chapter 4, some comments on travel through Europe exhibited national prejudice against countries like Germany or France. The hostility expressed by several boys is difficult to pin down, as children did not verbalize the sources of their prejudice. Their own national pride was constructed on denial of any merits of the out-group (Bauman and May, 2001:32). This conforms to Tajfel et al’s (1997) difficulties in explaining young children’s prejudices.

Important aspects of the different ways children in the sample negotiate identities seem related to age and gender. Eight- and nine-year-olds are subject to greater parental control than ten-year-olds, constraining their agency in participation in children's cultures. Older children mentioned fewer restrictions on movement around in their neighbourhoods. They had a sense of greater freedom and could choose with whom to interact. Parental narratives confirm Lareau's (2003:68) observations about girls being more confined within the domestic sphere than boys. However, some girls extend their social networks, search for activities in their neighbourhoods and, by choosing karate or football, break with these gender stereotypes (Chapter 5).

It is apparent from numerous examples from this study, that these children's individual identities are embedded in Polish cultural identity, foremost through speaking mother-tongue and feeling Polish (Chapters 4 and 5). This conforms with Gellner's view (1983:61) that "the culture in which one has been *taught* to communicate becomes the core of one's identity." As young children, they are closer to family and parental values. As short-term migrants (the 'one-and a half-generation'), they differ from the second or third generation (Colombo et al, 2009). Their embeddedness into home and diaspora life establishes their space of exploration, social engagement and interactions. Mother-tongue (L1) is successfully maintained and children use it across all spheres in everyday communication.

As observed at St Luke's school, these children exhibited collective Polish identity, especially in the playground (Chapter 7) and at the Welsh Catholic church (Chapter 6). Polish children comprise a distinctive ethnic group in these settings. They showed their solidarity, in Bauman and May's (2001:30) words, as a "common bond" and "togetherness". This proves Smolicz's (1981:75) assertions of the salience of 'core'

values for collective identifications. It also conforms to Ní Laoire et al's (2009; 2011) findings that for EU children of various nationalities their own national identities were important. For example, they do not want to become Irish, even if they liked living there. Nor do they speak of hyphenated identities, like Polish-Irish or Lithuanian-Irish. In my study's card choice exercise, some children chose labels indicating hyphenated identities like Polish-Welsh, Polish-English, but the majority opted for the 'Polish person' label. Using Suarez-Orozco's (2004:177) terms "I am a member of *this* group", these children revealed that their 'achieved identities' are Polish. The majority declared their belonging to the Polish group, by choosing the Polish nationality label.

On the other hand, they were vulnerable to Polish 'imposed identity'. Suarez-Orozco (2004:177) describes how children's 'other' national identity may be imposed on them by members of the host-country's dominant culture. This is exemplified by these children's narratives of their arrival in class (Chapter 4). Such experiences of 'otherness' due to their Polish identity remain vivid in their memories. Schools commonly categorize migrant children by nationality (Zufiaurre, 2006; Lesar, et al, 2006; Ní Laoire et al, 2009). This I observed at St Luke's (Chapters 5 and 7). The implemented 'valuing language and diversity' model works well for children during school or church celebrations (Chapters 5 and 6). However, in everyday encounters, children prefer not to emphasize their cultural difference. The older children in the study appeared to prefer negotiating their identities by avoiding stigmatisation as 'ethnic others', as De Block and Buckingham (2007:55) found. They want to fit into the majority group, not represent themselves as 'different'. It appears that children prefer to choose when and how to display their national identity traces themselves, and older children express this more openly. This conforms to Connolly's (2007:51)

argument that: “young children play an active role in appropriating, re-working and reproducing attitudes towards ethnicity”.

These Polish children are inevitably on their own ‘routes’ in the process of identity development, to use Hall’s (1996: 4) expression. The process of identity negotiation is complex and individualized. A half-Polish, half-Belarusian boy exemplifies this clearly (Chapter 7). His disadvantaged and complex position in the Polish group at school may be explained by the multiple intersections of exclusion he experiences (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). In his case, he intentionally and persistently stresses the Polish half of his inherited identity to enable inclusion into Polish children’s cultures at St Luke’s. In Anthias’ (2011: 213) terms, it is ‘in his interest’. The complexity of these children’s identifications is also observed in their situated and performed identities. This conforms to Scourfield et al’s (2006: 53) findings about children performing identities in front of peers. Children performed different identities at school (public space) and home (domestic space). Parents sometimes talked about dissonances in children’s behaviour, which I could compare in both Library sessions and St Luke’s classrooms. One striking example is a girl of 11, whose performed identities contrast sharply: boyish at school and motherly at home (Chapter 5).

These children are gradually constructing their bilingual identities in multilingual contexts in Wales (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). Due to the short time spent in Wales, low English-language confidence is evident (Cummins, 2000). As non-dominant-language-speakers they are vulnerable and are disadvantaged in classroom and social situations (Brandsma, 2000:34). However, they are confident Polish (L1) speakers. At St Luke’s, I observed



that children manifested their Polish linguistic identity as an asset and sometimes rejected non-Polish speakers (Chapters 5 and 7). Children used their agency to achieve their goal when the context was suitable, for example, when Polish-speaking adults were available. The frequency of such social exchanges reinforces their Polish linguistic identity.

In the context of St Luke's school, Polish linguistic identity may help children with self-identity and self-esteem. Polish as a minority language is not associated with shame or stigma (MacSwan, 2000) but officially recognized as one of many languages in the setting. Puzzlingly, however, this may also lead to self-exclusion. For example, children want to laugh, play and not worry about English words to express themselves in front of non-Polish-speakers (Chapter 7). However, because Polish is used frequently by a large number of people, it is not always accepted by non-Polish-speaking children – as examples in Chapter 5 show. Paradoxically therefore, speaking Polish at St Luke's may be seen as a practice to self-exclude from English-speaking children's society.

These children's Polish linguistic identity is enhanced by immersion in various linguistic settings in Wales where Polish is spoken. This intensifies exposure to national identifications. Polish identity, however, is subject to intergenerational redefinition in a supplementary school (Archer et al, 2010). In this context, attending Saturday school strengthens children's identity representation. During patriotic and religious celebrations at the Polish Club, they encounter different diaspora generations' Polish: the post-war generation's and new migrants' (Chapters 4 and 6). Such exposure reinforces their attachments with the Polish past and present, making

cultural continuity visible and strengthening emotional ties with their 'nation' (Yuval-Davis et al, 2005). Families' Catholic practice in the Polish-speaking church and Saturday school helps with language maintenance (Fishman, 1966; Smolicz, 1981). From the intensity of such attachments in all spheres of life, it may be predicted that this generation of Poles will value Polish more than earlier cohorts for whom native-language ceased to be an important identity marker (Lustanski, 2009; Leuner, 2010). For these Polish children, their mother-tongue remains a strong identity marker in Wales.

Migrating children's balanced and harmonious identity development is seen as transcultural identity. Suarez-Orozco (2004: 192) discussed the importance of "fusing aspects of two or more cultures" to develop a transcultural identity. This involves achieving "bicultural and bilingual competences that become an integral part of their sense of self". In this study's children's case, bilingual identities are likely to be achieved but have not yet been. Given their time abroad, these children are probably midway towards English-language proficiency (Cummins, 2000). Their embeddeness into Welsh environment and culture is not yet achieved either. By labelling themselves as Welsh or English, some children showed their preferences and interest, which may be associated positively with language-learners' identities. There is, however, little evidence of attachments to Wales as a country. The national flag was discussed in terms of it being "difficult to draw". Neither the distinctive Welsh countryside nor exploration of Wales were mentioned, apart from school trips. This may be due to Polish families' intense transnational activation outside the UK instead of internal tourism or exploration. As shown in Chapter 4, these families' lifestyles are work-oriented, characterized by unsocial hours of work and uncertainty

of employment. This may preclude families spending time and resources on leisure activities in Wales.

#### **8.4. Implications for policies and practices of protection of migrant children in Wales: bilingual and EAL provision at St Luke's.**

As a bilingual assistant volunteer at St Luke's, I was in a good position to observe its EAL provision in practice. My interactions and observations in this study have led me to emphasize the need to expose Polish minority children's lived experience. Being Polish with English as my second-language, I must acknowledge that my observations may be biased. However, my linguistic experiences are closer to these children's than non-Poles' because I share some of their struggles. For example, sometimes being with a group of children, especially outside the classroom, I could not understand when English-speaking children spoke quietly, shouted or used unfamiliar words. Not knowing how to respond, I did not feel good at these moments; in fact, my self-esteem dropped rapidly. It is probable that Polish children feel the same.

In my four empirical chapters, I presented numerous interactions between Polish children and different agents. In all of these, children were embedded in linguistic practice: listening, writing, talking, switching languages or struggling to participate. As argued in Chapter 5, all aspects of language use impact on children's identification. To add to these children's precarious position, they must learn two new languages, not one. In fact, these children should be referred to as 'multi-linguals', instead of 'bilinguals', as in Wales they also learn Welsh. (In this particular area, however, Welsh is rarely spoken.)

As I presented in the Literature Review, only recently has the issue of how long a child needs to learn a language been demystified (Ball, 2011:18). The understanding of this lengthy process is recognized at St Luke's school (EAL policy statement (2008: 2). The school's practice demonstrates adherence to intercultural education principles: particularly those which aim to ensure that children feel that their cultural, thinking and interaction patterns are valued to the same extent as those of the 'majority' (Huttova et al, 2008). However, the practice I observed is not bilingual education per se in which students are able to study subject matter in their first language (Carrasquillo and Rodrigues, 2002: 68), but adherence to bilingual education principles (Ball, 2011). The problem with implementing bilingual education in this setting is twofold. Firstly, as Huttova et al (2008:49) observe, "bilingualism as a real policy option is most realistic in a setting with a maximum of two ethnic groups". St Luke's is a multilingual school with pupils speaking over 20 home-languages: clearly not a bilingual setting. The second problem relates to the financial feasibility of supporting a mother-tongue bilingual program. St Luke's makes best use of the resources available: namely two bilingual teachers for almost forty newly-arrived Polish children.

One of St Luke's particular features is the principle of valuing migrant children's languages in line with the 1977 EU Directive for provision for migrant children. This school's initiatives follow the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship's. This creates a very welcoming environment for pupils and their families who arrived from Poland. The data showed that parents value the fact that Polish assistants both provide information and ongoing practical support for their children and help in communication between school and home. Moreover, the Catholic ethos and religious practice play an additional inclusive role as these are

close to their familiar experience. Most Polish children come from a Catholic background (as shown in Chapter 6).

Regarding recent reports on how education policy in EU member states shape migrant pupils' experience, the St Luke's efforts are outstanding. It provides a quality education "creating their sense of learning, dignity and ambition" (Zentai, 2009:9). Moreover, as Messing et al (2010:9) argue, "ethnically mixed school environments seem to best meet the needs of both majority and minority ethnic students." Being a multilingual school, St Luke's also appears to contribute to the healthy development of children's self-esteem and identity. In practice, the principles of bilingual and intercultural education mean valuing both the child's-home and mainstream cultural backgrounds which are believed to contribute to a child's balanced identity development (Ball, 2011).

Under 'Key Principles', St Luke's EAL policy states that all children follow the curricular requirements of the Foundation Phase and the National Curriculum. The school supports pupils with limited proficiency in the language of instruction. As data show, its method is immersion in the host-language with systematic EAL language support individually or in small groups. As observed, specific-language support has also been developed. Frequent attempts (constrained by resources) are made to teach the youngest group (six-year-olds) in their mother-tongue, Polish, as a language of instruction. There are attempts to introduce additive bilingualism (paying attention to not losing the first language but adding to it) as opposed to subtractive bilingualism (Baker, 2000:137).

Another key principle of EAL policy is to teach new arrivals in mainstream classrooms through collaboration between subject teachers and bilingual assistants. I

observed numerous examples of good mainstream practice in classrooms (presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 7). These include, for example, integrating bilingual assistants into classroom learning by providing immediate translation and making lists of English and Polish words to ensure pupils understand the subject's vocabulary. This teaching practice adheres to the Swann (1985) Report, "Education for All" recommendations. This maintains that beginners make better progress if exposed to English through mixing with their monolingual peers. This clearly relates to Cummins's (2000:23) interdependence hypothesis.

From my observations, the presence of EAL pupils, especially beginners, in a main classroom space requires a high level of teaching skills and sensitivity on the teacher's side. I observed situations when pupils withdrew attention, or avoided exposure when the teacher was addressing the whole class (Maths). The sizable group of speakers of one minority language in one classroom puts additional demands on class group organization. One coping strategy was to categorize five Polish children as a 'Polish team' for a team-based competitive task.

As this study shows, the practice of withdrawing children from the classroom for language-help sessions appears to be a missed opportunity for including them into the learning process. Moreover, this has a negative effect on identity-building. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE, 2000) opposed such out-of-mainstream sessions. Zuffiure (2006) and Messing et al (2010) consider that pupils' separation leads to low performance aspirations, low self-esteem and negative identity-building. This practice also raised concerns about ethnic minority pupils' marginalization. As a result, withdrawal came to be seen as an ethically and methodologically unsound practice.

From my observation, segregation practice seems detrimental to pupils' self-image and learners' identities (Chapter 5). Although beyond the scope of this research to make recommendations on teaching methods, this study's findings suggest that the withdrawal-sessions method is the least advised option for children's learning and identity.

The sizable Polish minority within the school's over twenty (more modestly represented) linguistic minorities makes a specific context for intra-ethnic exchanges and language switches. In Chapter 3, I presented literature recognizing that a concentration of ethnic children may hinder linguistic and social integration (Esser, 2006). The ESTYN Report's (2010) supplementary guidance on the inspection of racial equality, promotion of good relationships and English as an additional language recognizes that the presence of sizable identifiable groups in schools may impact on their members' wellbeing and learning experiences. As Miller (2003: 4) argues, for second-language learners, supportive interactions with dominant-language peers and cultures are crucial for social language and identity development. I observed that the Polish concentration could hinder making cross-ethnic, and sometimes even intra-ethnic, friendships. Indeed, there was little evidence of the Polish group participating in intra-ethnic and intra-racial exchanges in the playground (Chapter 7).

Both the diversity of, and their difference within, the multicultural world they find themselves in may be difficult for these children (Ball, 2011). They need to face their own, often inexplicable, prejudices (as examples in Chapter 4 show) and the social and national stereotypes into which they are born because of their family

background. It is within their agency to choose between the language of interaction and the people they feel more comfortable interacting with.

Probably the best measurement of success of the linguistic diversity policy on bilingualism is the agency it grants its users – the children themselves. This is best seen in the playground. The presence of one sizable group of foreign-language-speakers within an English-speaking majority group unbalances the ethnic composition, so makes context very specific for all social agents. This may be the reason why dualistic constructions (Polish children/English children: *Polskie dzieci/Angielskie dzieci*) were very strongly represented in discourses in this study. Additionally, the presence of Polish adults near playing children brings power differentials into the field. In the playground, neither other linguistic-minorities nor English-speaking children have ‘special’ adults to resolve disputes and misunderstandings. The fact that children only seek adult support when they feel unfairly treated, but not when they are unfairly treating others, exacerbates this unbalanced situation. This may make non-Polish-speaking children feel this is unfair on them (Chapter 5).

From this research’s data on children’s English and Polish learning, several key points about EAL provision emerge. Polish children in this study have varied experiences of English-language acquisition (and Polish-language maintenance) due to individual differences in aptitude, personal dispositions, social skills, attitude, motivation and learning style (Carrasquillo and Rodriguez, 2002:64-67). As my one-year ethnographic study provided numerous interactions with children involving speaking and writing activities, I could observe how their academic competences in both languages developed. In the sample of 29, there were several children with poor



writing skills in one or other language. Two children, although confident Polish-speakers, chose not to write in Polish. This may be a sign of subtractive bilingualism (Baker, 2000:35). Two girls (aged 8 and 9) were unable to write confidently in either language. This may imply semilingualism (Cummins, 2000:86).

One of the main challenges in a bilingual world is to differentiate between language impairment and the development of more than one language. Ryan et al (2010) suggest that the identification of special educational needs (SEN) can be speeded up by involving bilingual staff. The general assumption that Eastern Europeans are better prepared for schooling than children from outside Europe (Zuffi, 2006) may cause delays in specific learning assessments. Regarding Polish children in the UK system, Sales et al (2008) suggested that cultural stereotypes about Polish children as high achievers may contribute to the postponement of language assessment. The main challenge for schools, therefore, is to train professionals in EAL teaching and language specialists. EAL needs to be given recognition as a subject and the status of its provision elevated. Despite schools' good policy intentions about inclusion, for children and their parents there are very thin lines between being categorised as a pupil with 'no English', an EAL or SEN pupil or as an other-language speaker. Clearly, in a school setting, other-language speaking connotes as being 'different', which may attach stigma. Focus on EAL provision appears to be crucial due to the growing numbers of students with English as an additional language – not only Polish children.

### **8.5. Recommendations towards making a positive difference in Polish migrant children's lives.**

This research confirms existing representations of Polish children in the UK as shown in studies in London primary schools by Sales et al (2008) and D'Angelo and Ryan (2011) and in Scotland by Moskal (2010a). Polish children were portrayed as welcome arrivals from the EU, who add positively to their schools' diversity and generally adapt well, although some needed language assistance. This study contributes to existing knowledge by showing a group of Polish children who are growing up in Wales. Their identity negotiations were observed across their everyday spaces: schools, churches and neighbourhoods.

The evidence gathered in this research, however, challenges familiar stereotypes and assumptions: particularly that unproblematic transfer into other EU countries' school systems and adaptation to their new communities is easy for all children. The EU rhetoric encouraging family mobility stresses the aspect of 'language as opportunity' and portrays children as better language-learners than adults (Publications Office of the European Union, 2010:16). This stereotyping overlooks the fact that the process of second-language acquisition (L2) is lengthy and individualized – as evidenced by children in this study. To add to the complexity of children's adaptation, mastering L2 is understood as an instrument for both integration and tackling social exclusion (Esser, 2006). This adds another layer to expectations that children's abilities to bridge will compensate for migrant families' weak linguistic and social capital.

This study's findings support Seda-Santana et al's (2010) argument that schools' beliefs and values confront those of parents. For example, St Luke's principles of bilingual education challenge Polish parents' views that mastering English, not

Polish, assures opportunity for children's upward social mobility. The data generated in this research identified myths and misconceptions in parents' discourses on bilingual acquisition. Most of them acknowledge the importance of Polish, and take its mastery for granted. Foremost, however, parents want their children to speak good English and succeed academically in school. These concerns are particularly strong in relation to transition to secondary school.

This study's findings support Connolly's (2007:51) view that children are active "in the formation of their attitudes towards ethnic differences." The data on participation in peer networks confirms children's differentiations by nationalities, languages or race. Furthermore, the findings evidence little cross-ethnic or cross-racial exchanges between Polish and other children in school playground, church or home-neighbourhoods. This suggests that Polish children may need support to develop intercultural competences. They were born in a monolingual, monocultural country and may live in an insulated family and social domain.

It appears that Polish families could benefit from building awareness of discussions on ethnic diversity in Britain. This necessity can be explained historically. Before the Second World War, Yiddish, Roma, German, Lithuanian and Ukrainian languages were common in Poland. After it, ethnic cleansing, re-drawn boundaries and Stalin's population expulsions had effectively eliminated all non-Polish ethnicity. The typical Polish upbringing is therefore monocultural and monolingual. Consequently, recognition of multi-ethnic and multi-language issues is lower in Polish families than in those coming to Britain from more ethnically diverse backgrounds (e.g. postcolonial countries). D'Angelo and Ryan (2011: 246) also observed their ill-ease in multi-ethnic contexts in England. Consequently, Polish parents may need

encouragement to strengthen their children's social competences in multi-cultural contexts: a crucial pillar of intercultural education in schools.

As observed at St Luke's, some children were better at approaching non-Polish-speakers but others lacked confidence. In the child-migration field, the issue of resilience attracts much concern (Rutter, 2006; Esnor and Gozdzia, 2010).

Supporting the development of resilient identities is not only important for traumatised children but also those who have 'merely' experienced displacement. In fact, to help positive identity development, resilience is important for any vulnerable child growing up in difficult circumstances (Krovetz, 1999).

Recognizing migrant and ethnic-minority children's multiple disadvantages, the European Commission (COM, 2008; EC, 2013:7) recommended both creating inclusive learning environments and providing support and training for their parents. There are a number of possible ways to improve families' cultural awareness and overcome barriers to children's participation in multi-ethnic environments. St Luke's after-school clubs (e.g. chess, football) already apply such inclusive practices. In the playground, however, when all children are together during lunch-breaks, the situation is more demanding, so might benefit by more detailed attention: especially, Polish-assistants role in proactively encouraging Polish children to play with other ethnic groups.

How to include newly arriving children into school life is, however, a matter for the whole school community to discuss. This study shows that English-speaking pupils may not know how to include less confident English-speakers in classroom tasks and play. All children including those from the settled population need support in developing social inclusion competences. In this school's catchment area, the Polish

community has grown immensely over the last five years. The subsequent changes in the school's ethnic composition place unfamiliar demands on all children in everyday school life. Although adults commonly believe children can easily adapt to changes, we should not assume that they intuitively know how to manage. To build relations with children from other backgrounds (including, but not only, Poles), all children need professional help. This should especially target children who are already 'visibly' at risk of social isolation. As identified in this study, these are especially those who experience multiply-intersecting disadvantages: e.g. single-parenting, low social confidence, and/or finding learning English demanding.

Additionally, the Catholic community is a potential resource for addressing racial and ethnic diversity issues. As Polish parents value and practice Catholicism, the church is a platform they trust. The congregation, however, is culturally diverse, with many Caribbean- and African-origin members. Out-of-school contacts with parish families would be beneficial for both children and their parents. Catholic universalism gives an opportunity to mix children and families in a trusted, safe environment.

It appears important to assist and encourage children in building multi-cross-ethnic exchanges within peer cultures in their new neighbourhoods. As this study shows, children have restricted agency in this area. Parents have more, but host-country attitudes play a large part. There are policies and programmes to tackle ethnic prejudices and promote community cohesion, as the settled population's attitudes and behaviours towards minority-ethnic groups range from welcoming to hostile. Recently, Poles have added immensely to their neighbourhoods' diversity, establishing new businesses serving local communities. On the other hand, the media

promotes a negative discourse about migrant workers from Poland. The Federation of Poles in Great Britain (Zjednoczenie Polskie: ZP) considers migration and asylum media-discussions victimize Poles (Sewell, 2008). Recently, the press highlighted the issue of child benefits (Slack, 2013). Such negative coverage may impact on how local communities perceive newcomers. Apart from media reports, however, little is known about the new Polish communities, except for Moszczyński's (2010) systematic documentation of Poles in West London. As this study had shown, Polish parents are gradually building their relations with their local communities, e.g. some children attend sports activities. Similarly, in my study, children were enthusiastic about learning Welsh at school. This is an opportunity to engage Polish families into programmes targeting local communities, for example, the Communities First (2012) programme in Wales.

First and foremost, however, the Polish diaspora community in Britain can do most towards improving Polish children's lives. There was a Conference in the Polish cultural Centre in London (POSK, 2012) discussing children's futures. More of such initiatives are needed, especially addressing newly-arriving Polish children's transnational identities, new attachments and acculturation.

Regarding Polish-language preservation, it is apparent that only children in London and a few other urban areas have access to Saturday schools (POSK, 2012). For example, my estimate is that only 15% of Polish children in Wales attend these. This situation requires action. All Polonia organizations need to reflect on values, formulate guidance and provide support for Polish migrant families and children. Both in the UK and Poland, there is a need to build widespread awareness about migration's consequences for children: particularly in the spheres of education and

social adaptation. The Polish diaspora community has built a reputable position in the UK after the Second World War. The new political situation, with its anti-migrant, anti-EU rhetoric, requires coordinated efforts by all diaspora organizations – old and new – to continue building positive relations in localities and promoting Polish cultural values. It appears important for the youngest generation of Poles in the UK to work on a positive national image by celebrating and incorporating elements of Polish culture and customs into the patchwork of British ethnic diversity.

My ethnographic research aimed to explore Polish migrant children's identities. Its design required me to spend time with children in their natural settings. Other than St Luke's school, these mostly appeared to be spaces in the Polish-speaking community, designed by parents. Reflecting on this, I see some weaknesses of this research in relation to inclusion and integration issues. In work with children, Seda-Santana et al's (2010: 26) advice on how to tackle ethnic division and prejudice issues is relevant:

“...it is necessary to recognize the social competences of young children and their role in the construction of ethnic differences and to create the space for them to reflect on various issues related to ethnicity.”

In my study, children have space to reflect on their Polish ethnicity. However, due to limited time and resources, I was less able to create a wider space to engage them in, and then reflect upon, multi-ethnic exchanges. For further research with Polish children, therefore, I recommend that the natural spaces they are comfortable within, namely diaspora spaces, be purposefully widened to assist them in crossing boundaries of their own ethnicity. This should be done in conjunction with programmes teaching them about cross-ethnic exchanges within peer and wider cultures in schools, neighbourhoods and the Catholic community.

In the light of the increasing numbers of Polish migrant children in the UK school system, this study's findings and recommendations seem timely. This is especially so for schools with sizable groups of Polish pupils, as at St Luke's. I conducted this study to deepen understanding of the complex consequences for children of EU regulations on migrant workers' free movement. I hope this research in Wales contributed to this.

#### **8.6. Conclusions: Migrant children transnational identities and children's agency**

This research confirms other studies' findings in the transnational families field: that mobility opens diverse identity options for children (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002), that family context affects multiplicity of identities (Bailey, 2009) and that emotions play a vital role in identifications (Gardner, 2012). For these Polish children, family is central to their identity negotiations. Families' transnational practices, hyper-connectivity and Poland's proximity enable children to maintain strong attachments to significant others and those left behind (often transnationals themselves). These factors appear to have a cumulative effect on children's strongly pronounced national identities. Mobility is perceived positively and considered 'normal': an important part of their childhood experience. For Polish children, like many other children migrating within Europe (Ni Laoire et al, 2011), family mobility contributes to multiple intersecting identities. I consider Anthias's (2011) translocational positionality framework useful to interpret their negotiations as a process. This



conforms to the postmodern view, which sees identifications as an ‘open-ended’ activity (Bauman, 2001), negotiated along individualised ‘routes’ (Hall, 1996).

This study did not find any Polish children trapped between two cultures, as the essentialist view on identity would suggest, nor undergoing identity crisis (Mannitz, 2005). Instead, children dynamically negotiate identities influenced by the contexts of mobility over several locales: Wales, Poland and diasporic space. Different contexts can induce different identity traces to become more prominent: gender, age, being ‘white’, European, Polish or Catholic. Unlike most migrating children (Devine et al, 2008), Polish children’s negotiations of otherness in Wales do not take place along racial lines, but cultural and linguistic ones. Various contexts add to the complexity of their situational identifications. For example, within diasporic space, children are exposed not only to national and patriotic identities but also to a specific Polish Catholic habitus. In the context of their Catholic school, the sizable group of Polish children reinforces reproducing or redefining collective identity, but also resistance to categorisation.

Valuing the opportunity for gaining linguistic capital by speaking Polish, English and Welsh articulates cosmopolitan identity traces. English competency has a value as convertible capital (Bourdieu, 1986) for accessing global market and material resources. Children often present themselves as experienced travellers across European space. Related to this, hyphenated identities, e.g. Polish-English or Polish-Welsh are modestly used. Although mainstream cultural capital’s importance is clear from the high value accorded to schooling and learning English, the influence of home values is strong. Instead, therefore, of negotiating ‘third place’ and hybrid identities (Bhabha, 1994), these children are comfortable within the Polish paradigm.

They also demonstrate confidence in the multiple identity negotiations that their mobility and cosmopolitanism offer. As a first generation, they evidence no disconnection from their ethnicity, which second- and third-generation migrant descendants typically do. For these children, Polishness is not contested but remains a valuable source for identification. They demonstrate continuity of linguistic competence and emotional engagement in networking with other Poles.

These findings of the importance of national identity may appear to contradict postmodern views on multiple identities and fluidity. However, in these children's case, national identity is not static – as the essentialist definition of 'the core self' suggests – but is redefined contextually and simultaneously, so does not make other identities unimportant or impossible for them.

In this study, I foregrounded the perspective of children as competent agents (Mayall, 2002) who use their own knowledge and experiences to give meaning to 'what is important' in negotiations of their own identities. Although generally favouring the new sociology of childhood approach, I consider that, in relation to agency, the binary oppositions: passive-active or adult-child should be viewed with caution. Neither migrant parents nor children are independent agents. Within their complex web of interdependencies, they should rather be seen through their multiplicity of 'becomings' (Prout, 2005). My findings show that children are embedded in generational and hierarchical relationships, which bring both opportunities for, and limitations on, their agency. They negotiate identities on the intersections of what their families' socioeconomic status, cultural and social capital, and their own nationality, religion and gender make available to them.

Parents decide on the institutional bodies and types of settings their children enter (Corsaro, 1997). Religious practice and choice of a faith school are parental decisions. Participation in neighbourhood peer cultures is parentally controlled. In hierarchical places, e.g. schools, ‘coersive relations of power’ (Cummins, 2000) weaken children’s agency; particularly when ascribed attributes like nationality or mother-tongue are used to categorise them, e.g. as a ‘Polish group’. On the other hand, these children evidenced little resistance to this practice; rather they welcomed the opportunity to socialise with other Polish children. This demonstrates the importance of ethnic belonging, loyalties and emotional comfort for them. Moreover, by choosing to label themselves ‘Polish’ or ‘Catholic’ in the card-choice exercise, they demonstrated the value they attached to these concepts.

This study does, however, confirm that these middle-childhood children are particularly active in taking control over their social participation (Corsaro, 1997), in Jenkins’ (1996) words, they are “entering society”. Children’s agency and active representations are most pronounced in peer groups and friendship-making. For the best position for themselves, they produce situational identities by performance in front of peers or adults (Scourfield et al, 2006). To negotiate their ‘otherness’, these children used a variety of coping strategies. In school – a multi-ethnic peer group context – this sometimes meant resistance to perceived marginalisation or nationality-based prejudice. Children skilfully used their linguistic competences as a tool for inclusion or exclusion. This reinforced the ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ polarity. In the context of the sizable Polish group, children’s agency was visible in the many friendships within this mixed-age and mixed-gender group. The group’s size, linguistic comfort and frequency of exchanges reinforced emotional ethnic loyalties and contributed to collective and situational identifications. Social capital, as

possessed through ethnic bonds, had both an enabling (having friends) and constraining (having only Polish friends) influence. This has a limiting effect on peer groups' ethnic mix. Sometimes children's agency in friendship building was severely constrained due to complex disadvantages, e.g. families' social capital limitations.

Children's age and gender play decisive roles on restriction of free movement in neighbourhoods. However, these only modestly restrict Internet access and mobile technology use. These children are empowered by their confidence as media consumers (de Block and Buckingham, 2007). Their agency is boosted by their independent Internet contact with people of their own choosing and also by maintaining intergenerational attachments that cut through age-restricted lines.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: The study samples

**Table A.1.1. St Luke's school sample, 15 Children: 11 girls and 4 boys**

Name	Sex	Age	Year	Years in school in Wales	EAL 5-stage model <sup>8</sup>
Marta	G	8	4	5	C
Ola	G	8	4	3	B
Wanda	G	8	4	3	B
Gosia	G	8	4	1	A
Alicja	G	9	4	2	A
Iza	G	9	4	2	A
Zosia	G	9	4	4	B
Ania	G	10	5	4	A
Asia	G	10	5	6 <sup>9</sup>	A
Sara	G	10	5	4	A
Sylwia	G	11	6	4	B
Maciek	B	9	4	4	B
Olek	B	9	4	3	B
Mikołaj	B	11	6	4	B
Darek	B	11	6	4	A

**Table A.1.2. Polish Saturday school sample, 14 Children: 6 girls and 8 boys**

Name	Sex	Age	Year <sup>10</sup>	Years in school in Wales	School Attended <sup>11</sup>
Danka	G	8	4	1	Catholic state maintained
Basia	G	8	4	1	Community school
Martyna	G	8	4	4	Community school
Jagoda	G	9	4	5	Catholic state maintained
Magda	G	9	4	5	Community school
Iwona	G	10	5	5	Community school
Jarek	B	8	4	2	Community school
Bartek	B	9	4	5	Catholic state maintained
Łukasz	B	9	4	5	Community school
Adam	B	9	4	3	Catholic state maintained
Jan	B	9	4	British born	Community school
Paweł	B	11	6	5	Catholic state maintained
Karol	B	12	7 (secondary)	2	Catholic state maintained
Mateusz	B	12	7 (secondary)	5	Catholic state maintained

<sup>8</sup> These five stages span from A (beginners) to E (fluent).

<sup>9</sup> 1 year return to Poland

<sup>10</sup> The year they are in now e.g. the fifth year

<sup>11</sup> These 14 children go to various schools in the area, unfortunately, I was not able to collect data on these children's EAL level.



**Table A.1.3 All (29) children: pseudonyms and ages**

<b>ST LUKE'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL (15 children)</b>		<b>POLISH SATURDAY SCHOOL (14 children)</b>	
<b>Girls (11), age</b>	<b>Boys (4), age</b>	<b>Girls (6), age</b>	<b>Boys (8), age</b>
Marta, 8	Maciek, 9	Danka, 8	Jarek, 8
Ola, 8	Olek, 9	Basia, 8	Bartek, 9
Wanda, 8	Mikołaj, 11	Martyna, 8	Łukasz, 9
Gosia, 8	Darek, 11	Jagoda, 9	Adam, 9
Alicja, 9		Magda, 9	Jan, 9
Iza, 9		Iwona, 10	Paweł, 11
Zosia, 9			Karol, 12
Ania, 10			Mateusz, 12

As observed, several of the children from St Luke's attend masses at Polish speaking parish on Sundays but rarely social gatherings at the Polish Club. Two girls from St Luke's regularly attend Saturday School classes. From observation social life of the children and Polish families from St Luke's is evolving around St Luke's parish.

Children attending Saturday school belong to the Polish speaking parish and attend social events for families at the Polish Club.

## **Appendix 2: Access letters etc.**

### **A.2.1. Letter to St Luke's school**

Dear Headteacher,

For my PhD at Cardiff University, I am researching Polish migrant-workers' children's identity and sense of belonging in Wales. Little is known about these children's experiences of migration and their subsequent adaptation process in schools and in their home neighbourhoods. It is my hope that a better understanding of their childhood experience will help all those working with similar groups of children in the future.

I would like your permission to conduct the study at your school. This will involve observations of Polish pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6.

#### **Aims and procedures**

The purpose of this study is to listen to children's voices in order to understand how they negotiate their identities and belonging in Wales. The ethnographic observation will focus on four broad questions:

1. How do Polish children negotiate sameness and difference in a peer group context?
2. How do Polish children construct belonging and attachment in their neighbourhoods?
3. To what extent is the everyday experience of children's worlds shaped by the migration situation?
4. What are the emerging identities of Polish migrant children in Wales today?

#### **Anonymity and Ethical considerations**

Being aware of the researcher's role and responsibilities, in line with the Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee, I wish to assure you that I will respect your wishes with regard to issues of confidentiality (SREC/638).

Anonymity will be maintained by eliminating material or information that could lead others to identify the school or any individuals involved. Only I will have access to field notes. The links between names and transcripts will be destroyed. Pseudonyms

will be used in the reporting of analysis. No information will be provided that might identify your school. Only descriptive information about pupils (grade, level taught, sex) will be retained with the records. At any time students can decide not to participate in the study.

I would be most grateful for your co-operation in this study. It addresses under-researched issues about migrant children who recently entered British classrooms. I would be very happy to share my findings with the school. I hope that individual teachers and all involved with work with Polish migrant children would benefit from this study.

Through my own teaching experience in Polish schools I am aware of the time pressures on teachers and staff. I would hope to avoid any disruption. Ethnographic observations will be carried out while volunteering at your school on the agreed weekly basis.

I would be very happy to arrange a time to meet at your convenience to answer any further questions regarding my study aims and any practical considerations about conducting the study at your school.

Yours sincerely,

## **A.2.2. Letter to Saturday school**

Dear Headteacher,

For my PhD at Cardiff University, I am researching Polish migrant-workers' children's identity and sense of belonging in Wales. Little is known about these children's experiences of migration and their subsequent adaptation process in schools and in their home neighbourhoods. It is my hope that a better understanding of their childhood experience will help all those working with similar groups of children in the future.

I would like your permission to conduct the study at your school. This will involve observations and additional activities with pupils aged 8-12.

### **Aims and procedures**

The purpose of this study is to listen to children's voices in order to understand how they negotiate their identities and belonging in Wales. The ethnographic observation will focus on four broad questions:

1. How do Polish children negotiate sameness and difference in a peer group context?
2. How do Polish children construct belonging and attachment in their neighbourhoods?
3. To what extent is the everyday experience of children's worlds shaped by the migration situation?
4. What are the emerging identities of Polish migrant children in Wales today?

### **Anonymity and Ethical considerations**

Being aware of the researcher's role and responsibilities, in line with the Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee, I wish to assure you that I will respect your wishes with regard to issues of confidentiality (SREC/638).

Anonymity will be maintained by eliminating material or information that could lead others to identify the school or any individuals involved. Only I will have access to field notes. The links between names and transcripts will be destroyed. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of analysis. No information will be provided that might identify your school. Only descriptive information about pupils (grade, level taught, sex) will be retained with the records. At any time students can decide not to participate in the study.

I would be most grateful for your co-operation in this study. It addresses under-researched issues about migrant children who recently entered British classrooms. I would be very happy to share my findings with the school. I hope that individual teachers and all involved with work with Polish migrant children would benefit from this study.

Through my own teaching experience in Polish schools I am aware of the time pressures on teachers and staff. I would hope to avoid any disruption. Ethnographic observations will be carried out while volunteering at your school on the agreed weekly basis.

I would be very happy to arrange a time to meet at your convenience to answer any further questions regarding my study aims and any practical considerations about conducting the study at your school.

Yours sincerely,

### **A.2.3. Letter to parents (in English)**

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is xxx. I am currently working as a volunteer at xxx School with full permission of xxx. I provide support and assistance to the Polish children in the school.

I have lived in Wales for five years now. In Poland I used to be a teacher of Polish and English in primary and secondary schools. Currently, I am a doctoral researcher at Cardiff University. This research has the approval of Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (SREC/638).

With the full support and approval of the Headteacher of xxx school, I would like to invite your child to take part in a research study about Polish children's identity and sense of belonging in Wales.

#### What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to learn about the experiences and identities of Polish children who have come to Wales since 2004. In particular, how they have adapted in schools, built friendships and found their place in their new neighbourhoods.

#### What is involved?

This research will be conducted during the whole school year 2010/2011 and has two parts.

Part I. While my volunteering at school, observations will be carried out during lessons, breaks and lunch times. The focus will be on children's play and friendships.

Part II. In the spring term I will invite children to take part in a participatory project. Children will be involved in creative activities (photos, drawings, map-making) to express their views on their immediate environment. This will focus on children's choices of places in xxx that they find nice and friendly to be in. Some interviews and focus groups will be conducted to discuss their views and comment on their work.

#### How will information be recorded?

During the observations at school, I will take notes which later I will write up into 'field-notes'. The interviews and focus groups will be tape-recorded. Visual materials created by children (photos, maps, drawings, etc.) will be used only with their permission.

What will happen with the information?

The field-notes, interviews and visual materials will only be accessible to myself and my supervisors. No personal data will be collected or stored about your child. The collected materials will be analyzed and form the basis of my PhD thesis; and may be published in articles in academic journals or presented at academic conferences.

I am requesting your consent for your child to take part in this study. Your child is not obliged to take part. However I would be very grateful if you give your consent.

I wish to advise you that I have full clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau to work with children. If you have any concerns, or you would like to talk about this study feel free to contact me at xxx or by phone xxx .

Please fill out and sign the attached form.

Yours Sincerely,

**A.2.4. Parental consent form (in English)**

**Research project into Polish children's negotiations of their identity and sense of belonging in Wales.**

Name of Researcher: xxxxxxxxx

1. I have read the above information about the study, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns with the researcher of the study.
2. I understand that the data collected will be kept anonymous.
3. I understand that my child is not obliged to take part, and I am able to withdraw my child at any time without giving a reason.
4. I give consent for my child to take part in the above study.

**Name of Parent/Guardian:**

.....

**Name of child:**

.....

**Age:** .....

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....



### **A.2.5. Letter to parents (in Polish)**

Drogi Rodzicu/Opiekunie

Nazywam się xxxxxxxx. Jestem wolontariuszką w Szkole xxx i za zgodą xxx pomagam polskim dzieciom.

W Polsce byłam nauczycielką języka polskiego i angielskiego w szkołach podstawowych i gimnazjach. Od pięciu lat mieszkam w Walii. Obecnie jestem na studiach doktoranckich na Uniwersytecie w Cardiff. Prowadzę badania, które uzyskały pozwolenie Komitetu do spraw Etyki Badań (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee, SREC/638).

Mając pełne poparcie Dyrektora szkoły xxx chciałabym zaprosić Wasze dziecko do wzięcia udziału w badaniach dotyczących tożsamości polskich dzieci mieszkających w Walii.

#### Jaki jest cel badań?

Celem badań jest poznanie doświadczeń polskich dzieci, które przyjechały do Walii po 2004 roku. Szczególnie ważne jest znalezienie odpowiedzi na pytania, jak dzieci zaadoptowały się w szkołach i nawiązały nowe przyjaźnie oraz jak postrzegają swoje najbliższe środowisko.

#### Jaki będzie przebieg badań?

Badania składają się z dwóch części i będą prowadzone w ciągu całego roku szkolnego 2010/2011.

Część I. Pracując w szkole jako wolontariusz, będę obserwować zachowanie dzieci podczas lekcji i przerw. Szczególnie zwrócę uwagę na ich zabawy oraz przyjaźnie zawierane w grupie rówieśniczej.

Część II. W semestrze wiosennym zaproszę dzieci do wzięcia udziału w dodatkowych zajęciach. Dzieci będą mogły uczestniczyć w zajęciach artystycznych (np. robić zdjęcia, rysunki, mapy miasta). Celem spotkań jest poznanie dziecięcego środowiska, a szczególnie miejsc, które dzieci lubią i uważają za przyjazne. Dzieci

będą proszone o komentowanie prac oraz wyrażenie swoich poglądów w wywiadach indywidualnych i grupowych.

W jaki sposób będą zbierane materiały?

W czasie obserwacji będę robić notatki, które później wykorzystam w mojej pracy doktorskiej. Wywiady indywidualne i grupowe będą nagrywane. Prace wykonane przez dzieci (zdjęcia, mapy, rysunki, itd.) będą włączone do badań wyłącznie za zgodą dzieci.

Jak będą wykorzystane materiały z badań?

Materiały z obserwacji i wywiadów oraz prace wykonane przez dzieci będą przedstawione moim promotorom. Materiały będą anonimowe i żadne dane o dziecku nie będą przechowywane. Zebrany materiał zostanie zanalizowany i włączony do mojej pracy doktorskiej. Materiały z badań mogą być również prezentowane w publikacjach naukowych i na konferencjach.

Zwracam się do Pani/Pana z prośbą o wyrażenie zgody na udział Państwa dziecka w powyższych badaniach. Wasze dziecko nie musi wziąć w nich udziału, ale byłabym bardzo wdzięczna za Państwa zgodę i współpracę.

Pragnę nadmienić, że posiadam zezwolenie na pracę z dziećmi w Wielkiej Brytanii (Criminal Records Bureau). Jeżeli macie Państwo jakieś pytania dotyczące badań, zawsze możecie skontaktować się ze mną drogą mailową xxx albo telefonicznie xxx.

Proszę wypełnić załączony formularz.

Z poważaniem,

#### **A.2.6. Parental consent form (in Polish)**

#### **Badania na temat tożsamości polskich dzieci mieszkających w Walii.**

Przeprowadzająca badania: xxxxxxxx

1. Przeczytałam/łem informację na temat powyższego badania i miałam/łem sposobność zadać pytania i porozmawiać o tym projekcie.
2. Rozumiem, że zebrane materiały będą anonimowe.
3. Rozumiem, że moje dziecko nie ma obowiązku wzięcia udziału w badaniach i w każdej chwili mogę je wycofać z badań bez podawania przyczyny.
4. Wyrażam zgodę na udział mojego dziecka w powyższych badaniach.

**Imię i nazwisko Rodzica/Opiekuna:**

.....

**Imię i nazwisko dziecka:**

.....

**Wiek :** .....

**Podpis:** .....

**Data:** .....

### **A.2.7. Letter to St Luke's parish**

Dear Priest,

My name is xxxxxx. For my PhD at Cardiff University, I am researching Polish migrant-workers' children's identity and sense of belonging in Wales. This research has received the approval of Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (SREC/638).

Little is known about Polish children's experiences of migration and their subsequent adaptation process in Wales and in their home neighbourhoods. The purpose of this study is to listen to children's voices in order to understand how they negotiate their identities and belonging in Wales. To achieve this, an ethnographic study will be carried out from September 2010 till July 2011. The study will be conducted in several settings: children's schools, neighbourhoods and Roman Catholic churches. Data will be collected through participant observation and a participatory project with children.

Therefore, I would like to ask your permission to conduct unobtrusive observations of Polish children and their families attending your church. I would merely observe how families inter-relate. For the congregation, on your permission, I put up a bilingual notice in the church about my carrying-out these observations. I will also discuss the way the observation will be conducted with my supervisors to ensure that I offend nobody.

Being aware of the researcher's role and responsibilities, in line with the Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee, I wish to assure you that I will respect your wishes with regard to issues of confidentiality. Anonymity will be maintained by eliminating material or information that could lead others to identify the church or any individuals involved. Only descriptive information about children and families (age, sex) will be retained with the records. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of analysis. Only I and my supervisors have access to field notes.

I would be most grateful for your co-operation in this study. It addresses under-researched issues about Polish migrant children and their families who recently came to Wales. It is hoped that a better understanding of their childhood experience will help all those working with this group of children in the future.

I would be very happy to arrange a time to meet at your convenience to answer any further questions regarding my study aims and any practical considerations about carrying my observations at church.

Please contact me either in writing (SAE envelope included) or by e-mail or telephone.

Yours sincerely,

#### A.2.8. Letter to Polish parish

Drogi Księżę Proboszczu,

Nazywam się xxxxxxx. Jestem na studiach doktoranckich na Uniwersytecie w Cardiff i prowadzę badania nad adaptacją i tożsamością polskich dzieci mieszkających w Walii. Badania uzyskały pozwolenie Komitetu do spraw Etyki Badań (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee, SREC/638).

Celem moich badań jest poznanie doświadczeń polskich dzieci, które przyjechały do Walii po 2004 roku. Szczególnie ważne jest znalezienie odpowiedzi na pytania, jak dzieci zaadoptowały się w szkołach i nawiązały nowe przyjaźnie oraz jak postrzegają swoje najbliższe środowisko. Polska Parafia i Kościół są niewątpliwie najbliższym środowiskiem dla polskiego dziecka. W związku z tym zwracam się do Księdza Proboszcza z prośbą w wyrażenie zgody na prowadzenie badań w parafii, polegających na obserwacji dzieci i rodzin przychodzących do kościoła.

Byłabym bardzo wdzięczna Księdzu za współpracę. Badania dotyczą kwestii nowych i ważnych dla polskich dzieci, które niedawno wyemigrowały z Polski. Wierzę, że lepsze zrozumienie ich doświadczeń pomoże w przyszłości wszystkim pracującym z tą grupą dzieci w szkołach i parafiach.

Za Księdza przyzwoleniem i zgodnie z wymogami Komitetu Etyki (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee), chciałabym umieścić w kościele ogłoszenie, że takie badania będą prowadzone.

Z poważaniem,

### **A.2.9. Church notice in English and Polish**

Dear Parishioners,

With the permission of Priest I will be undertaking research in church (some may be during services).

If you would like to know more please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Email address xxx and telephone xxx

Drodzy Parafianie!

Za zgodą Księdza Proboszcza będę prowadzić badania w kościele. Jeśli chcecie Państwo wiedzieć więcej na ten temat, proszę skontaktować się ze mną.

Z poważaniem,

Adres mailowy xxx i numer telefonu txxx

### **A.2.10. Letter to Library**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to hire your library room from 21 February 2011(Monday) till 25 February (five days) for two hours per day, from 10 am till 12 noon.

This room will be used for the purpose of my research project. For my PhD at Cardiff University, I am researching Polish children's identity and sense of belonging in Wales. This research has the approval of Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (SREC/638).

One part of the research is a participatory project with children. Children will be involved in creative activities (photos, drawings, map-making) to express their views on their immediate environment. Some interviews and focus groups will be conducted to discuss their views and comment on their work.

The group will consist of 10 children. The activities will be carried out by myself with some help from my daughter. I wish to advise you that I have full clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau to work with children. My helper also has been cleared by the CRB.

Yours Sincerely,

## Appendix 3. Parental Questionnaire

### A.3.1. Kwestionariusz

Imię i nazwisko

dziecka.....

#### I. Rodzeństwo

Imię	Wiek
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

#### II. Wykształcenie rodziców (proszę zaznaczyć)

Wykształcenie	Matka	Ojciec
podstawowe		
zawodowe		
średnie (matura)		
wyższe studia		

#### III. Czy obecnie uczycie się Państwo ? (np. kursy języka angielskiego, walijskiego zawodowe/studia)

Matka.....

Ojciec.....

#### IV. Zatrudnienie/zawód/zajęcie wykonywane obecnie w Walii:

Matka	Ojciec

#### V. Do której szkoły planujecie Państwo posłać swoje dziecko po ukończeniu szkoły podstawowej?

.....

Serdecznie dziękuję Państwu za pomoc i współpracę. Jeżeli macie Państwo jakieś pytania dotyczące badań, zawsze możecie skontaktować się ze mną drogą mailową xxx albo telefonicznie xxx.



### A.3.2. Parental Questionnaire (English translation)

Name of child .....

#### I. Number of children in family

Name	Age
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

#### II. Parental education

Education	Mother	Father
Primary		
Vocational		
A-levels		
University		

#### III. Are you doing any courses in Wales? (e.g. English, Welsh vocational/university courses)

Mother.....

Father.....

#### IV. Employment in Wales

Mother	Father

#### V. To which secondary school are you intending to send you child?

.....

Thank you very much for your help. If you have any concerns, or you would like to talk about the study feel free to contact me at xxx or by phone xxx.

## Appendix 4. Questionnaire answers

### A.4. Examples of anonymous responses to questions I, II and IV

Child, age	Siblings, age,	Mother's Eduaction	Father's Education	Mother's employment in Wales	Father's employment in Wales
Girl, 8	Brother,8 sister 2	Matura	Vocational	Cleaner	Production line factory
Boy, 8	Sister, 10 Sister, 15	Higher	Vocational	Teaching assistant	Builder
Girl, 9	Brother, 8	Matura	Vocational	Care assistant	Plumber
Girl, 9	Brother, 6	Matura	Matura	Housewife	Bus driver
Girl, 9	Sister ,14	Vocational	Vocational	Not working	Warehouseman
Girl, 10	No siblings	Matura	Vocational	Hotel Housekeeper	Builder
Boy, 9	Brother 14 Sister 6	Matura	Matura	Care assistant	Production line factory
Boy, 9	Sister, 3	Matura	Higher	Hotel Housekeeper	Chef restaurant
Girl, 10	No siblings	Matura	Matura	Not working	Car mechanic
Boy, 11	Brother, 27 Brother, 26 Sister, 24	Vocational	Vocational	Hotel housekeeper	Production line factory
Boy, 11	No siblings	Matura	Vocational	Cleaner	Production line factory
Girl,11	Brother,12 sister 2	Matura	Vocational	Care assistant	Housekeeping porter
Boy, 12	Brother,8	Matura	Matura	Shop assistant	Shop assistant

## **Appendix 5. Overview of participant observations during social gatherings at the Polish Club**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Celebration/occasion</b>	<b>Hours</b>
September	Harvest Festival	3
November	Independence Day Academy Ball on St. Andrew's Day	6
December	St Nicolas Day Nativity Play Christmas dinner	10
January	Children's Costume Ball	4
February	Carnival Ball	4
April	Easter food blessing	1
May	The 3 <sup>rd</sup> May Academy, the annual commemoration of Poland's 1791 Constitution	3
June	Family Fete on Children's Day 1 <sup>st</sup> June	4
	Total	11 days/35hrs

## **Appendix 6, Topics for group/paired interviews and the opening questions**

1. Languages we use: Polish/English/Welsh “What language/s do you speak at home?”
2. My school: “ Tell me about your school, please”
3. My week: “ What do you do on Sunday mornings?”
4. Favorite pastimes time: “What are your favourite activities?”
5. Being a Polish child: “Are you proud to be Polish?”
6. Learning languages: “How are you learning Polish/English?”
7. My holidays: “What are going to do this summer?”
8. My favorite place to visit/live: “Where would you like to live?”
9. My future: “Who do you want to be ?”
10. Important others: a postcard to someone special: “Who would you send it to?”

## Appendix 7: Examples of generated data

### A.7.1. Languages used at home: St Luke's sample

Name, age	Play with siblings	Play with friends	Reading	TV	Computer
Marta, 8	_ Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl We	En Pl _	En Pl _
Ola, 8	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _
Wanda, 8	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl We
Gosia, 8	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _
Alicja, 9	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	does not have a computer
Iza, 9	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _
Zosia, 9	Only child	En _ _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl
Ania, 10	En Pl _	En Pl _	En _ _	En Pl _	En _ _
Asia, 10	_ Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _
Sara, 10	_ Sl _	En Pl _	En _ _	En Sl _	En Sl _
Sylwia, 11	_ Pl _	En Pl _	En _ _	_ Pl _	En Pl _
Maciek, 9	Only child	Pl We	En _ _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _
Olek, 9	Only child	En Pl _	En Pl Bl	En _ _	En Bl _
Mikołaj, 11	Only child	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _
Darek, 11	Only child	_ Pl _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _

### A.7.2. Languages used at home: Saturday school sample

Name, age	Play with siblings	Play with friends	Reading	TV	Computer
Danka, 8	_ Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _
Basia, 8	_ Pl _	En Pl _	En _ _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _
Martyna, 8	Only child	En Pl _	En _ _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _
Jagoda, 9	En Pl _	En _ _	En Pl We	En Pl _	En Pl _
Magda, 9	_ Pl _	En _ _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _
Iwona, 10	Only child	En _ _	En _ _	_ Pl _	_ Pl _
Jarek, 8	_ Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _	_ Pl _	En Pl _
Bartek, 9	Only child	En _ _	En _ _	En Pl _	En _ _
Łukasz, 9	_ Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _
Adam, 9	Only child	En Pl _	En _ _	En Pl _	En Pl _
Jan, 9	En Pl We Cz	En _ We	En Pl We Cz	En Pl We	En Pl We Cz
Paweł, 11	En Pl _	En Pl _	En _ Wel	_ Pl _	En _ _
Karol, 12	_ Pl _	En Pl _	En _ _	_ Pl _	En Pl _
Mateusz, 12	Only child	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _	En Pl _

En-English; Pl - Polish; We- Welsh; Sl - Slovak; Bl - Belarusian; Cz - Czech

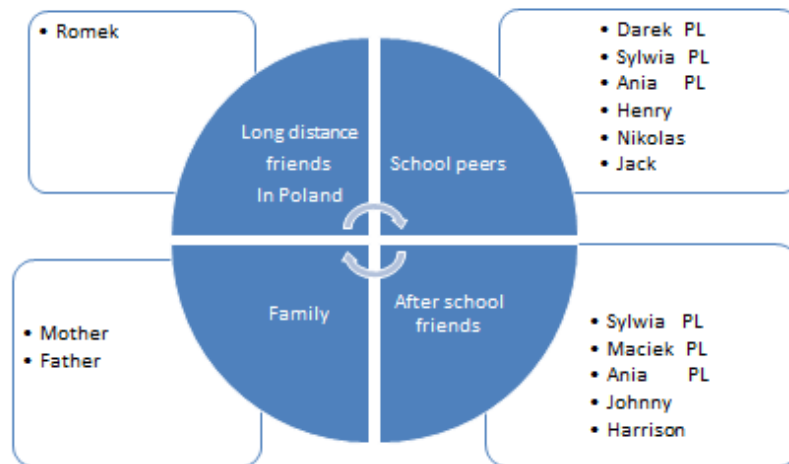
### A.7.3. Examples of anonymous responses to Card Choice exercise<sup>12</sup>

Child, age	First choice	Second choice	Free choice
Girl, 8	<u>Polish person</u> Girl White English person	<u>Mother</u> Sister Father Computer games	My cousins in Poland
Girl, 8	<u>I am from Poland</u> <u>Catholic</u> Girl Polish person	<u>Mother</u> Dog (in Poland) Listening to music	Mother ('play is important but mum is the most important')
Girl, 9	<u>Girl</u> Polish person English person	<u>Grandmother (in Poland)</u> Mother Father Grandfather Dog	Mother Father Grandfather Grandmother (in Poland) Dogs
Boy, 9	<u>I am from Warsaw</u> Boy White Polish person	<u>Father (in Poland)</u> <u>Grandmother (lives in Wales)</u> Mother	Dog ("I am going to have one in 500 days once my mum finished her university course")
Boy, 9	<u>Boy</u> European	<u>Computer games</u> Cat Father (in Poland)	Secret
Girl, 11	<u>Girl</u> White Catholic Polish person I am from Radom	<u>Football</u> <u>Sport</u> Mother Listening to music	Career in football
Boy, 11	<u>I am from Poland</u> Boy White European Catholic	<u>Father</u> <u>Mother</u> <u>Grandfather</u> <u>Grandmother</u> Computer games Listening to radio(Polish radio)	Making models

<sup>12</sup> Children's first choices are underlined and their comments are in brackets.

#### A.7.4. Mapping a social world

### Mapping of Mikołaj's social world



## **Appendix 8. Children's work**

### **8.1. List of pre-prepared work sheets.**

Children were asked to choose from those for their 'Book about Myself':

1. 'I am' (a picture of yourself, a front page of a booklet)
2. Important events in my life (events chart)
3. My favourite activity/things to do (I like doing/do not like doing)
4. My best friend chart
5. My school (cartoon making)
6. My best day at school
7. Children at my school (names, nationalities, languages, play with)
8. List of children/guests for my birthday party (last year, this year, imaginary)
9. Happy, Sad, Angry (three jars)
10. My Three wishes
11. My home and important places I visit
12. Me and my computer
13. Maps of locality
14. My way to school



## Appendix 8.2. Some examples of children's work

Figure 1. A front page of a 'Book about Myself'



Figure 2. Anonymous example from a chart 'Important events in my life':  
'Ważne wydarzenia w moim życiu'

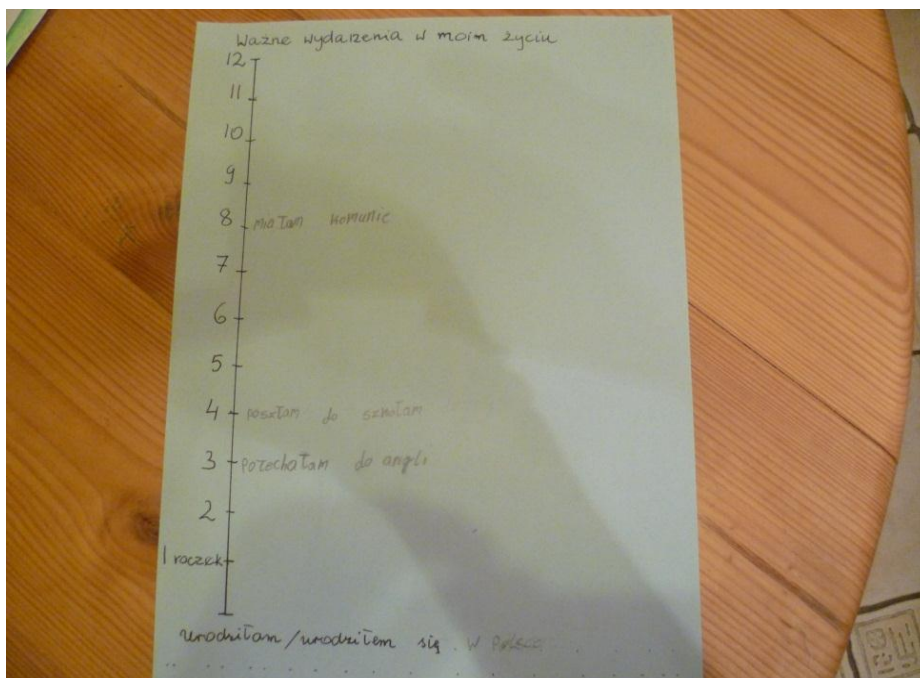


Figure 3. Anonymous chart 'My best friend': 'Mój najlepszy przyjaciel'



Figure 4. Anonymous chart 'My home': 'Mój dom'

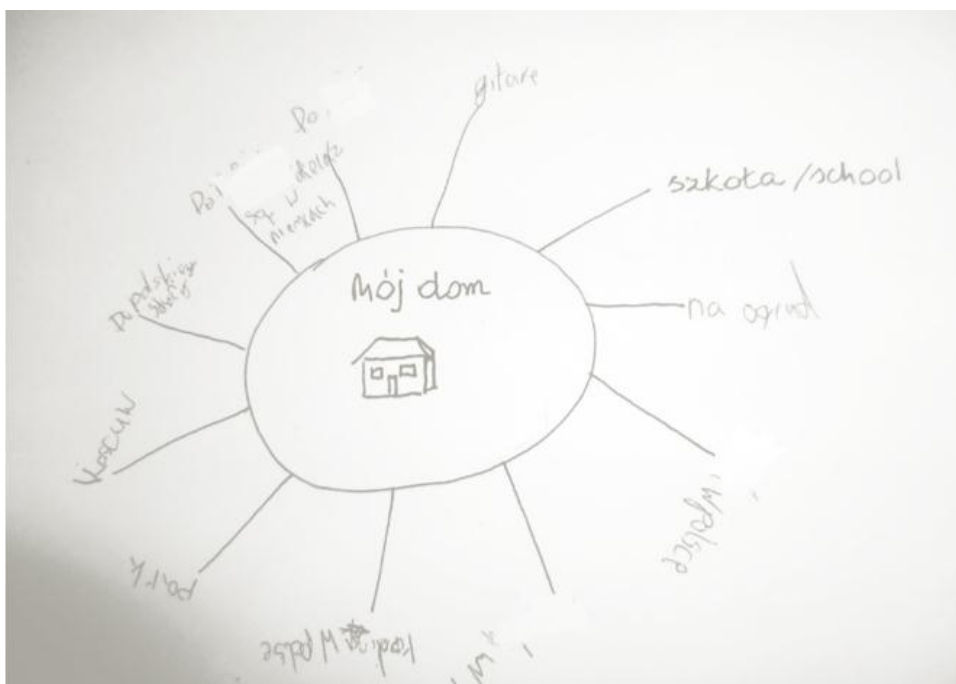


Figure 5. An extract from Martyna's diary

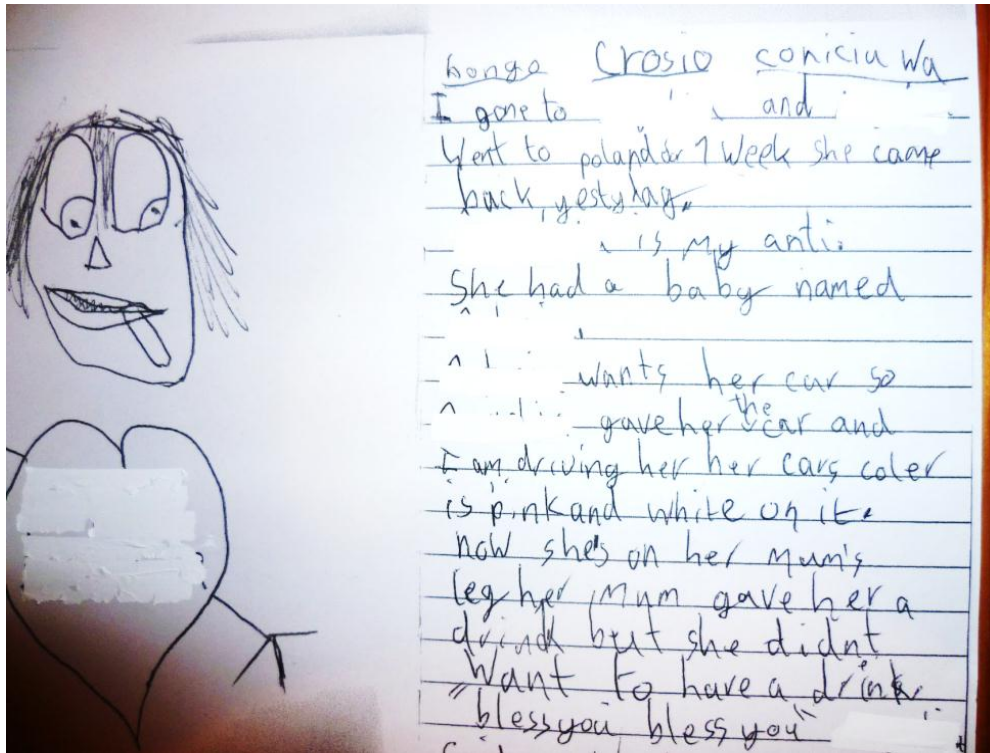


Figure 6. Jarek's photograph of his sport equipment

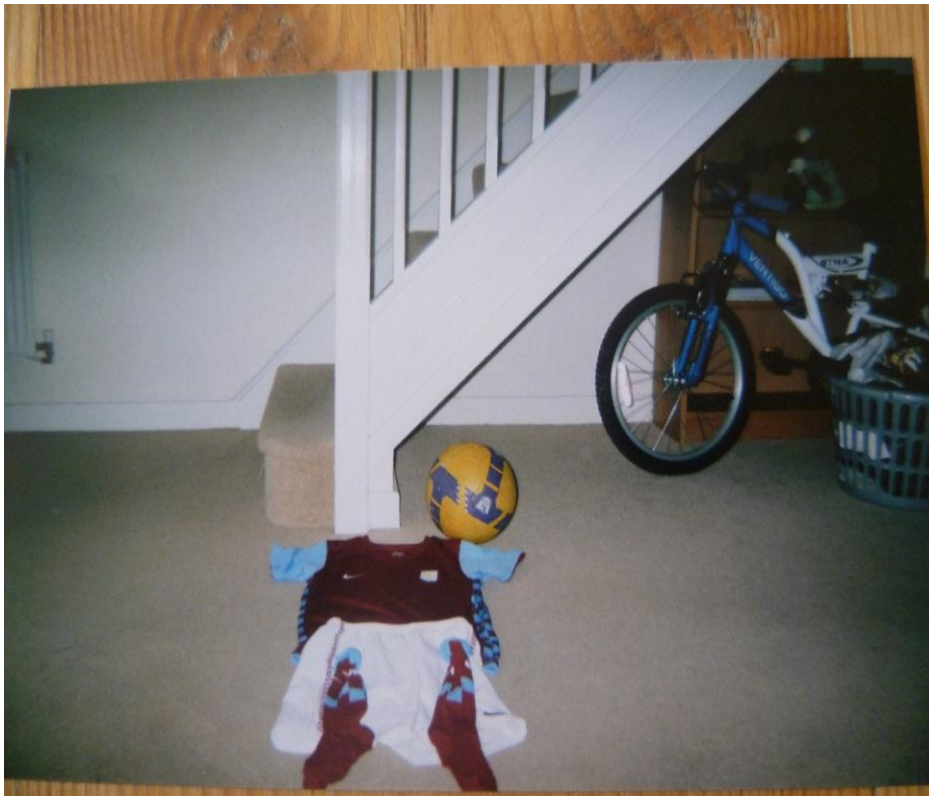


Figure 7. Children's engagement into collective map drawing

