

**Migrant women's cross-cultural adaptation –
the case of Polish immigrants in Ireland**

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Feminisation of migration (Castles 1998)

- Towards recognition of the female experience of migration
 - Phizaklea (1983): 'One way ticket'
 - Morokvasic et al. (1984): 'Birds of passage are also women'
 - 'Women on the move' (1984): contributions from Morokvasic, Abadan-Unat et al.

Feminisation of migration

- East-West migratory space; 1 million Polish migrants since 1989
- ½ million Polish migrant women in Europe
- Increasing recognition of Polish migrant women in Europe
 - Mainly study of Polish diaspora in UK & Germany
 - Temple (1999, 2001); Morokvasic (1993, 1994); Coyle (2007)

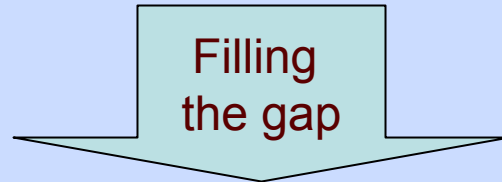
Feminisation of migration

- Feminisation of Polish migration in Ireland
 - No account of female Polish migration in IE
 - Focus on Irish emigrant women: Gray 2004, O'Carroll 1990, King 1991, O'Sullivan 1995
 - Lentin (2000, 2002,3,4): various studies & focus on African women
 - Luibhéid (2004): Asylum seeking women
 - De Tona (2004): Italian diaspora in IE

Feminisation of Polish migration in Ireland

- Existing research in IE:
 - Kropiwiiec (2006): 'Polish migrant workers in Ireland' (*in cooperation with National University Maynooth & NCCRI*)

no recognition of gender-specific aspects of Polish migration



- Exploring the experiences of cross-cultural adaptation of Polish migrant women in Ireland within the field of intercultural studies

Background to the study

- Recent changes in Irish society since EU accession on 1 May 2004:
 - Est. 200,000 Poles residing in Ireland (*source: e-mail received on April, 3 2007 from the Polish Embassy in Dublin*)
 - Est. 35% women (*ibid.*)
 - Everyday life changes:
 - Polish language; Polish newspapers, radio; Polish food and shops; Polish 'C' cultural life; Polish crèche; ...

The study of migrant women

- Polish and Irish people are perceived to have a similar cultural background
 - Being Catholic
 - A history of foreign occupation by its neighbours
 - Experience of emigration in history
 - Specific cultural aspects, mainly in regard to socialising patterns
- How does this perception impact on Polish migrant women's adaptation to IE?
- Underneath the surface....

Research questions

- On the surface, how do perceived similarities between Polish and Irish culture, if at all, impact on the process of adaptation as experienced by Polish migrant women to Irish society?
- Which aspects of Polish and Irish culture (& other factors) facilitate or hinder the process of socio-cultural adaptation as experienced by migrant women in Ireland?

Methodology

- 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews
- Dublin area
- Variations in age, occupation, marital status, children, time in Ireland
- Flexible interview questions - **themes** to exploring issues of adaptation
- Intercultural mindset

Methodology

- Preliminary survey
- Atlas.ti software to facilitate analysis of data - specifically developed for GT analysis

Grounded Theory Approach

- A qualitative Grounded Theory (GT) approach to exploring new migration experiences of women in Europe
- Original techniques & procedures of GT (Strauss & Corbin 1990)
- Charmaz' (2006) Constructivist Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory Approach

- GT guidelines:
 - coding (initial, open, axial, selective)
 - memo-writing
 - theoretical sampling
- **Flexibility**
- Exploring and **interpreting the studied world,**
- **Researcher is a participating part of the studied world**
- Theory is developed from data & data are collected detached from preconceived theory

An intercultural mindset to the study of gender-specific migration

- The aim to **successful adaptation** is to achieve a functional 'fit' between the individual and the environment. (Kim 1998, 2001)

An intercultural mindset to the study of gender-specific migration

- **Cross-cultural adaptation**

- a process experienced by people (Polish women)
- moving from one (usually their home country)
- to a new and unfamiliar place (Irish cultural, social, political and historical environment)
- with a particular cultural background (Polish cultural, social, political and historical environment) on their shoulders

An intercultural mindset to the study of gender-specific migration

- **Strategies of acculturation (Berry 1997, 2002)**

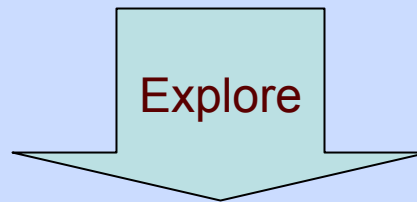
Cultural maintenance & contact and participation:

Integration - maintaining home culture & seeking interaction with host culture - an ideal for successful adaptation?

Separation - holding on to home culture and avoiding interaction with members from host culture

- Exploring

- » Process of successful adaptation
- » Home cultural maintenance
- » Contact with members of host culture
- » Participation in host culture environment



Interview themes

Interview themes

- Socio-demographic background information
- Motivation to immigrate to Ireland
- Preparation, pre-knowledge, pre-conditions to emigrate
- Experience of Ireland: first impressions, changes, why?, how?, what consequences to personal life, ...?
- Exploring cultural background, comparison between life in Poland and life as a migrant in Ireland:
 - Being a Polish woman & being a Polish migrant woman

Interview themes

- Polish social life: social networks, **socialising patterns in Poland and Ireland**
- Polish culture: values, traditions, rules
- Experience of Irish culture, similarities and differences to Polish culture
- Specific cultural aspects: **family, friendship,** religious life, history
- ...

Some results – socialisation patterns

- Perceived similar socialising patterns in Polish & Irish culture:
 - Outside home & often related to drinks
 - Facilitating initial adaptation - 'getting to know phase'

Some results – socialisation patterns

- Polish socialisation patterns:

- Mainly at home
- Living with Polish family or friends
(if not in a relationship with Irish man, or other national)

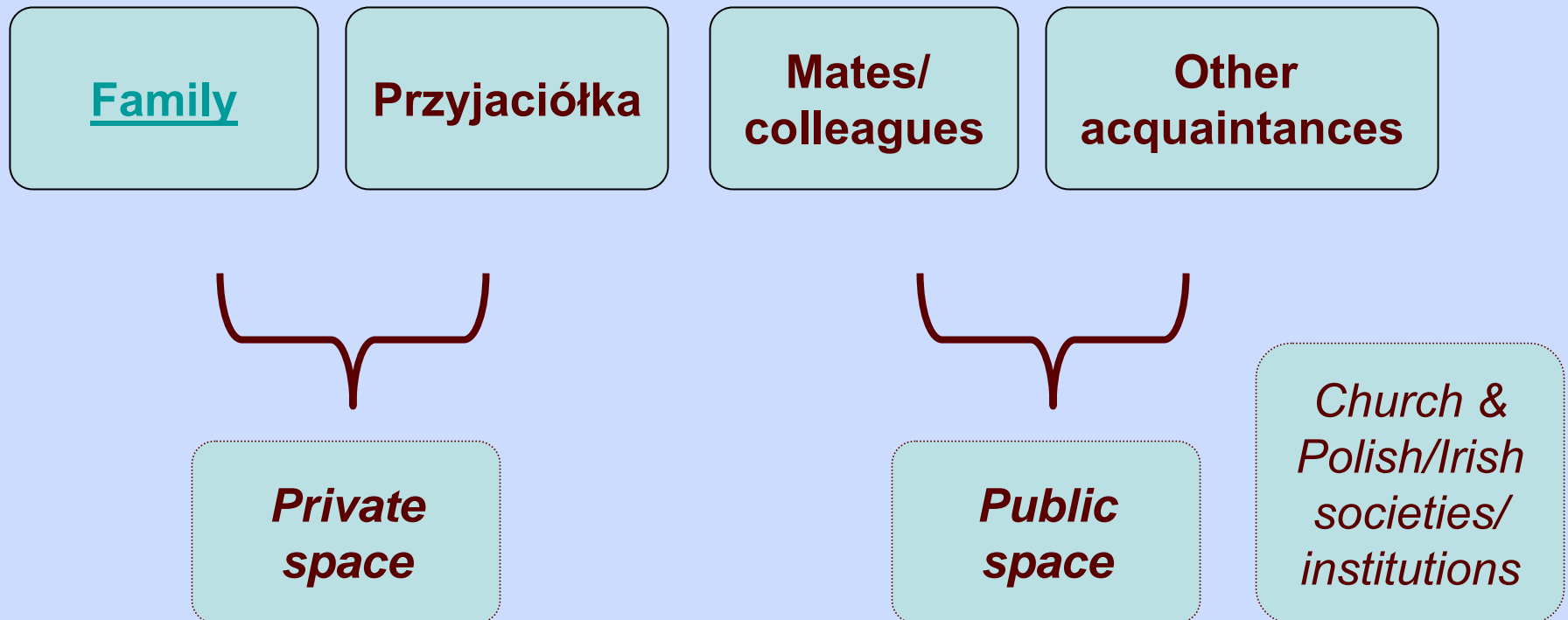
- Irish socialisation patterns:

- Mainly outside home - in public space

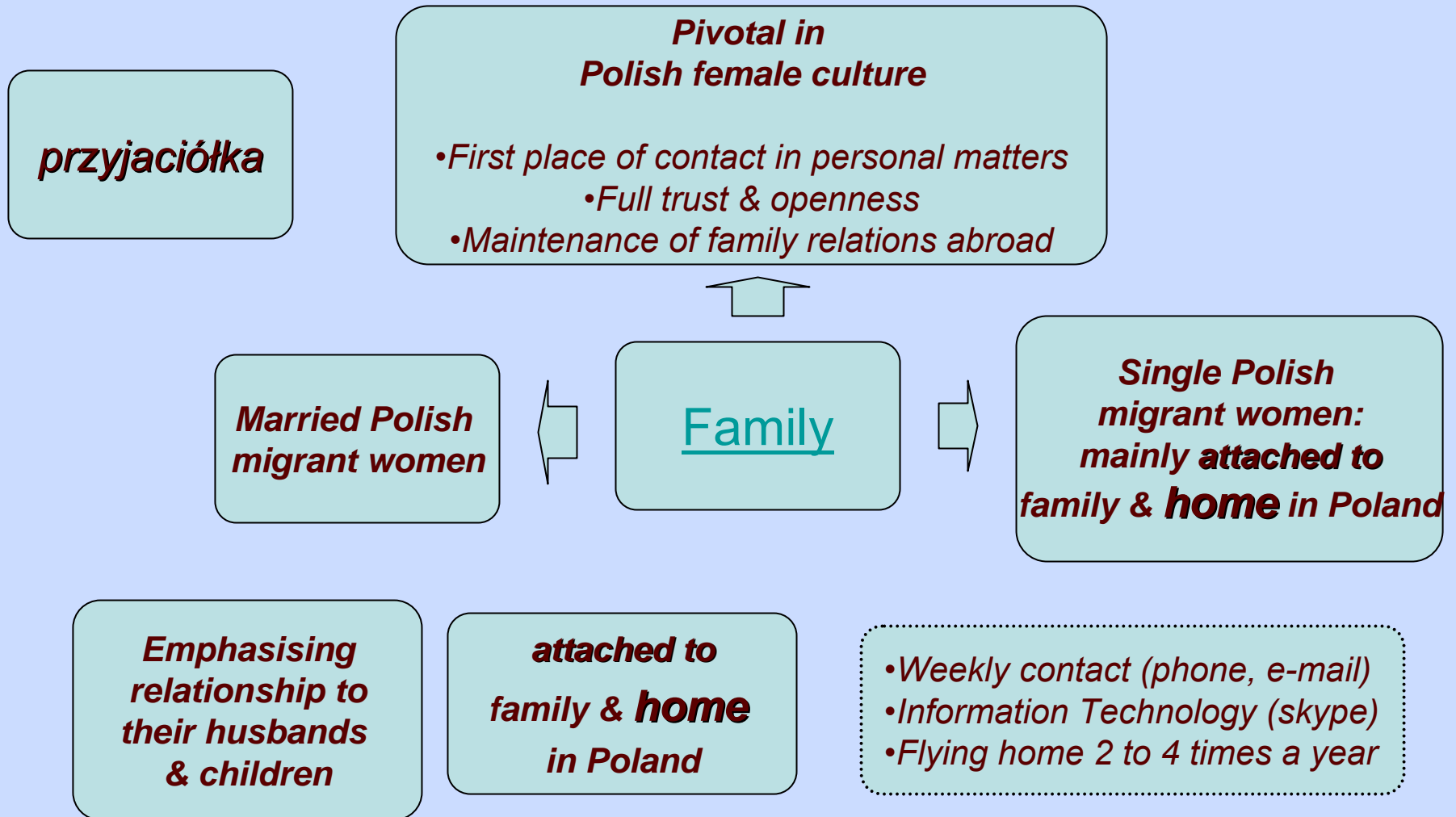
Some results – socialisation patterns

- Strongly connected to friendship and family in Poland
 - Attachment to home & family in Poland
 - Distinction between friendship in Polish culture and Irish culture

Polish woman's social support networks



Polish woman's social support networks



Friendship in Polish culture

- 3 categories of friends in Polish culture:
 - **przyjaciółka** - associated with friendship, best friend, like a family member, small in number
 - **kolega/ koleżanka** - a mate, colleague, schoolmate
 - Polish colleagues, schoolmates, other Polish mates
 - Foreign “friends” - sharing similar experience of being a migrant & often language difficulties
 - Irish “friends” - often colleagues or family friends in a mixed marriage
 - **znajomi** - other acquaintances (not friends)

Friendship in Polish culture

"[...] somebody you know for a very long time."

"Whenever I feel bad I just call my best friend in Poland."

"A przyjaciółka is like a family member."

always a Polish women

often a sister carries this role

przyjaciółka

"I can tell her everything & she will tell me everything."

Attributes to Polish friendship:

- deep
- truthful
- critical
- honest
- trustworthy
- helping/ supporting
- grown over time

Inclusive friendship

Socialisation patterns

Private space:

- *Where inclusive friendships are formed & maintained (Malikiosi-Loizos 1999)*
- In Ireland: mainly other Polish migrants
(leading to separation from host culture)
- Interaction within family & with friends takes places at home

Public space:

- *Where accessible friendships are formed (ibid.)*
- Irish, Polish & foreign colleagues & mates
- Interaction takes place in workplace, in the pub, in church or societies
- *Where Irish host cultural socialisation patterns are most common to take place*

Perceived Irish host culture socialisation patterns

- Difficulties arising from different socialisation patterns & different perception of friendship within Irish host culture
 - Most socialisation in Irish host culture takes place outside home; in a workplace or the traditional pub
 - Friendship as defined in Polish culture appears not to exist
 - Friendship in Irish culture is perceived by Polish migrant women as “nice, but superficial” or “not truthful”

The Polish way of adaptation within Irish culture

- **Separation** from Irish life into Polish way of living
 - Retreating to private space - home
 - Socialising with Polish friends (private & public sphere)
 - Inclusive friendships
 - Sharing personal matters with Polish friends & family
 - Looking for support first from Polish friends & family
 - Polish przyjaciółka
 - Attachment to home & Polish family (frequent contact)

The Polish way of adaptation within Irish culture

- Partly **integration** in Irish life to function within the different environment
 - Accessible “friendships” with Irish colleagues/ “friends”
 - Support/ advice from Irish colleagues/ “friends” regarding host country issues
 - Participating in Irish cultural life
 - “Felt integration”

The Polish way of adaptation within Irish culture

- Although there is **separation** taking place - that is evident by lived socialisation & friendship patterns in the Irish host culture
- Polish migrant women are also availing of the support by members of the Irish host culture & taking part in Irish host cultural practices
- Which enhances their well-being and brings about a **felt integration**

Thank you

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