



AALBORG UNIVERSITY

Master Thesis

The Dividual and Gendered Experiences of Polish Women in Denmark

Aalborg University in Copenhagen: Development and International Relations,
Global Refugee Studies

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October 2023

Number of characters: 285.440

Number of pages: 119

KEYWORDS: Polish migration, Polish women, Denmark, gendered migration, individualism, gender roles.

ABSTRACT: Immigration from Poland to Denmark remains a significant phenomenon even almost two decades after the country entered the European Union. This research seeks to unearth and highlight the experiences of Polish women who have migrated to Denmark, by promoting a more complete understanding of a sector of the migrant population that has been mostly ignored in the academic literature. Furthermore, this study aspires to deepen the understanding of Polish women's migration, through a focus on experiences and family relations, which will showcase connections between personal feelings, duties or actions and building a life in a new country, by using a theory from a different area: Stratern's concept of dividuality. The data for this project was collected through a series of in-person semi-structured interviews with Polish women living in and around the city of Copenhagen. Women who migrate from Poland to Denmark seem to follow a trajectory where the unity of the family, its safety and their ability to maintain close ties are prioritised. Mostly observed in the areas titled in this paper as "Polish Women as Family" and "Polish Women as Motherly Wives", women's priorities seem to stem from gender roles learnt while growing up, especially in those of more advanced age. This, in turn, prepares them better for language learning and for career advancements. Once the initial lack of job offers is overcome, due to the lack of a migration structure, such as the one Polish men have access to through construction companies and similar.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank:

The Polish Unionist Club, that opened their doors for our research;

Every Polish person and family, who welcomed us into their house;

Anja Kublitz, for her enlightening theoretical guidance;

Danny Raymond, for his enriching and helpful academic counsel at the final stages of
the paper.

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction to this paper spans four different brief chapters. At first, the topic of this paper will be introduced, after which a research statement will explain the relevance of the topic of research including the various fields of research that this paper contributes to. Thirdly, the research questions will be presented, while the problem statement will serve as the subchapter that explains the meaning and terminology of the research questions. Finally, this introductory section of the paper will include a small chapter on the structure of the remainder of the paper, and how it should be read and understood.

Introduced in its most condensed form, we aim in this paper to reveal the experiences of migration, livelihoods, families and concerns that Polish women in Denmark contend and grapple with, and we do so by introducing and applying an entirely novel theory that has found no application on Polish women before, while indigenous familiar theory finds supporting application. While the theory of dividualism sounds distinctly foreign, theories on feminism and gendered roles appear more familiar when women and their plight and equalities are discussed in Polish and Danish contexts. Although theory plays an important part in the creation of this paper, their generation, discovery and application are first and foremost a result of a lengthy inductive endeavour, where our data collection and gathering was made without particular theories in mind. This paper is a result of a distinctly inductive study and research strategy.

The topic of this paper was first and foremost inspired by a study of Polish construction workers in Denmark made by the students and researchers of this paper in an earlier setting (Carvajal et al., 2022). Unsurprisingly, and later documented, most construction workers in Denmark are men, and when we listened to their troubles, concerns, stories and indeed lives, we were imprinted and impregnated with the idea of looking at the other side of the story, namely Polish women in Denmark. This remains especially true when some of the interviewee's partners join in, with a lot to say and obvious intentions of sharing and participating. While the dichotomy and the binary topology of men and women are challenged by new developments in theory, science and politics, we have found it meaningful as we engaged, questioned and analysed the statements and stories of Polish women in Denmark. Much like men reflect on their partners and wives, likewise will Polish women reflect on their male counterparts. This paper is therefore both a standalone thesis, that represents a study of a

concrete case of Polish women in Denmark and is in some sense also a continuation of ideas and lessons learned from previous projects, that have helped shape this thesis into its final iteration.

One key assumption that sits at the core of this paper, is that migrants will always have something interesting and worthwhile to say once posed with questions about their experience. This could possibly be said for all people, if enough questions are asked, yet for students of migration, special emphasis is frequently directed at the experience of migration as something life-altering that is fraught with dilemmas, difficulties, insecurities as well as hopes, dreams and aspirations. To ask a person who has migrated thousands of miles and crossed multiple borders about their experience, only to see them gently shrug their shoulders with a display of indifference, would indeed be a very unexpected and incredible finding. It is such assumptions that guided this paper from the very beginning. When we place Polish women in Denmark at the very centre of this paper, we in much the same way assume that they have something to say that will puzzle us and spur our interest in ways that will yield novel findings and exciting conclusions.

Polish women in Denmark today are found in varied family arrangements, employed in various professions and with diverging life trajectories and aspirations, yet despite the heterogeneous and contextual circumstances that we found our Polish interlocutors in, homogeneity and similarity still exist. In this paper, we will reveal how partnerships and companionship have played a key role for all of our interlocutors in their migration. We will display how children and family members shape the lives of our interlocutors in ways that present them as precarious, cautious and worried mothers as well as determined and arduous agents of families that yield successes, fulfilment and happiness. Finally, we will show how labour, socialisation and language learning allow our Polish interlocutors to surpass and exceed their male counterparts in ways that present Polish men as mute and lonely leftovers which momentarily reverses core feminist assumptions.

Research Statement

The following is a short paragraph that briefly presents the relevance of the research topic and the research to which it is relevant.

The topic of this paper concerns the experience of migration of Polish women living and residing in Denmark. On the topic of chronology, both prior and posterior experiences of migration are researched and examined. This means that the experience made by Polish women before their move to Denmark is examined, such that the causes and reasons for their migration are revealed, while our interlocutors also reflect on their newfound life in Denmark. The discovery of both posterior and prior experiences leads to a situation where comparison and changes occur. As such, prior, posterior and an impromptu comparison of the two become three modalities wherein we source the experiences made by Polish women in Denmark.

Drawing on the above, the keywords for this paper are “migration” and “experience”, and as the research concerns the social settings, culture and behaviour of Polish women, the study is firmly situated within social science research, where migration research remains the preeminent subdivision of the social sciences that this paper finds it place. In terms of identifying further subdivisions of the research field that this paper concerns, we wish to separate such a task into two paragraphs. As this paper is a result of an inductive study, certain research fields were identified in the initial phase of the making of this study, other topics and fields of interest are a result of an inductive approach where theories and their respective research fields were identified and generated over time with their explanatory powers as the contingent selection mechanism. It was our open-ended data gathering that was the source of the respective fields of research that this paper is relevant for.

The choice of studying Polish women in particular, after having studied Polish construction workers, is in itself a feminist gesture. In choosing to study Polish women in Denmark, feminist theory and its related theory of gender roles are theories that are applied for analysis in this paper, and the findings of this paper are therefore relevant to the overall field of feminist studies, where our contribution concerns Polish women in Denmark in particular. Throughout this paper, differences between men and women, and their gendered roles are identified and studied. Relationships, children, family, labour, and language learning are all empirical topics found within this paper that find relevance for the application of feminist

theory. This theoretical perspective was the only theoretical field that necessarily would be part of the paper.

Through an inductive process, this paper has become relevant to the anthropological field as well. Data and preliminary findings yielded themes and provisory hypotheses that invited anthropological theory. From our data gathering, conceptions of personhood via the care and concern for children and family guided us towards the application of anthropological theory on the conceptualization of personhood. The concrete theory in question is the theory of dividualism as authored by Marilyn Strathern (1988a), and it has found application in the analysis of this paper on the empirical topics of relationships, children and family as they have been revealed by the data gathered in the making of this paper.

In summary, the paper is a result of an inductive study of the experiences made by Polish women in Denmark, where the empirical findings concern the topics of relations, relationships, children, family, partnerships, labour and language learning, while the theories of feminism, gender roles and dividualism offer the theoretical lenses. As such this paper offers an additional empirical case to the field of feminist studies, anthropology, and notably and naturally also feminist anthropology, while the overarching context and area of research concerns the study of migration within the field of social science. As a small addition, this paper may also find relevance for scholars of labour markets, and social and labour market integration of migrants, although the empirical data found within this paper is of limited quantity and remains anecdotal, although contextually important for other findings found within this paper.

Research Questions

In this section, we will present the research questions that are divided into primary and secondary categories. The primary research question is the initial and most general question we posed when the research began which constituted our point of departure. Subsequently, the secondary research questions were posed when the interviews were already conducted and the crucial themes were found.

Primary research question:

- From the perspective of Polish women in Denmark, how is their migration experienced?

Secondary research questions:

- How do Polish women concern themselves, overcome and contend with the experience of migration and its gendered aspects?
- How can the gendered roles and intimate relations of Polish women's migration experience be understood through the lens of individualism?

Problem Statement

This brief chapter serves to explain the various terms and concepts that appear in the research questions, to provide clarity to the meaning of the terms, how they are understood, and finally how they are to be researched and analysed.

With the research questions above, we wish to examine and study the experience of migration of Polish women to Denmark. In the questions, several keywords appear that take a central role in and play a significant part in this paper. When we ask how Polish women experience their migration to Denmark through their own perspective, several notable concerns should be elaborated. We wish here to emphasise the word "How" as it guides all our research questions. We offer the interpretation that there is a need for a close-up, detailed and intimate look at the various factors, situations, dilemmas and difficulties that are said to constitute experiences for our interlocutors, as they themselves describe them. When we refer to the perspective of the Polish women themselves, we clearly wish to state that the conception of experience as a term in this paper is closely tied to our interlocutors' own words and expressions. The topic relates then to the internal feelings, thoughts and actions our

interlocutors have, justify and enact. It also relates to the actions taken that shape the migration by informing when a decision needs to be taken when leaving Poland can or not happen, and which members of the family will move. It also relates to how the women view, understand and reflect on these acts, during and after the migration. As mentioned before, this includes actions taken in Poland and Denmark, both before and after the movement itself was made.

Approaching the issue through another lens like the concept of social navigation or using only feminist theory on gender roles would no doubts produce results. We doubt, however, the ability of this theories or concepts to really broaden our understanding of their actions. Rather, we apply the novel and alien theory of dividualism, and the concept of the “dividual” to offer a brand new and so far-used lens for the analysis of the various gendered roles and responsibilities that both burden and embolden Polish women. We intend to use this angle in the same way interdisciplinary work can fuel an area of study with creative energy and new understandings. Concerning the experience of migration that Polish women contend with, we reveal our desire to engage in the collection of data that aptly can be said to capture the experiences of the Polish women themselves, while we offer an analysis of said experience via the theories of feminism and dividualism.

The problem then, in the manner defined above, will be also looked at through a feminist lens. Due to the nature of our focus, we argue for a theoretical framework that would make sense of the reason or origin of the observed/interpreted dividuality. Where dividuality allows a deeper and different view of actions, the logic that informs them and other thoughts, a gender perspective will help us understand the context and reason for how this dividuality appears. To brighten the context and justify it, instead of seeing it as an exercise that would require them to interpret their actions in a vacuum.

In summary, the various preliminary and provisory research questions provide, in combination, an amalgamation of various theoretical and empirical terms. The resulting paper will study the experience of migration of Polish women in Denmark, where empirical findings made throughout the data gathering of this paper have generated various themes that invite a feminist analysis and revelations of dilemma and challenge that gender and gendered roles as inescapable concepts that assert themselves through our findings. In addition, the theory of dividualism is largely novel and indeed, in the context of Polish women, an entirely

alien theory, that forces entirely new ideas and perspectives into this paper, as personhood is reconceptualized in oppositional and contradictory new ways.

Terms and Definitions

We wish to briefly elaborate on a few initial terms presented via our research question and the problem statement of this paper.

- Experience

When we refer to experience, we specifically understand it as the experiences made by Polish women as they have been conveyed, restated and re-experienced with and to us via speech, emotions, gestures, expressions, and grimaces. The experience therefore lies with the Polish women themselves, and their experiences are therefore first and foremost recalled and retold. To a limited extent, we also state that some of these experiences have been seen by us, as papers, documents and injuries or a rare photo has been shared with us, but for the primacy of all experiences that are examined and analysed in this paper, they have been conveyed to as objects of speech. Experiences come to us therefore in the form of memories that are narrated, retold and recollected by the Polish women themselves.

- Migration

Migration itself is a broad term that, depending on use, conveys multiple meanings. In this paper, we refer to it via experiences of it. This means that migration for us, is not constrained to its physical embodiment of the movement, meaning the moment the luggage is first packed until its final unpacking, but rather the perhaps never-ending experience of migration as they are made by Polish women. In concrete terms, the experiences of migration start from the moment the idea of migrating to Denmark is even momentarily considered, until it is no longer meaningful to refer to migration when experiences made by Polish Women in Denmark are discussed. No upper bound for such discussions has been found for these experiences of migration in this paper and the experience of migration can in this sense be considered everlasting, or at least have ever-lasting effects.

- **Dividualism**

When dividualism is referred to in the research questions, its meaning in this paper stems concretely from the chapter on the theory of dividualism with Marilyn Strathern as its principal author and as it is presented in this study. In its most condensed form, the term dividualism creates an opposition and dichotomy between the individual and the dividual, and the theory fundamentally aims to challenge conceptions of personhood within anthropological theory. For an in-depth discussion and presentation on the theory and how it is later applied, we refer to the chapter on theory in this paper.

- **Intimate relations**

Intimate relations, as it appears in the research question, is not a theoretically derived term but a descriptive one concerning our interlocutors' personal relationships that were pervasive during our interviews. Therefore, by using this term, we refer to the relationships within the nuclear family as well as non-formalised romantic partners. Our focus comes from the direction of the paper itself, as well as the important amount of time that our interviewees dedicated to talking about them.

- **Feminism**

Although is not explicitly mentioned in our research questions, its presence can be seen through the paper. Feminist at its core covers a set of theories where it is understood that both theory and socialities at large have been plagued by patriarchy, By including women both as researchers and the researched can we rectify and retire the patriarchy, and provide more truthful and representative findings for the human experience and predicament. Marilyn Strathern similarly remains the principal author of our theoretical chapter on feminism.

- **Gendered roles**

Gender roles, and the gender roles theory is similarly grounded in our chapter on the theories applied for analysis in this paper. Drawing from work by Diekmann, Eagly and Wood and also from Chafetz's work, we look at expressions of dividuality, behaviours learnt and reproduced, that have an origin in female gender roles in Poland. The theory chapter will expand on the idea of learnt behaviours in society and on a sexual division of them.

Structure of the Paper

In the following short chapter the structure of the remainder of the paper is explained. The purpose is to explain the order of the remaining chapters of this paper, such that clarity is provided about how the paper is read and understood and how it relates to the process of the conduct of the study and the writing of this paper.

This paper is first and foremost a result of an inductive process and study, where research questions, theories and ongoing gathering of data have resulted in an iterative process for a period of eight months between February 2023 and September 2023. This means that both research questions, theory and analysis have been continually revised and changed in a gradual process of refinement. As such, the presentation of our work and the structure in this paper do not correspond to the actual process of the execution of our study and our research. The resulting paper and its structure are our best attempt at condensing our work into a readable and readily understandable iteration that is both concise and conclusive.

The order following chapters in the paper is as follows:

- Methodology
- Literature review
- Empirical data
- Theory
- Analysis
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Perspectivation

The chapter on **Methodology** includes subchapters on our research strategy, research design, and methods used to create, gather and collect data and it also includes the method we use to conduct the literature review of this paper. The paragraph on our research strategy reveals the inductive and qualitative approach and nature of the study. The research design explains our study as a case study and the concrete contextual case in question. The paragraph on methods explains the ordered use of semi-structured interviews and a sporadic and opportunistic use of participant observation, to accentuate and moderately triangulate our findings. The chapter

also includes paragraphs on the concrete execution of the methods including the success and shortcomings of such execution.

The chapter on **Literature Review** contains the literature review of this paper. This chapter examines the relevant literature and existing knowledge and writings on the topic of this paper, such that a gap is identified, which in part justifies the topic and research of this paper.

The chapter on **Empirical Data** contains a presentation of the data we have gathered throughout our research. It also includes a meaningful and anonymized presentation of our interlocutors including some metadata about the data we gathered together with them. The chapter also includes a paragraph that reveals preliminary empirical findings, and importantly a paragraph on how these empirical findings lead us to finding and later applying theories that could help us analyse, examine and understand these findings further.

The chapter on **Theory** contains the presentation and explanations of theories that are applied in the analysis of this paper. Two theoretical perspectives are explained. First the theory of individualism and second, a set of two theories; namely the theory of feminism and the theory of gender roles. The theories are applied in tandem through the various chapters of analysis.

The chapter on **Analysis** contains the analysis of the paper. It is separated into four different chapters of analysis; firstly an introductory chapter of analysis followed by three separate chapters that narrow its focus to further analysis of three empirical preliminary findings. The three subchapters are Polish women as family, Polish women as motherly wives and finally Polish women as laborious workers and language learners.

The chapter on **Discussion** contains a discussion of the main findings from the analysis. Of topic discussion, the replicability and specific context is discussed such that the particular findings in this paper are not overestimated and generalised beyond what the data and the findings warrant. Also, dividuality as a theory and its merits. First, as a theory to study the topic at hand, and second, in relation to the theorised benefits of finding concepts and theories that originate outside our main topic of research to deepen our knowledge and approach subjects.

The chapter on **Conclusion** contains the conclusion of the paper, which provides the reader with fulfilling, adequate and concluding answers to the research questions of this paper.

Finally, the **Perspectivation** chapter will allow us, outside of the methodology and the main topic of our research, to discuss aspects of itself and other themes tangentially to our project that we would find interesting nonetheless.

Research Process

We wish to briefly elaborate on the process we have been through regarding the conduct of our research and study.

As stated previously, this paper is a result of an iterative and primarily inductive process, where preliminary curiosity about the lives of Polish women in Denmark has led to a gradual refinement of theories, data and research questions. Concretely, preliminary curiosity has led to the development of questions that materialised in the collection of particular data. This data has been treated and handled to generate and indeed locate theories and perspectives that could be applied in ways that would accentuate our findings and lead us to an elaborate and worthwhile analysis of our findings. Preliminary analysis has then been used to refine our research questions, such that a circular process is generated where the analysis and research questions are continually refined into iterations that are worth presenting in a master thesis. This short representation of the process we have been through in the making of this paper is the most honest and transparent way we can document the process we have been through. For this reason, there is a difference between the way this paper is read and the way this study and research have been conducted. Where the reading of a paper initially is a linear process with a definite ending, the process of studying and researching can be a continuous and never-ending process that is only interrupted by deadlines for documentation. With this chapter on the structure of the paper and this short paragraph, we hope that we have helped the reader to a preliminary understanding of the research behind this paper, such that the coming chapters can be read sensibly and clearly.

METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter the methodology of this paper is explained. The chapters cover subdivisions that firstly concern our Research Strategy, where our Qualitative and Inductive strategy is revealed. Secondly, we explain the Research Design; a case study with a corresponding presentation of the concrete case in question. Thirdly, the Methods used for the collection of data are presented, while additional attention is directed towards the concrete execution of the methods in the paper with a brief discussion of the successes and shortcomings of such a process. Fourthly, we explain how we Treat and Read our data, to generate and select theories that can help examine and analyse our findings further. In a fifth and final subdivision, we explain our Method for the conduct of our Literature Review.

Research Strategy

By research strategy we refer to the definition offered by Alan Bryman (2014). On social research, Bryman broadly refers to research strategy as “the general orientation to the conduct of social research” (ibid.). And the research strategy we adopted for the study of Polish women in Denmark, is based on inductive reasoning and the collection of qualitative data. In the various ways any research strategy can be conducted, one bifurcation that may present itself early on concerns the handling of data and the extent to which either quantitative and qualitative data, or indeed a mix of the two will serve as the base of any finding and analysis in any piece of research. The Research strategy of this paper relies solely on the collection of qualitative data.

Qualitative Research Strategy

With the research question: “From the perspective of Polish women in Denmark, how is their migration experienced?”, we find that qualitative data would serve as the most meaningful and content-rich data that we can create and gather to offer a meaningful, valid and trustworthy answer to the research question. By gendered labour market, we refer to the fact that men and women are not employed equally across various professions, while the hours worked and the organisation of such work may be similarly gendered. Cleaning assistants and nurses are overwhelmingly women. Among butchers and construction workers, we find a clear majority of men. These facts can be confirmed quantitatively via trustworthy statistics and qualitatively via narrative interviews with questions about the gender of the nearest colleagues.

Building on our previous work and knowledge of Polish migration in Denmark, the direction that our research points towards makes, in our opinion, quantitative data inadequate. Quantitative data could point out similar trends to the ones we have observed e.g. women being responsible for the general decisions regarding family cohesion and movement, husbands or partners moving back to Poland. Since the topic at hand concerns phenomena that require an in-depth inquiry and a qualitative research strategy to be explored, examined and researched. That is where the focus on experiences appears. We argue that feelings, perceptions and choices strongly invite a qualitative research strategy if we are hoping to catch the nuances underpinning them.

What we mean to state is that to explore and examine “experiences” made by others, one must first conceptualise what an “experience” really is and what it constitutes, and secondly one must understand how knowledge about “experiences” can best be created and disseminated in a paper like this one. For us, an “experience” as a noun, and “to experience” as a verb, constitute phenomena that once conceptualised have great difficulties escaping a qualitative research strategy should they be examined. For this reason, the qualitative research strategy for the topic and research question at hand is well justified. Stemming from our knowledge of existential anthropology (Jackson & Piette, 2017), we wanted to let its intention (but to be fair, not his complete methodological approach) guide our project, focusing on the fact that understanding someone’s existence means highlighting projects, intentions and desires in the face of social and historical processes that are transformed and affected by the first. Then, our interviews were followed by, when it was possible, a walk through the city, a coffee or similar. The observation of the everyday details, the comments and ways of seeing.

The research group initially emphasised a desire to solely rely on qualitative data, and the use of quantitative data as supplementary was only considered should we be unable to answer the research question qualitatively alone. Initially, any quantitative data was only considered complementary for the sake of triangulation to strengthen the validity of our findings. In the end, we did not attempt to quantify and support our findings via quantitative methods, as we find our findings trustworthy and valid on their own.

Inductive Research Strategy

The research strategy is primarily an inductive one, that is nuanced by what, de facto, consists of various steps of iteration via the infiltration of some deductive reasoning in the initial stages of the development of this paper.

When we state that the strategy is inductive, we mean that we have focused most of the initial attention of this project towards gathering data, prior to forming, finding and developing theoretical concepts that are applied and used in the analysis. The inductive research strategy was adopted from the moment the project and this paper were first conceived, and within the research group, there was full agreement about the research strategy. According to Bryman (2014) however, the induction strategy is rarely if ever strictly followed, if it even can be. To be fully inductive, a researcher must deprive him- or herself of any preconceived notions about the subject of research, and allow the gathered data to speak for itself entirely. This is rarely possible, however, as any interest in any topic must be grounded in “something”. This something, this interest, cannot be empty or consist of nothing (ibid.). In practice, this means that a researcher will always have theoretical concepts and notions in the back of their mind, that guide and bend the research toward particular narratives or perspectives, that potentially could be suppressed if the inductive process is followed to a hypothetical perfection. We acknowledge that we, as researchers, similarly are under the effect of ways of thinking that lead us to claim that we attempted to conduct an inductive research strategy to the best of our ability, knowing that perfect execution may be impossible.

The research strategy and the later approach to our analysis in this paper closely resemble that of grounded theory, with the main exception that we never arrived at the point of generating independent theoretical concepts and theories ourselves. Instead of generating such concepts and theories ourselves, we have sought support from well-established theories that could help us examine and analyse particular phenomena we have found to be salient and worthwhile to examine further, which ultimately serves to answer our research questions. A key point to include here is that our inductive research strategy has de facto been interrupted at various stages by several steps of iteration. Initially, we emphasised gathering all our data before delving into it, but practically it has been impossible for us to exclude and remain unaffected by findings made in early iterations of our data gathering, as we conducted final data gatherings later, and we quite naturally emphasised and sought additional data on particular in our later data gathering, that initially were discovered early in our process.

Similarly, our process towards the final iteration of our research question also closely resembles the process advertised via grounded theory. We, however, do not claim following closely any recipe derived from grounded theory, as Bryman also notes how the pure and idealised conduct of grounded theory is scientifically contested, and simultaneously grounded theory is both advertised as an approach, a strategy and a framework for analysis (Bryman, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We understand grounded theory to constitute a particular logic that helps us guide our research process and transparently document it in this paper. Concludingly, we merely wish to state that both our methodological execution and our concrete research question have been through various iterations throughout the process of this paper, such that our inductive research strategy is interrupted by various moments of deductive reasoning that have helped refine our methodological execution gradually with incremental improvements.

In summary, we will state that the research strategy for the paper is overwhelmingly an inductive one. It has nonetheless been adopted under circumstances, where we were unable to exclude deductive reasoning, and it is also for this reason that our initial interview guide was designed for semistructured interviews, whose structure ultimately is derived from some prior theoretical conceptions, such as the concept of gender, temporality, precarity and transnationalism. Additionally, we would like to state that these theoretical concepts that came to structure our data gathering, were not idealised. We did not want to find them meaningful necessarily. We were hoping entirely that our data would be able to speak for itself and lead us to findings entirely unrelated to these concepts. We retained the concepts as structuring elements, however, as they initially provided us with a backstop and a backup in case our inductive strategy proved less fruitful than we initially had hoped and anticipated.

Research Design

In the following paragraph the research design for this paper will be explained. In short, this study is designed as a case study, with Polish women in Denmark being the single contextual case study.

Case Study

The research design for this paper constitutes a case study. We selected the case study as the research design for this study and this paper, as we found it to aptly fit our needs in terms of

providing us with a feasible, reliable and trustworthy process towards answering our research question. When we pose the research question of “From the perspective of Polish women in Denmark, how is their migration experienced?”, the case study becomes a research design appropriate for providing us with reliable and trustworthy answers to the research question.

The research question will not be answered with comparability in mind. In this paper, no attempt at comparison between other potential cases that differ in temporality, chronology or spatiality. We are not to compare the experience of migration of Polish women in Denmark, with Polish women that have migrated to other countries. Nor are we to compare the experience of migration of Polish women, to women migrating from other countries. Nor do we compare the experience of Polish women to Polish men in Denmark, unless the difference between men and women constitutes a salient experience of the women themselves, as it may have direct relevance to the research question. Our knowledge of Polish men’s migration might serve to emphasise women’s particular experience, but nothing more. In addition, our research question contains no longitudinal element, and we will make no attempt to track or trace the experience of Polish women in Denmark over time. As such, our research design concerns a single case study that is both contemporary and highly contextual.

Research Case

To present the concrete case for this study and paper, we wish to offer a verbal dissection of the elements, and words, in our research question(s), such that each part can be presented and explained, which in part reveals the contextual nature of our case. We intend to operationalize the adjectives and the concepts. This process, as defined by Jonker and Pennink (2010), consists of changing a theoretical construct into a concept that can be 'seen' in the empirical reality. Our study is first and foremost a case study of migrated Polish women in Denmark. These adjectives, then, relate to the theory without coinciding with it. While the validity of the concepts can be put into question, as one can not really be sure of how much the operational measurement still measures the theoretical concept (Harvey, 2022), our attention to detail and effort resides in making the concepts “capable” of corresponding and adjusting to theory specific notions, providing our lens, of theory, to be applicable. It is also important since the concepts discussed in our research question and most of our projects are not isolated concepts. They also exist, if we could say that, in a more layman and colloquial way. As such, we need to explain what they mean to us in the context of our research, putting both ourselves

and the reader in a position where biases and ideas that relate to what we think these concepts are, can be shed to facilitate the research and its understanding.

Firstly, in concrete terms we take aim at the word “migration” and by definition, we can state that all the women who contributed to the data collection in this paper have indeed migrated from Poland to Denmark and are also currently residing in Denmark. We have not interviewed or studied any women who have not experienced migration via the crossing of the border into Denmark. As we have directed questions towards the women on the specific topic of their migration, we wish to state that their answers are unique to their experiences of migration. If we had made interviews with interlocutors who had never migrated or had never found themselves in Denmark, our questions would surely be out of place. We have no doubt that our case indeed consists of people who have migrated, and we regard their experience to be unique enough to constitute a separate element for a case for research.

Secondly, we focus our attention on “Polish”. Unlike all other terms in the case, Polish is the only immaterial adjective that retains no immediate physical dimension. Outside of cultural decorations and common facial features, “Polish” cannot be seen. Although our interlocutors all carry a Polish passport or have carried one at some point, their national papers may differ from their self-identification. Throughout our interviews, we deliberately asked about this in particular self-identification and we found no indication that any of the women we spoke to were not Polish, and when pressed on it, none of our interlocutors referred to a loss of Polishness over time. If a Danish, international or indeed a transnational identity was emerging, the women we spoke to only referred to it as an addition to their “Polishness”. Polish was never replaced. We, therefore, have no doubt that our subject material and topic indeed concern Polish people. Through self-identification, place of birth and place of residence for the majority of their lives. We have however not identified anything particular about “Polishness” in itself, but merely identified experiences of differences between Danish and Polish. “Polish” therefore exists as a significant adjective to our subject and topic not as a thing in itself, but merely as the difference from Danish. In this paper “Polishness” and “Polish” therefore came to refer to a contrast to what is strange about Danishness and Denmark from the perspective and through the experience of a Pole.

If we were to give physical attributes to “Polish”, we could state that there are particular circumstances in Poland and Denmark that induce particular forms of migration. When

Poland was first integrated into the European Union, and the free movement of people in the EU was first fully implemented, Poland and Denmark were and remain countries with great proximity, while differences in income and salary were and remain high (OECD, 2023). The cost of travel is relatively affordable, while the journey itself can be done within a few hours by flight. We suspect that there are relatively few daily commuters between Gdansk and Copenhagen, but monthly journeys back and forth remain affordable and within reach, which quantitative data and our previous research attest to. As such “Polish” migration can fairly easily take the form of relatively frequent circular journeys. They are not commuting to and from Flensburg or Malmø daily, but they are unlike East Asian au-pairs and more permanent settlers too. Proximity, affordability and income inequality are attributes that give our topic and subject material of migrating Polish women a distinct and very material “Polishness”.

Thirdly, we state that our subject concerns women, and we can confirm that we have only interviewed women, outside of very minor exchanges with sons, husbands or other family members. What is important to us is that some of the knowledge we create will contain particular gendered dimensions, and we are willing to state this clearly, because we, the research group, have already conducted a study of Polish men in Denmark. So even though this paper explicitly excludes a comparison between men and women directly, we remain confident enough in our subject material that the discoveries made among Polish women retain elements that are vastly different from those of men in several aspects. So even though we are inclined to draw conclusions on the experiences of women only in this paper, we retain the knowledge of differences between Polish women and Polish men, which helps us to qualify and to some extent test insights and conclusions drawn in this paper. With our inductive strategy in mind, we base our findings in this paper on knowledge gained from women that reflect on the experiences of men. Gendered dimensions of migrations have been confirmed in a multitude of studies (Kofman, 2000a; Morokvašić, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2015), its inclusion in this paper solely relies on its empirical expression as appears in the data we have collected.

Finally, our subject material is limited to experiences of migration of Polish to Denmark in particular. We have directed our questions towards the particular experiences of migration to Denmark, and although some of our interlocutors have had experienced migrations to other countries, we have in particular been researching the migration experience concerning Denmark. We can therefore not exclude Denmark as part of our case study, as we have no

indications that the answers we have received and the knowledge we have gained necessarily pertain to a broader context. We prefer to state that when clear similarities between our interlocutors' experiences emerge, we generally see them in a Danish context. Prior experiences of migration. For these reasons, we argue that, as a case, our study and this paper concern the particular and contextual case of migrated Polish women in Denmark.

METHODS

In this chapter the methods for the collection of data will be presented and explained in addition to a separate paragraph that elaborates on the method used for the conduct of the literature review

Data Collection Method

With the research question of “From the perspective of Polish women in Denmark, how is their migration experienced?” On the topic of Polish women in Denmark, we selected semi-structured in-depth interviews as our research method. As explained, it is the experiences made by Polish women in Denmark that are the centrepiece of this paper, and for the purpose of collecting and gathering data on such experiences, we selected semi-structured interviews as the primary method the data collection. In addition to the interviews, we also conducted participant observations.

Semi-structured Interviews

The interview as a research method, offers in our opinion the most ideal combination of advantages and fewest drawbacks given our research question. Interviews as a method of data collection suit the circumstances of this study while offering ample insights into the topic of our research questions. The interview is a versatile and flexible method of research that contains various advantages and benefits when particular social phenomena, contexts and experiences are revealed and examined (Silverman, 2018; Spradley, 1979; Bryman, 2014). Bryman is quick to point out that interviews may be a preferable method for master students to adopt even if it is not considered absolutely ideal given the exact research questions. Unlike participant observation and ethnographic approaches, the interview is less invasive to and demanding of our interlocutors and less demanding of our time as students and scholars (Bryman, 2014). Interviewing is a highly flexible method that can be amended to the various needs of the interviewer and out of concern for the research question. As qualitative studies tend to allow data gathering prior to theory generation, interviews need not be based on prior conceptions and theory, and as such is it a suitable method for a research strategy that relies on inductive reasoning.

A mix of semi-structured and defacto unstructured interviews have been conducted for this paper. This inspiration for this study stems from a prior study made by the same research group about Polish labouring men in Denmark, and as we moved our focus towards women

this time, at the most elementary, we had the following assumptions: women are different from men, and therefore their answers to our questions should differ in perspective and content. In addition, we assumed that their “Polishness” would retain similarities across genders via comparable statements about the strangeness of Denmark and the strangeness of Danes. We therefore expected to find both similarities and differences across various themes that served as our entry point before conducting the first interview. This led us to prepare semi-structured interview guides for our initial interviews. Although every interview was prepared as semi-structured interviews accompanied by an elaborate interview guide, we had a secret, yet thinly veiled desire to be surprised by entirely new angles or themes to the experience of migration made by Polish women in Denmark. In a sense, we did not want to conduct semi-structured interviews, but we instead preferred to partake in lengthy unstructured interviews that would align closely with our inductive research strategy. As we simultaneously did not want to leave empty-handed when we needed data, we always prepared for a semi-structured interview, where we would take a greater lead in the interviewing, should it prove necessary. This was a conscious decision, as there is no guarantee that every interlocutor would be fit for our topic of this paper, while even personal mismatches and lack of personal connection and intimacy between interviewer and interviewed also could become obstacles to our data gathering (Spradley, 1979). For this reason, we prepared for multiple scenarios with every new interlocutor, to make this experience as comfortable and productive for all parties involved.

The initial interviews were therefore conducted and initiated as semi-structured interviews, while the momentary and ongoing loss of structure during an interview was seen as a success and as an opportunity for adding and creating new knowledge. We wanted to be caught off guard, one could say. We wanted something unexpected or that would call our attention, to focus on.

This is not to say that this chosen method was an immediate and easy choice. If we are to take the contributions of both Silverman (2018) and Bryman (2014) into account, we see both issues and advantages with the chosen method for data gathering. The interview can easily come to appear as the go-to method of social science researchers who engage in qualitative research (Silverman, 2018). To a certain extent, the interview as a research method can become an overly dominant method that researchers adopt out of biased reasons, that do not reflect the qualities and the suitability of the method given the circumstances and research

question. This is in part, according to Silverman, because we live in an *interview society* where even seasoned researchers are exposed to and influenced by a culture that popularised the interview as a method for much more than just research, such as talk shows and televised news (2018). For this reason, we wish to offer some initial reflections on the chosen method and how we came to rely on it so heavily.

We hoped initially to rely on equality as a form of participant observation via fieldwork through which we would imitate the work of ethnographers, yet various circumstances related to our interlocutor and the specific localities that we wanted to research prevented us from bringing these methods to full fruition. Through our data gathering and via attempts to locate potential interlocutors, we have been unable to find them in a setting and particular locality. That inspired us to and warranted the research and creation of an ethnography. We were able to discover and acquaint ourselves with various Polish women in Denmark. However, as we established contact with them and got to know them via our initial interviews, we quickly realised that they had less in common than we had hoped and that they were in no way bound and tied to settings that invited ethnographic research, in our opinion. They were not part of some kind of club or union and, while some of them shared or had shared the same type of job (cleaning), this was not something on top of which we could build a deep ethnographic research. This is not to say that we had no concerns about the quality of our interviews and that ethnographic insights could help us alleviate those concerns. One such concern, for instance, related to the potential for ethnographic research of Polish culture, and its gendered dimension, yet when one of the members of our research group is Polish, there would be little room to examine it as the cultural proximity between the two poles would be too close for any strange cultural or gendered artefacts to become salient and noticeable without deliberately risk frustrating and discouraging our interlocutors, which is a potential phenomenon according to Spradley (1979). And excluding the Polish group member from the conduct of interviews was not feasible, as language barriers demanded that some interviews be conducted in Polish. For this reason, we have not been able to utilise ethnography to our desired extent. The interviews themselves were challenging to conduct. While men often had extremely busy schedules, the way their lives in Denmark were structured allowed us to find little moments to conduct them. The time constraint was present, but the mediation and schedule of their lives made it an issue of energy and availability from our side. For our female interlocutors, more than availability, it became an issue of scheduling, of lives arguably as busy, but as a consequence of a mixture of work, family duties, illness, and social

time. A few times, interviews that were supposed to take place one or two weeks into the future were cancelled one or two days before, making the data gathering difficult. Insights into ethnography have, in a way, helped us to qualify our interviews and interpret and compensate for some of the downsides of heavily relying on them.

Participant Observation

Another methodological goal was to attempt participant observation and spend a great deal of time with our interlocutors. This method has only been used sporadically and opportunistically, and our access to such participant observation has been quite limited if it were to be conducted as a stand-alone method. With some candour, we find it necessary to admit ourselves as followers of what Nigel Barley [2012 (1983)] called “The High Priests of the (fieldwork) cult”. Whatever obvious reasons distance the fieldwork he references, one of the classical anthropologists that travel the world to distant countries in pursuit of the “other”, and our Polish interviewees, it is hard to negate the force of tradition and how it informs our wishes. Our wish to participate in data gathering beyond a set conversation where our interlocutors had the chance to, maybe even unconsciously, interpret a role. Participant observation allows, through great effort, to highlight what is normal and see what is given, that would usually go unnoticed, which can vary between contexts and groups. To make ourselves explicitly aware of this normality that is often blocked (Spradley, 1980).

The Polish women who became our interlocutors often welcomed us into their homes for our interviews, but we were not able to establish situations where we could reliably conduct participant observation. This, however, does not mean that our presence in their homes has not been fruitful and of great value to us. By visiting our interlocutors, we have participated as guests and visitors and, as such, we have participated in the cultured and ritualised event of visiting the homes of Polish women in Denmark. As one of the members of this research group is Polish herself, we attempted to bridge ourselves into this strange role of guests in a “Polish” home, by carefully considering whether to bring a gift, in the form of either candy or cake. In addition, we also had considerations about our demeanour and presentation while present in their homes and upon arrival, and while we prepared ourselves, we could never predict the full interactions. On some occasions, we were encouraged to keep our shoes on inside a living room, while other visits prompted us to unshoe ourselves immediately. As we wished to study the gendered dimension of their experience of migration, the presence of men and, notably, close partners during some interviews also created situations that we would not

have been able to replicate had we not been guests. As we directed our questions towards our female interlocutor, we could be interrupted by her various domestic activities in the form of coffee-making, table-setting and cake preparation. An odd silence could occur between us as guests, and an otherwise idle husband and boyfriend, as she, our interlocutor, always posed us questions before we could ask her any. “With or without milk?” was therefore frequently the first question asked during our interviews.

Our performance and participation in “guesthood” was a circumstance that came to shape our interviews and our relationship with our interlocutors. Although we always brought a minor condiment to our interviews, we were more frequently than not overwhelmed by the hospitality of our Polish interlocutors as wine, cake and melon were served in addition to coffee and tea, and we even found ourselves embarrassed with our meagre contribution to the sweets, food and drinks we were otherwise offered. This, we argue, made it difficult to retain a particular role as serious students, when the hospitable role of hostess at times morphed into an almost motherly caretaking of poor and childlike students. This situation generally produced circumstances where our Polish interlocutors were as much and if not more in charge of events as they unfolded during an interview than we were. We would argue that this in no way harmed our data gathering, but rather situated us in circumstances where the gendered dimension of their life in Denmark became extremely present and easily noticeable, and as we had already studied Polish men in Denmark, we understood and took note of this difference immediately. Our home interviews with Polish women stood in great contrast to those we had made with men one year prior (Carvajal et al., 2022). This form of participant observation was however always conducted in conjunction with the interviewing as the primary method.

We have never been able to just become a fly on the wall or a participant in a lengthy activity. On one occasion, we were invited for a walk around town, and when our interlocutor proudly exhibited the church of Kalundborg to us, she revealed an almost patriotic allegiance to her newfound home. This trip remained the best expression of a purer form of participant observation throughout the making of this study. Our presence and the conduct of interviews have in the vast majority of circumstances been *the* activity, and very rarely took place as an addition to another activity.

Data Collection Process

This paper builds on data collected through the conduct of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted over a period of 12 weeks in random intervals. The data collection process depended on the availability of our interlocutors and our ability to combine schedules and coordinate schedules. In total, we conducted 11 semi-structured in-person interviews that were sporadically interrupted by moments of participation, as we took upon ourselves the highly ritualised role of visitor and guest in the homes of Polish women in Denmark. 10 women were interviewed at the end of the process.

Gatekeeping and Access

With the goal of studying, questioning and learning about the gendered experience of Polish women in Denmark, we initiated our data collection period, by examining established networks that we already had connections within the communities of Polish migrants in Denmark. As the research group behind this paper had already established connections in various Polish groups and organisations in the Greater Copenhagen area, these communities were initially identified as our starting point for locating potential interlocutors, and with the inductive mindset and as women and Polish were our only sampling requirement.

In concrete terms, we had previously established good and trustful contact with the organisation called the Polish Unionist Club. The club is connected to and shares facilities and office space with the Danish labour and trade union of “Byggefagenes Samvirke”, a labour union in Denmark. We reached out to the club once again, and we invited ourselves to a meeting organised by the club that took place on Sunday the 26th of February 2023. At the club meeting, 25 men and six women participated, and during the meeting, we were given a chance to present our research and our goals with this new study, to the extent we could comfortably state them. We were hoping for some kind of familiarity, since our Polish group member had already come back to the Union after our last project to explain the findings and, more than anything, to give back, in other words, to show gratitude for the collaboration. The meeting took place in Polish, and we presented our project in Polish as well. To participate, an entrance fee of 20 DKK per person was paid, and although the meeting took place in Polish, there were in principle no restrictions on participation. It was not necessary for the Polish participants to be members of the club. Most were not, we learned. The club served the general purpose of educating Polish workers on their upcoming tax returns, how to read them

and how to apply for possible tax credits. In addition, the meeting served to warn Polish workers about “scammers” that would charge unnecessarily high fees for assisting Polish workers with any engagement with Danish authorities concerning NemID, MitID, health insurance cards etc. In the opinion of the club representative, Polish workers were better off learning to handle Danish authorities themselves or at least letting the club help participants for free during the meeting. We agreed with the sentiment of the club representative. We proceeded to leave our contact information with the club representative, so the Polish women could approach us if they were interested in participating and being interviewed. Furthermore, we had the chance to approach the Polish women who partook in the meeting. Two of the women approached us by themselves. We were able to set up interviews with both of them for the following week. A third woman joined one of these interviews. Another woman present in that meeting reached out a few weeks after to also be part of the interviews. That means that four interlocutors were found via our direct participation in this meeting.

We also authored a document for the club representative to share via email with all members of the club and former participants. The message was short and concise. We included no elaborate requirements in terms of establishing contact with potential interlocutors via this email other than asking about women who were coming from Poland. Sorting between willing and engaging interlocutors was not a luxury we could afford at this stage of data collection. We initially deemed this method of establishing contact with potential interlocutors successful, as we ended up arranging most of our interviews via this method. In total, we were able to secure 5 more interviews through answers to this document.

We later realised that the woman in all likelihood did not answer our “email” to be precise. Unbeknownst to us, the club representative did much more than merely send an email. As we conducted our interviews and questioned our interlocutors on their relationship with the club, we learned that they hardly had any such relationship. Upon examination, we discovered that our message had been shared far and wide across many different Facebook groups. The groups were all in Polish with predominantly Polish members, however, they varied in Danish regional affiliation and topic. Broadly though, the groups all consisted of Polish people living and residing in Denmark. They were all based in a Danish locality. The Polish people reached this way could have no affiliation to the club at all, beyond simply sharing membership of the Facebook group with the club representative. As such, our interlocutors replied to Facebook posts that we had not posted ourselves.

Upon reflection of our path to discovering and meeting our interlocutors, we see both drawbacks and advantages. A key benefit to this unexpected and unrequested assistance stems from the added replies to our initial message. We assume that we would have gotten fewer replies otherwise, and in the end, we would have had a much harder time establishing contact with willing interlocutors, had it not happened this way. In addition, the uncontrolled and unknown expansion of potential interlocutors also added a random element to our data collection, that would dilute any selection bias that we, the researchers, may have had towards our interlocutors. In addition, the club representative is a somewhat well-known Pole in Denmark and retains some clout. We suspect that his status and rapport helped encourage Polish women to reach out to us. We later confirmed this hypothesis via our interviews to some extent.

On the other hand, as a drawback, we also realised that any imitation of an ethnographic approach to the cultural space that Polish Unionist Club embodies would have limited success. In other words, we can no longer claim to study the organisation of Polish women at this particular club. We cannot claim to base our studies around the club. The club was in the end merely a small door into a much broader space. As we come to present our interlocutors in this paper, you shall see that there is great plurality, heterogeneity and difference found within what can be called “Polish migrated women in Denmark” as we discovered them.

Finally, one interviewee was approached through networking. We knew of her existence as a Polish woman who migrated to Denmark a few years back and we decided to ask through a mutual acquaintance if she would be interested in participating, which she agreed to.

Interviewing Process

The interviews were conducted as a combination of unstructured and semistructured interviews, and an interview guide was created before the first interview took place. The combination of both unstructured and semistructured interviews is a result of a concrete desire to prepare well for any given interview, while we as researchers secretly hoped to be caught off guard by highly unexpected themes or angles that could guide us towards insightful and interesting findings. When restarted, we hoped to find interlocutors who could help us find hidden paths and exciting and pristine locations that our otherwise elaborate interview guide could not foresee and preempt. In other words, using a metaphor from American baseball, we

prepared our bat for many possibilities and throwing techniques, yet secretly wished for the most obscene, unexpected and difficult curveballs.

The interview guide included questions that were categorised in the following way and order:

- Introduction,
- Migration experience,
- Labour experience,
- Transnationalist experience,
- Gendered experience,
- Communicative experience,
- Closure.

The introductory questions were aimed at gathering some initial face sheet information about our interlocutor, while we established some initial rapport with our interlocutor via some chit chat and small talk. We wanted to ease ourselves and our interlocutor into the interview.

The questions about the migration experience were aimed at gathering the most immediate experiences of the migration itself. These questions covered the period leading up to the migration and movement, starting from the moment the idea of moving was first considered till the moment that daily life in Denmark was well-established and considered familiar enough to not feel strange or new. For some of our interlocutors this strangeness had not disappeared when we interviewed them, we would argue.

The questions about labour experience covered any form of labour as it was done. Broadly speaking, the questions were aimed at discovering how our interlocutor generally spends their time, while any labour, be it domestic duties, work, employment, finding work or volunteering, were covered. We wanted to discover how they spent their time, and how they felt about this time.

The questions about their transnational experience were specifically aimed at discovering a transformation of our interlocutors over time. We wanted to discover if our interlocutors were becoming something or someone particular, and how they related to this becoming. We initially approached the theme by inquiring about our feelings of strangeness among our

interlocutors upon revisits to Poland, and this had some success. Our initial naming of the theme towards transnationalism hides the fact that transformation transcends and expands to much more than nationality. None of our interlocutors hinted at any loss of Polishness, and none hinted at obtaining Danishness. The gap to Danishness could be bridged, but never really crossed so to say.

The questions about the gendered experience were aimed at discovering how the women related to what broadly constituted gendered experiences. In particular, we wanted to discover the feelings of difference the women may feel towards the migration experience of their husband or partner, as they perceived it, in addition to what they felt themselves. Our questions were predicated on knowledge gathering from previous research on the experiences of Polish men in Denmark, so we had preconceived notions about such differences, but we very much wanted the Polish women to elaborate on them themselves in their own words. The questions covered differences in the migration experience both based on personal accounts and third hand perceptions.

The questions regarding the communicative experiences are closely related to difficulties related to bridging the gap between the Danish, Polish and English languages. We suspected from prior experience that language difficulties would play a significant part in the overall experience of migrating to Denmark, and the questions were generally aimed at discovering how the interlocutors felt about these language gaps and discovering how they navigated around them and over time perhaps overcame them.

The closing remarks served to ease the interview to an end, while we allowed the interlocutors to reflect on the interview experience. We specifically asked all our interlocutors to provide some hypothetical advice to newly arrived Poles in Denmark. It was a difficult and demanding question and required the interlocutor to both reflect on their own experience, while they revealed conceptions of their fellow Poles. It was a question that opened many avenues for further questions, so even though the question was presented as a part of an ending to an interview, it often ended up prolonging the interview quite a bit. It was nonetheless a very successful question.

The interviews were conducted in Polish and English, while some Danish was occasionally spoken, and remained a helpful tool throughout the interviews, as various terms need translation.

The vehicular language for the interviews was Polish, with the majority of interviews performed in this language. English was also used, whenever our interlocutor felt comfortable using it. However, the Polish language remained critical for our success, as interlocutors who initially adhered to English, and often found it necessary to switch to Polish intermittently. In one case, the language changed from English to Polish as the interview progressed. In general, this meant that for most of our interviews, our Polish member of the research group had to be present.

Transcription

All our 10 interviews have been transcribed fully using the transcription service *Descript*. The tool used allows for automatic machine transcription of interviews in both Polish and English. We were initially concerned about the amount of work to be performed by our one Polish speaker in the research group. Since most of our informants and fieldwork situations required Polish knowledge for communication to be effective, the concerns were two: First, the amount of data to be processed by only one person may result in an impossible task; second, possible biases coming from one person filtering and translating all the data.

To address the first concern, *Descript* became a handy tool (Descript.com, 2023). We used the program to be able to transcribe our interviews in the language they were conducted in. Polish ones were then checked for errors while listening to the original audio and then translated into English. Our English interviews were only checked for errors in the transcription, with adjustments and editing done by the members without a non-Polish speaking background. While doubts about the efficacy of the program can be doubted, corrections were made to avoid possible issues. In the end, the tool allowed us to save a great number of hours that were used to gather more information and data for the research.

Literature Review Method

For our project, we will engage in a literature review. During the following pages, we will explain and justify the style of our literature review, the process of making it and the theoretical and methodological issues that inform and give sense to it. To address it, we chose to follow “Doing Your Literature Review: Traditional and Systematic Techniques” (2013) by Jesson, Matheson and Lacey.

A literature review is a way to show the knowledge that already exists about the topic(s) present in a project’s research question. On one hand, is the opportunity to show our awareness of pre-existent works and knowledge and our ability to interpret and make sense of them. On the other hand, a literature review also allows us to, in a way, justify our topic selection (ibid.). The chance to critically approach pre-existing knowledge allows us to pinpoint contradictions and gaps in it, which will act as a justification for our endeavour.

As researchers, we draw from the two dimensions of knowledge, “explicit” and “tacit” and through reflection and interpretation, we interpret the works of others (ibid.). We do “stand on the shoulders of giants”, but we also bring the tacit knowledge sitting on our heads, knowledge based on our past learning, our insights, intuitions and observations to the table (ibid.).

For our master thesis, we chose to make a “scoping review”. Defined as, by Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2013):

A scoping review sets the scene for a future research agenda [...]. The review documents what is already known, and then, using a critical analysis of the gaps in knowledge, it helps to refine the questions, concepts and theories [...] The output is a document which maps out the general topic area and makes recommendations for future research.

As has been discussed in different methodological books and journal articles, traditional literature reviews can fall victim to a lack of transparency in the method and subsequently, carry implicit bias and be an easy target of criticism. While the obligation to provide a method, inclusion/exclusion criteria and a blueprint for the literature research is not implicit in the traditional as it is in the systematic review (ibid.), a scoping review might help bridge

the gap between these two kinds of literature research. Although a *scoping review* is a type of traditional literature review, it differentiates from the latter since it adds a systematic approach, a description of what critics object, to and say it lacks. In a *traditional review*, the material is often selected due to its ability to add to the author's argument (ibid.), it adds to the narrative part of the contribution the author hopes to make. However, as a consequence, it may provide a one-sided or biased argument (ibid.). As such, both the design and method for it are too open and flexible (ibid.).

To address these issues and avoid a lack of transparency, we will provide an explanation of the process of selection, criteria for inclusion and exclusion, etc. Details that will inform the reader of not only the purpose of our review but the *why* behind the documents presented in it (ibid.).

Defining the Keywords for Research

Drawing directly from our research question and pre-existent knowledge, we will define keywords to be used in search engines, journals, libraries and other databases. We will both use *Natural Language keywords* (those directly retrieved from the search topic) and *Controlled Vocabulary* (keywords that identify topics central to the article, rather than words that just appear in the article; words assigned to articles by authors and database compilers) (ibid.). There might be an overlap between them, so it is important to familiarize ourselves with the keywords relevant to the topic, in order to refine the keywords. This will be done by checking what experts on the themes and topics of our research question use. It can also be done by guessing first and then reviewing actually keywords used, putting forward good research criteria.

Defining Appropriate Literature and Researching

We will focus our research efforts on the following types of literature, stratified in different layers in a descending level of importance:

- 1) Peer-reviewed articles,
- 2) Non-peer-reviewed articles that are thematically relevant,
- 3) Articles, news and thematically relevant journals from a different discipline background.

The research will be performed through, in any order of relevance:

- 1) Library catalogue (books and journals, subscription-only online resources, theses from the Aalborg University, printed resources).
- 2) Online electronic libraries (Bibliographic databases, internet search engines, other online resources).

We would like to mention that we will use online depositories where specific articles that cannot usually be found without a paywall, can be accessed for free, such as Sci-Hub and Libgen.

Reading Process

The reading process, after selecting literature that we consider appropriate, will be guided by the questions and logic put on the page by the authors (ibid.):

- 1) Is this reading relevant to your study? Is the information appropriate to the matter under consideration? If yes, continue.
- 2) Does this reading add anything to the arguments or information that you have already compiled? If yes, continue. If no, add the reference to your bibliographic list. Make a note that it has nothing new to contribute so far, add your reading date and reference details. The need might arise to look into it again in the future.

Critical Approach

As emphasised multiple times throughout their book, we will take a critical approach. An important lens through the reading and interpretation of the literature chosen, culminated in the drafting of our review. To engage critically means adopting an analysis of both positive and negative features of the texts chosen (ibid.). Weaknesses and strengths will be mentioned. They will help address the perceived gap in the existing knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter constitutes the literature review of this paper. In brief, the review initially covers the state of the research on Polish migration across the world, yet mainly in Europe and especially the UK. Secondly, the review confirms that Polish migrants are understudied in Denmark, while simultaneously revealing a knowledge gap and entirely unexplored avenues for the application of novel theories.

Through this literature review we demonstrate how, in the case of Polish women in Denmark, there is an important gap in the academic literature to be filled; an interesting issue, given that Polish migrants, in general, are one of the more studied migrants' groups due to the boom in migration from Poland after, as we will show later, the entry of the country into the European Union in 2004. In this case, the increase in the number of studies might reflect the high number of migrations in what feels like a one-to-one comparison.

Furthermore, Polish migrants in Denmark have been generally understudied, and this literature demonstrates what will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs. Additionally, we aim to show, during this upcoming section, why there should be more academic interest in the Polish migration in Denmark and, simultaneously, the importance of developing new theories or making use of diverse ones. This paper will hopefully add to that much-needed collection of studies on Polish migrants, both men and women, needed not only in Denmark but also in the rest of the Scandinavian countries.

Following the literature review methods demonstrated in the previous section, the chosen keywords for the research were: Polish migration, women, gender migration, Polish diaspora, migration in Denmark, labour migration, integration in Denmark, and Polish migrants' strategies. The inclusion criteria reflect back to those articles where the experiences, feelings, decisions, strategies and similar *about* the process of migration, before and after the movement, were an important part of the articles. Specifically, those that included decisions about the family's movement as a whole. As such, most quantitative studies were not included except for those that helped to set the stage and the empirical context of the study. Similarly, studies about pre-ascension migration, those that focused on the labour conditions of Polish women in Denmark were not included, since they do not give enough relevance to our subject of study.

As Polish people who live outside of Poland constitute one of the biggest and most widely dispersed diasporas in the world, numerous studies focus on this group (Lie, 1995; Drzewiecka, 2002; Smith, 2003). The experience of migration of Polish citizens outside their country has been a deeply relevant topic, not just the numbers and statistics, which will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs. Polish migrants stay at the top of multiple countries' higher populations of citizens born in different countries such as Germany, Netherlands, Ireland or Norway (Statista, 2023a). Even when the inquiry interests itself not in the total number of foreign-born citizens, but precedence of migrants yearly, the statistics in Scandinavian countries show, year after year, Polish migrants as either number one or two (Danmarks Statistik, 2023; Statistisk Centralbyrå, 2023; Statista, 2023b). Of all the migrant groups in Denmark, the Polish one is the next largest, with a total number of 55.873 citizens (Danmarks Statistik 2023).

The high number of Polish citizens emigrating from Poland in the 21st century can be traced to the entry of the Polish state into the European Union. Nevertheless, it is important to focus on this century specifically because of this. The material conditions surrounding this last and ongoing wave of migration, while affected by previous movements, affect Polish people almost two decades later. As such, the specificities studied would provide an understanding with a global aim of facilitating integration, labour integration and generally improving their lives. Although historical trends are important, and an understanding of the past informs the present, different waves of Polish migration have taken place during the long history of the country, such as World War II migration, and focusing on them would make the scope too broad for quality analysis.

On the research and library engines used, we found a plethora of research conducted around Polish migration; most of this research, however, focuses on the United Kingdom. All this literature has helped us, even though the place of arrival differs from our focus, to understand the social and economic context that precedes, informs and influences current migrations to Denmark. However, due to the sheer size of the body of work, a literature review of general aspects of the Polish diaspora would be a monumental task that would require a different focus and objectives than the ones addressed in this project. Due to this, we will present previously written literature reviews about different facets of the Polish migration to the United Kingdom, since this is where the biggest parts of the *oeuvre* lie. On top of it, we will include research focused on Polish migrant women and gendered roles in order to realise

which part of the road we find ourselves on, so we can build from it, instead of starting from scratch; to add and compliment. Lastly, relevant articles will be included about both Polish men and women in Denmark, since the specific context might contrast with our findings and context, highlighting what needs to be investigated. While all sorts of topics have been addressed, we will focus on those that preoccupied themselves with the living conditions of the migrants seen from a social perspective: integration, livelihood, feelings of loneliness and missing their families, as this is the focus of this study at hand.

Firstly, from a quantitative perspective, we examined “‘New’ Polish migration to the UK: A synthesis of existing evidence” written in 2009 by Paulina Trevena who addressed the need to unify the knowledge produced on the topic after 2004 in the face of the entry of Poland into the European Union. Constructed as the basis for a future paper entitled “International Mobility and its Impact on Family and Household Formation among Polish Migrants Living in England and Scotland”, it provides an incredibly useful account of the situation at the time of writing. The author offers a succinct history of migration trends from Poland to the UK in four contexts: historical (16th century and onwards), post-fall of the Berlin Wall, pre-entry to the European Union and post-entry to the European Union.

In the same year, Kathy Burrell edited and published the book “Polish Migration to the UK in the 'New' European Union: After 2004”. With one chapter using quantitative analysis and the rest using a qualitative approach, the book made an effort to bring into question the reality of Poland, and not only the experiences in the United Kingdom. By focusing on migrants in the UK and Polish people in Poland who went through the migration experience and its impact back home, the reader can get a bigger and broader picture of the phenomenon (de Helga A. G. de Valk, 2010).

Later on, Anne White published “Polish Migration to the UK Compared with Migration elsewhere in Europe: A Review of the Literature”. While not only offering a concise review of the study of Polish migration in Poland, White adds to the ever-growing knowledge of the Polish migration by starting a comparison and review of articles, research and journals where the diaspora is discussed in the context of migration to other European countries. The author highlights the fact that Polish people are now spread around all of Europe: “from Iceland to Greece” (White, 2016). Once more, the size of the diaspora gives relevance to the present research.

While examining the existing literature on Polish migration, we encounter research on diverse aspects of migration, for instance, migrants' experience interacting with the labour market (Currie, 2007), job choices, search strategies and language issues related to recruitment and retention in the hospitality sector (Janta & Ladkin, 2009), coping mechanisms when engaging with the job market (Weishaar, 2010) and even analysis of the different strategies employed by trade unions when engaging with Polish migrants (Fitzgerald & Hardy, 2010). Here is where our secondary interest in this project comes from: the process of finding their first jobs in Denmark, and how their future plans relate to their job opportunities; these are all areas of the academic literature in which we wish to add and expand, albeit tangentially, as they, however important, are not the main focus of our interlocutors' experiences.

On a more idiosyncratic side, cultural and identity issues regarding Polishness, and integration into a host country have been explored, like food (Rabikowska, 2009) or ethnicity (Ryan, 2009). The importance of networks, social capital and social support (Ryan, Sales, Tilki & Siara, 2008) or of family strategies (Ryan, Sales, Tilki & Siara, 2009). Furthermore, the report by these four authors on "recent" Polish migrants in London and social networks (Ryan, Sales, Tilki & Siara, 2008) stars three important areas which constitute the themes and topics where our research is located, the specific knowledge we wish to expand on. The first one is how economic and/or social issues present in their lives in Poland influence the experience of the migration, to the point of making the stay permanent, even if it was originally planned as temporary. Secondly, the strategies that families use to cope and act on within this process. Thirdly, but closely related to the second point, the gendered aspects of migration. Our inductive process allowed us to work with our findings as one of our starting points, and similar findings have been made in this report: the changing expectations regarding the expected time of the stay abroad, the multiple cases of women joining their husbands after these had previously migrated, plans, agreements, discussions and kids' education; all of their subjects still on women's minds. Through this research and the subsequent study "Polish Children in London Schools: Opportunities and Challenges" (D'Angelo, Lopez, Ryan & Sales, 2008) Ryan and Sales published a later study called "Family Migration: The Role of Children and Education in Family Decision-Making Strategies of Polish Migrants in London"(2011).

It is worth mentioning that recently, in academia, the gender aspects of migration have been studied throughout numerous papers highlighting the fact that there is a significant gap to fill

about migration in women's case. This gap has been pointed out by scholars as Mirjana Morokvašić in "Birds of Passage are also Women ..." (1984) or Eleonore Kofman in "The Invisibility of Skilled Female Migrants and Gender Relations in Studies of Skilled Migration in Europe"(2000b).

Despite these discussions allocating women's experiences to the forefront, we propose a more detailed focus. First, by centring the experiences of women even more, establishing them as the actors we want to produce knowledge about. And second, theoretically speaking, by adding what can be considered an outsider theory. However, a lack of studies that focus specifically on the experience of Polish women was noticed, therefore we intend to contribute to fill this gap in this paper.

A tangent study to ours is called "Gendered migrations and precarity in the post-Brexit-vote UK: the case of Polish women as workers and carers" from 2017 by Eva A. Duda-Mikulin. However, the authors focus mostly on Polish women's reproductive labour and kid-raising in the context of uncertainty after Brexit in 2019. A more micro approach has not been as prioritised.

That does not mean that this dimension has been ignored completely or that, out there, there is no fruitful research about it. Kloc-Nowak's (2018) research on Polish women's narratives in Bologna, for example, echoes this need. Through the use of the concept of "lifestyle migration" in Huete et al. (2013) and Benson & O'Reilly (2015), she draws attention to the decision and reconsideration of Polish women regarding their situation and future. How once labour migrants are able to solve the most urgent needs, decision-making appears as an activity not purely economic, but also of lifestyle and general well-being. The importance of studying the internal logic and roles women perform in and in relation to their families and how, is reflected in their decisions to stay or leave. The other articles were presented by Bivan Erdal and Ryan (2018). "Gendered, spatial and temporal approaches to Polish intra-European migration", which Nowak's work is also part of, are somewhat relevant. Articles that deal with the spatial relation and daily life encounters and convivence of Polish migrants as influenced by policies of multiculturalism and issues of class and race in Barcelona (Rzepnikowska, 2017), how the internalisation of neoliberal ideologies influence ethnic and qualitative perceptions of categories like worker or mother (Lisiak & Nowicka, 2017), how experiences shape the experience of gender roles that are reproduced and/or changed in the

context of migration, driven by different grades of embeddedness' in a new society and the also changing effects of habitus, class and transnationalism (Bivan Erdal & Pawlak, 2017) and how, in the case of Belfast, the new destination is imagined and seen through its potentiality for change but gender roles, nonetheless, rarely change deeply (Bell & Domecka, 2017). This potential is, however, dependent on material circumstances and still subject to future change.

Be as it may, men and women tend to have different migration experiences. While studies that broadly examine the Polish experience of migration are still necessary, other research targeting particularities is also important. More and more, we see the paths of Polish men and Polish women diverge after migration, being different not only at the start of the process but also at the end of it. We have been privy to the inside of relationships and the effects of migration. The usual two-step migration of families (one partner, usually the man, moving first and then, afterwards, the wife and some of the children following) induces changes in relationships, their constitution and their breaks. How some male counterparts in the relationship, not always after a breakup, return to Poland. Whereas the previous paragraph shows an existing interest and research on the gendered aspects of migration, concerns aligned with our concerns, we believe new theories need to be applied.

Angles of study, in our opinion, have not focused enough on the key role Polish women occupy in their families. One of the papers that focuses on the family network of Polish women is called "How Women Use Family Networks to Facilitate Migration: A Comparative Study of Irish and Polish Women in Britain" conducted by Louise Ryan in 2009. This comparative analysis of Polish and Irish women examines the family ties and strategies of those two migrant groups in the UK. The author argues that the topic of social networks is under-studied in the migration field and provides a new perspective on the migrant experience. Here, the relationships have been under scientific scrutiny, especially as part of support networks and how they, as migrants, navigate their new environment and their condition as foreign citizens, but our understanding of the reasons for their actions and worldview is still limited.

Lastly, when we look at the studies on Polish people in Denmark, the majority of the papers focus on labour market dynamics or precarious work conditions of Poles. For instance, the study called: "Labour Market Specific Institutions and the Working Conditions of Labour

Migrants: The Case of Polish Migrant Labour in the Danish Labour Market” by Arnholtz & Wesley Hansen (2012). This unsurprising focus continues all over the available literature, literature that is important nonetheless, but one that displays the gap in knowledge we are trying to add and fill in. That of individual experiences, that which concerns itself with the social and learnt attitudes, roles and the relationships they influence and consequently, how migration changes and modifies them. Tests them, changes them, produces new expressions and ways of acting.

This gap in the knowledge widens when “Polish women in Denmark” becomes the focus, and this research by Arnholtz and Wesley might be one of the best starting points, since it brings forth both gender aspects and questions regarding what (maybe experience and acts, maybe something else) is the reason why Polish people seem to earn more than Danish people as a general rule. However, we wish ask tangential questions that touch on this subjects, but that have not been asked.

The Polish people presence in the the country is ubiquitous. As shown through this section, their number in Denmark keeps growing, but research does not reflect it in the same way it did when Polish migration skyrocketed after 2004. With such a big presence in the country, research is needed to better understand the motives, logic, arguments, and justifications that they take during and after their migration process. It is in this context that our research takes place. We intend to drive attention to women's narratives, decisions and actions (and logic and worldview behind them) as migrants, a place where new theories need to be applied to bear a more profound knowledge. Our research is also situated, as we have shown, in the growing but still limited research about Polish women in Denmark. In the same way, interdisciplinary collaboration is able to create paths of understanding, through the use of a theoretical lens created for a completely different context, to brighten the general understanding of the highlighted aspects of Polish migration.

EMPIRICAL DATA

In the following chapter the empirical data that has been collected will be presented. The chapter also contains some metadata on the interviews that have been conducted and on your interlocutors. Additionally, we summarise our initial data gathering in some preliminary findings and we explain how these findings have led us to finding, selecting and applying a set of theories that ultimately guides the analysis of this paper.

Interviews

As stated previously, a total of 11 interviews have been conducted, of which one is a follow-up. As such the number of interlocutors for the making of this paper. The names of the interlocutors have been anonymized, and any information about our interlocutors has only been shared to the extent that it is meaningful for the conclusion made in this paper.

In brief, our interlocutors are:

- **Alina** is 53 years old, and has four children (three daughters and one son), her profession varies from factory worker, social care worker and kitchen personnel. She has been living for 11 years in Denmark. The interview was conducted on the 7th of March 2023 in her home and was 101 minutes long.
- **Barbara** is 52 years old, and has two children (a son and a daughter), she is a nurse but was also working as a social care worker. She has been living for 16 years in Denmark. The interview was conducted on the 23rd of March 2023 in her home and was 104 minutes long.
- **Czesława** is 63 years old, has four children, she is a cleaning worker. She has been living for 12 years in Denmark. The interview was conducted on the 7th of March 2023 in Dorota's (our next interviewee) home and was 72 minutes long.
- **Dorota** is 55 years old, has two children (a son and a daughter), she is a cleaning worker. She has been living for seven years in Denmark. The interview was conducted on the 7th of March 2023 in her home and was 139 minutes long.

- **Edyta** is in her 50s and has two children (a son and a daughter). She is a cleaning worker. She came to Denmark in May 2022. The interview was conducted on the 24th of March 2023 in her home and was 97 minutes long.
- **Grazyna** is in her 50s, has one daughter. She works as a cleaning worker. She has been living in Denmark for six years. The interview was conducted on the 30th of April 2023 in her home and was 108 minutes long.
- **Hanna** is 34 years old and works as a barista in a coffee shop. She has been living in Denmark for one year. The interviews were conducted on the 10th of March 2023 at a public library and were 40 minutes long, and on the 12th of May 2023 at the premises of Copenhagen University and it had a length of 44 minutes.
- **Iwona** is 36 years old. She works as a Polish-Danish language interpreter. She has been living in Denmark for more than a decade. The interview was conducted on the 28th of April 2023 at her workplace and was 80 minutes long.
- **Jagoda** is 31 years old. She works as a waitress in a restaurant. She has been living in Denmark for seven years. The interview was conducted on the 2nd of March 2023 in the home of a member of the research group and was 90 minutes long.
- **Kinga** is 40 years old. She works as a Recruitment Agent at a vicariate and recruitment agency, responsible for the recruitment of construction workers and agriculture workers. She has been living in Denmark for 20 years. The interview was conducted on the 29th of March 2023 at her workplace and was 84 minutes long.

In total the interviews collected cover audio recordings with a total length of 887 minutes. The shortest interview had a length of 40 minutes, while the longest interview totalled 139 minutes. The interviews were collected between early March and mid-May 2023. One follow-up interview was conducted with Hanna.

Participant Observations

We have participated as guests and visitors mainly in the form of visits in the homes of our Polish interlocutors. This form of participant observation can be considered a somewhat

circumscribed and limited form of participant observation, and the observations have not been documented in the form of notes and memoirs, but are regarded as having taken place during our interviews that had been, before, during and immediately after an interview had taken place. Six of our interlocutors were interviewed in their homes, and we largely determined that these six interviews constituted the environments wherein we participated and guests and visitors. Our memory of these events constitutes the “empirical” element of these observations, while the interviews and the recording of them constitute the data that ultimately document our observations despite taking the form of recordings only. Our observations ultimately take the form of the various breaks and interruptions that are found in the interview recordings, as our interlocutors juxtapose the role of hospitable hostesses and engaged interlocutors.

Coding, Treatment and Interpretation of Interviews

The interviews in the paper have ultimately not been coded systematically. While Nvivo initially was used to code our initial interviews, the research group later adopted an approach of conducting a general thematic reading of the interviews, where the quantitative qualities of Nvivo were downplayed and disregarded in favour of broader and more general readings of the interviews, in conjunction with an auditory replay of the interviews.

Through a general reading of the contents of the interviews, while we using each other in the research group, we scoured the interviews for themes and conceptual notions that were both the most salient and the most “experienced” by the Polish women, such that we could identify topics and themes that were both experienced by almost all our interlocutors, while also proving to be strongly felt and of great importance. It was through such reading and coordination between the three members of the research group that we inductively identified highly gendered dimensions to the experience of migration of the Polish women we spoke to. And it was through this reading, that we also discovered that it was during the management and the navigation of relationships of intimacy and labour, that their experience took its most gendered form. The insights we gathered a year prior about Polish men, helped us and guided us to this assertion, as equally gendered work environments were found among men (Carvajal et al., 2022).

Although the interviews initially were conducted with greater variation in the themes and topics covered, it specifically was the gendered dimension of their migration experience that

appeared most critical. And ultimately it was this theme that attracted our attention and curiosity. This does not mean that other concepts and other themes were not important, and although we learned and heard about difficult destinies and individual frustrations that perhaps were of critical importance to the message our interlocutors at times wanted to convey, they remained stand-alone observations that could not warrant our scientific inquiry without a much greater number of interlocutors and much better selection criteria for our interlocutors.

Key Preliminary Empirical Findings

In this paragraph we wish to expand on the immediate empirical findings as we have derived them from our interview. The findings served as the vessel and starting point for the search for theories and theoretical concepts that could help us conduct a thorough analysis for this paper. It is the findings explained in this chapter that have ultimately shaped the theoretical considerations for this paper, and as we adopted an inductive research strategy from the get-go, this is also a contributing source to the formulation of the research questions of this paper. The findings are presented as qualitative aggregates, while a further in-depth examination will be withheld for the analysis of this paper. By aggregate, we refer to a collective reading and early analysis of all the interviews in combination, where themes have been selected based on qualitative readings of the impact, saliency, importance and frequency of various themes and situations throughout our interviews. Simplified, we could say that when our Polish interlocutors spoke, it was their engagement, emotion, frustration, happiness and cheerfulness that gave weight to the themes we selected for further examination and analysis. We group our findings into three main themes and key findings for further analysis. Three key findings, in the form of qualitatively dominant and salient themes, have been identified, and in summary, they concern highly gendered aspects of the Polish women's migration to Denmark via themes on family, motherhood, intimate relations, labour and language learning.

Gendered Migration of Polish Women

Preliminary finding: Gender and gendered roles shape the migration of Polish women in Denmark.

This first finding concerns the most elementary discovery of the fact that there are circumstances that concern Polish women's experience of migration to Denmark that are

unlike those of men. And as we, the research group, have conducted multiple interviews with Polish men, via our prior study, and also now have conducted 11 interviews with Polish women, we can say without a shadow of a doubt that the gender of Polish migrants seems to have a significant effect on both their long-term and short-term experience of their migrations. It is for this reason that further analysis and examination of gendered aspects of their experience is of importance to this paper, and therefore warrants further analysis. An important element of this finding is that it is not limited to a discovery of differences between Polish men and women, but also concerns experiences of gender and migration that stand in opposition or sometimes simply in relation to the experiences of men. To give a simple example, a woman may not simply migrate later than a man, but rather after a man, which signifies a relationship and not just a difference. We therefore give additional salience to these findings because the experiences of migration made by Polish women do not simply concern experiences of difference, but rather experiences of opposition, alternative and relation. It is this finding that leads us to an analysis shaped and conceptualised by theories of gender and gender roles. In concrete terms, we have found that men and male partners can function as safe outposts and pioneers in a process of migration, such that men and partners migrate ahead of women, where women only follow their partners once safe ground and some modicum of promised comfort can be confirmed.

Polish Women as Family

Preliminary finding: Polish women act as agents of entire families, as male partners and counterparts are reduced to outsiders and economic appendages.

As a second preliminary finding, Polish women are found to be central agents and embodiments of families in such a way that male partners are found to be outsiders and absent in the form of far-away economic appendages. We have found Polish women to be critical and indispensable in the decision-making of families in such a way that they come to embody families themselves, with little to no influence from husbands or other partners. These findings relate to matters concerning the day-to-day lives of families, care-taking of and concern for children. It concerns matters relating to property and accommodation. And it also concerns relations with the elderly.

Polish Women as Mothers to Husbands

Preliminary finding: Polish women are found to act as mothers to their husbands and male partners.

The third preliminary finding concerns the behaviour and actions of our Polish interlocutors that we interpret as quite motherly behaviour towards their husbands and partners. They identify these findings, in terms of interpreting actions of women, that their male counterparts in Poland would be able to do themselves, but that in Denmark either cannot do themselves or deliberately delegate to their female partners. The finding has in a sense two mutually exclusive hypotheses built in it, as we can either see a tendency for Polish women to either deliberately or unconsciously infantilize their men or a tendency for men to remain infantilized in Denmark, as their wives or girlfriends learn the Danish while they themselves do not. Concretely we see a tendency for women to learn Danish to a much greater extent than their male counterparts which produces imbalances between the sexes and the gendered roles that shape them. This finding is partly a continuation of the finding of Polish women as central to the families, yet it appears significant enough to warrant its separate inclusion in this chapter.

Polish Women in Gendered Labour Markets

Preliminary finding: Gendered labour markets are critical sources for expressions of difference, opposition and alternatives between Polish women and men, as they are separated across professions, forms of labour and language skills.

In addition to the first key findings, we have discovered the labour markets of Denmark to be constituted by a gendered division of labour that remains critically important for examining situations that produce differences in the experience of migration for Polish women and men. This second key finding covers and reveals various precarities, difficulties, opportunities and benefits that each materialises across a gendered division as we have discovered among Polish women in Denmark. Specifically, we see how language skills, labour and the organisation of labour produce situations of differences and opposition. We see how women's language learning is facilitated and improved, while Polish men remain stuck in Polish. We see how the difficulties of job-searching and networking become necessary modalities for social navigation and the development of social skills, while Polish men stick to agency-mediated employment and closed ethnolinguistic social circles. We also see how

domestic divisions of labour and duties become critical sources of contact with Danish authorities via schools, healthcare and financial benefits and services.

Generating and Discovering Theory

In a distinctly inductive endeavour, the above four main empirical findings have served as a starting point for the location and discovery of theories needed to offer in-depth and worthwhile further analysis. While a grounded theory approach would have demanded that the empirical data alone have been used to generate an entirely new theory, if data and findings allow it, however, such an undertaking has been deemed too demanding for the purpose of this thesis, and the findings may be insufficient to warrant it. As students, we acknowledged the constraints and limitations offered by the concrete circumstances of writing a thesis. The application of theory in this paper and its concrete selection is therefore rather an explorative process that has been conducted with the assistance of supervisors and their gentle yet directed guidance.

The theory of dividualism with its further presentation in the chapter of theory, was generated and discovered as we took note of the various functions and roles that Polish women filled. At its most elementary, we found Polish women as both mothers to their children and their partners while they tended to other relatives as well, while partners and husbands were often far away or with less responsibility. This was the main driver of the search for theories that allow us to examine and analyse such findings, and the concrete discovery of the theory of dividualism was a result of assistance and guidance from the supervisor to this paper. The theory offers entirely novel perspectives, and as such it was an entirely foreign theory to the authors of this paper when it was initially suggested. We regard its discovery and application as unlikely, had it not been suggested via fruitful supervision, as the theory itself disavows immediate and easy understanding. The theory is presented in full in the chapter of this paper on theory.

The theories of gender roles and feminism and their selection for this paper have two main origins. When the topic of Polish women in Denmark was selected for research and study in this paper, there were implicit assumptions that particular gendered phenomena would be discovered throughout our interviews. So even prior to our data gathering, we had some ideas that the theory of gendered roles and indeed feminism would offer perspectives that would help us analyse and study our findings, even if it was not a given. Beyond these initial

assumptions, we found our interlocutors in intimate relationships that were unavoidable as topics during our interviews. In simple words, when we questioned our Polish interlocutors about their migration to Denmark, intimate relations with male partners often proved decisive and pivotal in their ultimate decision to migrate and move, and as these discussions revealed great differences in the roles that women and men took upon themselves and the responsibilities they had. As such, gendered roles become quite apparent, while inequalities called for feminist perspectives as well. For these reasons, feminist and gender roles theory become deeply relevant for this paper.

THEORY

In the following chapter the various theories that are applied through the analysis in the paper are explained. In short order, the theory of individuals and partible persons is explained, followed by the theory of feminism and gendered roles, while a final paragraph on the operationalization of the theory concludes the chapter.

Theory of Individuals and Partible Persons

A fundamental difficulty in the description and recollection of anthropological theories on personhood of relations, divisions and partitions as offered by Marilyn Strathern is that fact that theory itself, reflexively demands us, the writers, to very carefully approach the concepts and ideas as they have been created and disseminated by Strathern. Donna Haraway offers perhaps the most poignant introduction to the work of Strathern:

Strathern is an ethnographer of thinking practices. She embodies for me the arts of feminist speculative fabulation in the scholarly mode. It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. (Donna Haraway, 2016)

In translation, we mean to say that the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of Strathern's work require us to stutter and hesitate when her theory is restated and explained in this paper. Her work and theory demand that once we engage with it, we must do our utmost to not infuse her writings with our preconceived notions, ideas and concepts. Strathern's methodology fundamentally demands an openness to newfound ideas and reconceptualizations that challenge the very language that is needed to describe both her theory and the very phenomena we wish to examine. At its core, Strathern's theoretical work, therefore, serves to reconfigure and challenge Western notions of the "individual", "relations", "society" and "person", and offer alternatives to them (Strathern, 1988; Strathern, 2018). These alternatives, as we read them, need not be in direct opposition or contraction to said notions, but can also be constituted by terms and meanings that reveal discontinuity, tension, antinomy and conflict that dialectically forces and requires either synthesis or perhaps the creation of something entirely novel. It is such openness and novelty that produces the difficulty of her work. The purpose of this introduction is therefore, to demonstrate our awareness of this difficulty and to show that the very exercise of carefully

considering the terms with which to describe, analyse and think of the migration experience of Polish women in Denmark is also exercised when this chapter on her theory is written. To read, rewrite and recall her theory is, to us, a first exercise in her methodology. We regard these initial considerations as helpful in conveying a credible and trustworthy recollection of her work and theory. It is this theory that in the end guides us towards a new set of concepts and ideas, that give entirely new meaning and explanation to the experience of migration of Polish women in Denmark.

From Old Euro-American to New Melanesian Concepts and Conceptualizations

Marilyn Strathern makes it clear that the concepts and analysis that she derives from her Melanesian studies fundamentally are motivated by a critique of what is an unjustified reliance on the Euro-American language and build-in notions of relations, individuals and the person when other cultures are examined (Jolly, 2012; Strathern, 1988; Strathern, 2018a; Strathern 2018b). This language and these notions are part of an analytical language that:

[...] Appears to create itself as increasingly more complex and increasingly removed from the 'realities' of the worlds it attempts to delineate, and not least from the languages in which people themselves describe them. (Strathern, 1988)

Strathern states that the terminology and ideas that so far, at least for the time of her writing, had been used to examine, study and analyse the Melanesian socialities of New Guinea are misfits, reductive and at times unviable (Strathern, 1988). The crux of the matter and the difficulty of her work, lies in the fact that the critique that she delivers is founded on the contention, that the terms and concepts that have been used to describe and analyse said socialities are so firmly embedded into the very language we, Euro-Americans, use to describe and analyse and that dispensing with them is not outright possible (ibid.). The argument is that it is not simply a question of replacing concepts with new ones, but rather of understanding that dispensing with certain concepts, ideas and a particular analytical language disables our vocality and makes us mute almost. To that end, she argues that our inability to detach and challenge concepts firmly embedded in our language is caused by ideological and cultural underpinnings and that these underpinning in turn become critical obstacles in ethnographic studies, when the inductive desires and grounded theories become sullied and polluted by notions derived from what Strathern designates as Euro-American ethnocentrism (Strathern, 2018a & b; Jolly, 2012).

Now, if we were to argue for the existence of flat spheres or attempt to soak ourselves in dry air, it is Strathern that similarly challenges conception, notions and the very language that we use, when she proposes that we should regard individuals as individuals and a person as partible, and relations not as an attachment to selves that are worn as statuses and serve us with roles but rather embodied in relations that can be moved, gifted and parted with in a physical sense (Strathern 2018b). On the ethnocentric view of the person, Strathern lets us know that conceptions such as individual, agent, self, human being and subject all concern terms in the English language that refer to the person as individual meaning in this case undividable and indivisible. The conceptualizations all concern various ways of regarding a person as one and whole which ultimately is what Strathern desires to challenge in order for anthropologists and ethnographers to not impose a language that determines a constitution of a person that obfuscates and prevents novel and original discoveries. To really bring a full argument to force, yet as condensed as the paper requires, we must also understand that these Euro-American conceptualizations are socially derived such that we can refer to the broader European sociality as their source, wherein social exchanges between peoples gradually have been building and constructing the various meanings all the terms in question (Strathern, 2018a). And it is within this European sociality, with Strathern's reference to the French, Latin and English languages, that we should find ideological and cultural contexts that gradually produced conceptualizations of person individual, agent, self, human being and subject that are more contextual and less universal than seasoned ethnographers at the time of her writing were aware of (Strathern, 1988; Strathern, 2018a).

Just as we should understand that some cultures do not have an elaborate language for numbers and counting and that the Slovene language still contains “Dvojina”, a dual grammatical number that exists between singular and plural, we must also realize that cultures may entirely lack a concept for the individual, and instead contain conceptualizations of personhood that are entirely novel (to us!) (Strathern 2018a). And if our Euro-American conceptualizations find no equivalency and little descriptive power in Melanesia, what alternatives does Strathern propose? How should we understand the relations, the acts and the exchanges made in cultures whose language and meaning cannot be described in our own words? According to Strathern, we need something new.

Bridging Old and New Conceptualizations

To bridge ourselves to new concepts, we would like to offer a brief explanation of Strathern's need to oppose and replace the concept of individual and whole person, in a description of Melanesian socialites. The purpose of this exercise is to move us closer to the point where Strathern makes her incision into our language, injects into it new concepts and conceptualizations, and finally stitches us together such that we are not left with a vocabulary wound that produces incoherent text and analysis. In brief, we do not want to simply present the old and the new concepts, but we also wish to explain how we go from the old to the new.

To make a concise argument, Strathern states that the challenge to our language is too deep to simply replace old terms with new ones. Merely attempting to decontextualize to bring about comparable generalisations that remain meaningful within the language we possess is not enough.

The task is not to imagine one can replace exogenous concepts by indigenous counterparts; rather the task is to convey the complexity of the indigenous concepts in reference to the particular context in which they are produced. (Strathern, 1988)

The reason for this statement is found in the fact that the *particular context* of a Melanesian sociality requires terms that are derived and constructed within that said context to be described (ibid.). Just as this paper is an exercise in induction, Strathern advocates therefore for the necessity of a strict inductive strategy. Yet the rigour and attention to detail that is required goes beyond merely treating data inductively, but also requires the induction of the vocabulary and language used for analysing and describing the very same findings. And most importantly, it is in this induction that Strathern has documented differences that are so radical, that there is tension and contradiction between not just words and terminology, but even the symbolic systems of English and Melanesian languages. Ultimately, it is because of these inductively derived and documented differences, that Strathern invents the concepts of the partible person and the dividual. Critically we can observe how these new words are not merely new forms of individuals, and similarly the partible cannot be reconciled with the whole, the complete and the indivisible. Instead, they are radically new, in the sense that they disavow immediate understanding in the language we possess. These new concepts are roasted in water and flat-like spheres, which is what makes us stutter and hesitate when we first engage them.

Dividual, Partible Person, and Relations

The dividual and the partible person exist as terms in opposition, contrast and tension with the counterparts of the individual and the whole and the complete person. To bring out an operationalizable definition of these new terms for this paper, it is worthwhile to identify them in their tension to the more familiar conceptualization of their counterparts and to do so, we need to explain their *relation* to *relations* and how these new and old terms are interrelated. Strathern's formulation on the relation is not easily digestible, as the term is given meaning itself, while it simultaneously is used to describe how concepts are related and exist in relationships to each other (Strathern, 1988). In fact, all concepts are relational, in so far as they relate to other concepts and concepts are co-constituted by other concepts (Strathern, 2018a).

In effect, it is relations between constructs that position them so that they seemingly work by themselves. This is evident in the conceptual field of the person. Person, self, agent and so forth: any of them may be taken as the singular starting point for discussing any other. (Strathern, 2018a)

What Strathern, identifies and argues for, in conjunction with the quote above, is the fact that the various aforementioned concepts such as individual, agent, self, human being and subject all exist in relation to each other in a particular analytical Eurocentric language that identifies a particular indivisibility, unpartable and non-partitionable whole person and personhood (Strathern 2018a). In principle, we should therefore identify a set of terms and concepts that in combination constitute a typology of the individual, while another set of concepts concern an opposing typology of interrelated concepts that describe the dividual and dividualism. But to simply relate these two typologies in opposition to each other skips a larger debate on personhood and the concept of being within the anthropological field, to which Strathern is hardly the only contributor. In its most condensed form, the debate concerns the various meanings of the dividual and the individual and how they relate to each other. On the one hand, it is argued that the terms need not be mutually exclusive and contradictory, but rather cooperative and overlapping and existing on a continuum. In this sense it is argued that persons can be both individual and dividuals at the same time, and thereby exhibit dividualism and individualism at various moments under a range of circumstances or even consciously select a mode of being that is most opportune given a particular predicament

(Bialecki & Daswani 2015). In much the same vein, it is argued that the individual and the dividual as analytical perspectives rely on cultural contexts for descriptive success (ibid.). The individual perspective may have a greater descriptive and analytical perspective within one particular cultural context and vice versa, yet both can assist each other in any context (ibid.). The tricky part of debating these two modes of being or personhoods stems in part from the prefix “in” being the only linguistic difference between the *individual* and *dividual*. This prefix of “in” fundamentally signals opposition as the relation between the terms, and as such Strathern’s invention of the *dividual* has been criticised as deliberately too oppositional, and more spectacular in its heuristic and hermeneutic potential than what the realities of Melanesia can support (Bialecki & Daswani 2015). Some authors have suggested the “composite” or “fractal” person or personhood, as a concept that is defined by bridging and combining the individual and the dividual (Mosko 2010).

For the purpose of this paper, we align ourselves with a Strathernian interpretation of this oppositional divide. We do this not to take sides in this ongoing debate nor to give credence to any of the perspectives involved. We take a closer reading of Strathern because of the clarity and the heuristic potential offered by her theory, in so far as it offers clear differences and divides which can help us elaborate, analyse and expand our findings with confidence. And if Strathern's new inventions and conceptualizations retain elements of anthropological activism, then we regard such activism as the source of her successful methodology. While the geocentric and the heliocentric universe can never be reconciled we believe, the *dividual* and the *individual* divide will likely remain a contested topic, whose further contestation is outside the scope of this paper.

For Strathern, distinct irreconcilable differences between the individual and the dividual remain. On the personhood of the individual, we must understand the individual as “the emergent form of the self as it develops within a context of social relations”, while “individual selves [being] social in their very constitution” (Strathern 2018a). The self is in this case a reference to an indivisible body, that later constitutes itself via relations to other bodies via participation in social exchanges. And particularly, we must understand that *relations* with other persons exist as phenomena that are outside the person and exist between persons that are external to an inner complete self (ibid.). Persons are whole, and maintain completeness, as long as relationships with others are regarded as external phenomena that is not inside us, but between us, or rather between individual bodies and minds (ibid.). In an

interview with STSISTANBULAB conducted by Onur Arslan, Strathern provides her perhaps most readily digestible and succinct version of her argument that can serve as our starting point:

[...] Somebody is one person's daughter and another person's sister's daughter, or another person's wife, and all the rest of it. And we would regard these as different statuses, precisely because we (Euro-Americans) have an indigenous theory of relations. We would say, okay the woman is playing the role of wife, or that she has got the status of a sister, or the status of daughter. It is imagined that these statuses are like an external costume that she carries around; moreover, while these relations all radiate from her, she herself is not completely described by these relations. Rather, she has autonomy as a subject, agent or individual, even as she is connected through her relations to other individuals. And what keeps the individual coherent is the externality of those relations [...]. (Strathern 2018b)

Although a lengthy quote to include in a theoretical paragraph, it nonetheless captures precisely what we want to recollect; it is a Euro-American indigenous theory of relations predicated on the externality of said relations that enables the individual and the whole, complete and indivisible person to function as a viable and coherent descriptive and analytical concept (Strathern 2018b). The bridge towards the partible person and the dividual stems then, from the various Melanesian studies where Strathern has found a critical need to supplant, discard and challenge this old theory of relations, as she found its descriptive potential in Melanesian contexts insufficient and misleading (Strathern 1988). In bringing the partible person and dividual to the forefront as viable alternatives, Strathern shares the following on her discoveries on relations in ethnographies in Melanesia:

[...] Different changes and statuses are registered in terms of flows of wealth and valuables, gifts, compensation (payments), and so forth, ethnographers in the region have referred to the partibility of these wealth items. These items are distributed between different persons, as a detachable or partible counterpart to the flow of nurture or relational concern. People also divide themselves off from one another in attending to one relationship rather than another, and I borrowed that term partibility to refer to the fact that there is no single identity which encompasses a person all the time. We might want to talk of 'dividuals' rather than individuals. (Strathern 2018b)

What was captured by this statement is that relationships become circumscribed and contingent relations that are constituted by the movement of goods, objects, persons, bodily parts, favours, knowledge, and gifts among others (Strathern 1988a; Mosko 2010). We see how items and labour are fused with relations, and how a relation is a counterpart to the movement of an object or a favourable act. Dividuals, the partible person and the related term dividualism are given meaning via exact actions of reciprocity and exchange. And for Strathern and others, what we must understand is that relations at large remain indescribable and incoherent if special attention to these partible and dividable elements is not given. The theoretical lens offered by Strathern reformulates various questions concerning the relations between people, and questions such as “Who are you to others” become synonymous with both “Which others are you made of” and “What acts and exchanges are you made of”. In an ethnographic sense, what the theory aims to emphasise is that when an interlocutor is asked to describe their relationships with others, we would expect to find relationships enacted by rituals, gifts, and exchanges. This is not to say that acts and reciprocity do not matter in the Euro-American theory of relations (Strathern 2018b). What we should understand rather, is that relations in the Western sense can meaningfully exist without material physical actualizations, while the Melanesian relationship of Strathern cannot be described without them. In the Melanesia sense, a claim to a relationship cannot be made without a corresponding material actualization, or with some moderation, we could state that a Strathernian perspective would regard descriptions of relationships that exclude this material and physical actualization, as misguided and inaccurate in most Melanesian contexts. Such descriptions would fail to describe what is and what takes place. The prior reference to the entire lack of a conceptualisation of the individual in some Melanesian communities becomes relevant here again when Strathern refers to personhood as sourced entirely in relations or “socially defined positions” (ibid.). In the most reductive form of this argument, we could state that in a Euro-American conceptualization of the individual person we could well see a personhood and person that exists without relations to others in the form of an inner person constituted by mind and body. In Strathern's example of a conception of the dividual, we would however not be able to conceive of a person without social relations. A body and mind without social relations and a history of social exchange would not be a person who could exhibit any form of personhood. They would be an entity of matter of sorts. But not a person or anything exhibiting personhood.

To qualify our theoretical arguments, we like to draw on a few different studies that exemplify various expressions and forms of dividuality. Empirically, with reference to Mosko (2010), we see how the imposition of Christianity in Melanesia takes a distinctly dividualistic form as the relationship with God is enacted through exchanges and gifts, as sins, blessings and curses are either taken away and given back. It is in that way that we can give ourselves to God in exchange for the deprivation of sin, and the reception of blessings. The key insight here is that regardless of the properties of the relationship with God, it is in a Melanesian sense always conceptualised via exchanges and reciprocity. It does not simply exist. It has to manifest itself in ceremonial exchanges of gestures and gifts. Whereas a Euro-American could question the reality and authenticity of this relation, the Melanesian reality is instead firmly embedded in the exchange itself. To question it would essentially be meaningless as we understand it.

Hess presents us with a different account of the dividual, as she refers to persons to co-constitutes of families via the distinctly matrilineal concept of “vĕnĕm” (2006). The concept resembles that of a family or a clan, but functionality and most importantly, the vĕnĕm is given a type of agency in itself. In practice, this means that it is this matrilineal concept of family that acts, and a person can only become momentary singular embodiments of this vĕnĕm, when a gift is handed over or a marriage between families is constituted, as is the case for Hess’ study (ibid.). What is important to note is that it is this conception of family that becomes the unit of account and the centre of this localised sociality of Vanua Lava, such that persons are parts of another whole, and they thereby conceive themselves as dividuals. They are partly made up of others, while these others also are made of them. The person's agency and ability to act is bounded and constrained by an “uplifting” of agency to the family unit and the relation it constitutes. What we learn from both Hess and Mosko, is that it is the detachment of partible things that both capture small embodiments of persons, that are then exchanged to form.

It may be meaningful to present an interjection here, as these perspectives on individuality invite a particular comparison. Just as physicists may be motivated by a desire to find the indivisible final particle to which everything can be reduced, we may question the individuality or the dividuality of neutrons, atoms, molecules, mitochondria, cells, muscles, limbs and bodies. While the fusion or division of atoms is entertained by humans through the search for new energy sources, the fusion and division of the body may concern reproduction, via the modest seminal contribution to the bloody outcropping of a new human being from the

woman's body, we may similarly question the *individual* unit of account in various different socialities across various cultures. And while Strathern and other authors are fully aware (but in disagreement) of the hypothesised inevitable spread of modernity to the entire globe, and with it a distinct understanding of the individual and its position vis-a-vis society, we can still search for various demotions or elevations of sociality along similar orders of magnitude. Just as physicists may prefer individual electrons and dividual atoms, chemists may prefer individual atoms and divisible molecules.

Transferred to the context of Melanesia and Strathern's theory of the dividual, what is emphasised is that when we escape the fixed concept of the individual and conceptualise the dividual, the dividable and the partible, what is emphasised is a personhood that is expanded to both a lower order of partible things, such as blood, bones, rituals, labour, but also a higher order of new wholes of families, clans or the particular matrilineal “vĕnĕm”, and that they are created and maintained by the exchange of said partible things and physical enactments. The person, the human subject is thereby stretched and placed among these orders of magnitude. And for Strathern, it is exactly when she made her inquiries into the socialities of Melanesia that she finds no individuals, but rather persons that are divided into these various domains, as what she ultimately designates as dividuals; and ultimately it is a Melanesian self-conception from which Strathern derives her findings and builds her theories.

While Strathern denotes how Euro-American conceptions refer to relations as something that is carried around or attached to selves that exists on their own separate from selves, yet irreplaceable and undetachable, the Melanesian conception of partible person refers rather to relations as partible that can be partitioned off and remain unenacted and at times replaced by new acts that denotes new relations. In its most condensed form, as we understand it, a Euro-American woman may then question: “Am I not a mother/daughter?”, while a Melanesian woman rather says “Act I not a mother/daughter?”. Although a simplification, what is to be noticed is the grammatical omission of “as” (such that that the phrase “Act I not *as* a mother/daughter?” is made), which denotes how relations cannot be played, imitated or bridge by actions that merely simulate relationships as in the eurocentric perspective. In the Melanesian context, we must rather understand that acts can constitute relations in themselves entirely. Insofar as relations are socially derived and co-constitutive of personhood, it is these partible relations that ultimately divide a person and produce the partible person as a concept. In addition, Strathern emphasises anticipated partition as important, as relations are not

unilaterally enacted. In the Melanesian society, we understand that agency involved in the relational act is a duality where, either your part with an enacted relation of yours, or someone else parts with a relation of yours, or even parts with a relation of yours on behalf of you, which denotes that the partible person is also something that can be parted with which challenges the conceptions of the full self and the autonomous individual. You are not whole, complete and individual, when relations are detachable and can be parted with. You are rather partible and dividual. Another aspect of the conception of the partible person found within the Melanesian context concerns relations as donatable, giftable, and craftable through initially unreciprocated exchanges. Similarly, relations can come in the form of embodiments of physical objects or even body parts whose possession signifies and constitutes relations (Strathern 2018a). Mosko (2010) gives concrete examples of such relational constitutions, referring to the gifting and transfer of a father's bone, a mother's blood or other body parts, as ways to divide yourself up into pieces that constitute relations. Food, knowledge, a form of wealth, land and labour can simultaneously be gifted and donated to denote and craft new relations, while reciprocity of such gifting serves to consolidate, confirm and validate such relations.

Controversial Concepts

We have previously introduced a debate on the meaning of the dividual and its relations to the individual, but we wish to expand this topic, to argue for and justify the adoption of Strathern's theoretical perspectives. The concepts of the partible person and the dividual are first and foremost contested ones, and Strathern readily regards its initial conception as a challenging one she also questions whether it retains the same value, as new anthropological inventions have come to challenge and perhaps supplant it (Strathern 2018a). In presenting her concepts of partible persons and dividuials, Strathern is quick to mention her conceptions as controversial and contested (ibid.). Although Morgan and Taylor (2015) favour various conceptions of person and personhood to exist on a continuum rather than in opposition and contradiction, we see desire to adopt and put the concepts of Strathern to use in the form that she presents them and we see value in such an approach.

With reference to Kieran Healy's controversially titled article "Fuck Nuance" (2017), we should understand that not every new theory needs to be nuanced or bent to conform and more aptly fit every phenomenon examined. Healy contends that we risk diluting a theory's explanatory and descriptive power by introducing nuance that allows research to wiggle and

weasel itself out of contestation. There is heuristic and hermeneutic value in keeping and maintaining contrasts and contradictions between conceptualizations, as it directs our analysis towards distinct categorizations. In a sense the loss of nuance allows clarity. For a theory to remain of great value, it should function in its clear and concise form (ibid.). Rather than trying to bend the concepts and explain and reveal every aspect of the experience of migration made by Polish women in Denmark, we instead approach the concepts offered by Strathern in their purest, most novel and undiluted form and put them to the tests as we have understood them. And with this paper, we hope to demonstrate that the conceptions presented here are more than useful in Polish and Danish contexts and that our approach to Strathern's theory in no way invalidates our inductive strategy, nor challenges the trustworthiness and credibility of our findings and conclusions.

It is it also Strathern herself, with reference to Théry (2009), who states that we should not shy away from applying newfound concepts from a Melanesian context to a homely and familiar context, even if their use at first requires great consideration, as they challenge language and understandings that we as researchers are firmly embedded in (Strathern 2018a). We read Strathern's encouragement, as relying on the assumption that individualism and contemporary modernity from the Euro-American perspective are less universal than generally understood. This assumption also serves to shatter the hegemony of the "Euro-American indigenous theory of relations" (Strathern 2018b), such that any new theory, regardless of origin, may challenge contemporary assumptions about relations, individuality, society in Europe and America in addition to just Melanesian socialites. Between the written lines, we interpret Strathern's work to not just concern the development of new theory, but rather to concern the shattering of a hegemonic theoretical framework and a hegemonic analytical language of the individual. The reservations, resistance and reticence towards her theory, may in this sense not simply be based on a judgement of her theory, but also on the discomfort of the theoretical plurality that it enforces and creates.

Theory on Feminism and Gender

In this section, we will present feminist thought and gender roles theory which will be later used in the analysis as a contextual theory of this study.

Feminism as a theory can be introduced and presented in this paper with a reliance on Strathern as the main scholarly contributor. We reintroduce Marilyn Strathern in this chapter on theory to provide us with the theory of feminism and feminist perspectives on the theory of gender roles. Strathern's engagement in feminism stems primarily from the uneasy relationship between it and anthropology as her primary scientific field (Strathern 1987; Strathern 1988a). Although feminist scholarly work has surely progressed during the last 40 years, we choose for this paper to stick with Marilyn Strathern to elaborate on feminism. This has the benefit of allowing us to engage the topic of Polish women in Denmark via Strathern's coherent and overlapping concerns and considerations for individuals, gender and feminism. And as Strathern is well versed in all three, we avoid difficult translations between different authors when the work of Strathern already offers significant difficulty. In our reading of her work, we still find her relevant.

While the theory of gender roles offers descriptive explanations of the differences between men and women, and how those differences produce patterns of relationships and sociality that appear across all cultures, feminism in its scholarly iteration is introduced as a theory with purpose and as a deliberate intervention. For Strathern, scholarly feminism principally has its roots in a critique of prior scientific accounts as disinterested, less universal and less general than what they purport to be (Strathern 1988a). In feminism, sciences are understood to have been dominated by men who have overlooked the role and plight of women both as researchers and as subjects of research. This male dominance has led to conclusions about the human predicament and experience that were less universal and less general than claimed, which ultimately is summarised as a patriarchy that has existed in scholarly work across the humanities and social sciences.

While the theory of gender roles can serve to explain the rise of patriarchy, feminism as a theory purposefully serves to rectify this inequality and highlight the differences and inequalities between men and women in a salient and constructive manner (Strathern 1988a). At the time of her writing, Strathern explains how inequalities between men and women, in an anthropological sense, are interpreted as universal phenomena. The universality of it simply

refers to the fact that inequalities between men and women appear across disconnected cultures. Yet, it can be debated whether every culture necessarily always produces forms of inequality and if such inequalities can be overcome entirely. Feminism is in this sense the attempt to reach this overcoming. Towards this overcoming, the social theory of feminism first and foremost serves to reveal and point out how “Certain structures are perpetuated to the advantage of men, upon the extent to which “women suffer from systemic social injustice because of their sex”” (Strathern 1988a, p 26.).

For Strathern, these “structures” are discovered via assuming women to be “autonomous agents and shapers of meaning” by themselves, while any relationships of dependency and structures of domination are viewed as results of male interests within a given sociality, that come at the cost of women interests (Strathern 1988a). As such, and in a distinctly inductive fashion, we take this viewpoint as an instruction towards identifying the Polish women in the concrete contexts of their daily lives and only afterwards impose inquiries about the structures that they may find themselves in. Or restated, the theory of feminism played no deliberate part in the phrasing of our questions during our data collection, and was only consciously applied once our interviews had been conducted. When we mention conscious and deliberate application, we consider the fact that prior knowledge of theories on gender and feminism naturally has inspired the topic of this paper, and subconsciously may have influenced our approach and angle of inquiry. In realising this fact, we simply wish to openly reveal our awareness of this dilemma, which serves to cement the trustworthiness of our research.

As a disclaimer, we should state that Strathern concretely identifies and elaborates feminism via an empirical and historical account of women, as being disadvantaged in their relationship with men, and disadvantaged within the structures that define and maintain such relationships. Feminism as a theory, contains within it a notable degree of plurality. At its most zealous expression, feminism is a forceful and powerful political ideology for change and at its most modest it is an academic desire to find truth in the combination of the accounts of both women and men and also to deconstruct the experiences of them both into the gendered performances that help constitute them. For the purpose of this paper, the theories of gender, gender roles, and feminism serve as the guiding tool towards inquiring about the gendered aspects of their lives, and how such gendered roles shape, constrain, limit, free and benefit their lives in the short and the long run, while special emphasis is directed inequalities between men and women.

The Gender Roles Theory

Numerous scholars of different fields such as sociology, political science, biology or economics examined gender and the causes for the possible differences in women's and men's lives in all different sectors. Therefore, gender theory is a multidisciplinary field that encompasses all the above-mentioned fields and more.

According to Janet Saltzman Chafetz, there are two main perspectives to gender theory which are macrostructural approaches and microstructural approaches (2006). The macrostructural approaches study gender at the macro level which are systemic inequalities that come from a societal organisation known as patriarchy; for instance, the macrostructural approaches encompass World Systems Theory and Marxist-inspired theory. On the other hand, the microstructural approaches focus on a micro level of gender stratification which is gendered behaviours and interaction patterns that come as a result of the inequalities at the macro level (ibid.).

In this paper, gendered behaviours and interactions will be studied, therefore, one of the microstructural approaches will be applied, specifically, a so-called Gender Roles Theory. The gender roles theory comes from the Sociology field and its starting point is a broad concept of social roles. Social roles are the societal expectations that transform into a set of rules and obligations according to a social category one is a part of. The Sociology of Gender Roles derives from the concept of social roles as their narrowed-down subgroup. As Eagly, Wood and Diekmann claim in their book (2000): "The concept of gender role derives from the general concept of social role, which refers to the shared expectations that apply to persons who occupy a certain social position or are members of a particular social category".

In the case of gender roles, the above-mentioned social categories are "men and women" and the gender roles thrive from the attributed social expectations to those categories. However, scholars have posed a question: "Why do people have specific expectations toward the category of men and women?" The authors argue that it derives from gender hierarchy which refers to a status of power of men and women. Many scholars stated that it was observed cross-culturally that men hold a high status of power in society. Eagly, Wood and Diekmann (2000) pointed out: "Most anthropological scholarship accounts for the division of labour and

gender hierarchy by arguments that physical sex differences, particularly women's reproduction and men's size and strength, interact with socioeconomic systems".

Therefore, according to the authors, the most outstanding reasons for gender role differences between men and women are labour division and physical differences. The labour division is closely related to women's reproductive capacity because it determines their professional career path and affects their economic resources. For instance, while a woman is late pregnant and stays at home, a man goes to work and in consequence, it creates the image of a suitable social role for each one of them. Additionally, men's, generally speaking, bigger size and strength also affect the perception of both genders in contrast to each other. For instance, a man can carry more weight which creates his image as a strong one in comparison to a woman who can carry less. As the authors claim (ibid.): "In general, physical sex differences, in interaction with demands of the economy, technology, and local ecology, influence the roles of men and women".

Moreover, apart from physical differences, another aspect that influences gender roles is gender stereotypes. Eagly, Wood and Diekmann argue that gender stereotypes constitute a significant factor in people's perception of gender. The authors point out that there are various important components for the development of gender roles; firstly, the fact that people believe in sex differences (2000) which constitutes the set of beliefs and knowledge about women and men in society which can be also called gender stereotypes. Secondly, people approve of many stereotypic sex differences which means that they perceive them as positive phenomena and they consider that women and men should differ. The authors state that: "this oughtness adds the essential injunctive ingredient that transforms gender stereotypes into gender roles [...]" (2000). Finally, people behaviorally confirm others' gender-stereotypic expectancies which comes from the fact that people often conform to other people's expectations and it results in an effect of so-called "self-fulfilling prophecy" (ibid.).

It is worth mentioning that gender roles interact and overlap with social roles. Saltzman Chafetz points out that gender roles encompass domestic and employment roles that change over time in relation to the progress that a given society makes (2006). Eagly, Wood and Diekmann share this view with the author and conclude:

Gender roles, viewed as shared expectations that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially identified sex, coexist with specific roles based on factors such as family relationships (e.g. mother, son) and occupations (e.g. secretary, firefighter). (2000)

Furthermore, it is essential to highlight that gender roles vary culturally in the sense that definitions of certain roles are different and dependent on cultural setting:

Women perform the duties of their numerous roles within a "social circle" comprising all those with whom they interact in their role enactments. Given cultural definitions of various roles, some combinations ("role clusters") are easier to negotiate and create less conflict and strain than others. (Saltzman Chafetz, 2006)

Moreover, executed roles interact with each other and create “role clusters” which are less or more negotiable within a given culture. In this paper, we will focus on Polish women therefore the gender roles will be studied in the Polish socio-cultural context. In the book called “Parenting and Work in Poland. A Gender Studies Perspective” by Katarzyna Suwada, the author claims that Polish society is characterised by significant gender inequalities which can be especially seen in the care work as: “[...]women are still perceived as the main caregivers” (2021).

When it comes to the critique of gender roles theory, Saltzman Chafetz states that it depoliticizes the study of gender as it moves the focus from the structural power imbalance to the situational behaviours (2006). However, the division between macro and micro approaches does not attribute the higher importance to any of them but rather highlights the variety of perspectives on the study of gender.

Operationalization of Theory

When we leave the context of Melanesia that Strathern has relied on, and return to the context of Polish women in Denmark, we adopt the theoretical lens of the dividual conceptualization of personhood to scour and analyse the interviews we have gathered for expression of what we broadly understand to be acts, exchanges, concerns and efforts that take a dividualistic character. What we have aimed to do is to analyse the language and the statements made by our Polish interlocutors that encapsulate concerns that go beyond what we would expect of an individual, such that certain acts or particular behaviour, concerns or desires are more easily

and better described when we conceive of them as dividuals. In a sense, what we expected to conclude and to find, were examples of behaviour and concern, that in the individualist perspective could be considered backwards, traditionalist and conservative, yet in the light of a dividualist lens could be understood differently and given entirely different meaning. What we aim to do with our analysis is to conceptualise our findings within a dividualistic lens, such that we can ascribe the lives, stories and troubles of our interlocutors with new and far richer meaning, and ultimately result in credible answers to our research questions. We engage in this undertaking with both desirable ambition and cautious reservation. When we distance ourselves from the indigenous conceptions of Melanesia and return to Poland and Denmark, we assume much like some of Strathern's critics, that the individualist conception of personhood could be fully operational among our interlocutors (Morgan and Taylor 2015; Bialecki & Daswani 2015). If we had asked our interlocutors about their individuality and how they understood it, we would surely have found meaningful and understandable answers. The goal of this paper is therefore not to reaffirm to reiterate expressions of individuality as expected from a broader Euro-American sociality. While Strathern inductively derived dividualism from Melanesia, we aim to apply this theory and dividual lens, to what we assume to be an individualistic conception of sociality to forcefully and deliberately produce something entirely new.

On the question of the operationalisation of the theories of feminism and gendered roles, the concrete analytical exercise takes much the same form as the one above. The various interviews we have conducted will be read, examined and analysed for expression, situations and concerns that display and denote experiences that relate to our interlocutors' gendered experiences. In a hypothetical sense, this could concern experiences of their motherhood, their role as wife, their relation to their children, their responsibilities as women, their husbands or ex-boyfriends or other male partners. The aim of the theories is more precisely to narrow down and focus on experiences made by our interlocutors of differences between men and women's capacities, responsibilities and opportunities and to highlight them. On a final note, we wish for the theories to work in tandem and together, such that expressions of dividualism also can be analysed from a feminist and gendered perspective, which aligns well with the contentions of Marilyn Strathern, as she is well versed across all the theoretical perspectives offered in this paper. In this way, there is not a standalone dividualistic and feminist analysis in this paper, but the various theories will be combined when the empirical findings justify and invite it. The different chapters of analysis in this paper are therefore empirically driven

ANALYSIS

In the chapter the analysis of this paper is presented, and it includes four separate chapters, which are initially explained in the following short paragraph on the structure of this analysis.

Structure of Analysis

The structure of the analysis of this paper consists of a subdivision of the entire analysis into separate chapters. The chapters are ordered in a fashion that offers the greatest readability. Each chapter can be read separately, yet the chapters build on each other, such that a coherent argument is built through the chapters that culminate in the answer to this paper's research questions, which are then summarised in the final conclusion.

The analysis consists of four separate chapters, that each elaborate on various aspects of the lives of Polish, that are captured by theories on gender, feminism and dividuality. The chapters express the most salient, interesting and critical empirical findings that gathered our curiosity and spurred questioning and analysis. The theories as they have been presented will not find equal representation across the chapters, as they are applied when empirical findings call them to action and relevance. The chapters for the analysis of this paper are:

- Polish Women as Dividuals:

This chapter concerns the initial analysis of Polish women as dividuals and how we apply the theory of dividuality, to reveal the various enactments of family roles, motherhood, and wifehood among other relationships. The chapter serves as an introductory chapter to the various themes that are explored and examined further in the following chapters of analysis.

- Polish Women as Family:

The first chapter concerns the Polish women as family, and how in their actions and considerations turn out to be the agents of the family. As dividuals, they are not merely part of families, but the enactment of family lives becomes gendered and feminine.

- Polish Women as Motherly Wives:

The second chapter concerns the Polish women as motherly wives to their at times infantile and isolated male counterparts.

- Polish Women as Workers and Laborious Language Learners:

The third chapter concerns the Polish women as labourers and language learners, as they acquire skills and vocalities to a much greater extent than their husbands which both empowers and burdens them with new concerns and responsibilities.

Analysis of Polish Women as Dividuals

The following initial chapter of the analysis of this paper serves to summarise, name and bring forth the various findings throughout our treatment of the interviews that we have conducted. The chapter offers an overview of our most central findings, and how said findings relate to one another and can be understood and analysed via the theories of dividualism, feminism and gender. The chapter introduces the various themes and topics for the following three chapters of analysis, namely; Polish women as family, Polish women as motherly wives, and Polish women as laborious language learners.

In analysing the Polish women in Denmark, we found no need to outright enforce an entirely dividual conception of personhood. The Polish women understood very well the meaning of individual. We found no need to necessarily invent a new analytical language and a new conception of personhood to understand and give meaning to the descriptions and actions of Polish women in Denmark. Strathern theory of the dividual and the partible person however will find plenty of relevance, and guide us in understanding the Polish women. The Polish women are not backwards or laggards in the globalised and universal march towards modernity as Strathern in part warned us about, as she pondered the development of a universal culture that even the Sentinelese could not avoid. The Polish women exhibit many and various expressions of dividuality, that shape their lives and both limit and enable their agency. In concrete terms, we see how Polish women act as centrepieces in families and networks. We see how they act as mothers to their children and both mothers and wives to their husbands. And we also see how they enact and fulfil the gender norms and idealised motherhood and womanhood. All these enactments mirror and relate to the dividual conceptions offered by Strathern, and the theory of dividualism will be applied to reveal and analyse the above findings in this analysis of this paper. They are also enhanced and made more noticeable. The expressions, acts and behaviour that inadvertently pass as a well-camouflaged underwater animal break surface tension and erupt through, making them visible. This upward pushing force, the beginning of the chain reaction is the migratory process, enacted by them or their partners. The specific experience of the migration that Polish women experience has been observed to be significantly different enough from that of men, as the research pointed out at the beginning of our paper and our own previous research seem to show. Men's role is that of the outpost (Carvajal et al., 2022). A solitary individual scouting the terrain, setting camp. Working (earning money) is the centralising activity of their migration.

In addition, we also observed how the societal context has a big impact on how that dividuality is expressed, and most importantly, what the circumstances are of its existence. We have found that despite great emphasis on the study of Polish women themselves, their relationship with their husbands, and male counterparts play a distinct role in their lives, which also reveals great differences between women and men, and indeed Polish women and men. For that reason, we will apply gender roles theory to understand what society expects and requires from Polish women and how it influences their own perception of their duties, tasks and responsibilities towards others. Consequently, the concept of dividuality will be applied to analyze how Polish women navigate their migration experience in the context of their relationships with husbands, children, parents, labour, authorities, etc. Therefore, the concepts of gendered roles and gendered expectations aptly allow analysis from the dividualistic perspective. In principle, and much in line with Strathern, the Polish women that we have interviewed and whose word and histories we have analysed, reveals them as contingent agents that are bound by prior relations and decisions that cannot be easily reconciled with an individualistic theory of relations. Rather, we are to analyse them from a dividual perspective to bring forth the meaning of their actions, their concerns and their goals.

The gendered migration experience of Polish women in Denmark is first and foremost established as a thing in itself as women, and the accepted and expected behaviour of a woman. Secondly, it also exists as an exclusive category of the mother. In the first case, the woman exists as a thing in itself, while the mother in part exists in a dualistic relationship with the family, while they constitute parenthood and the activity of child-rearing. As we found Polish women in Denmark, we both saw them as persons who lived gendered experiences, both as mothers and as women. What we found particularly revealing about the Polish women in Denmark, is that they in large part constituted a centrepiece in what we designate as the Polish family and that we can translate this centrepiece into a form of matriarchal embodiment of family. In some sense, the Polish women found themselves as the family itself. The chapter on Polish women as family examines this topic in much greater detail. The finding is accentuated by the migration of the Polish women as the migration of husbands without accompanying children has produced various moments or periods of digress, concern, fear and discomfort for the Polish women. Concretely, we have seen how Polish husbands or partners have found themselves as economics nomads travelling Europe in search of employment, be it the UK, Germany or Scandinavia, while Polish wives or partners

stayed in Poland, tending to supplementary sources of income, child rearing and care-taking of old parents, among other obligations such as communication between, the home, the school and authorities. In a sense, we found the Polish as the centrepiece in various relations, where she was irreplaceable. Her detachment from the centre was unimaginable and ultimately unfeasible so to speak. We found multiple recollections of such stories of Polish women having their men physically detach from them, and leaving them with the sole responsibility of the domestic affairs, while men worked abroad.

The ultimate challenge to this arrangement appeared, however, when the women contemplated moving to Denmark and thereby eliminating their distance from their partner. Such contemplation was motivated by various factors and was considered with various concerns that hardly escape a dividualist analysis. As the agent of the family, we found Polish women with many thoughts about their kids, their properties, and their parents, who were poorly able to reconcile with their migration. Tending to their obligations as both women, wife and mother and indeed the primary agent of their immediate family rarely matched with a permanent migration to Denmark, and as such it was immensely difficult for them to manage the various expectations and concerns they had.

When considering these perspectives, we saw a bifurcation of sorts that was noticeable enough to highly in the form of youthly, childless women acting differently from motherly and experienced women and mothers. While Polish childless women, also were drawn to their partner in Denmark, their migration took a romantic, more spontaneous and unplanned form, as they made their journey without consideration for job opportunities, their immediate comfort, living arrangements and the necessary labour needed upon arrival for sustenance. They notably arrived with the idea that few additional language skills were needed beyond English, and their various confrontations with Danish society and the benefit of learning Danish provided us with stories and concerns that were deeply felt, as break-ups, failures and successes were revealed to us.

The older mothers however mostly exhibited greater concern, consideration and calculation prior to moving themselves to Denmark. In concrete terms, the Polish women we spoke to, had many worries about uprooting their children from their schooling in Poland, and they noticeably attempted to time their movement with the graduation or the fulfilment of particular milestones in the lives of their children. In a sense, the matriarchal centrepiece and

indeed agent of the family was first and foremost an earned position, that relied on the long-term development, rearing and fostering of various relations, and we can state that the dividuality of these relations and this position was found in the fact, that there appeared not meaningful way in which this agent of the family could be discarded or disregarding. The agency of Polish women, and especially mothers was something that was distinctly tied to their prior established relations, and they found themselves in circumscribed and contingent relationships that could not be escaped. In our findings, we saw several breakups and shattered relationships, yet none of those produced outcomes where the relationship between child and mother was broken up. The husband, the father and the partner could more easily disappear and in fact, entirely lose contact with their child. While an entirely Danish context could give rise to a debate about whether a child should choose between father and mother, no such debate could be raised among the Polish women we spoke to in Denmark. We regard this finding as an affirmation of both dividuality of the motherly roles, and the women and the mother as the agent of the family. According to our findings, it is via the mother that the family is maintained and established or we at least find this to be true among our Polish interlocutors.

Between men, husbands and fathers in opposition to women, wives and mothers, we cannot simply elevate women in a relationship of parenting and family alone. What we found when we interviewed Polish women, is that their male counterparts in practice found themselves reduced to economic outsiders and providers that in a social sense, appeared distinctly different from their female partners. Even in the case of the childless couples we saw clear examples of differences in the sociality of Polish women and men when women acquired language skills to a far greater extent than their male counterparts. If we consider the centrepiece of a Polish family of migration as something matrilineal, then we can question whether there is a relegation of the man to a physical outsider during his initial migration to either the UK or Denmark, or if the role and agent of the family is assumed or “conquered” by the woman. We do not have a conclusive answer to the question, but we found an overweight of stories about migrating men, that were only later followed by their female counterparts. Such male migration was initiated by economic concern while our interlocutors initially remained in Poland tending to the closest family in the form of elderly parents, children, housing and domestic work. What we discovered was a physical detachment of men from the core concerns of the family, such that they became economic appendages and outsiders, while our Polish female interlocutors instead placed themselves at the centre of the family, and

thereby assumed the agency of the family while they tended to all the social relations and concerns. What we critically observed was that this frequent arrangement of relations was nothing out of the ordinary, there was nothing odd about it, and our interlocutors remarked on their absent and faraway husbands as perfectly normal. What we will argue is that the idea of an absent and detached husband existed among our interlocutors as a perfectly normal and at times necessary economic arrangement of family relations. And it is the normalisation of this arrangement that we see as a sign of a socialised matrilineal family unit, wherein Polish women find themselves and if we are to conclude anything about Polish culture, we would say that it is the free movement of workers within the European Union that may have strengthened and cemented a particular gendered and cultured arrangement of families in Poland, with women as their centrepiece, and men as loosely attached economic appendages.

Among our interlocutors, we understood such arrangements to be common. And there was no shame in it. Although we suggest that this family arrangement signalled a particular working-class position in Polish society that our interlocutors were aware of, it did not spur great emotion or disappointment. To have a faraway partner was simply normal and accepted. It was not ideal, but economic forces required it and for our interlocutors, it was not met with a great deal of regret. It simply was a family arrangement that was firmly embedded in the norms and culture of families in Poland.

To bring forth highly salient and critical findings for our further analysis stems in fact from reflections from our interlocutors when this family arrangement came under threat. And it was threatened and challenged by our Polish interlocutors themselves. As this paper is based on interviews with Polish women having migrated to Denmark, it is exactly when they consider migrating and indeed following their husband to Denmark, that their individual role as the agent and centrepiece of the family is challenged. It is when they move, and detach themselves from their children, their parents, their properties and their friends that their experiences are fraught with doubts, stress, concerns and consideration as they, as the agent of families, find great discomfort in their departure.

Ultimately, what we have found is that Polish women exhibit critical and indispensable roles in their families, in contrast to detached and far-away husbands. And it is when these Polish women, nevertheless choose to migrate and follow their husbands to Denmark, that this family role is threatened. When we questioned our Polish interlocutors throughout our

interviews, it was exactly the concerns for their families and the various fears and doubts about their migration that became salient and abundant throughout our interviews. In the following chapters, we will take a much closer look at these dividual findings by qualifying them via meaningful quotes and further analysis in detail.

Polish Women as Family

In this section of the paper, we will analyse Polish women migrants as a mitigating family unit. Our research points to Polish women as exhibiting various roles and relationships, i.e. the family relationships they perform constitute a divisible part of themselves, as their experiences are fraught with concerns and decisions about their family and themselves at the same time. And being both produces various difficulties for the Polish women. Where concepts like partibility and dividuality help us to better understand and make sense of this multiple-constituted personhood, migration elevates gender roles and this concept of personhood to an even more surface-level state. Either observable or self-evident, the process of migration, especially when understood as the journey together with its preparations and posterior movements and the situation in the country of arrival, highlights the special role in which Polish women find themselves and the performance of these roles in relation to their nuclear families, their partners and kids. And this is observable in the case of our interlocutors and informants.

Alina was the first person we were able to interview for our project. After cancelling two meetings in the span of just a few days, we were able to speak with her while promising to understand that she would not have much time to dedicate since she was really busy and sick. We spent around two hours speaking with her, as she told her life story and engaged with our many questions. Alina is the mother of four. Her particular situation garnered our interest early on because her migration to Denmark was not the first cross-border journey in her life. Our conversation began openly and Alina started to talk about her life 15 years ago. She has four children (one son and three daughters) and she is originally from a village in Eastern Poland. She was working in a meat factory in Poland and when her youngest child was four years old she and her husband struggled financially:

Maybe I will start from the beginning, so it's understandable. We had four children and back then, there was no '500+' (a social benefit introduced in 2016 by the current

Polish government) *in Poland, there were no benefits.[...] You know, it was hard, I had four kids [...].* (Alina, the 7th of March 2023)

As she explained, 10 years ago in Poland their financial situation was difficult and that was the time when she decided to migrate for labour for the first time. After a quick search, she moved to Italy to work as a caretaker, as a “badante” as she likes to call it in Italian:

Oh dear! Now that I think about it, I don't know how I survived it. She led me to the bedroom where this grandmother was sleeping. And she has such hair. It seemed so terrible to me. And then I stayed in the middle of the night, and there I was and this grandma started to scream like crazy. (Alina, the 7th of March 2023)

She spent three years in Italy taking care of an old woman in her eighties who she had no language skills to communicate with. She wonders how she “survived” the experience: The travel itself, which took two days, included an accident; the house, which she characterized as spooky and not modern, left a negative imprint on her and the family member who introduced her to the woman she was about to take care of for the following weeks, took her there in the middle of the night and just left. When she moved there, it was just a few days after she received a job offer from a friend who mentioned they needed people. As mentioned before, the economic situation was dire for them and needed money, which culminated in her migration. The interesting part was that, although poverty and thereby money was the principal factor cited to explain the reason for her migration and constant reminders of economic need appeared throughout the interview. For example, she mentioned that the money earned while working abroad was going to be used to build a bathroom, since they were using a bucket before that (Alina, the 7th of March 2023). She still invested money and time to visit her family every three months. Her salary was meager though, and she remitted most of her earnings back to Poland, with cigarettes being the only allowed luxury:

With those 500 euros, it was doable. i.e. I ate at my grandma's for free. It didn't cost me to stay in Italy. So I can say that I only saved myself for cigarettes. And the rest I sent to Poland. (Alina, the 7th of March 2023)

Her monthly salary was 500 per month and the visits to Poland every three months were therefore a large expense. Her story signals her dividuality and her matrilineal position as the

agent of the family. She found herself in the opposite situation that we initially found common. While her husband and children remained together in Poland, she was the one who appeared as an economic appendage. This position was extremely difficult for her to remain in and produced great stress and discomfort. It was for this reason that she chose to fly to Poland every three months, despite the little savings she mustered. The distance was something hard for her to cope with, a sadness made bigger, enhanced and her role challenged. Difficulties feeding both sadness and her position as a family, the two connected in a feedback loop. The frequency of her travels, when understood as the act of a “dividual”, heavily deepens our understanding of the situation. They are attempts to re-perform and temporarily reprise her role. A sort of heart-beating blood into nothing through a disconnected aorta, suddenly in its place when finally transplanted. Where men could remain as outsiders and economic appendages, she found herself critically challenged, as her motherhood and agency as a family were threatened with a laborious stay in distant Italy.

The reality of their economic situation, of the lack of resources and the need for money, was what produced the migration. Alina points out constantly their lack of resources, especially by pointing out how her husband’s “laziness”, as described by her, constituted a burden. By moving to Italy for work, she split the family and more specifically, her being away was a problem for its functioning. Her salary was welcomed, useful and necessary, but what ended up producing her return was a gap, a hole left by her. It seemed as if the roles she performed for her family were a bigger problem. As if the hole, the void left by her absence was bigger than her body since the way she constructs and performs her relationships with other members of the family makes it this way.

As we have observed in our previous work, Polish construction workers in Denmark, most of them -all of our previous interviewees-, are under a time constraint. Their life in Denmark, especially in the case of workers whose schedule places them six weeks in Denmark, the work one, and two weeks in Poland, the rest, leaves little time for non-work related activities. With ten or twelve-hour shifts five days a week, most of what is considered their free time is spent either preparing for work (doing groceries, batch cooking) or travelling from and to work in sometimes long commutes. Polish construction workers who reside in Denmark permanently usually have access to better work conditions, or at least, a bit more time outside work or work-related things, but the logic is similar. This is to say: the job and the role of Polish men in these situations revolves around working. In contrast, women as we

have seen through the present research, are responsible and take on bigger roles, bigger *parts* of the relationships. The women are to their family, *the* family, as a consequence of the big roles they not only take on but since they define what they are, the reason why Alina could not stay in Italy alone a longer time, the reason she had to move to Denmark and push and make the movement of the rest of the family happen. Interestingly, it seems as if migration makes this role more explicit by delimiting its sphere of action, like a black and thick outline on a drawing. What the family is, was expressed with their migration to Denmark. Yes, the nuclear family as the centre of the roles of the women was already present, as can be seen by her fear of “losing” her daughters once they start their own families. But once these individuals were together in another country, away from other family members, it was even more clear.

When asked about why she came back to Poland, she said that after those three years in Italy, she started to have reflections on her children growing up, she began to feel that she was missing very important moments in their childhood and adolescence. She then quit her job in Italy, moved back to Poland and told her husband that he had to start working, she said she gave him an ultimatum; Alina (7th of March, 2023 recalls: “After three years, I said: ‘Enough!’. I’m not going anywhere any more, I said: ‘Do what you want!’”.

Her husband was not working while she was working in Italy, and that was an obvious problem for the family’s economy. She confronted him, confronted him, and he ended up looking for and finding a job in Denmark, a journey that, according to her, he was not prepared to go through with. But he went, nonetheless, and she stayed, after finding a job for herself in Poland. More will be developed about this perception of laziness in the following section, but what we think matters in this one is the following: she came back because she did not feel good so long away from the family. Missing time, important moments and the life of her children's life felt more important, as they are part of her.

Not long after her husband started work in Denmark, their two oldest daughters moved there too and started their higher education, while Alina and the two youngest children stayed in Poland. She recalls (7th of March, 2023): “The fact that he was here and my daughter was graduating from high school the eldest and we said: “Try Denmark”. It is difficult to educate four children in Poland”

Educating their children was a hard task in Denmark, she said. They started and then kept trying. With him in Denmark, the country was now an option for all of them. First the eldest, and slowly, she and the rest of the children went through the necessary bureaucracy and completed the family migration to Denmark.

Therefore, at that moment half of the family (father and two children) was in Poland and another half (mother and two children) in Denmark. If we look at Alina's family as a whole migrating entity, we can observe that they found themselves in limbo. Half of the family was stuck in Poland while another half was already in Denmark and started their life there (work, studies, etc.). When we asked Alina why she decided to move to Denmark she answered: "Well, you can say that I came to Denmark... To bring the family together". Through her role as the mother of her family and the following of this script, Alina was the main representative and actor in managing the relationships and actions of the family as a whole. While the family was not *together* when her husband was away, he was considered and felt more like an appendix, than a limb. The *together* characteristic of the family was fulfilled when Alina was there, not because other members were less important but because the relationships were not complete without her partition, her giving to other relationships. While no items are distributed or gifted facilitating the visualisation of the partition of the person, tracking of the nature of the giving as part of the person, as we cited before "People also divide themselves off from one another in attending to one relationship rather than another, and I borrowed that term partibility" (Strathern 2018b). Polish women, as explained through Alina until now and as further developed below, allocate time to act on relationships and specific interchanges where their protagonism (the big part they are giving) and consequent responsibility (maintenance, movement) make them *the family*, the main actor in the internal relationships, driving force even in the lives of others.

Alina equates losing time with their children as losing them:

[...] *My youngest child was maybe 4 years old when I left him. And that's how my girls grew up, they were already starting to turn 14, 15 years old... I would be afraid that I would vegetate like this in Italy. My girls are going to get married and I won't know my own children.* (Alina, the 7th of March 2023)

Equates not having a relationship -physically, being present- with them as losing time, time that will not exist once they are old enough to have their own families, once they find their own set of relationships and nuclear family, once the relationship cord of the dividuality and the channel through which time, “part” is given, is gone. “To bring the family together” echoes through her narration. After her husband left for Denmark, two of her kids, the oldest, followed him. Somewhere between March and April of that year, she moved to Denmark too, leaving her youngest two alone, with the big one, who was not even 18, to take care of the other. We can see the echo, the vibrations in their needs: communication with her kids and needed paperwork.

Imagine, in June he broke his (her youngest son) arm. They call here. The child broke his arm. You have to do the operation. You have to look for a fax here to send the permission for surgery. (Alina, the 7th of March 2023)

Details not specifically asked are shared, their life is her life, their needs are her needs, and she is the active agent.

Bureaucracy is also dealt with by her. The tedious tale of its navigation lingers as the performed part, as the taken part of others. Writing papers and authorization for their sons, taking them to the municipality, filling and submitting the following necessary documents, the speed at which they are produced, the urgency in their words made explicit by thoughts clashing into each other, a timeline given, speed explained as a factor. She looked for a school, she thought, and she went. She applied without speaking the language, she finished the proceedings (Alina, the 7th of March 2023). She made sure to take care of everything their kids would need in the future, from legal documents that would allow them to stay to more general but daily life matters as school. What was hers but not *of* hers, given. Barbara (23rd of March, 2023), in a similar fashion, was not happy with her husband. She wanted and had intentions to leave for a while: “Well, I was getting divorced. And this is a rather dramatic situation for me in Poland, so I knew that I would leave anyway just to get away from my ex-husband”.

She clarified about her emotions and the way she was feeling, as well as the situation she was in. She repeated constantly the fact that she had to start a new life, that it was a new beginning. Among other things, complaints include time (Barbara, the 23rd of March 2023):

“At that time, I wanted to change my job, to be more, enough to be at home, not to work shifts. I had a husband and a doctor”.

Her husband at the time, a doctor, had really long shifts and a busy work schedule. That situation, which she also found herself in, was not working for her, especially since their two kids already had a school life. Here, we were also able to observe how she takes on responsibilities, roles and issues that relate to her kids:

The fact that I moved temporarily was because I wanted to send my daughter to a private school [...]. I also wanted to give her a better, better start and to quickly, she was able to learn Danish quickly and continue school. (Barbara, the 23rd of March 2023)

Through a dividuality lens, we can observe and understand her actions taken towards giving a better life for her daughter as a way to improve the part of her daughter which she, as a mother, had taken on. Bigger than herself, as we have been arguing for and making explicit, its weight and significance also grow, as is not in fact for another she cares about, but for the part-responsibility from the other constituting herself.

Not all of our cases and subjects have a necessarily or mostly bad relationship with their partners or ex-partners. These relationships, however, seem to be present all through our interviews. The reason why this matters is that they appear to us more present and constant, in ways that seem and feel more important, than the men gave them when we were talking and interviewing them. Their focus seemed to be, all in all, more geared towards their work life, work schedule and the like. And while one might be able to point out the fact that our previous project, unlike this one, was focused on the labour market, we would like to think that this is not the only explanation, not even the main one. Our question, we argue, focused not necessarily on the labour market but on time, feelings, and emotions in the previous project. And in the present one, the labour market was also something we specifically asked about and questioned them on.

With this idea, we would like to continue our analysis by talking about Dorota and Czesława. We met Dorota at the Polish Unionist Club’s meeting in 2022 during our first project but we did not really have the opportunity to speak with her. During our first visit in 2023, when we

attended a meeting to explain our project and ask for their help, we had the opportunity to converse with her a bit more.

She asked us, before her interview, if a friend of hers could join, and that is how it ended up happening. Our Polish-speaking member met them at a train station outside of Copenhagen, where they were waiting for her. After joining them in the car, the drive to Dorota's place took ten minutes. As our Polish group member recalls, the house was very Polish in its style and arrangement, as well as our interlocutors' manners: showing the house around, bringing a lot of food, proposing different beverages, and a Polish TV programme was playing in the background.

Dorota has been living in Denmark since the year 2015. As she herself states: "I came to work, I mean, I came here at the persuasion of a man whom I just met" (Dorota the 7th of March 2023). She had mentioned that she had come to Denmark to work and added her partner to paint a better picture. Economic reasons were present but it was a relationship and his influence that convinced her to move. Dorota moved to Denmark sometime after the death of her husband. A guy she just met, a future boyfriend, told her to move to Denmark. Here in the country, he already had a residence permit and was working. What can be seen as insistence from his side, we see and interpret more as part of the situation she was put in. Her ex-mother-in-law verbally asserted that she was not to live with her anymore, forcing her into an unstable ground, one where moving represented an opportunity to improve her life but not allow herself to become homeless. Dorota's boyfriend was working in Denmark, in the cleaning industry. He was in a rotation scheme, spending three months working in Denmark and then three months of holidays in Poland. One month after they became a couple, the man went back to Denmark and started to encourage Dorota to move in with him and work in the same system. However, she was not convinced:

First of all, I was afraid to come alone to this man, right? So I sent my son because he was in the "black" (black meaning: untaxed work). (Dorota, the 7th of March 2023)

After a month, a month which her boyfriend at the time kept asking her to come, she asked her son if she could join them in Denmark if it was safe, a viable option. She could not erase the fact that they had just met one or two months before from her mind and her doubts. Doubts about the place she would be going to, her hypothetical life. But when jobs were not

available, contacts failed due to unforeseen circumstances and the opportunity for her to do something was cut, it became a problem.

And then the problems began, and all my contacts that he was supposed to give me, everything got broken off and I could only work illegally. But he still found, somehow we found, a job for me to clean in a private company. I worked 15 days for three months. Oh, that's really a lot! (Dorota, the 7th of March 2023)

The sarcasm in her last sentence drives the point home. She wanted to work and earn money, not stay at home sitting, and not being able to find it was a problem. Although there were jobs available for her without speaking Danish, as said and offered by her partner, she felt it was not enough and passed the six Danish school modules.

Furthermore, her family relationships have changed since she moved to Denmark. The relationship that brought her to Denmark came to an end at some point over two years ago and a new one started, in this case with a Danish man.

But it's a joke because this Dane is not 100%! His great-grandmother... his father, his father had a Polish mother. So he already has some Polish blood. [...] There is an attraction between two similar people. Do you understand me? He is Danish, but it's like... not fully. (Dorota, the 7th of March 2023)

She also has a daughter back in Poland. Similar to other cases we have talked about here, it did not make sense for her to move since she was an adult. Moreover, an adult with a family, and children. She even lives with her husband's parents. The war in Ukraine almost "sent her packing", as her mother said.

Our next case, Edyta, was also in part pushed by this war to move. Here, what we find one more time, is members of the biological family that are separated and the roles of the mother do not reach out anymore. Age, in the case of the children, delimit and restringe the area their moms act upon. The roles and actions that they do "for" them, that they represent in their life. If they are no longer part of the family because they are either under the umbrella of another one (as is the case, for example, of Dorota's daughter) or at least old enough to be left alone to search for theirs or build their own life, the role the women play is not the same. This is not

always the case, since Alina and Czesława spend a good deal of their time with their grand-children. We think this is more a case of the extension of the relationships they perform in the context of the nuclear family, extended to grand-children since their daughters and sons spend a good amount of time working. And works where geography allows to, since Dorota's childrens stayed in Poland.

She feels that she is slowly becoming more Danish. Maybe not a lot, and she does have a Danish boyfriend, as pointed out by Czesława, who she can practice the language with. Some food she would never eat in Poland, she would. More than anything, labour conditions. Her daughter said that her *horizon* had completely changed, the same way her worldview had.

My mentality has probably changed a lot. At times my daughter says "You're acting like a rich woman!" Because I am a person who counts money a lot, but before much more than now. (Dorota, the 7th of March 2023)

Czesława's case is also quite interesting. She works with Dorota as a cleaning worker for the municipality of Copenhagen. Through our interviews, conversations and fieldwork it comes up constantly that cleaning is usually a job that a lot of Polish women take on when they arrive in Denmark. A number of our interlocutors have mentioned knowing another woman who is employed with a cleaning company. We have had people explaining to us how Polish-owned companies take advantage of newly arrived Polish women without knowledge of work in Denmark to pay subpar wages and labour conditions. Their employment right now, however, seems fair and good. They feel taken care of.

Czesława is in her sixties and she has been living in Denmark since 2011. When we asked her why she decided to come to Denmark, she said (Czesława, the 7th of March 2023): "And why did I come? Because my sons came".

Her reason for moving to Denmark was, like Alina also said, to bring the family together. Her sons had tried Warsaw to no avail. One of them owned a construction company, and instead of earning money, he was losing it. While in this predicament, they heard about a Pole who was advertising his business. Advertising DanStaff, from Denmark, a place where Dorota's son also works at. They had a lot of job offers, not only construction work. Cleaning and distributing newspapers were also available options. Her two sons eventually left and were shortly followed

by her husband, who looked to help them at the construction site they were employed at. She stayed in Poland first, with the other two children, but eventually dipped her toes, and in a similar phrasing to other Polish women, she said: “I for a bit, to see how it is”.

You know, there's other money here, other earnings. And that's how it went. And then Dominika came, and Ksenia, and I gathered everyone together. (Czesława, the 7th of March 2023)

Movement, and migration, were also facilitated at the time because it was significantly easier to get a yellow card, Denmark's identity card, through the person that had offered you the job. The other pieces made sense too. One daughter had already gotten married and had a child, so there were fewer responsibilities. The other kid had finished primary school, so it made sense. Once again we see how important is from the perspective to have a finished or concluded part of their life. While the end of primary school is not an arbitrary point, it seems to be given some importance. This relevance, which could be shared by finishing any other school year, seems to grow in importance as validating the movement since it shows that the moment is perfect. Her words are also not random but represent the topic here discussed. “I gathered” reflects both the significance of the act and who performs it.

Once more, the mother, the woman, manages the internal functioning of the family. For her daughter Ksenia, she made sure that there was a certain benchmark acquired (finished primary school) before moving her. The older ones, married and with their own families, were outside her role. In consequence, it was time to put the family together.

Denmark's welfare state and the advantages it offers absolutely matter when migrating and experiencing a new place. But it can be even more relevant when it allows them to take better care of their children, especially since two of them suffer from diabetes. She can not help it, the comparisons are there: healthcare offered in Poland is nowhere near as good as the one offered in Denmark.

We can see how different reasonings and explanations for moving, from fleeing to moving because of a new partner's insistence, to explicitly reunite the family under a similar logic and in the same fashion. We also have the case of Edyta who is an experienced worker with a background in agriculture. She worked for more than a decade in a Swedish company in

Poland, where year after year, she was getting better jobs and more responsibilities. Her explicit worries reference multiple issues, but again, her worry and mention of aspects of the family and their needs stand out on top of her other concerns.

She received all three of us at her house, no more than ten minutes away from the city's train station. It was one of the few interviews that we had the opportunity to participate in as a group. Her English was good and fluent enough for the topics of the conversation, but she also expressed an interest in expanding social circles and being open to opportunities to meet, talk and get to know more people, which ties into what we have been discussing in the case of other women and will be developed when examining her interview.

We entered a not quite big but also not small apartment part of a three-story building. The TV was on and a Polish TV music channel was playing. Behind, the windows let all the light of the sunny day in. We sat at the dining table, a middle-way between the kitchen and the living room, where she had prepared fruit cut in different shapes and sizes. Cookies, juice and water completed the setting. We started the interview right away after making some small talk and some stuff piqued our interest right away. For instance:

I need a few months to assimilate. I find this flat from Kommune [...]. I have a laptop, I have a translator, I push the button... I know maybe not everything, but I try to understand. (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023)

Being self-sufficient is extremely important for her, as she stated for herself: "I am a workaholic". Edyta quickly shipped multiple CVs, only to find a job soon after arrival. She is a very experienced worker. Her education, which was in the field of agriculture, is complemented by years of experience and a growing career in industrial manufacturing. Her position in Poland, as a manager, was hard for her to leave: "[...] Uh, oh my God. It was very difficult, especially with my workers, with my group at work."

According to her, she left her job after 15 years of employment, with an otherwise great relationship with her boss, and even a crying colleague, as she handed in her resignation. In a sense, she felt as if she was part of the company, as she specifically recalled how critical she was in the process of training new staff, in all things from the forklift to the IT systems.

All in all her departure was not lighthearted, and on top of this, finding a job in Denmark where her qualifications mattered was out of reach due to her not speaking Danish. This a fact she specifically mentioned, but has not deterred her at all, since she is already a few modules into the public Danish language course. Her hope is that once she is able to speak the language, she will be able to get a better job position, like the ones she has been applying to, like a big pharmaceutical company. In the meantime, she contends herself with studying and stays at her current job, which allows her to network and focus on the future.

We found that her story can be understood in a similar way that the others are also understood. The reasons cited for the movement are family-related. They have a connection to their role in the family, to this big performance (not as in fake, but as in outside of yourself). And those reasons not inherently related to these roles, are often articulated in a way that reminds of it. For example, when we asked her if she considered moving to the UK when her husband was there, she let us know clearly that it was a bad time. She was scared, and stressed; she mentioned twice that her kids were small, that they were in kindergarten. Bigger than herself, dealing with decisions regarding the well-being of her kids from the perspective of multiple disciplines was not dealing with external factors affecting other people. What it was, in fact, was the process of understanding and managing that part from others that was given to her. It was not time for her, for it was not the correct time for them either.

I got the job and I got a new flat in Poland. Okay. And children were in kindergarten, and I think it was not time [for it]. (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023)

And when we asked her about her husband's stay in Germany:

In Germany it was, uh, like Auschwitz [...] It was very bad. And I was one time in my husband's house in Germany. And I said: "You have to finish that. You have to go back to Poland". (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023)

In line with our previous research, her husband was performing a job outside of Poland in less than ideal conditions and was she who exercised the action of asking him to go back. Moved through worry, her decisions relate to what the family needs to do and the next step. While she was needed with her kids in Poland, she stayed. When the jobs her husband had or the places he was living in were not suitable for her or more members of the family, it made sense to leave in

Poland. When her husband's place of residence was not suitable for him, was not good for him, she asked, told and even demanded of him to go back. Following these, we asked her about moving out of Poland and why she did not try to go to Sweden. With her contacts, all her time in a Swedish company and how much they cared and valued her as an employee, it seemed like a logical step. But simply put, "Because my husband is here, not in Sweden". This matters a lot. She is once more behaving with the intention of keeping the family together and functioning. Especially how the context is completed with her next set of words: "Maybe, when he will be in Sweden, maybe, I will go to Sweden". The relationship is materialized through the acts that keep the material fabric of the family, which women take care of by assuring timings for travels or for different members to move out or back.

It might seem that husbands do not have much of an option since their role is that of the breadwinner. They are still affected by their personal situations. About being lonely, like many of the men interviewed on our previous project or here. She mentioned that her husband called her and asked her when would she join him, explaining his loneliness.

And he was, sometimes very depressed. And it was too long. And we decide, okay, I try to do something new [...]. (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023)

More and more, it seems that the role of the migration process is to push the limits on their respective roles. Loneliness, and harsher and unknown work and social environments might fill the book of the men's experiences. For the women, it looks as if the arms, the limits of the role they represent for the family, the family itself that they act as, stretch out, trying to accommodate new distances and whatever necessities arise from it.

She even complains about the alienating behaviour of Polish people (men) who drink and isolate themselves. That is the reason why she enthusiastically agreed to be interviewed by us or why she is making such an effort to learn Danish, to not be cut off and isolated.

Our next interviewee, Kinga, has been living in Denmark for a long time. We interviewed her in her workplace after working hours so we were alone there. She was very professional in contact with us, we sat at her office and started to chat. Kinga moved to Denmark in 2005 when she was twenty-three and now, at forty, resides in the country permanently with her husband.

They do not have kids and she has never wanted kids. When asked about the beginnings of her relationship, she said:

It was extremely difficult to be here alone, even though the relationship was at the beginning. The decision was that either we go, he comes and we stay here together. Yeah... Or I go back to Poland, and then we try something else. (Kinga, the 29th of March 2023)

A sentiment echoed by Jagoda, when she said “Okay, so we need to make some decision”. At that point, she had already lived abroad, in Belgium. A call from a friend offering her a job for a few months took her there. Jagoda has been living in Denmark since 2016, she was twenty-three when she migrated. At that point, however, freshly returned from Belgium, she, in a way, confronted her boyfriend. The relationship had been going on for a while, he had been living in Denmark for two or three months; it was time to make a decision, moving would include continuing the relationship. Iwona also came to Denmark after her boyfriend, but in her case, he was the one insisting on it.

For those without kids, their role seems smaller. Since they do not have to perform acts and activities for more members of their group, their attitudes seem smaller, and closer to “just” themselves. Like a better-suited glove; closer to their bodies, without room between skin and fabric. Perhaps, as a consequence, there is also room for more thoughts about themselves as individuals, self-development and opportunities that are only (or mostly) relevant to them as individuals. Hanna, thirty-three, does not hide it at all: “Firstly, I came to Sweden to my boyfriend”, but also: “[...] I really wanted to change something because I feel that I could stay in my town but not a lot would surprise me”. They moved to Copenhagen since she could not find anything in Malmö that would fulfil her, especially the fact that the Danish city was “more interesting”. This is her second time in Copenhagen since she had to go back to Poland. This time, she came alone, for herself. We would like to finish this section with our main point from this part: In connection with gender roles, women are members of the family. They perform and act for their members occupying, in a way, their self-space. As if given these parts of them, these roles and constituent components to worry about and manage. For those without kids, even when ages vary in a range of around twenty years, this extra space is smaller, which translates into more talk about the self.

As an addition to the analysis chapter on Polish women as family, we wish to dedicate an additional paragraph that closely examines our Polish women as mothers to their children. The purpose of such an analysis is to unpack the fusion between being a mother and being a family, and additionally analyse this fusion through the perspective on gender roles and feminism.

Quite a few of the Polish women we have spoken to are mothers. They have acted as mothers and they are women that have given birth to children. Naturally, we would state that there are mothers among the Polish women. Yet drawing on Strathern, we must also see motherhood as a form of deliberate enactment through actions and exchanges, in addition to a biological fact. Strathern points out that insofar as a woman and a man contribute to the creation of a new body, a child, they do so on an unequal basis. And in theory, we should see this inequality become apparent in the relationship between mother, father and child. As a short theoretical reiteration, the dividuality of the mother is clear, as she literally divides herself off to a new person when a birth is given, while a father's contribution is far more modest. As such a child will always be a part of a mother, like a mother will always be part of a child, because a mother grows one body into two, while the father's contribution is invisible to the naked eye and reduced to a mere sexual exchange while the mother-child division is a nine-month physical, visible and laborious process. While jokes about biological fatherhood can operate regarding the unexpected complexion of a newborn child, no such jokes can exist for mothers. They would be meaningless. It is perhaps because of this dividual gendered sexual difference and inequality, that we found no Polish mothers without strong and obvious relations to their children, while we listened to multiple stories of absent and disconnected fathers, who either deliberately did not take part in the lives of their children or were prevented from doing so. The principled and most immediate argument is that it is the very factual inequality in the production of a body that infuses women with the role of mother, and this mother role is in itself a gendered construction that is sourced in the dividuality of women. Quite literally in this case.

Firstly, as an interjection, we should quickly state that any retelling of a romantic or marital relationship and the reason for its later break-up will in all likelihood contain bias as frustrations, disappointment and heartbreak are stuck within such recollections. And even if we cannot hear the other side of the story from their male counterparts, the stories told are nonetheless truthful retellings of how our Polish interlocutors want to convey their

relationship to a former or current husband or boyfriend. It is outside the scope of this paper to account for divorces and child custody battles under Polish law, but divorces are lengthy and difficult processes in Poland, and the courts in Poland generally favour delegating the primary caretaker to the mother, especially when the children are quite young, which is sourced is a decision from the Polish Supreme Court that attests that “[...] the courts favour mothers of young children. The preference for the mother as custodian, especially of younger children, is explained by the alleged existence of the greater emotional commitments of women to children ” (Thomsonreuters.com 2023; Polish Supreme Court 1998). We are not going to attempt to derive the modern judicial system from Strathern's theory on dividualism even though such an exercise could well prove fruitful we believe. We do however see an effect from Polish law, as we have found Polish women in Denmark, that remain without any contact with their husbands despite the marriage being in full legal effect.

To move this analysis closer to the statements of our interlocutors, Barbara’s account of her move to Denmark was a difficult moment in her conversation with us:

[...] Well, I was getting divorced. And this is a rather dramatic situation for me in Poland, so I knew that I would leave anyway just to get away from my ex-husband [...] He would destroy my life... And my daughter's life... So it was primarily because of that. (Barbara, the 23rd of March 2023)

With Barbara's decision to move to Denmark being grounded in her relationships with her ex-husband, the tie between their at the time 13-year-old daughter and the daughter's father was effectively cut. In Barbara’s case, we initially felt compelled to ask further questions on this topic, but her emotional answer and her embarrassed and stressed demeanour prompted us to withhold them, and even as we approached the topic, she dodged us and with good reason, we believe. As students and mere strange visitors, we were too close for comfort. It was a difficult interview throughout.

In hindsight, we did not get too many answers about her departure with her daughter to Denmark, and we asked ourselves whether there were other reasons for us not questioning further. If for instance, she was a man and a father to her 13-year-old, we think to ourselves that we would have questioned how one can leave a hypothetical mother in Poland and “abduct” a child to Denmark. In a sense, we would say that, as we have equipped ourselves

with the theory of dividuality, we are offered a clear explanation as to why children find themselves attached to mothers. Namely, their dividual conception fundamentally is a gendered aspect that is derived from the very nature of human reproduction. So when we first interviewed Barbara, we did not question her ties to her daughter, nor found her cause for flight from Poland unreasonable. And surely her emotional state left us no doubt about her reasoning. What we wish to highlight though, is that the very aspect of a mother and daughter fleeing a husband is to us a plausible personal situation that we needed the theory of dividuality to really highlight how it is the dividuality of mother and child relationship that makes it so natural. In a sense, we can now state that a follow-up interview would have been very fruitful, had we been able to inquire further without exposing our interlocutor to harm or any discomfort. In the end, we did not conduct a follow-up interview with Barbara.

The exact nature of her relationship with her husband will remain unknown for the purpose of this paper. However, for Barbara, the move to Denmark was primarily an escape from her ex-husband. When we briefly suggested the dichotomy of yearning for something new versus escaping from something old, Barbara was quite clear in her language:

Yes I do... I do... I was actually travelling away from my ex-husband at that time. [...] I knew that I was about to start afresh. I was about to start my new life. I had to start over. In a new reality. I knew I had to learn to know this new reality. And find myself in that. (Barbara, the 23rd of March 2023)

This new life, this necessary change, was something that Barbara often framed around her daughter. Although we may be stretching our findings to their limits, Barbara's explanations were often reiterated in the form of a pair made up of Barbara and her daughter. Their moves were made together, and as a small family of just the two of them, Barbara enacted a small family of two, where the dividual relationships constituted both a unique mother and daughter relationship and a small family wherein Barbara acted as agent. Her success was her daughter's success. Her well-being was her daughter's well-being.

I came to Denmark with the intention of staying here. When I arrived, I took my 13-year-old daughter with me. [...] I made it not only for myself but also for her with the intention of educating her and giving her the best possible start. (Barbara, the 23rd of March 2023)

And, in another iteration of much the same statement:

I wanted to send my daughter to a private school because that's where I found her private school. I also wanted to give her a better, better start and to quickly, she was able to learn Danish quickly and continue school. (Barbara, the 23rd of March 2023)

In our eyes, Barbara and her daughter made a pair, that life and the concerns of Barbara were centred around. We should perhaps say that this pair need not be gendered, and a lone father could exhibit the very same concerns, however, as we discovered it was a pair whose actions and consideration were enacted by Barbara herself as the mother she is. These motherly concerns need not be a revelation in itself. One can easily claim that any mother would think like this or any father in fact. But perhaps it is the fact that it is the expectation of such behaviour that becomes the ultimate proof of the viability of the concept of the dividual. In what sense can we say that Barbara is an individual when she takes her daughter with her to Denmark? Or should we rather conceive of them as dividuals? In concrete terms, we could state that upon arrival in Denmark, Barbara and her daughter constitute a pair and a tightly knit unit without connection to their surroundings. Initially, they are just themselves, without a surrounding family or a network. And the legal guardianship that Barbara holds over her daughter, functionally and legally becomes the fusion of her and her daughter. And the moment of arrival Barbara's agency in and of the pair becomes her clearest expression of dividuality. She becomes larger than herself, as she is everything to her daughter and with her daughter.

Polish Women as Motherly Wives

In the following chapter, we will make the argument that Polish women, as we have found them, act and concern themselves with their husbands, partners and boyfriends in a way that mirrors motherhood and reflects motherly behaviour. We have listened to examples of Polish husbands and boyfriends being regarded as almost childlike and a break-up or a divorce has been regarded as a blessing when our interlocutor was relieved of not just a disagreeable husband, but also a dependant and dormant man-child. As a first hint to this phenomenon, the research group was exposed to a gendered division, when our interlocutor prior to the arrangement of our first interview, kindly reminded the only Pole and the only female

member of the research group, that she should not do all the work herself:

Kaja, you should not end up doing all the work, as is usually the case for us Polish women. (Dorota, the 26th of February 2023)

The concrete circumstance for this exchange concerned our initial data gathering, as we approached Polish women at a Polish labour union meeting in an attempt to find and locate informants. As the women we approached mainly spoke Polish, the task of establishing the first contact was delegated to the only member of the research group who spoke Polish. Yet the fact that it was the female member of the group that spoke, while the Danish and Colombian male largely remained silent, was a signal of a phenomenon that we found widespread among our Polish interlocutors. Male partners were frequently regarded as inferior learners of local languages, with Danish as the critical one for this paper. And as men were either unwilling or unable to learn Danish, our interlocutors signalled and exercised and revealed an endearing, yet sometimes frustrating infantilization of their male counterparts. In some examples, women found their partner's unwillingness or inability to learn somewhat cute and sweet, yet juxtaposed with disappointment as their inability to speak transferred social tasks and concerns from their partners to themselves. The cases of these non-Danish-speaking partners were numerous, and Edyta's answer to our inquiry about her husband's language skills serves as our second case (24th of March): *“No, my husband doesn't speak Danish because, in his company, the people have to speak Polish”*.

Even as Edyta explains how her husband's employer is an international company with multiple different nationalities employed, some employees remain inside ethnolinguistic enclaves, as she paraphrased her husband's employer:

“If you want to work with me, you have to speak Polish”. [...] And uh, I think it's not good because these guys are alienated. They are only in a Polish group. Yeah. Sometimes he speaks with Ukrainians, but I think it's not good. (Edyta, the 24th of March)

And even as Edyta was challenged by our need for her to speak English, her choice of the word “alienated” prompted us to inquire further:

I know my English may be not very good, but I came to speak with you, with other people, with my neighbour who speaks in English, etc. And Polish people after work are alone [...] I think it's not good to alienate. I think I have (to make) the first step to meet someone. (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023)

What our interview with Edyta exemplifies and what her statements reveal is both a case of a non-speaking husband, but also a phenomenon of labour-induced ethnic enclaves that traps or insulates male partners from learning the native Danish language. The discovery of her references to isolated men mirrors our findings from our previous research (Carvajal et al., 2022). Edyta's husband worked as a butcher and sausage-maker and the concrete circumstances of her husband's labour were physical hard work, where language skills were not developed. In our concrete case, Edyta lambasts and reveals a sadness about her husband's inability to speak and inability to engage and learn the local language, while simultaneously revealing a gendered environment of labour for men that constrains or limits men's ability to speak. What we detect here are two related phenomena that seem to suppress the ability of men to speak via-a-vis Polish women. First a gendered labour market and gendered labour conditions and secondly a gendered behaviour where women possess gendered roles that more readily invite engagement in social interaction. As we continue this chapter, we wish to engage both these phenomena to the extent that the quality of our interviews allows.

To qualify a further analysis of these phenomena, we wish to first confirm that Edyta was not alone in observing the vocal inferiority of her partner. Kinga and Iwona also had things to say when questioned about their husband and partner and their ability and willingness to learn the language:

He cannot hear it. He cannot learn it. He tried three times. (Kinga, the 29th of March 2023)

Similarly, Iwona:

We were going together to language school but he didn't finish all the modules. (Iwona, the 28th of April 2023)

Although the particular situations and life stories varied a lot among the Polish women we spoke to, the difference in the ability of Polish women and their male counterparts ability to

speak and learn Danish was quite noticeable throughout the interview. It was not a densely discussed topic in itself, as our inductive interviewing and research strategy has not designated language learning as an important topic and our interviews mostly aligned with the life of the women themselves as they recalled it, and our interviews were not directed towards their husbands when we conducted them. Nonetheless, our Polish interlocutors found themselves in situations where they either already had a much greater ability to manage social relations, or that they in time would gain it, which we ascribe to the gendered differences between women and men, and in this case Polish women and men.

The three male partners in question so far worked as a butcher, crane operator and carpenter respectively. The three men were identified as labourers whose nearest colleagues always also just spoke Polish. The relative isolation of these men from learning the language aligns well with the prior affirmation of them as potential economic appendices to the centrality of a Polish family, as discussed in the previous chapter of the analysis. Their inability to speak via-is-via their wives and girlfriends also produced, in our mind, a relationship that morphed a wife and husband into a mother and child. It was our Polish interlocutors who found themselves with greater responsibility in Denmark as their social skills and language skills enabled them to manage the relations and the social concerns of their husbands in addition to their own and elevated them to motherhood of sorts. In this sense, their experience and behaviour in Denmark can well be understood from a dividual perspective, as they took upon themselves several roles and executed enactments of such roles. They simultaneously acted as agents of their family, and juxtaposed spousal and maternal activities vis-a-vis their partner within the same material relationship. This is what we can gather from their experience in Denmark.

An interjection can be made here though to our argument above, as we detected an infantilization of men of sorts among our Polish interlocutors without reference to Denmark itself. Their stay in Denmark is not the source of this infantilization, but rather a location and lingual space that made it highly visible. In a sense, when the Poles we spoke to found themselves in Denmark, the mute Polish men compared to the socialising and vocal women made the infantilization obvious and immediately apparent. And we are already aware of the cultural artefact of the drunk and absent father and husband in Denmark, who instead of feeding their family, spend every Friday's paycheck on alcohol. Such artefacts and stereotypes are also in operation in Poland, yet rejected in this case (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023):

“They sit at home and not drink vodka every time. Because it's a stereotype about Polish people, no, it's not true”

Although Edyta spoke the best English she could, it is worth elaborating on what she meant. Edyta refers to the old trope of Polish men sitting at home and drinking vodka all day as a stereotype that is not true. Although we use the quote here to demonstrate, the idea of an absent or irresponsible father and husband is not something that we simply observe in Denmark. It exists as a fully-fledged cultural artefact in Poland as well. The point we wish to make is that an infantilization of Polish men can exist in Poland as well as Denmark. It exists in both countries. But it is in fact the experience of migration to Denmark that critically reveals the vulnerabilities and incapacities of some Polish men, as vocality becomes a critical new arbiter of this infantilization.

Alina serves as a critical case, for revealing and disappointing and frustrating relationship with an, in her words, incapable husband. For Alina, her experience of an irresponsible and absent ex-husband was very real and detrimental, while she was working in Italy:

He was on unemployment benefit, and he didn't get a job anywhere. And since he was always so clumsy that I did everything for him, he didn't work. And finally, I came. After three years, I said: 'Enough!'. (Alina, the 7th of March 2023)

Alina's “enough”, was the moment she decided to depart Italy for good and return to Poland to assist her family, as she clearly saw how her husband did not live up to the responsibility that her husband had in Poland, as she, as a woman, was the one that was an economic appendage to the family as she staying Poland.

With Edyta's and Alina's statements in combination with Dorota's initial remarks about “Polish women ending up doing everything”, we aim to reveal that the indigenous Polish stereotype of an irresponsible Polish husband and father, however real, becomes salient in Denmark. And to a certain extent, it becomes even more observable as we listen to our Polish interlocutors when they explain and reveal the deficiencies of their male counterparts. We understood Dorota's initial remarks as being made jokingly and as an attempt at feminine solidarity between her and the one female member of our research group. Jokes, however, tend to only be funny when they contain elements of truth. As such we read her comments as

being grounded in a reality that indeed is very real for our Polish interlocutors. Although we do not own extensive quotes that can elevate our analytical points to uncontested qualities, we would still like to interpret the individualisms involved in the arguments of this chapter.

When we see the smile of the Polish women as they regard their husbands, ex-husbands and boyfriends as either incapable or unwilling to learn the Danish language, we both hear and detect the endearment and affection involved, as they see their partners as something to be taken care of, nurtured and socially assisted. In this way, it becomes a possibility for them to build an even closer bond with their partner. Simultaneously, with Alina in mind, we also detect some of the frustration and disappointment involved as incapable partners overburden their wives with tasks and obligations that at times become entirely unmanageable and unacceptable. In either case, with good emotion or bad, we see individual perspectives where women and wives become agents of families, mothers to their children and indeed also mothers to their husbands. Our Polish interlocutors, we would say, traverse various boundaries inherent to individuals as they engage in roles and enactments that elevate them into relationships that cannot be merely tied to a unified role. They are both mother, wife and decision maker vis-a-vis a husband who appears both a man, a child and an indecisive mute. In a sense, we could say that the Polish women are overburdened as individuals, and by regarding them as individuals we can understand all the relations that they contend with. The dislocation of their boyfriends and husbands serves to elevate these perspectives in cases where they are far away in other countries when he initially is in Denmark, while she remains in Poland. But a different form of dislocation takes place when our Polish interlocutors learn Danish and their male partners do not. While the Polish partner can be physically far away in the first instance when the family is located in Poland, this dislocation can be reproduced as families migrate to Denmark instead, so the local language becomes a new arbiter of the centrality of women in families. In either locality or sociality, Polish men can find themselves as outsiders, while women assert themselves as agents of families.

Restated, we see a tendency for Polish male partners, to be outside the core management and concern for relations within families, as they are far away working in foreign countries. With Denmark being one such country. Their stay abroad turns them into economic appendages and outsiders to the core family, while our Polish interlocutors retain the sole responsibility for the day-to-day function of their family and the concerns for their children or grandparents. Our critical observation for this analysis is that the “outsideness” of the Polish men is

reasserted in the form of an infantilization of them as they over time become laggards in Denmark because they never or at least to a lesser extent learn the language. So when we state that our Polish interlocutors are the agents of their family, and retain the greater part of the responsibility for the maintenance and wellbeing of families in an immediate social sense, we will argue that their migration to Denmark and reunification with their husbands, does not relieve them of this responsibility. Where distance was the arbiter of family agency when the Polish women remained in Denmark, infantilization and muteness of male partners became the new deciding factor, where an unequal relationship in Denmark is reproduced vis-a-vis the decisions made on behalf of a family. Polish women simply retain a greater responsibility for the well-being of their families regardless of the place of being, where inequality is produced in each locality for different reasons.

Polish Women as Workers and Laborious Language Learners

The various themes and topics that have been analysed have led us to write this separate chapter on what we call “Polish women as workers and laborious language learners”. The chapter serves as a follow-up to the previous one, where we analysed how women become mothers to their husbands. The clue and the key finding that we wish to refer to here is the fact that we found the Polish women to be excellent learners of the Danish language, while their partners on the contrary appear as laggards and at times isolated individuals with little language skill and few learning opportunities. To confirm this finding we primarily refer to the interviews we have conducted with our Polish interlocutors in the making of this paper, as they refer to their open skill and the lack of skill among their husbands, but considering our paper on Polish male construction workers, we found similar trends in their isolation and language skills (Carvajal et al., 2022). In concluding that Polish women in Denmark learn faster, and speak significantly better, we are drawn to two primary causes. Firstly we regard the dividuality of Polish women as identified in their role as family, mothers and motherly wives that they inherit, take upon them, and condition them to solve social dilemmas and concerns of relationships that by themselves require vocality. In short, because they are both family, mothers and motherly wives at the same time, they need to be able to speak, to a greater extent than their at times isolated and distanced partners, who are relegated to economic appendages or infantilized male partners. The Polish women we have spoken to find themselves in these heavily gendered roles, of motherhood and indeed female agents of the family. This leads to a situation where they find themselves forced, coerced or encouraged to learn a new language, to socialise and vocalise themselves to a much greater degree than

their male counterpart. This is the first primary reason, which mirrors the findings in the previous chapter.

The second reason, which partly is the main topic of this chapter, highlights another factor on the question of language learning that we find critically important, which in this case is also heavily gendered. This factor concerns the nature of the labour and work itself, as various types of jobs require either less or more social interaction with clients, colleagues, superiors or sociability in general. One key observation concerns the physicality of the labour itself, as our interlocutors referred to their husbands and partners as being employed in physically demanding jobs, which at times through their exhaustive completion impeded social interaction. You cannot speak while drilling in concrete. Stuffing sausages does not offer pause for commentary, as you need to catch your breath while serving unrelenting machinery. Also, and following from our previous findings, time constraints of different types also resulted in fewer opportunities for conversation, with much of the week spent on cooking, commuting, sleeping and working. On top of this, we identified male partners as being confined to colleagues who spoke the same language as they did, which we in part blamed on the nature of their initial recruitment. We found partners that were recruited via recruitment agencies in large batches from the same country, which stood in great contrast to our Polish interlocutors who arrived often in a less organised fashion, so they had to knock on doors at cafes or look up cleaning companies. Polish men were recruited in groups, while our Polish interlocutors were on their own as they later joined their partner in Denmark. So, while we found Polish male partners employed in hard physical work within ethnic and linguistic enclaves, Polish women were employed as receptionists, waitresses and cleaners in situations that naturally invited and encouraged language learning and social interaction. And while their partners were recruited in batches as productive yet mute labour input in industries, our Polish interlocutors were often on their own as they navigated and weighted connections and relationships that could produce job opportunities or career advancement.

Edyta, for instance, recalled how she had pleasant interactions with various occupants of private houses in her job as a cleaner:

[...] I work for all Zealand. All Zealand. And it was very good because I know very nice people. At my first job, I met very friendly people. Yes. And my customer was very

friendly. I clean houses for him. And, they were very nice and helpful and sometimes like a friend. And it's a lesson for me. (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023)

It was also Edyta, that left the job that her husband still holds as a butcher because of the physical strain involved:

Yes. I tried to do that, but it's not for me. [...] You have the line is very fast. [...] And I have a big pain in my finger. It was a lot of hours and I think about it and no, it's not for me. (Edyta, the 24th of March 2023)

Edyta exemplifies a concrete circumstance, where gendered professions in the case of butcher contra cleaner lead to situations of social interaction that set Polish men and women on diverging trajectories of vocality and language learning. Concerning the previous chapter, we learned how Edyta lamented her husband's isolation in a physically hard job that constricted him to colleagues who shared his language, while she employed her social skills and her willingness to learn the language to find other job opportunities. In trying to understand the difference between Edyta and her husband, beyond the impact of personality itself, we wish to introduce a short discussion to qualify an argument.

Via reference to our theory of gender roles, we may be quick to assume that it is the physical characteristics of the man that burden him with physical jobs that naturally limit social interaction at large. Alternatively, we could claim that it is the gendered norms that are ascribed to a man that leads him to physicality instead of vocality as a general trope. Rather than entertaining a contest between the two, we find it appropriate to say that the two approaches continually reinforce each other, such that physically demanding activities infuse the gender role of men with exhibitions of physicality, which then imposes the next generation intending to tend to similar physical work. In the case of Edyta's husband, we suggest that his seeking employment in a physically demanding job instead of a more socially demanding job could well be caused by the gendered norms that he as a man enacts as a butcher and sausage maker. Either way, the discussion concerns the questions of whether physical demands to labour and work induce a lack of language learning and a mute Polish man in Denmark, or if gendered norms of physically laborious isolated and lonely men, push them away from learning the local language. Additionally, we could note that, as far as the Polish man is inscribed with the gendered role as the family breadwinner, we may ask

whether the physically demanding work also comes with a wage premium, such that the salary becomes the arbiter of gender distribution in sectors of employment, as women tire and exhaust themselves and later leave physically demanding workplaces. In the long term, however, we have also seen how our Polish interlocutors have progressed past current and past partners, in both status and income which ultimately is one of our main arguments in this analysis chapter. If there is a wage premium, to physical hard work, we would conclude that this is only temporary, as sociability and language skills become long-term arbiters of career paths, success and accomplishment. To confirm this finding directly, we would like to quote Iwona (28th of April, 2023): “Yeah, yeah, yeah. When I came, he earned much more than me”.

As we questioned her further concerning her desire to leave her physically demanding job as a cleaner (28th of April, 2023): “Yeah. I don't want this kind of job. I need an office job. Yeah. I have ambition, so I had to learn Danish. And afterwards, it started to go in another direction and I started to earn more than him”.

In Iwona's case, the language is absolutely clear and apparent, and a case in point. For her, there was a distinct desire to escape physical hard labour as a cleaner, while she simultaneously demonstrates an example of a temporary wage premium to physical hard labour.

Returning to Edyta, we should note that she did not shy away from sausage making in principle, although the difficult physical work ultimately pushed her away from it. She, nonetheless, still referred to having had female colleagues during her short period of employment. In terms of employment, we suggest that economic necessity and possibly a wage premium may push women to pursue employment in male-dominated sectors, while we suggest we will not find many Polish men employed as waiters and receptionists in Denmark. In a hypothetical sense with the theory of feminism in mind, we are tempted to say that, as far as we live in a predominantly patriarchal society and culture, we suggest that women penetrating the male-dominated environment can be seen as successful and a sign of progress, while men penetrating female-dominated environments as perceived as failures, exemplifying regression and emasculation. For this reason, we could well suggest that the labour market at large is culturally more open and flexible to Polish women than men, but the data we have gathered limits the reliability of this conclusion.

We wish now to draw on some additional examples of Polish couples that have produced divergence in language learning and labour market participation, and we have already introduced them in the previous chapter, where Iwona quickly was promoted to a receptionist at her hostel, while her boyfriend never succeeded in taking courses in Danish. He now works as a crane operator in the construction industry. As Iwona herself, has found employment within the Danish trade union as a liaison between Polish members and the union leadership, she fully testifies to the gendered dimension of the Polish workers in the construction industry (28th of April, 2023): “So we work mostly with Polish men. We have maybe four, uh, female Polish members, maybe five. And 195 men”.

We take Iwona's statement at face value and regard it as proof of gender divisions in the Danish labour market. But if the men are overwhelmingly found in the construction sector, in what sectors and jobs are the women employed then, and how can we see work as conducive to language learning? Let's look at that now, continuing with the case of Iwona. As stated in the previous chapter of the analysis Iwona got herself a part-time job in Denmark as a receptionist, and as she worked there, she took Danish classes at the same time. When we asked her how she felt after finishing the Danish language modules and courses, Iwona answered:

[...] I don't think I felt a huge difference because I think actually I learned most in practice. Yeah. Uh, in the, in the work. [...] When I started my education, my colleagues from Dan Hostel started to automatically teach me Danish and talk to me in Danish all the time. Even if I didn't understand a word. They just talked to me, and it was fantastic. (Iwona, the 28th of April 2023)

Iwona's experience is exemplary of our findings. Not only did she benefit greatly from her role and function as a necessarily vocal and social receptionist, but it also was a great and indeed fantastic experience for her, that in our mind propelled her forward and gave her much encouragement. In addition to Iwona, Jagoda's experience also serves as an excellent example of employment-induced language learning. Her encouragement towards learning Danish was a distinctly negative experience, however:

[...] because all of them asked me “Do I speak Danish” and I just arrived, like, I cannot (speak). So they didn't take my CV. So I was like, for one week I was just trying to, you know, just find something by myself. Still looking on the internet, but mostly I was also visiting some cafes or bars to try to just apply for a job. But all the places when I approached, they asked for Danish, so I couldn't apply. (Jagoda, the 2nd of March 2023)

Two lessons can be drawn from Jagoda's experience. The first one concerns language skills as a barrier to entry-level employment in the Danish labour market that requires Danish unlike butchering or construction work. Secondly, her journey towards employment was entirely unmediated. No agencies or networks facilitated contact between her and a potential employer. Jagoda was fully vocally and socially engaged when she first arrived in Denmark. She was on the street and alone. Jagoda did find employment eventually, but as a cleaner with a Polish employer, a woman, in Denmark. Jagoda's language skills were still found lacking in her experience, as she engaged with her newfound employer (2nd of March, 2023): “But she's like: ‘You Polish people’ [...] she didn't consider herself like a Pole anymore. Because she could speak Danish, you know, so she was really like above us”.

The statement by Jagoda is interesting for multiple reasons, and it constituted one of the very rare references to transnationalism; a theme we initially wanted to explore in this paper. Firstly, her lack of Danish language became an issue, even in an entirely Polish-speaking setting. Secondly, the statement also reveals a particular imagined transcendence, as if a Polish person can transcend into a Danish and indeed “better” or superior person via language learning. Even if this idea of transcending Polish into Danish was a particularly personal and standalone experience among our interlocutor, there was no doubt it was another frustrating experience that revealed the benefit and necessity of learning Danish. Jagoda eventually quit her job as a cleaner and eventually found a job at a café without being able to speak Danish. It was, however, her job at the cafe that served as the final impetus for learning the Danish language:

So actually when I started working at this cafe, [...] there were so many Danish people coming every day talking Danish to you and of course, I said every week I said: “I understand something” because they kept speaking Danish to me. [...] It's like: “Okay, I have, I know something, so I would like to learn”. (Jagoda, 2nd of March 2023)

With her statement, we see clearly how Jagoda's experience of labour in Denmark induced her to learn Danish, and it was indeed the experience with her customers that pushed her towards taking Danish classes, which she did in the end. As a final example, Hanna's experience also exemplifies labour-induced language learning:

[...] It was a really nice interview at Scandic Hotel and a lady was surprised about my experience and I was happy. And in the end, she explained to me that she hasn't had an available offer (for) a position now, but in the end she explained to me that at this Scandic Hotel, I need to speak a Scandinavian language. (Hanna, the 10th of March 2023)

As Hanna did not find employment with the hotel, she later much like Jagoda found employment as a waitress in a restaurant, where she also had ups and downs with her customers as she welcomed an elderly couple as guests.

[...] I welcomed them. I was nice. I was smiling. They just sit down next to the table and I go to check something. And when I come back, they left, and they left a comment on the internet and my boss told me that they are very disappointed about the situation in the industry and it is my boss fault that when I, and they describe all the situation and they really make this, put this information that I was nice, I was smiling, but why I don't speak Danish". (Hanna, the 10th of March 2023)

Beyond the experience of Iwona, Jagoda and Hanna, we have multiple other examples of labour-induced language learning among our interviews and interlocutors, where the function that they served during their work either pushed, encouraged or induced them to learn the Danish language. When we combine this learning, with our interlocutors' various expressions of frustration and disappointment in husbands, boyfriends or ex-partners who do not learn the language and remain incapable of speaking Danish we identify a particularly gendered phenomenon that separates Polish men and women. We regard this separation and bifurcation as something that sets Polish men and women apart on trajectories where women progress, learn and grow while men remain stuck both in status, income and personal development. And we regard individualism and the highly gendered dimension of it as being the ultimate source of these various trajectories, which in combined allows a feminist argument.

We may also refer here to the previous chapter, when we explained how Kinga and her Polish partner also revealed bifurcation, as she progressed far beyond the speaking ability of her boyfriend. Her case is also interesting, as she was recruited together with her husband via recruitment agencies in Poland. She was not the one, wandering the streets and knocking on doors, nonetheless, she still found herself under social circumstances where she had mastered Danish to a greater degree than her partner. Through her various employments, successful language courses and a university degree from Copenhagen University, Kinga now finds herself employed as a recruiter in the very same type of company that initially recruited her. Her partner works in the construction industry as a carpenter.

The interview with Kinga was not conducted without difficulties, however, which led to circumstances where we spoiled and shared some of our preliminary findings with her during the interview, just as we were about to close it. Since she had an academic background herself, she was quick to interpret our questions as well, which risked our data gathering. Nonetheless, when we concluded with her, we found breaks up of Polish couples leading to women staying in Denmark, while Polish men left and moved back to Poland. Additionally, we also shared the fact that we found Polish women to be much greater speakers of Danish, with Kinga being a good example herself as she is completely fluent. As we spilled those details she quickly commented: “But you know what my theory is on them? It is because women are more social than men!”. For the purpose of this analysis, we propose that this “more social than men ” specifically refers to the highly gendered expressions of dividuality that we have explored and examined through the various chapters of our analysis in this paper. Their role in their families leads them to situations where language and communication are needed.

When we apply a feminist theoretical lens to the aforementioned analytical points, we see a partial reversal of the core feminist argument about a male-dominated and patriarchal world. Initially, we regard Polish women in Denmark as challenged by various circumstances they find themselves in. At face value, the women we have spoken to reveal several concrete challenges that, from their perspective, are less prevalent among Polish men. Firstly, the experience of migration for women appears less mediated. While male partners may be recruited from abroad and later dragged and transported to Denmark, the Polish women that later follow their partner need to look for jobs themselves and find themselves in a more

precarious position as they shop around and ask around for employment, in ways men do not. On top of this phenomenon, we see the tendency for greater vocality and greater ability for women to learn the languages, which we explain by women being challenged by the labour conditions offered to them in a heavily gendered labour market. In short, serving Danish customers at cafes requires Danish, but building houses for them or stuffing sausages does not. In these ways, Polish women experience greater challenges at the onset of their migration than men do, which signals that men supposedly have it easy in comparison. What we then observe however is that Polish women appear to be as successful, happy and better off in the long run, as they learn the language, and they learn to navigate the labour market on their own. We can then condense the argument, and in the most simplified form say that because Polish women have it harder, they learn more and gain more, such that they become better off than their male counterparts later. As seen through a feminist lens, in a Danish context, differences between men and women, and the gendered roles they find themselves in create initial inequalities between women and men, then are then rectified and reversed over time, and women become the “winners” and the source of success stories.

In summary, we see how the dividuality of Polish women, the nature of their work and their experience of navigating the labour market are heavily gendered aspects, that stand in great contrast to the experiences of their male counterparts as they have retold it, and the knowledge we have gained from our previous work with Polish construction workers (Carvajal et al., 2022). And while these heavily gendered aspects at times have produced both great distress and difficulty among our Polish construction workers and current interlocutors, we are inclined to state that the social, and indeed the demands to the dividuality of our Polish women make them more powerful and better off in the long run. Powerful in the sense that they become much more capable of dealing with issues that may concern them throughout their life in Denmark via social skills and their ability to communicate. And better off, in the sense that their development pays off in the form of financial comfort and general well-being. What we mean to say is that the dividuality of Polish women makes them both the agent of the family, motherly wives and excellent language learners. Since they possess critical roles for their children and even infantile husbands, they appear to us with responsibilities that, once managed with success, give and attribute them with skills and abilities in social circumstances that lead to better lives in Denmark in the long run. As we have gathered, our Polish interlocutors appeared to have fared better and enjoyed a greater quality of life than their male counterparts. We find our interlocutors to have gained skills, progressed careers and mastered

the elusive Danish integration to a much greater extent than their partners or sometimes previous partners, and as stated earlier, we identify these various gendered aspects of dividuality, sociality and labour as the ultimate source of these difference between Polish women and men in Denmark.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of our paper as they have been presented and analysed. Firstly we wish to discuss possible bias in our findings, that ultimately is sources of bias found in our interviews and among our interlocutors. When we discuss this topic, we do not see it as an attempt to invalidate our findings, and thereby reduce the validity of our findings. We find our findings to be valid within the methods and theories we have applied to bring them about, but our findings may not be entirely representable for the entire case as we have stated it. As the case concerns Polish women in Denmark, we can state with that we have only been able to engage a very tiny snapshot of all Polish women in Denmark, and even as our stated goal for this research never was representability, it is still worth it to discuss our interlocutors and what possible sets them apart from the majority of Polish women in Denmark. This discussion may take an onset in our initial attempts to locate interlocutors. As our main path to identifying interlocutors were mediated by our visits to and contact with a Polish branch of a Danish labour union, we already situated ourselves with a group or an enclave of Polish men and women, that found themselves within certain professions and with certain needs and concerns. Most we would say, are found within professions and jobs within the sectors of construction, cleaning, hospitality and restaurants. As such, we know for sure that we have avoided Polish people that either find themselves entirely outside the labour market, while also not meeting Polish women employment in other professions. Certainly we have avoided Polish women employed within professions that require degrees within higher education as those found within universities. That is not to say that the women we have spoken to did not hold university degrees, but rather that we have found them employed in professions where their hard earned skills were not officially applied. Barbara for instance holds a masters degree in political science, but the professions she had been employed in in Denmark were social care work and nursing.

These concerns for representability within our group of interlocutors have not led us to amending the concrete case concerning the methodology of this paper. were We considered designating our group of interlocutors as a particular subset of Polish women that shared particular characteristics such as social status and class. We also considered narrowing down the geographic and thereby constructing a case that had spatial constraints as well. Neither seemed reasonable to us. As we spoke to Polish women both living in central Copenhagen, its suburbs and indeed in small towns in the countryside of Zealand, we did not find a

meaningful way to spatially limit our case within Denmark. Similarly, even as we located interlocutors without the Polish section of our labour union and via labour union related facebook groups, we did not amend our concrete case, as we have not been able to find unifying characteristics that warranted designations such as class & socioeconomic status. In a sense, the issue at hand is that we maintain a sneaking feeling, that the various themes and topics and concrete concepts that have been discussed have been informed by a relatively narrow set of interviews where relatively few, but very intense recollections of events have guided central conclusions and findings in this paper, and as such it may be very worthwhile to collect many more interviews in an attempt give the concrete findings greater robustness and representability. Again though, we should stay that even as our findings may not offer a lot of representability, we remain steadfast that they are indeed very valid. We are certain that if we look across all the 20.000 or so Polish women in Denmark, that we would be able to find thousands that would share many of the concerns and contentions offered across our interviews.

Another source of bias in our data can potentially be found within the subset in the labour union setting that most of our interlocutors found themselves in. We can discuss the potential bias in our data, as more capable and willing women may have talked to us. Our observations and findings show women are more apt for higher-paying jobs. The circumstances of their migration and their roles in their family constitute a material reality that helps them get along better in the job market. One of these important skills is their ability to learn Danish, either faster, better or simply going through the modules while the men do not. However, while they might represent a valid or medium portion of the general Polish population, the possibility remains that the people that we interviewed represent a group of more ready and willing to speak a foreign language such as English or to jump on the opportunities to connect with non-Polish-speaking people such as us as interviewers and researchers. This might be traced back to the methods used in the process of finding our interlocutors. The first selection bias appears here, we approached them through their organisations and their contacts, and in consequence, the women who would (possibly) be part of the sample are women who have already made a move to be part of an organisation or maintain contact with its members, which need not be the case of the general population of Polish women in Denmark.

Another selection bias corresponds to the act itself of participating in our research. A contact and email were shared for those willing to participate and, again, those who approached us

represented a section of the sample more eager to engage in the research. Therefore, when the agency is theorised as a trait born out of their gender-informed roles in the family, that their material position in Denmark takes them further than the men, we have to consider the possibility that, due to the already agency-informed step to be part of the study, we have interviewed women that are, by themselves, more willing to engage in external opportunities. A trait that may be particular to them, not of the descriptions we have observed and made about the general female population, can skew the data and our conclusions. Taken at face value, it is possible that we should have used this information to amend the case as well, but in this way any social research would be exposed to such bias. It is an issue that subsumes its own solution, as any attempt to avoid interlocutors that too readily are willing to participate, would produce an unsolvable problem. As such, it is a bias that we simply have to contend with as social science researchers.

Finally we should point out in this discussion, that although we strictly refer to the perspectives as they are by the women themselves in our research question, we do not refrain from discussing the plight, attitudes and situations of men in this paper. This is entirely justified as men is a topic that our interlocutors discussed. Even if the perspectives offered by women are perfectly valid, it is still meaningful to discuss whether a paper like this would have benefitted from also interviewing men. If just a few at least. Perhaps not all questions would be directed towards male counterparts, but it could have been worthwhile to include them as counterweight or indeed nuance. We only interviewed Polish women, and we found them in situations where they did not always refer to their exes and previous partners or even current partners with kindness, and it was partly with great frustration and disappointment that break-ups were recollected. Naturally, we regard such perspectives as trustworthy and honest perspectives, but they are also highly intimate and for this reason, there is cause for considering bias in some of these findings and for this reason, we can consider our findings highly contextual. When Barbara referred to her husband in Poland as someone that would “destroy” her, we have no doubt that had we confronted the husband, he would have replied with something else than “yes”. In other words, worse. We regard our findings as fully valid in term of having their origin in the perspectives offered by our interlocutors themselves, But we should still say, that our findings could have gained novel perspectives, by just in very small amount corroborating our findings with interviews conducted with new male interlocutors. Its entirely possible to create a followup to this paper, with such aims in mind.

On a different note, we would also like to briefly discuss our use of the theory of dividuality. Throughout the whole project, we have argued for the use of an alien theory when addressing migration phenomena, often comparing it to the work interdisciplinary support can offer for breakthrough novel analysis and understandings. How has dividuality and dividualism worked out as a theory for our project and has it helped in a way other theories closer to the field of migration would not have been able to? We argue that, as it is, one of the strengths of using a theory taken from another context (not necessarily dividuality) is how much it brought us away from descriptive analysis. While nothing is necessarily wrong with being able to capture reality in words, a theory that would have only facilitated the action of describing their lives, would not have allowed for a bigger understanding. A one-to-one analysis, not as riskier when engaging with social life, cannot deepen our understanding. In the same way, a change of glasses might help to discern the buildings and structures in the town you are walking through, walking up the mountain and looking at it from above, might give you a different point of view, one less evident and with more possibilities. As for the theory of dividuality itself, we think it fits perfectly when the subject relates to roles and human relations in closed groups, as nuclear families often are. Where the repetition of interactions gives room to apply a lens that observes them as part of an interchange of parts.

CONCLUSION

In this section, we intend to respond to the research questions posed in the initial stage of the paper and present the final reflections on the analysis.

The primary research question of this paper is “From the perspective of Polish women in Denmark, how is their migration experienced?”. To that question, we can answer and conclude that the migration experience of Polish women in Denmark is overwhelmingly a gendered experience, where Polish reflect on their own experience and the experience of male counterparts with differences and inequality. It is an experience where Polish women find themselves in a situation with many social responsibilities and concerns that they do not share with their male counterparts, be it husbands, boyfriends or indeed ex-boyfriends. And as seen from the core theory of dividualism we see that the perspective offered by the Polish women, reveals them as persons with multiple functions and roles, so that they divide themselves into being different persons to different family members. Through our research, we have shown, with examples and empirical data, that Polish women who migrate to Denmark experience a process that strains their relationships within their nuclear family. By using the theory of dividuality we have managed to deepen our understanding of their role, influenced by upbringing and gender roles, in their families. Likewise, through the understanding of Polish women as dividuals, we have demonstrated why the distance produces specific stress on their roles and actions, which we have seen expressed in two main ways: Polish women as family and Polish women as motherly wives to their partners. We have also demonstrated that Polish women experience themselves as part-takers in a labour market that, to them, appears as heavily gendered and fraught with differences and inequalities between men and women. On that note, we have also demonstrated that as women learn and acquire language skills to a greater extent than their male counterparts, such that the preliminary position on the labour market vis-a-vis their male counterparts, switches from one of precarity and inferiority to one of comfort, success and superiority.

Regarding the secondary research questions of “How do Polish women concern themselves, overcome and contend with the experience of migration and its gendered aspects?” And “How can the gendered roles and intimate relations of Polish women’s migration experience be understood through the lens of dividualism?” We can firstly conclude that Polish women concern, overcome and contend with their experience of migration in various and varied ways. First, the initial decision is fraught with uncertainties, doubts and hesitations as Polish

women weigh the various concerns for husbands, children, employment, security and property, prior to the decision to migrate. We have demonstrated how the schooling of children can slow or hasten the decision to migrate. We document how the concern for careers and employment security may affect the choice to migrate, and we see how intimate relations and romantic longing for partners may turn a calculated decision to migrate into a hasty and passionate move into precarity and insecurity. We have also analysed and described various concerns for both husbands, children, employment and personal well-being that may be weighted and juxtaposed against one another as various concerns may tip the balance towards migrating to Denmark, or later in life tip the scale towards either remaining or leaving Denmark should the opportunity to return to Poland arise. And finally we also document how Polish women find success in your reflections about their own development, language skills, careers and employment and the wellbeing of children gives them comfort, satisfaction and happiness.

On the question of how we then can understand this migration experienced through the lens of dividualism, we have demonstrated how the theory of dividualism has allowed a levelling of a focus towards separating and reframing the various roles of functions that taken upon themselves, such as the family itself, motherhood towards their children, the role of spouse and wife and indeed also the role of mother to their husbands. Furthermore, we provided a gendered context for the development of their personhood performance throughout their migration experience taking into account that when growing up in Poland, gender roles heavily inform the way Polish women interact in the context of their families. Their role takes on parts from the other members of the nuclear family. Kids and husbands delegate and give a part of themselves to their wives or mothers to perform, act, decide and work on. Polish women's embeddedness in the family makes sense when understood as them being the family itself. The role performed and the parts taken are a composite of the bigger parts of the family.

Here, is what we call "Polish women as family", with the role women perform as members of the family is that of the family itself. Family as a bigger entity with cohesion and togetherness as a priority, where decisions are taken for others as the personal issues affect the general standing of the family and, in consequence, are handled by the one that represents the family unit. This can be observed in the personal troubles women cite when being away from their families, by the rationalisations that justify a kid being old enough to travel, to migrate.

“Polish Women as Motherly Wives” is our way of describing the often shared feelings of our interlocutors about their partners. Men who, though isolated from Danish-speaking people and surrounded mostly by Polish-speaking people, look (to the women) unable, frustrated and full of difficulties when the topic of learning the Danish language is brought up. Migration once more exacerbates previous and existing concerns, with women finding more and more their position in the family, even to them, as that of the mother, shown on different occasions as amusement or, often enough, frustration.

It is important to note and understand the role that migration has in all of these. The dividuality of Polish women and its described and observed materiality, the actions, feelings and observation that composed their bigger self, their parts in others, them as family, as motherly wives, as are not a consequence of migration. It does not create this dividuality; this partition is more a consequence of gender roles and their socialisation in Poland. But what migration does, is colouring the experience of dividuality. What migration provokes, is a crisis. Their dividuality works in a specific cultural context. The word working here should not be taken in a functionalistic sense, is not that dividuality constitutes a social institution that preserves the cohesion of their society. As we have seen, precarity, economic struggles and unequal relationships are prevalent throughout their life stories. The point is more specifically that dividuality, and its limits, are not tested the same way while being present allows its roles to be performed. With Polish men’s and women’s paths converging and diverging constantly in Denmark, and as members of the highest foreign-born population in the country, understanding better their individual motivations and logic that govern decisions and movements becomes a higher priority day by day.

Lastly, we pointed out the real-life consequences this might have while addressing employment opportunities and jobs Polish women have, as they appear better prepared. We have noted that it might be a consequence of their position, as dividuals, in the family, and aspects that seem to characterise the migration of women from Poland. Fundamentally, the lack of streamlined jobs, having to hustle, and look more, together with a more spoken role in the family, one characterised by managing bureaucracy, needs, decisions, movements, etc. In some cases, they end up “better off” than their male counterparts, and also more willing to stay in Denmark.

PERSPECTIVATION

In this section, we intend to add another layer to our research experience which will reveal our less pragmatic but more relational experience of the research process.

While trying to fill the gap found within the studies about Polish women, we encountered various difficulties that were not present during our first research on Polish male construction workers. Even though we thought we knew our target group, the research process dynamics were different. For instance, found ourselves in more informal and private environments that we had to learn how to navigate; while with the male construction workers, our place of encounter was mostly their workplace or camps where they lived with other workers, in the case of Polish women, we were mostly invited to their homes, for dinner or coffee. The environment was more private which was challenging because it was easier to forget about our researcher's role while drinking wine on Sunday than while visiting construction sites - places we are not familiar with. It is important to mention that we did not have any private relationships with any of the interviewers in any of the two projects. Having said that, we consider this observation relevant as it contributed to the choice of the theory we made; as Polish women introduced us to a bigger extent to their private lives, we considered their social life a significant subject to examine. However, the generosity of our interlocutors resulted in a long process of interview analysis and searching for the themes and, eventually, the theory.

Furthermore, we noticed some practical differences in conducting the research, for instance, one of the group members who is a Polish woman herself felt safer and more comfortable during the process as visiting women lacked any potential misunderstandings about the meetings' intention; and in consequence, conducted some of the interviews alone without the need of assistance of other group members which was needed during the first project about Polish male construction workers.

It is important to mention the reason why in the case of this project we did not narrow down the group to one profession or field as we did in the previous one about Polish male construction workers. This decision was made due to one of our findings, that is to say, women's lack of stability and therefore, developed flexibility in the job market.

As discussed in the previous chapter, we have been at risk of bias through the women we have had access to, risking skewing the data. Here, we would like to add its relationship to our condition as students, and as such, our limited time and resources. While we still pursued some kind of generalisation, as narrow as our scientific integrity would allow us, we wonder about its limits when it is not a poor methodology that is applied, but the impediments of our life outside of university, even when this life allows this research to happen. Constrained by the few months that constitute the thesis timeframe and what we considered a short time for our aspirations and ambitions, setting up interviews, our main data recollection method depended not only on the availability of our subjects but also on our work schedules. This situation was only made worse since we needed, most of the time, our Polish members to be there.

Hence, our additional consideration here looks to expand on our assertion of biases. Depending on a single source of informants makes this risk higher, but limiting the already limited time for data gathering (to give enough time for analysing it) as a consequence of three different student-work schedules did not help either. Especially, when working inductively, since the process of finding a theory to apply it is made in a more exploratory fashion.

On a different note, we would also like to take a moment to talk about personal ethics and the importance of building a rapport with your informants, and small difficulties we found interesting enough to talk about briefly. During the process of interviewing our informants, we often found ourselves entering their homes and sharing meals, snacks and similar with them. This was, of course, by design, and not an accident. We intended to interview them in a place where they could feel the most comfortable, avoid the need for them to travel and observe their environment, a context that could be useful when trying to understand them. Food, beverages, and snacks were always offered to us, which resulted in awkward games and weird avoidances. Two of the members of this research are vegan and as such, choose not to eat animal products. But what do you do when eating, accepting someone's hospitality, is a first and incredibly important step to building trust between informant and researcher, a trust that if lacking, would make the data gathering extremely difficult. We found ourselves in situations where we had to awkwardly reject the only food available with lame excuses, hoping to change the topic quickly, hoping that our informants would not insist, while at the same time questioning the ethical component of maybe not lying but at least returning that

trust we were so worried about building. Once, when our informant was in the bathroom, our non-vegan partner ate a chocolate and made sure to leave the wrapper in front of another, so it could look like she ate it, and that we did not reject their hospitality. This also came into play when shopping for gifts, like chocolates, to give to our informants. Were we being deceptive? Did we incur unethical behaviour hoping to avoid more difficulties in our data gathering?

Finally, we would also like to appeal for the reasons behind our study. While the demonstrated gap in the knowledge relating to Polish women in Denmark exists and opens the place for a needed understanding of their lives to inform a better integration and their quality of life, that is not all. During Ghassan Hage's opening speech at the 21st Nordic Migration Research Conference in Copenhagen, he appealed for research out of interest. Migration is not a political issue, and while the particularities of the presented case require attention for their importance at a societal level, as they inform the lives of so many people and co-existence between continuously growing groups, that is not all. After researching Polish men in the construction sector, Polish women, an under-researched group, seemed like the next logical step. We intend to fill that gap, a gap that caught our attention.

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APPENDIX

The transcriptions of the interviews have been added as an appendix to this paper as a separate upload. Please see the separately uploaded document it has been supplied to the upload portal. Notably via DigitalEksamen which is accessible via digitaleksamen.aau.dk