Declaration

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Sara Bojarczuk
Summary
This study focuses on the utilisation of support networks for the organisation of various kinds of support, in particularly childcare, by working Polish migrant mothers in Dublin. Grounded in a support network perspective, the study employs a mixed methods approach to elucidate how migrant mothers use local, transnational and online relations in their social support mobilisation strategies, mainly in childcare as the crucial tangible type of support, but also other intangible dimensions such as emotional, acquisition of information and those involving socialising. Through 61 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, accompanied by a visual mapping of participants social networks, this thesis explores how these women elicit and manage opportunities for support in light of their return to work and the process of managing childcare and employment in a foreign country, where the availability of friends and relatives is limited. Through an original mixed methods approach, the data analysis provides both an inductive qualitative account of the mechanisms behind organising such support, and a quantitative analysis (created through a quantification process) assessing the general trends within the sample in a systematic manner.

Following the rapid expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2004, Polish migrants ‘flooded’ Western countries in search for better life and employment opportunities. While the first studies focused on the U.K. as the primary destination for Poles, Ireland also quickly became recognised as a host country for many Polish migrants. Within a few years, Polish immigrants had established themselves as the largest immigrant group in Ireland (122,515 according to the Census in 2016) and have increasingly attracted greater attention across academic research. However, most research has focused on integration, employment and career aspirations, rarely considering that those migrants can no longer be considered as single migrants, ignoring not only their families and but more so, perpetuating the image of a male Polish migrant, forgetting about the female perspective and how these women organise their lives in the new country. This study aims to contribute to the growing field of research on migrants’ social support, both transnationally and locally, with an account of the female perspective. Moreover, the original mixed-method design of this study aims to provide a unique contribution to the field of social support networks, which is usually divided dichotomously into qualitative and quantitative measures.
Community ties with friends and family are the principal means by which people receive supportive resources from others. As international mobility has increased over the last decades, so too has research on transnational families and transnational care, gaining a more prominent place in family and migration research.

The key aim of this study is to determine how Polish employed migrant mothers use their social networks to arrange various types of support. Despite some reliance on their male counterparts in relation to support, particularly regular childcare, women tend to build their networks independently through various channels according to their support needs.

This thesis argues that the support mobilisation strategies are greatly dependent not on the size of the network, but on the geographical distance and the strength of the relationship. While strong ties are proven invaluable in providing emotional and instrumental support (mainly prolonged childcare), this thesis proves that distance matters and it shapes the way that mothers mobilise their networks to provide support at the time, when transnational support is not available. Locally-based weak ties, based on various forms of reciprocity, are supplemental in sourcing ad-hoc crisis support when transnational ties cannot be mobilised. Nonetheless, transnational ties are shown to be crucial in childcare provision, in particular for longer spells of regular childcare and for emotional support. To my knowledge, this is also the first and only research comparing support mobilisation strategies among migrant with strong and weak transnational networks.

The role of the internet and the social networking sites has been also assessed here. Although those connections are mainly geared towards information acquisition, this thesis argues that Facebook groups, in particular, provide mothers with invaluable opportunities to form virtual communities based on mutual support.

Above all, this thesis makes significant methodological contributions due to its innovative design. For that reason, the primary contribution lies within mixed methods design with particular use of a generalisation model and quantification process, working from the qualitative data. This, to my knowledge is a unique research design and has not been employed to such an extent either in family migration studies or social support research. Moreover, the project incorporates visual mapping of the social networks that has been grasped in both a qualitative and quantitative manner. Finally, the issue of bilingual research can serve as further assistance and inspiration for researchers within the field of migration and transnationalism.
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**Abbreviations**

EU – European Union

NMS – New Member States

GUI – Growing Up in Ireland

OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

CSR – Country Specific Recommendations

CCS – The Childcare Subvention Scheme

ECCE – The Early Childhood Care and Education

NCS – The National Childcare Scheme

IAS – Income Assessed Subsidies

TEC – The Training and Employment Childcare scheme

CEC – Community Employment programmes

NELM – New Economics of Labour Migration

U.K. – United Kingdom

SB – Sara Bojarczuk, the doctoral candidate

PMWD – Polish Mothers in Dublin (Facebook focus)

SNS – Social Networking Sites
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores the role of social networks in providing various supports to Polish mothers living and working in Dublin, in particular, those who moved to Ireland after the 2004 European Union enlargement. The aim is to examine the complex strategies that these women employ to draw support from their social networks located both in Ireland and in Poland.

Through 61 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, accompanied by a visual mapping of their social networks, this thesis explores how these women elicit and manage opportunities for support in light of their return to work and the process of managing childcare and employment in a foreign country, where the availability of friends and relatives is limited.

Furthermore, this thesis examines other dimensions of support, such as the emotional level and the acquisition of information. Through an original mixed methods approach, the data analysis provides both an inductive qualitative account to the mechanisms behind organising such support, and a quantitative analysis (created through a quantification process) assessing the general trends within the sample in a systematic manner.

1.1. Situating the study: Aims and research questions

A growing body of work is developing to examine the impact that migration has had on individuals and their families. It is not only migration studies that contributes to an understanding of social support mobilisation from migrants’ social networks. Various disciplines have added to our understanding of the processes involved, yet there are some important gaps within the literature. In this section, the research questions addressed in the study are introduced and linked to the main theoretical debates. This is followed by a more general discussion of the approaches taken to examine these issues, and to further the contributions this study makes. Individual chapters then discuss the relevant literature that relates to the particular areas relevant to the focus of the chapter, as well as the precise gaps in the research addressed more specifically.

Broadly, there are three main research questions that are addressed throughout this study.
1. A key research question posed in this study is how do Polish migrant women use their social networks to arrange social support? For quite a while now, migrant women have been recognised and well established in the literature as an independent migrant group (Mazurkiewicz, 2018; White, 2011; Roeder et al., 2014; Boyd & Grieco, 2003; De Haas & Van Rooij, 2010; Kindler & Napierala, 2010). What becomes clear from the findings is that despite some reliance on their male counterparts in relation to support, the connections that women create through channels such as other women, mothers or fellow Polish migrants, independent of their husbands and partners, are often mobilised to organise a variety of support resources. Thus, the key principle of this thesis is to explore and assess the strategies of social support arrangements. The crucial support element here relates to the organisation of childcare, which continues to be the crucial issue that influences the lives and opportunities of parents, even more so when they are migrants and mothers in particular. Barglowski and Pustułka (2018) argue that the childcare choices that mothers make should not be considered as an individual decision, but rather as a complex intersection of various factors, such as circumstances and welfare regime in the host country, socio-economic determinants and availability of childcare. However, little attention has been paid to the role that social networks play in determining those choices. Conversely, research focusing on mothers and their experience (Barglowski & Pustułka, 2018; Mazurkiewicz, 2018) reach the conclusions that Polish migrant mothers, in order to fulfil their quest for “normalcy” (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010), resign from their career development and employment in order to adhere to traditional gender roles that allows them to maintain what Mazurkiewicz (2018) refers to as “proper” family. This research question addresses those mothers who challenge that quest and return to work and therefore are forced to avail of a variety of support to organise childcare and employment.

2. Since migrants’ personal communities are often composed of both local and transnational ties, both should be taken into consideration in the analytical process. Various ties provide various support types. Herz (2015) in his analysis shows that while restricted in the tangible dimensions of support (instrumental,
social companionship) transnational ties tend to be more active in providing a more intangible type of support (emotional). Moreover, he argues that rather than ego attributes and communities characteristics, what is crucial in support provision are the relational characteristics, i.e., the frequency of contact, strength of the tie in explaining how migrants source their support. Thus, a related research question here is therefore: what connections are used to provide which kind of support? The study focuses on childcare as a tangible support in particular, but nonetheless other, intangible dimensions of social support are also addressed, namely emotional, financial, informational and those involving socialising.

Further, the transnational dimension constitutes another level of analysis to be considered in pursuing a comprehensive picture of migrants’ interplay between social networks and provision of social support from friends and acquaintances. While the legal aspect of migration is not considered to be problematic here, due to EU freedom of movement, the issue of time and distance is considered to be vital. Additionally, the policies and regulations that enable a combination of employment and childcare play a crucial role in sourcing informal support and childcare services. For migrant women, childcare remains a particular challenge when their family members (kin) and already pre-established social networks are absent. Therefore, the impact of host countries policies and characteristics on various aspects of childcare and employment is considered in this study, as these are regarded as crucial to mobilising informal support, both in terms of pragmatic elements (crisis situations) as well as financial terms.

3. A final question considered in this study is how do Polish migrant mothers use the internet (namely social media and instant messaging applications) and if and how they impact on social network formation and sourcing support. Due to the endless possibilities served by the wide availability of the internet, such support can be compensated through virtual connections and those formed through the internet, as opposed to those formed in person (Mok et al., 2010). Additionally, while some types of support can only be provided in person, socialising, information and emotional support can often be sourced online, which is especially useful in a transnational context (Moskal & Tyrrell, 2015).
These questions are addressed by using data obtained from 61 qualitative semi-structured interviews that involved network mapping. The data is further quantified in order to provide a systematic analysis of the trends within the sample. Much research done in the area of migrants’ social support relies on qualitative data, analysed through qualitative tools (see Chapter Three for a discussion of study design and the advantages and disadvantages of using interviews, social networks maps and quantification). While the strength of qualitative thematic analysis lies in generating richer data description and the personal story behind every experience, many issues cannot be addressed by solely looking at themes and stories derived from individual experiences.

In most social network studies, the approach is fundamentally quantitative with a growing strand of qualitative social network analysis (cf. Herz, 2015; Barglowski et al., 2015; Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015; Barglowski & Pustułka, 2018). This, while being able to provide a broader picture of network structure, does not provide sufficient background to the motives and reasons behind certain choices. So, for instance, a question of how migrant mothers organise informal support from their social network members can indeed be addressed through those dichotomous approaches, they would nonetheless provide extremely different results. Thus, by looking at a substantial sample of 61 mothers and 1,262 network members (see Chapter Four for further description of participants and network members) this study employs a mixed methods approach to both the data collection and analysis stages. Through quantification of the data and simultaneous in-depth qualitative analysis, this study provides a complex, yet systematic, approach to both theoretical and methodological contributions. Quantitative hypotheses are driven both by the literature and also by an inductive process derived through qualitative thematic analysis.

The contribution of this study is twofold: theoretical and methodological. Theoretically, it extends the existing knowledge within the general field of Polish migration, by providing a systematic and in-depth analysis of support strategies employed by female migrants. To a greater extent, it enriches the knowledge about Polish migrants in Ireland. The topic, although present within the literature (cf. Roeder et al., 2014; Wickham et al., 2014; Muhlau, 2012), has not been greatly explored beyond the area of migrants on the labour market. Moreover, the Polish migrant working mothers, despite being a quite distinct and difficult to reach group, they may share commonalities with other mothers and thus this
research further contributes and can be applied to further understanding of not only other migrant groups in Ireland but also Polish migrant groups in a broader European perspective. The finding are also informative in understanding the native, geographically mobile mothers who may face similar circumstances.

The unique scope of this research lies within combination and engagement of various research fields that have not previously been addressed to such extend. It does not only enrich the present migration and transnationalism literature but also binds it together with social networks and the social capital they provide and therefore childcare opportunities and strategies that migrants use to form and mobilise support. This further informs their labour market participation. Overall, it allows us to look at the topic which despite a great migration influx of Polish nationals in Ireland, has not been studied sufficiently. Allowing for in-depth insight and systematic assessment of migrants’ support need, it is hoped that the outcomes presented here will contribute to the development of policies in a form of services and solutions (such as childcare provision) that goes beyond the formal solutions available, and that will accommodate the need of working parents, in particular migrants.

Further the contribution to the literature of social network and social support should be highlighted. To the author’s knowledge, this is the first piece of work up to date that compares participants with strong and weak transnational connections. While studies assume that migrants maintain the connections across the borders, the mechanisms behind structure and mobilisation of the local connections remain unknown. This thesis fill that gap by not only by systematically comparing strong and weak transnational connections but also by separately informing about the importance of both transnational and more so, the local connections for support provision.

Notwithstandingly, the methodological contributions should be also addressed. This thesis adopts a unique methodological approach by combining already established methods into a complex and systematic research approach. It provides an opportunity to combine two dichotomous approaches into one, a comprehensive mixed methods approach that not only explores in-depth the content of the analysis, but also examines whether the trends observed on the individual level can be verified and generalised across the sample. In addition to the unique and uncommon analytical design, the data is further
enriched by the visual methods (analysed both in a qualitative and quantitative manner) that are often undervalued in migration studies.

This chapter introduces the crucial themes of the research. First, there is a discussion of migration as an important social phenomenon and then a profile of Polish migrants in Ireland is outlined. The analysis of the general state of childcare provision in Ireland follows, where formal solutions are also defined. Second, attention is given to migrants as gendered social actors not only through a migration lens but also focusing on migrants as labour market actors. Third, building on the finding of inadequate provision of childcare opportunities, the importance of social networks as a key component for childcare strategies is set out. The fourth section considers the role of the internet and online communication in the management and structuring of support.

1.2. International migration movements

Today’s map of the world constitutes a complex spider’s web of movement. There are more people on the move than ever before. Since 1970, the number of people living in a country other than where they were born has tripled. Currently, around 3.5 per cent of the world’s population (around 272 million people) live in a country that is not their home country (IOM, 2020). While most people leave their home countries for work, millions have been driven away due to conflict, violence or climate change, which have ultimately become key motives for people to move. While Europe and Asia host most of the world’s migrant population, the United States continues to be the single most popular destination. This thesis, however, focuses on the post-2004 migratory flows between Poland and Ireland, two member states of the European Union (EU). The Republic of Ireland, despite being a relatively unknown destination at first, it quickly became extremely popular for Polish migrants. According to the 2016 Irish Census, Ireland was home to 535,475 international migrants from 200 different countries (CSO, 2019). Among those, Polish nationals constituted the largest group with 122,515 people, followed by 103,113 U.K. nationals and 36,552 Lithuanians. Just twelve nations, each with over 10,000 residents – America, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain and the U.K. – accounted for 73.6 per cent of the total non-Irish national population (CSO, 2016).
1.3. Polish migration to Ireland

Despite Ireland’s long history of emigration, it is now well established as an immigration destination for migrants from inside and outside of the EU. Before May 2004, Ireland was not one of the most important receiving countries for Polish migrants. Grabowska-Lusińska (2003) argues that, in fact, there were historically several, though numerically insignificant, waves of Polish nationals who moved to Ireland. According to her, the first wave occurred immediately after the Second World War and was a result of the Irish government funding 1,000 university scholarships for Polish citizens. However, a detailed account of how many people capitalised on the funding remains unknown. The second wave has been linked to the emigration of Solidarity members in the early 1980s. However, the size of this movement was not considered to be significant. The third wave, according to Grabowska-Lusińska (2003) could be called a ‘migration of hearts’ and concerned mainly Polish women who migrated to Ireland in order to marry Irish citizens. Similar to the previous wave, this one was also considered relatively minor in size. The final pre-accession wave started around 1997 and was directly related to the Irish economic boom and a shortage of necessary labour and skills. Before EU enlargement, Polish people required work permits to legally take up employment in Ireland. Numbers were quite low but grew from 188 work permits in 1999 to 3,142 in 2002 (Irish Department of Social and Family Affairs, 2008). Applications for social insurance numbers were also quite low until 2004 – below 4,000 per year (ibid.).

Due to Irish economic development, there was a shortage within certain sectors of the labour market and as a result, Ireland became a new destination for ‘employment trips’ by Poles (Grabowska-Lusińska, 2003). Due to the poor economic conditions of the Polish labour market, people were driven to leave Poland in search of better earnings and employment opportunities. This movement was quite untypical in comparison with other EU countries that welcomed Polish migrants because it had been predominantly initiated by highly qualified and young migrants (Krings et al., 2012; Grabowska-Lusińska, 2003). In other words, unlike the U.K. that became a major destination for low-skilled migrants, Ireland received, to a great extent, highly-skilled employees to contract jobs (ibid:29). Over time, these highly-skilled migrants became pioneers for Polish migration to Ireland. Later, they were joined by the seasonal workers who were often overqualified for the jobs they performed (Grabowska-Lusińska & Okólski, 2008).
In 2004, Ireland was among three European Union (EU) states that opened up their respective labour markets for the so-called A8 countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) that had joined the EU in that year. Having been granted free movement and labour rights, many (especially younger) Polish people were encouraged to migrate and find employment abroad as the situation in the Polish labour market was particularly severe. The goal of most Polish migrants was to earn and save enough money to provide better futures for themselves and their families back in Poland (Kropiwiec & King-O’Riain, 2006). While the push and pull factors were of a mainly economic nature, these often went beyond simply earning a certain amount and included gathering work experience that could be beneficial for their future career, especially among young migrants who were just after completing their education (Titley et al., 2010). Many saw no opportunities for professional developments and improvement of their career circumstances in Poland (Grabowska-Lusińska, 2003). Pull factors that led to Ireland becoming a popular destination for Poles were largely the fact that Ireland was one of the few countries to allow immediate access to its labour market after Poland’s EU accession. A further important pull factor was the favourable economic climate in Ireland with relatively high wages and easy availability of work, as well as the better conditions within workplaces, although the latter seemed to primarily emerge as a reason for staying rather than moving in the first place (Grabowska-Lusińska, 2003).

The English language is a further factor in favour of Ireland as a migration destination, as it is widely taught in Poland, and many migrants saw spending time in Ireland as an opportunity to improve their level of English as well as gaining other occupational skills (Kropiwiec & King-O’Riain, 2006). Also, social networks with friends and family who had already migrated were important, as many migrants needed immediate access to a job (Kropiwiec & King-O’Riain, 2006). Although these networks were relatively new, the rise in migrants’ movement allowed for rapid development after accession.

The first post-accession census illustrated a little about Poles in Ireland. Initially, British nationals dominated among all migration groups (with a total of 112,548 British migrants living in Ireland, according to the Census in 2006). Poles were already the second biggest migrant group with 63,276 nationals. However, since the 2011 Census, Polish migrants moved ahead of British cohort and became the largest European migrant group in Ireland.

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1 A detailed account of push and pull factors that have influenced Polish migration patterns can be found in Chapter Two.
Statistics available from that time are limited but indicate that Polish people who immigrated to Ireland were predominantly young (with an average of 27.5 years; 29 years for males and 25 for females), relatively well educated and around 30 per cent of all the migrant population was then working in non-manual jobs (CSO, 2007; 2008). At this stage, the Polish population was largely male dominated with male/female ratio of 64 per cent male and 36 per cent female in most age groups.

The majority (84%) of Poles aged 15 years and over were at work, mainly as employees. Over half of the males were in construction and manufacturing and half of all females were in shops, hotels and the restaurant industry. Employment was mainly in the lower socio-economic groups with only nine per cent classified to the top three groups. The predominant occupations were sales assistants (7%), building labourers (6%), cleaners and domestics (5%) and carpenters and joiners (4%) (CSO, 2006). In addition to the situation on the labour market, it is imperative to look at the marital status and living situation of Poles at that time. According to the Census (2006) the majority of Polish migrants were single (62%), 34 per cent married and four per cent divorced or separated.

A significant aspect is that 59 per cent of married men and 18 per cent of married women were not living with their spouses at the time of that census. This portrays a picture of Polish migrants as young and educated, childless people who came to Ireland in a search for employment opportunities and better living situations. Within a few years of EU Accession, Polish immigrants became an important migrant group in Ireland. Despite the fact that the economic situation in Ireland fluctuates and some migrants chose to return to Poland or move elsewhere, Polish immigrants are likely to remain present in Ireland and continue as the largest migrant group (CSO, 2019).

At that time, the situation of Polish migration also began to attract academic attention. Several qualitative studies along with small-scale surveys were conducted, mainly looking at workplace experience, social life and social integration in Ireland. In a small qualitative study of Polish immigrants, Kropiwiec & King-O’Riain (2006) noted generally positive experiences of Poles living in Ireland, even though many immigrants were overqualified for the jobs they performed. Whereas some participants in that study reported frustration with their employment situation, some also considered this as a temporary condition in a longer-term career plan or international journey (ibid). Language problems were cited most frequently as a barrier to accessing jobs that required professional qualifications.
A study by Krings et al. (2009; 2012) was among the first to explore the situation of new Polish migrants in Ireland. With an innovative methodological approach of a Qualitative Panel Study (QPS), the team tracked the changing career pathways of 22 Polish men and women across a period of two years through six waves of interviews. Interestingly, the results of the study emphasised that although work and employment remained crucial to an understanding of recent East-West migration, the motivations to migrate in the post-2004 context were usually complex, highly situated and included diverse non-materialistic as well as non-work-related reasons. Thus, an important debate was raised about whether the post-2004 Polish migration was purely economic migration or rather movement in search of a better lifestyle and opportunities.

Mazurkiewicz (2018) in her qualitative work explored the notion of the normative family and the adaptation to the traditional gender roles among Polish mothers in Ireland (the strong male breadwinner model, and wife responsible for the home sphere). She argues for the conventional and normative model of family to enable migrants to achieve and maintain the sense of security and stability in the host country. Thus, in her view, women acquire the value of their feminine identity thought strengthening their position as mothers and wives, through their home-making practices.

Other studies (Gazzola, 2017; Roeder et al., 2014; Krings et al., 2012; Barret & McCarthy, 2007) focused on NMS migrants, and with Poles constituting a large proportion of this group, it can be assumed that findings largely apply to them. Immigrants from the NMS were reported to suffer the largest occupational gap (Barret & Duffy, 2008). Unlike EU15 workers, NMS migrants earned considerably less and occupied positions that were not in line with their qualifications (Barrett & Duffy, 2008; Guzi et al., 2014), which directly reflects their position on the labour market, as seen in the Census in 2006. This overrepresentation of NMS migrants in certain sectors was characterised by lower wages and less secure employment (CSO, 2008).

The inflow of Polish migrants peaked in 2006 with 122,585 Poles living in Ireland at that time. Although the inflow of Polish migrants to Ireland has since slightly declined due to changes in the Irish labour market as well as improvements in the Polish one, the number remains relatively high in comparison with other non-Irish nationals. The situation

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2 The results show the wage gap for EU15 workers is not significant, apart from the low skilled migrants. (Guzi et al., 2014)
changed dramatically from 2008 onwards when the recession and rising unemployment triggered by the global financial crisis rapidly decreased Ireland’s prosperity. Interestingly, however, this – in the words of Krings et al. (2012) – did not reverse previous inward migration as Ireland continued to have a substantial migrant population (ibid, 36).

Despite their high qualifications, Polish nationals and other NMS migrants were over-represented in low-skilled jobs and to a great extent work below their qualifications (CSO, 2011). In 2011, Polish nationals dominated sectors including wholesale and retail, manufacturing, accommodation and food service. Polish migrants who participated in manual, semi-skilled and unskilled employment constituted over 60 per cent of all employment categories (CSO, 2011). This significantly limited their ability to purchase childcare and implied that for couples both parents would have to work to make ends meet (Muhlau, 2012).

A lot has changed since then, and Poles are still at the forefront of all migrant groups in terms of population size as well as position on the Irish labour market. Table 1 presents the number of Polish residents in Ireland throughout the years. With 122,515 Poles living in Ireland, once again, they came at the top of the migrant groups living in the country (CSO, 2018). In terms of residence, Dublin is the most popular place of residence among Poles with nearly 30 per cent of the overall Polish population living in the capital or its close proximity. However, a higher concentration of Polish nationals was found outside of the centre of the capital. The Electoral Divisions of Fingal and South Dublin were the most populated with Polish nationals (CSO, 2016), which directly reflects the place of residence among the participants of this study. Further areas of greater concentration of Polish migrants continued to spread outside county Dublin from Celbridge to Galway. While the overall size of the Polish population living in Ireland remained relatively stable between 2011 and 2016, the number of female Polish nationals increased by two per cent to 60,655 females, with the number of Polish males decreasing by two per cent to 61,860. There were more female than male migrants in the age range 20-34. Overall, the Polish population in the age of 30-40 constituted 47 per cent of overall Polish population in Ireland.
Table 1.1: The number of Polish people usually resident in Ireland 2006-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>63,276</td>
<td>122,585</td>
<td>122,515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, CSO, 2018

In comparison with 2006, when the Polish population was mostly dominated by single men, a decade later only nine per cent of Poles in Ireland who were married were not living with their spouses.

Regarding economic status, the Polish population has been very active on the labour market. In 2016, almost three-quarters of Poles were working (75,508 people, 73%). This figure is 20 percentage points higher than the proportion of the overall state population at work (53%). In 2016, more than one fifth of all Polish nationals were working in the retail industry. Within this industry, 6,746 Polish nationals were working as cashiers and retail assistants, accounting for almost one tenth of all Polish nationals at work (9%). Fourteen per cent of all Polish female workers were employed in sales and retail assistant occupations.

Inevitably, as demonstrated by the three waves of the Census data, Polish migrants remain as the largest European migrant group. However, throughout the years the nature of migration shifts with more migrants searching for better career opportunities and prospects in addition to economic betterment. Consequently, when discussing Polish migrants it is no longer only single males who are at stake, but the whole families (women and children) should be considered.

1.3.1 The consequences of post-2004 Polish migration to Ireland

The following section discusses the implications of post-2004 Polish migration to Ireland. The assessment accounts for three separate parts as the consequences of such migratory movement should be addressed on three separate levels, namely for Poland as the sending country, Ireland (receiving) and for migrants and their families.

Implications for Poland (sending country)

Among many, the key consequences of the outward migration for Poland as the sending country the following should be considered. The main economic element is the possibility
of remittances (financial transfers) being sent to Poland to support migrants’ family members in the country of origin. Beyond financial factors, there is also the prospect of social remittances when the migrant returns to their home country and brings back assets other than financial resources (such as experience, language skills or social networks) gained in the migration country (Klagge et al., 2007). Additionally, the circumstances where qualified and skilled migrants take their skills, qualification and experience with them, is referred to as brain drain. When a migrant together with his/her capital circulates and returns back to the sending country it is referred as brain circulation or brain regain (Klagge et al., 2007). On a positive note, such movement has been previously referred to as the “migration-return-development nexus” (Ammassari, 2004) in the circumstances where the knowledge and experience brought by migrants induces development and improves, for instance, the performance of organisation on the labour market (Klagge et al., 2007). Moreover, another migration consequence on the sending country is the possibility of a decrease of the unemployment rate due to the fact that those who are registered as unemployed are absent and seeking employment opportunities abroad (Iglicka, 2010).

On the other hand, the mass outward migration from any country poses negative consequence on the sending country, such as the phenomenon of the brain drain whereby the emigration country experiences shortages due to the fact that often young educated people are the ones who seek for the better opportunities abroad (Grabowska-Lusińska & Okólski, 2008; Stolz & Bate, 2012; Jałowiecki & Gorzelak, 2004). For post-2004 accession Polish outward migration, scholars often referred to this as a “washing out” of parts of the Polish population indicating the mass scale of migration of not only unemployed and low-skilled workers, but also highly educated and qualified labour force members. As those migrants are often young, they are also in the crucial time for starting family. Consequently, when settling abroad, the home country suffers from declining birth and fertility rate that leads to the population ageing and further demographic crisis.

In relation to care, while young people migrate, the older generation (parents) often remains in the country of origin with little support from their children who have migrated. Elderly parents are often forced to rely on other siblings or family members living nearby. This creates a care gap whereby the absence of children leaves their parents vulnerable and lonely.
Implications for Ireland (receiving country)

Due to the economic nature of this migratory flow, the key benefit for Ireland (and any other host country) is the opportunity to fill the gaps and shortages in their labour market. That was indeed reflected in the numbers of migrants and the timeline of economic development in Ireland, when during the Celtic Tiger economic boom, the number of Polish migrants arriving in Ireland rapidly increased. Further, considering the fact that Polish migrants are relatively well-educated and unlike other countries, Ireland attracted many highly skilled workers it can be asserted that Ireland experienced brain gain (Ackers & Gill, 2008; Ackers, 2013). It is further beneficial for the receiving country, as those workers who arrived in Ireland were already brought up, trained and educated elsewhere, thus the costs of the training had already been met by the sending country (Anderson, 2000). Additionally, migrants are found to be less economically dependent on the social welfare system, even despite the fact that Ireland is considered as having generous welfare provisions (Corrigan, 2010). Thus, for the receiving country, post-accession migrants can be perceived as an asset.

From the negative point of view, the possible consequences on the receiving country may lie within the issues related to the integration or migrants’ language proficiency and welfare provision, including accommodation or health care (Roeder et al., 2014; cf. Sime, 2014 for the experiences of Polish migrants using healthcare services in Scotland). For those who differ from the host population in appearance or other personal features, the differences might lead to racial, ethnic or religious conflicts (Vertovec, 2007). Additionally, not every migrant is well-educated and competes for highly skilled jobs. Many economic migrants had previously suffered from long-term unemployment in their home country or performed a poorly paid job (which acted as push factor for migration; cf. Chapter Two for push and pull factors). While on the one hand, migrants often perform the kinds of jobs that the native population does not want to undertake (due to its exhausting nature, low earning potential or long working hours), those migrants who perform low-skilled jobs also compete with local often already disadvantaged communities, creating further conflict in regard to the employment opportunities of the native population and social welfare support for those who do not manage to succeed
throughout the job hunt competition (Pemberton & Scullion, 2013; Arango, 2000; Portes & DeWind, 2004; Massey et al., 1998).

Further, as has been documented throughout the thesis, Polish migrants are no longer perceived as single economic migrants, but rather as consisting of family units, including children. This in turns implies a stress on the receiving country in provision of relevant services – including education – which need to be suitably adjusted to the needs of migrants (Smyth et al., 2009; Darmody et al., 2014).

Implications for migrants and their families

The consequences of economic migration that migrants bear in the host country range from financial (e.g., the initial difficult economic situation after relocation, but also present an opportunity to save money after undertaking employment, and thus the possibility to send remittances to home country) and social elements (e.g., better work experience; an opportunity to learn a new language, culture, broader career and aspiration possibilities). Those experiences can enhance and modify migrants’ human capital (skills and qualification) and what is linked with it – social capital (cf. Chapter Three and further analytical chapters for detailed discussion on the social capital of migrants). On the other hand, the social aspects are not always the source of gain, but can also become a subject for struggle to integrate in the host country and the labour market. The lack of pre-established social capital, including social networks may result in migrants being lonely with no one to turn to when they are in need (cf. Chapters Five and Six).

Another consequence that migrants experience in the host country is brain waste in the circumstances where individuals are unable to continue the employment on the same level as in their home country and their skills and qualifications lose their value and reduce the person’s value on the labour market. Those migrants often experience underemployment whereby they work below their qualifications and training (Muhlau, 2012; Iglicka, 2009). This may be due to migrants’ limited language skills, lack of adequate equivalent position, specific skills requirement to continue the given profession in the host country (e.g., in order to become a primary school teacher in Ireland, the candidate must pass an Irish language exam). The other reasons may simply be an urgent need to take on any kind of employment (low-skilled, low-paid) due to a difficult financial situation.
Further, the vital elements for consideration are the impacts that migration has on the family unit and migrants’ well-being. Migration, despite being a stressful experience for many, can have a positive impact on migrants’ lives and provide opportunities for a better life and personal growth (Bąk-Klimek et al., 2020). On the negative side, family breakdowns are one of the greatest negative consequences (Cooke, 2001; Smith, 2011; Szast, 2020). Settling into the new country or living at a distance from partners or other family members can also pose stress to migrants that is difficult to deal with and thus can contribute to the mental health difficulties (Smith, 2011; Bojarczuk et al., 2015). Scholars have also documented the phenomenon of ‘euro-orphanism’ (cf. White, 2011; Kawecki et al., 2015) whereby children whose parent(s) emigrated while they were left in Poland with their relatives as their care takers. This is often related to seasonal, short-term economic migration (usually in relation to seasonal work in Germany and other countries neighbouring Poland). Although it is usually motivated by the desire to provide better economic wellbeing and future opportunities, the consequences on children have been well-documented (White & Ryan, 2008; White, 2011; Kawecki et al., 2015). Moreover, relevant for this project is the perception and the importance that gender roles play in the process of migration. Double caring responsibilities (Ryan et al., 2009) have been highlighted as yet another stress factor that is experienced particularly by female migrants. In other words, due to the need to provide care and support to parents in the home country, and on the other hand the obligation to care for their children in the host country, female migrants often experience stress and additional pressure (Ryan et al., 2009).

1.4. Female migrants and the burden of childcare

The labour market situation of migrants from the new EU Member States in Ireland and other European countries has been well documented since 2004. Research shows an over-representation of migrants in low-wage jobs with irregular hours, fewer career development prospects and relatively low job security (see, for example, Barrett & McCarthy, 2007; Turner, 2010 for Ireland; see Ciupijus, 2011; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009 for the U.K.). After 2004, those migrants who arrived in Ireland (and other countries where the economies were booming) were, at that time, largely young and single (Muhlau, 2012). Consequently, in the literature as well as in public debates they were primarily seen as independent economic migrants. Despite some exceptions, such as
White’s work on Polish families in the U.K. (2011) and others (Ryan et al., 2009), the young and single (typically male) economic migrants serves as an image of post-2004 wave.

What appears to have been unnoticed is that those formerly single, young and independent migrants began to form families. Others brought partners and families from their home countries. While some recent research that looks at the case of Polish migrants in Norway focuses on transnational care where one parent migrates, little has been explored about the case of migrants who travel as whole families, and their settlement in the host country is often dependent upon the establishment of reliable and sufficient social support as well as the arrangement of trusted childcare and employment.

In 2015, there was a yearly increase of 69,300 immigrants, by 2019 the estimation by the CSO indicated an increase of 88,600. Immigrants increasingly constitute a greater proportion of the Irish population. Births to non-Irish born mothers now make up about one quarter of all births in Ireland, and a large and growing proportion of these are from accession states (Roeder et al., 2014). Previous research shows that both general and maternal employment rates tend to be lower among non-native women, which is often attributed to human capital factors and cultural preferences (Antecol, 2000). Furthermore, migrant families have been shown to rely disproportionately on informal childcare (Bonizzoni, 2014), and also make less use of pre-school education (Sylva et al., 2007).

For migrant women, childcare remains a particular challenge to handle in the destination country, when their kin are absent and the gendered norms of what forms of work and family life are acceptable varies from what they have known in their country of origin. Despite this, little research has been done to examine childcare strategies, in particular, the informal strategies that are often employed by native mothers due to the high cost and limited availability of formal childcare. That in turns reflects on maternal employment, especially in regard to low-income families or among single parents.

In Ireland, the cost of childcare for parents of pre-school children has been a salient issue for many years, muting not only the voices of the native families but completely ignoring the issues faced by migrant parents. Childcare policies also lag behind the changes that are taking place on the labour market regarding female employment and their needs for
childcare and parental leave, at the time of childbirth as well as further flexibility to combine family and work responsibilities later. Informal support is often limited for non-native mothers, whose primary support network has been left behind in the country of origin. This, in turns, impacts the time spent on paid and unpaid work (McGuinnity & Russell, 2008; Russell et al., 2018), limiting not only time available to devote to paid employment, but also placing a financial burden on families to fund childcare, with the prices of childcare remaining at the extremely high level over the years (Russell et al., 2018; Pobal, 2017; CSO, 2018).³

Research conducted in 2011, based on Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) data (Russell et al., 2018) shows that half of three-year-old children were in non-parental care for at least eight hours per week. The type of childcare used was divided between formal care centres and care of relatives or childminders (ibid.). According to Russell et al., (2018) people used an average of 24 hours of childcare per week in formal childcare with a significant component of informal childcare. Successive comparative analyses of childcare costs show that Ireland is among the highest in the OECD (OECD, 2007; 2014).

Concern around the high cost of childcare in Ireland was expressed by the European Commission in 2016. As part of its Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs), the Commission recommended that Ireland “[i]mprove the provision of quality, affordable full-time childcare” (EU Commission, July 2016 p.4). In reviewing Ireland’s progress on these CSRs in 2017, the Commission commented that “[t]he availability and cost of quality fulltime childcare present barriers to female labour market participation and hinder efforts to reduce child poverty” and recommended that Ireland “[e]nhance social infrastructure, including social housing and quality childcare” (EU Commission, May 2017:6/8 in Russell et al., 2018).

In 2011, parents typically spent €105 per week (or €4.50 per hour) on childcare. Inevitably, a childminder in the family’s home was the most expensive form of care, costing €5.70 per hour or €153 per week on average (Rusell et al., 2018). The hourly costs of a childminder outside the home were close to those paid for centre-based care (Russell et al., 2018). However, over half of the childcare based away from centres was provided free of charge (ibid.).

³The Consumer Price Index suggests that there was an increase of seven per cent.
In terms of the proportion of disposable income, Russell et al. (2018) reports that on average, families paying for care spent 12 per cent of disposable income on the care of their three-year-old child (GUI data). This rose to 16 per cent for lone-parent families and 20 per cent for those in the bottom income decile.\(^4\)

### 1.5. Women and employment

In Ireland, women’s participation in paid employment has increased dramatically over the last decade (Keane et al., 2017; Russell et al., 2009). Irish society has undergone a major process of feminisation of the labour market and has changed from one in which most women were not active in the labour market to one where the majority are involved in paid work (see England, 2005; Russell et al., 2009). Various occupations that were once male dominated have expanded to include women (such as transportation) or contrarily, as female dominated industries expanded, men withdraw their participation in those occupations (Keane et al., 2017).

In the early 1990s, the female participation rates in Ireland lagged substantially behind the EU15. Growth in the female participation rate accelerated over the mid to late 1990s as the Irish rate converged with the EU15 average. The gap in female participation rates between Ireland and the EU15 average fell from 12 percentage points in 1992 to just two by 2006. Overall, the Irish female participation rate grew by 41.3 per cent between 1992 and 2006, compared to a 15.3 per cent growth in the EU15 female average rate (Keane et al., 2017). Most research done in the Irish context on female employment does not differentiate between native versus migrant workers, thus overlooking important aspects that influence migrant women’s labour market participation. Roeder et al. (2014) in their report on migrant families focused on general migrant groups (differentiating between EU migrants and other non-EU migrant groups) but did not look into the employment trends specifically regarding nationality. Nonetheless, there has been a common agreement that there is indeed a low rate of increase in the labour market participation of mothers of young children (Russell et al., 2009).

\(^{4}\) Due to the recruitment and participation requirements for the GUI study, the data provided is based on the study child in the household.
Researchers such as Keane et al. (2017) have emphasised the persistent issue of segregation that women experience, which in turns impacts not only on labour market participation but also childcare patterns. While such experience has proven to be valid and explored among native women, migrant experiences appear to have been overlooked. This is due to the lack of already established support that could not only provide them with support related to finding employment or sourcing childcare.

Russell et al., (2018) in their report on maternal employment and childcare from GUI, find that the majority of mothers (54%) were in paid employment when their child was 36 months old, up from 46 per cent when the child was nine months old. By the time the child in the study was aged five, 59 per cent of women were in employment. The mode of employment also matters, with clear evidence that the burden of adjusting working hours to childcare requirements lands on mothers (Russell et al., 2018; Roeder et al., 2014). This presents financial implications for the household and for lower-income families, the cost of childcare poses a greater burden and barrier to balancing care and employment.

As Roeder et al. (2014) argue, the case and circumstances for migrant mothers are even more complex. Similar to native mothers, migrant mothers face strong pressure to work and some experience long and atypical working hours (see Klimek, 2017 for an analysis of the decision to have children and its interplay with socio-economic and institutional context among Polish migrant families in Ireland). Migrant mothers additionally face various challenges related to integration both within the society and the labour market. Wall and Jose (2004), looking at various migrant families from France, Portugal, Italy and Finland, connected migration patterns with the future participation of female migrants in the labour market.

Researchers thus connect migration patterns with work/care strategies employed by migrants (Wall & Jose, 2004; Roeder et al., 2014). Highly-qualified migrants are more likely to avail of private care solutions that are often costly. Migration with a partner often results in mother-centred childcare as a principal solution (often postponing return to employment in order to provide childcare), while unskilled labour migrants often rely on a variety of low-cost solutions or other family members, including older children, to look after the younger siblings (ibid.). Some women also delay the decision about having a second child due to the difficulties organising childcare in the host country (Klimek, 2017). Wall and Jose (2004) found that first generation migrants are often more likely to
be exposed to occupational and residential segregation, working below their qualifications, enduring atypical working hours and low earning potential, making it even more difficult and challenging to manage work and employment.

With regard to return to employment within migrant families, Roeder et al. (2014) indicated that there was a large decrease in the percentage of mothers employed full-time after having a child. Among all the migrant groups, mothers from the EU accession states were most likely to delay their return to full-time employment (reduction by 45% in relation to the employment level of the EU accession states migrant group prior to the maternity leave break) after maternity leave in comparison with, for instance, Asian mothers whose participation in full-time employment increased (by nearly 10%).

1.6. Childcare policies in Ireland
Until 2010, the Irish government did not directly invest in universal childcare, but instead focused on funding targeted disadvantaged families in need, using community crèches and private or voluntary providers in disadvantaged areas (Russell et al., 2018; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2020). Additionally, supporting childcare expenses involved cash payments such as child benefit (universally paid to all the parents, irrespective of childcare use) (McGinnity et al., 2013; Hayes, 2010; Russell et al., 2018). During the economic boom years, sustained demand for financial support towards the cost of childcare intensified (between 2000 and 2005). Consequently, in 2006 an ‘early childcare supplement’ was introduced; a monthly payment to assist parents in accessing childcare on the private market. This supplement was awarded to parents regardless of whether or not they were using childcare.

This scheme was criticised because the payment was not linked to participation in the labour market and it was extremely costly (OECD, 2007; Hayes & Bradley, 2009) and thus in December 2009 it was discontinued (Russell et al., 2018). Alongside this, capital grants for childcare community providers were made available. While they significantly expanded the availability of childcare places in community providers through reduced cost, they were geographically binding and limited to the disadvantaged areas within the community. There were similar schemes, such as the community childcare subvention

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5 Child benefit is payable to all the parents/guardians of children under the age of 16, or under 18 years of age if the child is in full-time education. This is irrespective of nationality (for EU nationals) and time spent in Ireland.
scheme (CCS) introduced in 2008, which provided a subsidy to parents on low income
allowing them to access childcare at a reduced rate. CCS was also geographically limited
and thus only available in disadvantaged areas. The government partially supports the
childcare cost, with the parent paying the reminder. The number of places was limited and
often insufficient, thus the scheme was closed to new applicants in 2012.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme introduced in 2010 was a
breakthrough in childcare provision in Ireland, because it was first form of the universal,
publicly-funded childcare support. The ECCE scheme provides 15 hours of childcare free
of charge. Since then, as part of the Affordable Childcare plan, launched in the 2017
Budget plan, the government announced a radical redesign of the delivery of support for
parents to “make quality childcare accessible and available” for families in Ireland. The
National Childcare Scheme (NCS) provides a system of financial support for parents
towards the cost of childcare. There are two types of subsidies: universal subsidy
(available to all families with children under three and for those with children over three
years old who have not yet qualified for the free preschool ECCE programme) as well as
income assessed subsidies (IAS) (National Childcare Scheme, 2020). The IAS is
available to families with children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years and is means
tested. Depending on the personal circumstances of the family, if parents are in full-time
employment or training, they may receive up to 40 hours of subsidised childcare. If
parents are not in employment or education, they may receive up to 15 hours per week.

Further, in order to facilitate parental return to education and employment, The Training
and Employment Childcare scheme (TEC) has been implemented. It is an overarching
programme designed to support parents/guardians on eligible Education and Training
Board courses, as well as certain categories of parents returning to work, by providing
subsidised childcare places. This programme provides childcare support for
parents/guardians enrolled on certain education and training courses, those on
Community Employment programmes (CEC) and also for families on Family Income
Support. However, the programme closed for new applications on 14 February 2020.

The issue of childcare provision in Ireland still remains a relatively recent problem and
efforts have been made to address the increasingly appalling situation related to the
provision of public childcare services in Ireland. The public solution, despite numerous
attempts to provide a programme that would allow parents to avail of support has not yet
been designed. Childcare programmes introduced throughout the years in Ireland either
do not fully address the need of working parents or target the wrong groups in the society.
Additionally, while the suggested solutions do not differentiate between native and
migrant families, it should certainly address the needs of working parents from various
background to allow migrant parents to manage childcare and employment. The current
situation, however, forces migrant parents to seek informal solutions because the
relatively low level of financial support for working parents is not relative to the high
costs of childcare services.

1.7. The importance of social networks in support provision

Much of the migration literature focuses on the time prior to migration or on the
migration process itself. A migrant’s opportunities to draw on their social capital, assets
and social networks are limited due to the geographical location and barriers that migrants
face in the host community. Members of social networks, in the form of social capital,
constitute an important source of support (both tangible and emotional) and thus can
facilitate improved employment and childcare opportunities. Erel and Ryan (2018) argue
that such a perspective acknowledges both migrants’ agency and the constraints of
national and transnational social structures which result in complex trajectories of social
mobility. A recent study by Barglowski and Pustulka (2018) compared the early childcare
choices among Polish mothers in Germany and the U.K., revealing how “migrant
caregiving is a function of gender norms in both the emigration and the immigration
country, inadvertently tied to the class-based resources and subjectivity, with the welfare
regime coming to play as an additional factor” (Barglowski & Pustulka, 2018:14). By
looking through transnationality and the cross-national elements of forming social
networks and how migrants draw on their support, allows us to assess the use and
perceptions of both formal and informal support across borders (Faist et al., 2015; Godin,
2019).

1.7.1 Internet and social support

With the wide availability of social technologies, social media has become a fundamental
element of migrant experience (Chen & Choi, 2011). As internet popularity increases,
migrants integrate the related technologies into their everyday practices including support
mobilisation. Connections formed through the internet allow migrants to maintain contact
and mobilise support regardless of distance. However, as suggested by research, the virtual ties tend to be characterised and employed in a different role than the ties that in close proximity (Herz, 2015). Virtual connections have been found to provide emotional comfort (Ellison et al., 2007; Steinfield et al., 2008; Marcheva, 2011; Moskal & Tyrrell, 2015) and most importantly, information (Van Dijk, 2020; Ellison et al., 2007).

Until recently, studies on migrants’ personal communities have tended to ignore the virtual connectedness or transnational social support networks of migrants. This is due to studies being based on a traditional perception of community, namely where social connections are formed in the context of the relatedness to other community members as well as within a neighbourhood, bringing the geographical proximity to the forefront of the basis for ties formation (Herz, 2015). “They have thus assumed, a priori, that a significant portion of an urbanite’s primary ties are organised by locality” (Wellman, 1979: 1203). Considering a transnational perspective already poses a challenge to this perception, and adding virtual connections poses an even greater challenge to this view. Therefore, the internet and virtual connections are indeed more likely to provide intangible support that can be provided despite geographical distance.

1.8. Thesis structure

In Chapter Two, a detailed analysis of current perspectives on migration is provided. The chapter focuses on a detailed overview of dominant overarching migration theories, particularly locating the theory of social network formation in the context of migration. The historical perspective of Polish migration to Ireland is provided to give a relevant background to the phenomenon, especially following EU enlargement in 2004.

The data and methodology used is addressed in detail in Chapter Three. The focus is a unique study design that combines qualitative data collection, visual tools, the quantification process and the use of both qualitative and quantitative analytical tools, outlining their advantages and disadvantages. To situate the study in a research field from the methodological point of view, the social network approach is thoroughly discussed in order to present relevant background and support tools for this research design. The chapter further provides an overview of participants and their social network composition. Sections 8 and 9 in this chapter focus briefly on the key variables included in the models for further chapters, as well as modelling strategies (detailed accounts of all relevant variables as well as modelling techniques are provided in each chapter accordingly).
Finally, Chapter Three addresses all the relevant ethical concerns, including the issue of bilingual research.

Chapter Four, together with Chapters Five, Six and Seven, presents a series of analytical findings. The analysis chapters present the theories employed and the consequent hypotheses derived, in addition to describing the specific data, variables and modelling strategies used, relevant to the specific topic under investigation. Models and findings are presented in each chapter, and conclusions are therefore drawn. A variety of topics are analysed, all of them concerned with the formation and use of social networks and relevant support obtained from them in various forms. Chapter Four is concerned with the concept of social capital and the structure and mechanisms behind the formation of egocentric networks among participants. It demonstrates the greater significance of transnational ties in participants’ overall network composition. While most networks are status orientated, low-skilled participants tended to value co-ethnic ties more, which certainly play a significant role due to the lack of language barriers and access to information. Inevitably, mothers also tended to form their network in a rather gendered manner, with a particular orientation towards other mothers, which is a pragmatic way of forming, organising and utilising those ties.

In Chapter Five the strategies of mobilising support from informal networks are examined. This chapter, through qualitative thematic analysis of the mothers’ strategies on network mobilisation, predominantly with regard to childcare support, provides a detailed account of the mothers’ motivations behind the choices undertaken. It also addresses the provision of emotional support and other exchanges of support based on favours and a reciprocal system. It argues that the provision of support “is not based on who you know but how you know them” (Wellman & Wortley, 1990:581). This places the quality of relationship over the number of ties as the focal point for support mobilisation. In other words, the level of connection and the quality of relationship is much more important than an extensive number of connections. Nonetheless, the strong ties are often located in a transnational context (as they are usually located in the country of origin) that in turn is difficult for support organisation. Migrants compensate for the lack of family members by placing their male partners and other local weak ties at the forefront of the support provision. However, the purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, through inductive qualitative thematic analysis, it provides a detailed account and understanding
of motives and reasons behind the choices made, when mothers face limited publicly available childcare in order to manage their childcare duties and employment.

It also serves as a baseline for, and should be considered together with, Chapter Six as a systematic multi-level analysis of all the support types drawn from participants’ social networks along with the transnational perspective. Indeed, distance is a clear obstacle in providing such support but the analysis suggests that the geographical distance is strongly compensated for by the strength of the tie and close relationship with the tie. Thus, together with Chapter Five, Chapter Six argues that grandparents are indispensable in terms of providing support in the transnational context. In the absence of transnational ties, local Polish connections compensate for the lack of availability of close family members.

Chapter Seven is the last analytical chapter in this thesis. It takes a rather different approach to the support provision, both from the methodological and theoretical perspectives. Methodologically it offers a two-step analysis. First, qualitative analysis provides a foundation and a detailed participant account on the use of the internet and social media tools in sourcing and mobilising support. This kind of support varies significantly from physical ties and is mainly used in providing intangible types of support, such as information or emotional support. It facilitates addressing the problem of geographical distance due to the advancement of technology and allows participants to be close with their network members even across borders. It is also vital for networks formation, especially local ties, using, for instance, Facebook groups. This serves as a starting point for a further systematic, quantitative approach. Multi-level random effect models on various support types are estimated, in order to assess whether the internet connections are associated with particular types of supports and also if any of the participants’ characteristics has an effect on the provision of various kinds of support from the virtual ties.

Chapter Eight concludes the dissertation by summing up the main findings, outlining where these findings fit into the research fields, and highlighting the major contributions of this research. It points out the general patterns emerging from the findings, as well as the elements where the findings diverge from those already established across the fields of social network, social support and migration. Limitations of the study are noted, and suggestions are put forward for further research.
Chapter 2: Migration in Theory and Practice

Like other migration, the inflow of Polish nationals to Ireland can be placed in a broader theoretical and historical context. There are numerous definitions, typologies, theories and approaches developed by social scientists in order to grasp an understanding of migration. As argued by King (2002), the literature related to migration studies usually imposes two broad, yet dichotomous perspectives. These are the process of migration and product of migration processes. The former analyses the actual movement across borders and the migrants’ motivations for movement. The latter approach explores the issue of the migrants’ situation in the host country, their post-migration experiences and settlement, mainly in relation to formation of ethnic communities and the integration of individuals and groups into the mainstream society (also referred to as ‘host’ or ‘destination’ country in this thesis). This dichotomous approach, despite being a useful starting point, is often not sufficient to fully capture the phenomenon, which requires a holistic and interrelated approach.

A key aim of this chapter is to provide a review of migration theories and migration types and patterns that are useful in explaining contemporary movement between Poland and Ireland. This chapter places the focus of this thesis in the broader context and locates it in the context of classical theories of migration; in particular, those that are commonly used in studies that have focused on contemporary Polish migration around the world. It is also complimented by a gendered approach to migration and a transnational perspective, which in the modern world is imperative to understanding the life circumstances of migrant females. Such theories also operate on various level of analysis. Together with Chapter Three, which focuses on the theory of social networks, I develop a solid theoretical foundation for an analysis of the role of social networks in organising childcare and employment among Polish migrant women. Although the theories outlined here have their limitations, they have proven to be useful for the analysis of post-2004 Polish migration to Ireland and thus they serve as a starting point to understand the migration phenomenon and further provide rationales behind family migration and network formation.
2.1. Definitions and Typologies of Migration

Migration is one of the key social processes of (social) change and development (Klagge & Klein-Hitpaß, 2007). International migration in the contemporary world is motivated by several factors and leads to diverse forms of movement. Migration has not been defined in one universal theory. Nonetheless, it is not a new process. There are a number of definitions, typologies, theories, approaches and concepts developed over cross-disciplinary fields. As argued by King (2002), the literature on migration tends to focus on two aspects: the act of migration and the product of this process. In the first case, research tends to explore the actual movement across borders and factors influencing decisions and tends to be more popular among geographers and economists. The latter explores the issues of migrants’ situations in the country of destination after migration, mainly in relation to the formation of communities and integration on micro as well as meso levels.

Migration can be understood as a process indicating movement across time and space and it does not hold a simple and universal definition. Lee (1966:49) defines migration “as permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between external and internal migration”. In a very general definition, Faist argues that migration is “a transfer from one place to another, from one social or political unit to another” (Faist, 2000:17). Thus, depending on the criteria involved, we may talk about various types of movements that do not necessarily count as migration as such.

The literature often distinguishes between the type of migration based on the nature and motives of the movement, length of stay, geographical distance or legal status. Table 2 presents a comprehensive outline of the criteria and migration type, which can serve as a framework for analysis of migration motives (Slany, 1995). Categories included in the table are not mutually exclusive, thus need to be approached holistically.
### Table 2.1: Typology of migration (Slany, 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Migration Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. The nature of decision about the movement | • Voluntary migrations  
• Forced migrations |
| 2. Reason for migration                      | • Labour (work related)  
• Family  
• Matrimonial  
• Based on political reasons  
• Religious  
• Ethnical  
• Ecological  
• Individual |
| 3. Duration of migration                     | • Permanent  
• Temporary  
• Seasonal |
| 4. Geographical distance                     | • Internal (within national borders)  
• External (international, outside of national borders)  
• Continental  
• Regional  
• Overseas |
| 5. Legal character                           | • Legal  
• Illegal  
• Semi-legal |
| 6. Other types of migration                  | • Retirement  
• Mass migration  
• Exodus |

While such a typology can be useful, this can serve as a Weberian example of ‘ideal type’ and holds the potential of excluding those who do not fit into such categories. King (2002) emphasises that migration studies tend to rely too heavily on the binary categorisation of migrants (voluntary–forced; legal–illegal) and therefore they should not be simply categorised in such strict terms because the situation is much more complex than the given categories. King (2002) also argues that there is a “complex continuum of
coercion and free will in migration decisions” and individual cases should not be
categorised in that manner. Thus, he developed broader distinctions:

1. Those who move entirely out of their free will (northern Europeans to the south
purely as a lifestyle choice).
2. Those who are ‘pushed’ by the situation in their home countries (such as low
income and high level of unemployment).
3. Those who are ‘forced’ to move due to the extremely bad circumstances in their
place of origin (political reasons, extreme poverty).
4. Conflict. No control over the decision to move, such as those who are being
expelled or forced to repatriate.

Regarding Polish migrants, such movement is generally perceived as voluntary (although
it could be argued that a poor economic situation ‘forced’ people to move) and usually
temporary (with no definite return date but also with no clear intention of permanent
settlement, (cf. White, 2011; Burrell 2009). While some definitions determine migration
within particular time-frames, usually a stay of at least 12 months is required to be
classified as a long-term resident and three months for short-term migration (GUS, 2013;
Kaczmarczyk, 2002). For the purpose of this research project, only participants that had
spent at least one year living in Ireland were selected. Additionally, only those mothers
who were living in Ireland for purposes other than leisure and tourism were selected
(Romaniszyn, 2003). Thus, all participants who took part in the study, despite not all
declaring an intention of permanent settlement in Ireland, can be considered to be long-
term migrants.

Further, the definition does not account for the differences between internal and external
migration. The former type refers to moving within national borders. The latter form of
migration denotes moving outside of the country, and thus it also results in different
experiences that can significantly influence the practices and settlement in the country of
destination. Moreover, external migrants are often required to obtain a visa or work
permit in order to move and work in the host country. Those who fail to meet the
requirements become illegal or semi-legal migrants. Additionally, moving to another
country holds personal consequence in relation to a new culture and language acquisition.
This appears to be particularly significant with regard to the administrative arrangements
within the European Union and differentiation between migration within and outside of
the EU. While legal aspects of work permits and visas are no longer applicable to Polish citizens migrating within the EU, the issue of language acquisition and cultural adaptation certainly remain present, yet these are not acknowledged in the definition of migration.

Regardless of the classification, no one migration type can capture the reasons behind the phenomenon of mass migration of Polish nationals to Ireland in the 2000s. These categories, however, are useful in providing guidelines towards a general understanding of the process. While ‘free movers’ (Krings et al., 2012) and highly-skilled migrants could determine migration strategies based on their free will, others could fall into the second category of being ‘pushed’ by the circumstances they found themselves in, such as a high level of unemployment and a lack of professional development opportunities upon completion of education. Thus, with regard to the general definition of not only what constitutes migration, but also who can be considered as a migrant, this project utilises the definition forwarded by International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2019:132):

"The term migrant is usually understood to cover all cases where the decision to migrate was taken freely by the individual for the reason of “personal convenience” and without intervention of external factors; it therefore applies to persons and their family members who move to another country or region to better material or social conditions and improve the prospects for themselves or their family."

It is worth noting that migration is increasingly understood as a process rather than a one-off event (Ackers, 1998; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2005; Lutz, 2010; Scullion & Pemberton, 2010). More recent literature recognises people’s ‘mobility’ as more relevant than ‘migration’ as it indicates fluidity and disappearing distinctions between its defined types as well as greater unpredictability of individuals’ mobility patterns (Castles & Van Hear, 2005; O’Reilly, 2009). This is particularly relevant to this research as Polish nationals’ migration patterns and life strategies are increasingly understood in its fluid and boundaryless character. Thus, some scholars pinpoint that mobility, or even mobilities (Krings et al., 2012) rather than old-fashioned migration can provide a term which is more appropriate to use while describing contemporary flows of people (Morokvasic, 2004; Ackers & Gill, 2008; Faist, 2013) and especially in the case of Polish post-2004 migration (Wallace, 2002; Burell, 2010; Okólski, 2012; Krings et al., 2012).
Traditionally, migration was conceptualised as a simple movement from point A to point B; those moves, however, have become more unpredictable (Wallace, 2002). As we now live in the ‘age of migration’ (Castles & Miller, 2017), people’s movements are characterised by acceleration, increased fluidity and the unpredictability of international movements. Additionally, the feminisation of migration has also been observed, which implies that increasingly more women have become migrants and thus traditional male-centred perspective of migration conceptualisation need to be revised (Zlotnik, 2003; further details on female migration and the burden of childcare and employment are discussed in section 1.3 and 1.4).

Moreover, this research focuses on external migration (also referred to as ‘international’) as it relates to Polish migrants in Ireland, as well as their relatives and other members of social networks that provide support. Although not a direct focus of the thesis, the research is concerned with those called economic migrants, namely those who migrated in order to improve their financial situation (Slany, 1995; White, 2011). Although Krings et al. (2012) in their research suggest conceptualisation of certain type of Polish migrants as lifestyle migration along with other motives such as search for career aspirations, it still resembles labour migration, and is therefore overall still considered as embedded within the framework of economic migration. Further, family migration is relevant to this study, as evidence suggests that recent Polish women in Ireland came as part of family migration (CSO, 2016). The use of social networks for the migration process to a lesser extent, but mainly for post-migration strategies and managing support from various sources (such as elderly grandparents, known as ‘flying grandparents’) is further applicable to this research.

2.2. Theoretical approaches to migration processes
Migration has played a significant role in various disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, such as sociology, economics, history, psychology and geography. Spatial mobility is not only geographical but also influences the demographic and economic spheres of the host countries; it shapes politics too and ultimately is a subject of study for psychologists and sociologists. Thus, the migration conceptualisation also varies depending on the aspect that is being researched. There is no single, universal theoretical approach to migration that would be widely accepted across the disciplines (Massey,
As previously stated, the major distinction between the understandings of migration is either the migration processes itself or the issues related to the later stages of settlement. Various theories operate on different levels, and while the majority of those discussed in this chapter conceptualise migration on both an individual and macro level, this serves as a framework for further placement of a perspective on networks within the individual’s reality.

2.3. Classic migration theories

In light of the recent mobility turn, some have argued that classic migration theories have become redundant (Morokvasic, 2004). However, they still provide a valuable framework, which enables an understanding of people’s migration behaviour. The majority of classic migration theories recognise and focus on economic determinants as the predominant factor influencing migration decisions. As further outlined in more recent theories, it could also be the case that people migrate due to their curiosity, their search for adventure and because they can (Krings et al., 2012). The major theories that provide explanation of migration movement are: the neo-classical theory of migration, Dual-Labour market theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theory. However, migration as a livelihood strategy as well as transnationalism are also considered here, as they are deemed applicable to the recent Polish migration to Ireland. It should, however, be acknowledged that because classic migration theories refer to mainly economic motivations, they often consider women as passive followers of their male counterparts (Ackers, 1998; Morokvasic, 1983). Thus, it can be argued that classic migration theories are indeed gender blind. This project addresses the strategies of female migrants, and therefore it is crucial to account for that perspective. Further, discussion on the role of social networks and support strategies is inherently embedded in migration motives and strategies.

2.3.1 Neo-Classical Theory

The neoclassical theory of migration (cf. Ranis and Fei, 1961; Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969), first introduced by Ravenstein (1885) and further developed by Lee (1966) formulates a set of ‘push and pull’ factors associated with the migration decision. While the key aim of this theory is to explore why migration is taking place from the macro-level perspective, neoclassical theory has its origin in the discipline of geography and does not necessarily link to any particular migratory movement, but rather establishes general ‘tendencies’ that explain migration (Castles & Miller, 2009:21). Among such
common tendencies, it has been distinguished that people move from low- to high-income areas and, broadly speaking, the determination of their decisions is due to a combination of four key factors:

1. Factors associated with the area of origin (push factors)
2. Factors associated with the destination country (pull factors)
3. Intervening obstacles
4. Personal factors


People determine their migration decision by making a comparison of conditions in the country of destination with their country of origin. Conditions in both countries can act as encouraging or discouraging factors, determining potential decisions about migration (Massey, 1998:13). Push factors determine people’s decision to leave an area, whereas pull factors attract people to another area. Neoclassical theory suggests that international migration is related to the global supply and demand for labour. Push factors may include, but are not limited to, high unemployment rates, poverty, underdevelopment or lack of career/employment prospects. It can be argued that the aforementioned factors may be applicable to Polish migrants in Ireland, considering the crisis in the Polish labour market post-2004. Pull factors refer to the opposite and may relate to employment opportunities, low levels of poverty and development in the area of destination. This can also be argued to be applicable to Poles in Ireland, post-2004 especially, considering the economic boom that created a high demand for labour, skilled workers and offered professional development opportunities. Neoclassical theory argues that the main causes of labour migration are differences in labour markets, particularly wages and earning opportunities between sending and receiving countries.

As has been argued by certain scholars (cf. Muhlau, 2012; Roeder et al., 2014; Roeder et al., 2017; CSO, 2016) many Polish migrants in Ireland are considered economic migrants, thus they have almost certainly been influenced by wage disparities between the countries (for a more detailed account on Polish nationals, see Chapter One, and Chapter Three for participants’ migration motives). However, this research aims to go beyond the purely economic factors that can potentially influence migrants’ decisions to relocate. Among those are curiosity and a search for better career and aspiration opportunities (Krings et
al., 2013), social networks (Bojarczuk & Muhlau, 2018; Ryan, 2009) or to fill the care gap and support family with caring responsibilities.

Although the neoclassical model provides a useful tool to analyse international migration of individuals and their motives, it requires critique. In its simplistic conceptualisation, the push-and-pull model does not fully capture the contemporary scale of Eastern European migration, omitting factors such as why migration among certain groups is more popular than among others as well as why migrants choose particular destination countries over another one. If international labour migration can be controlled by governments regulating labour markets in both sending and receiving countries (Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969), then it is the individual who decides to migrate as the opportunities arise in different regions. However, this cannot be controlled by the structural factors, and are purely dependent on the individual’s agency and their decision about the destination of migration. Thus, the rational decision-making capacity of migrants is considered of great importance in this theory (Bakewell, 2010).

By emphasising the individual decision to migrate, neoclassical theory also assumes that migrants have perfect knowledge of wage levels and opportunities available in the country of destination determined purely on economic grounds (Castles & Miller, 2009:22). However, this is not always a case, as limited or contradictory information held by migrants tend to be a source of struggle and for instance integration issue for migrants in the receiving country. The neoclassical approach assumes that individuals would intentionally seek information and ‘prepare’ for migration before making the decision to migrate. It pursues false assumptions that potential migrants have access to information prior to migration. While on the one hand it may direct attention towards the individual and informal capability of gaining information through networks or casual arrangements within the ethnic community, it ignores the formal provision of support from local and national organisations (if these exist).

In many cases, migration may be considered as a coping strategy to deal with the personal circumstances and structural settings in the country of origin, thereby suggesting migration to be a ‘livelihood strategy’ (cf. White, 2011 and discussed further in this chapter). Emphasising solely financial elements of migration, this approach completely silences other, potentially constraining, factors, such as administrative and legal restrictions, or migration determined by those non-economic, yet vital, elements for
migration process and settlement. Thus, neoclassical theories have been greatly criticised for their inability to explain actual movements or to predict future ones.

Nonetheless, the importance of this approach lies within the subjective perception of factors influencing the migration decision, especially as regards a potential country of destination as often migrants have a sense of “being pushed and pulled in different directions” (White, 2011:2). Thus, while a high level of unemployment in the country of origin constitutes an ‘objective’ and actual push factor, the labour market conditions prior to the arrival to the host country are transmitted by media, fellow migrants and other members of the individual’s social network (Bobek, 2011:21). Push and pull factors are further explored in Chapter Three in relation to the research participants.

2.3.2 Dual Labour Market Theory
Several scholars have incorporated Dual-Labour Market Theory into their studies of Polish migrants in Western societies which not only explains why migration occurs, but more importantly, how this process affects employment based on the supply and the demand for labour, bringing more attention to the role of race and gender in employment relations (Bobek, 2011; Arango, 2000:288; Massey et al., 1998:18; Castles, 2002; Castles & Miller, 2009:23). Dual labour market theories concentrate on structural conditions under which decisions are taken alongside analysis of the labour demands of modern industrial societies, based on the fact that advanced economies are in constant need of foreign labour to fill both high skilled vacancies as well as lower-skilled manual and production jobs (Arango, 2000; Portes & DeWind, 2004; Massey et al., 1998:18).

Thus, the division of primary and secondary labour markets enlarges, favouring the most dynamic and ‘global’ cities that attract workers with greater social capital or who belong to the majority ethnic group and polarising them with those less developed locations where minorities and those more disadvantaged members of society are clustered (Castles & Miller, 2009:24). This is of consideration in understanding the phenomenon of under-employment of migrants in a host country (lower-level jobs, working below the qualifications gained in the home country). However, despite its usefulness in explaining the employment of Polish migrants abroad, along with wage differentials compared to the standards back home, it perceives migrants as ‘target earners’ who aim to accumulate as much financial capital as possible (Lucas, 1997). While the wage differential constitutes a significant determinant, it is rarely the sole reason for relocation. Motives interlink with
other factors, such as education, unemployment, settling in costs (that might be easier to overcome if friends or family are present to support, by lowering accommodation costs and by prompting job search and information gathering) (Lucas, 1997). Dual-labour market theory is deemed to be useful in explaining temporary labour migration. It does not, however, address those who would like to settle long-term and possibly permanently. Thus, while it could potentially be useful in explaining the initial wave of Polish migrants to Ireland, as observed through the years, Polish migration to Ireland is rarely a temporary phenomenon.

2.3.3 New Economics of Labour Migration

While previously discussed theories hold that it is the individual himself or herself who makes decision about migration the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) (cf. Stark & Bloom, 1985; Stark & Taylor, 1989; Taylor, 1999), challenges the over-emphasis placed on the individual (Taylor, 1999). While both approaches share an emphasis on a rational choice, NELM asserts that decisions about moving abroad are not made by the isolated individual but rather by larger units of people related to each other – typically family or even whole communities (Arango, 2000:288; Massey et al., 1998:21; Castles, 2002:1149).

Unlike individuals, households are in a better position to control risks associated with their economic well-being by diversifying the allocation of resources, such as family labour: allocating various family workers in different geographical locations while migrants send remittances (Massey et al., 1998:21). Such strategies are not based on the income in absolute terms, but rather in its reference to other members of the group reinforcing the notion of relative deprivation (Arango, 2000:288; Castles, 2002:1149). It implies that the more unequal distribution of income in a given community, the more intensely the relative deprivation will be felt, prompting more incentives for further migration or change within the group of reference (Arango, 2000:228). In other words, people position themselves within certain reference groups (such as community groups in the sending country) and usually participate in interpersonal comparison of incomes. In this connection, the new economics of migration not only differs from classical economic theories by moderating the significance of wage differentiation, but more importantly, it brings attention to the social context of migration and the role that family plays in the
process of decision making about changing locations. NELM underlines the significance of remittances and emphasises the complexity of interdependence between migrants and the context in which they operate, suggesting that understanding migrants’ reality is crucial. This interdependence is based on the exchange of commitments: while one side remits money, the family in the home country takes care of the business left behind or are being used as a source of childcare or emotional support. Thus, as argued by White (2011), while migration remains a significant livelihood strategy for families, it is no longer dependent on delegating a single migrant to earn a living for the family back home. Instead, the migratory decision is treated as a family strategy to improve its members’ wellbeing (Taylor, 1999; Bąk-Klimek et al., 2020). A further discussion on grandparents and their role in family strategies can be found in Chapters Four and Five.

2.4. Livelihood strategies

The concept of livelihood explores the broader perception of a migrant’s life. It constitutes a theoretical framework that explores opportunities for people to make a better living in particular localities (White, 2011:3; Gough & McGregor, 2007:17). Its basic definition refers to ‘means to a living’, emphasising the significance of attaining a living rather than merely resources (Ellis, 2000:7). This theory accounts for all kinds of assets available to migrants: personal and social capital, experience, language or networks that not only constitute a ‘ladder’ for future migrants, but also create a set of emotional ties for those who have already migrated (White, 2011:229).

This approach explores individuals, their households and how the process of gaining a livelihood is constructed within the culture that influences an individual’s behaviour (Gough et al., 2007:19-20; White, 2011:229). It highlights that every household has its own combination of assets and liabilities that enable reconstruction and re-discussion of migration as family strategies, thus the most important accounts of such decisions and key factors influencing experience are precisely those that explore relationships within families and households (White, 2011:229). Status and symbolic values generated through interaction are meaningful to the individual and through attainment of material resources allow renegotiation of cultural principles and enable development of strategies. None of those values are fixed – they are constantly exposed to change and progress. The strategies involve a range of factors, such as second jobs, social networks, skills, and
other social and cultural resources in the household (White, 2011:3; Bridger & Pine, 1998).

In its holistic insight it not only emphasises the importance of individual perceptions of economies in sending countries as a point of reference, it also sheds light on what are the actual choices available in particular locations in both sending and receiving countries are (White, 2011:229). In order to understand why individuals migrate, it is crucial to understand the alternatives available and the migrants’ perception of them (White, 2009:556; Ellis, 2000:8). Additionally, dominant social norms within the community should be explored because they constitute significant factors that shape the conceptualisation of strategies and the nature of migration itself. Thus, knowledge of the social world is crucial to understanding the broader perspectives that shape livelihoods (Olwig & Sorensen, 2002:3). By emphasising human agency, the process of constructing and reconstructing livelihoods, and the creation of meaning ascribed to decision-making can all be explored. Additionally, livelihoods influence the process of identity construction, thus it implies building relationships with others, the choice of values, identification or distinction from status and many other techniques.

2.5. Social Networks in light of migration theory

As regards migration, social networks are, according to Boyd: “Highly relevant for the studies of international migration (…) they also shape migration outcomes, ranging from no migration, immigration, return migration and continuation of migration flows”(1989:639).

Once an international flow of labour begins, networks emerge between migrants and their country of origin that sustain the movement even after the original economic motives decline (Portes & DeWind, 2004:831; Arango, 2000:292). Similar to NELM theory, the social network approach stresses the importance of wider social groups rather than the agency of individual social actors only (Boyd, 1989). Social network theory puts great emphasis on the role and influence of wider social networks, namely migrant networks and family networks in the process of migration (cf. Palloni et al., 2001). Here, the social networks perspective is addressed in the context of migration theory: “Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in
origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin” (Massey, 1990:69).

Following the long tradition of Thomas and Znaniecki, the concept of social networks is perceived as crucial to understanding patterns of migration, settlement and employment as well as links with ‘home’ (Castles & Miller, 2009; Arango, 2000:291). This will be explored further in Chapter Three, as social networks are imperative in organising support in the host country.

In this sense, migration is the consequence of previously started and maintained relationships with other social actors, which in turn are part of wider social structures (Morawska, 2001). This can apply to, for instance, family migration whereby one family member becomes a migrant and is later joined by other family members (White, 2011; Bobek, 2011). It can also reflect on the situation where one person, a potential migrant, draws on the wider social network in order to identify a contact person who is willing to assist with the migration process, such as finding accommodation or potential job opportunities. Networks with their very powerful features “provide the channel for the migration process itself” (Vertovec, 2001:12).

Massey (1998), drawing on the theory of social capital, argues that migrant networks can be interpreted as the foundation of social capital itself as they are the main source that facilitates migrant access to other goods of economic significance, such as employment or the means to overcome barriers in receiving countries (cf. social networks as social capital in Chapter Four). Many migrants move because others with whom they are connected have migrated before, contributing to the development of a ‘migration chain’ and also predicting future flows of movement. The first migrants who arrive in a new destination have few social ties to rely on, and for them migration costs the most (Massey, 1990:69). The costs are substantially lower for friends and family who follow. Social networks are seen as instrumental in the process of migration decision-making, which is no different in the case of Polish migrants who are known to rely on their fellow nationals for support (Bobek & Salomonska, 2010; White & Ryan, 2008; Ryan, 2011).

A place with strong networks to a receiving country tends to be the type of location within which a strong migration culture develops (White, 2011:6). This might serve as a determining factor regarding the potential choice of destination country (Morawska, 2001). “Networks link population in sending and receiving societies in a dynamic
facilitate employment, accommodation and provide support in various forms (Arango, 2000:291; Massey et al., 1998:43; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2005; Temple, 2011). Migrants’ social networks not only explain how many people migrate – with help of others – but more importantly, to a certain extent offer understanding of why they migrate, thereby constituting a bridge between people and location through time and space. In the location where migrant networks are well established, the risks and uncertainty of migration are reduced (Arrango, 2000:291; Massey et al., 1998:43; Massey 1990:69; Zontini, 2010:36). Moreover, social networks can eventually become more influential migration deciding factors beyond economic imperatives, facilitating not only the migration process but also favouring settlement (Massey et al., 1998:45; Zontini, 2010:36).

By facilitating migration, social networks imply constant enlargement and development of those connections. Additionally, while social networks could potentially underpin the involvement of family members in migration, it rarely considers the gendered differences in forming and participating in social networks. That is the focal point of this thesis. Mothers tend to access their networks through playgrounds and schools and the way in which childcare impacted on their use of social networks is crucial to their development (including childcare management with other mothers or by bringing relatives from Poland) (Ryan et al., 2009: 164; cf. Chapter four). Men, on the contrary, tend to build their social networks through employment and leisure activities (ibid.). Thus, while women in migration theories are often perceived as the “baggage of male workers” (Cohen, 1997 in King, 2002:97), a gendered experience of migration has only recently begun to be recognised as an important focus for migration researchers, in particular, their central role in the process of migration and as cultural agents in structuring ethnic communities in the host society (Boyd & Grieco, 2003).

The perspective of social networks adds a new facet to the migration literature because it shifts attention away from purely economic determinants of migration. It also moves beyond the classic distinction of host or home country and puts emphasis on the individual actors moving between them. Further, in the current era of highly-developed communication technology, which makes it easier to stay connected more than ever before, regardless of the individual’s physical location, social networks can be maintained more easily (Vertovec, 2007).
Finally, Massey’s et al. (1998) conceptualisation of social networks prompts consideration of those who do not access migration networks. Therefore, potential migrants also need other forms of ‘social capital’ and confidence to entrust their migration to strangers (White, 2011). The significance of migrants’ networks lies not only within facilitation of migration, but is also highly valued after the individuals settle in the host country.

2.6. Transnationalism

A profound increase in cross-national activities has led to the emergence of new definitions and theories on transnationalism. The term ‘transnational[ism]’ has been defined in numerous ways, however, at the most basic level it denotes: “The connections which migrants keep with their home country, the persistent and fluctuating ties that bind across the borders” (White, 2011:7). Transnationalism is understood as “the processes by which migrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al., 1994:7). Portes (1999:464) suggests a definition of transnational activities as those taking place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants. Thus, it does not limit the analysis to certain actors, but it also involves organisations and representatives of national governments, multicultural corporations as well as individuals, such as immigrants and their fellow nationals in both the receiving and sending country. It opens an avenue for activities such as entrepreneurship, political, cultural or religious accomplishments without necessarily constituting mutually exclusive categories.

There are two perspectives on transnationalism: from above – activities conducted by institutions and multinational corporations and states – and transnationalism from below – activities “that are the result of grass-root initiatives by immigrants and their home country counterparts” (Portes et al., 1999:221). Alternatively, Vertovec (1999) interprets transnationalism as a social morphology that through cross-national movement affects the type of consciousness, identity formation and cultural reproduction. Indicating transnational ties between immigrants and their sending country, this term includes networks, but it is also used to describe activities that migrants engage in, such as
participating in organisations of fellow nationals in the host society or communicating with those who remained in the sending country (Portes & DeWind, 2004:834).

Faist et al. (2013) argue for a new scope of transnationalism, a perspective that goes beyond the usual understanding of migrants’ lives and instead pursues the notion of the multi-sitedness of migrants’ lives on various levels. While transnational ties inevitably operate within already existing social structures, the perspective offered by Faist does not limit the categorisation of transnational flows, but rather emphasises what they term transnational spaces. These take various forms such as kinship groups, communities or circuits that operate in the continuum of cross-border transactions (Faist et al., 2013). Therefore, their approach suggests that transnationality is a degree of connectivity between migrants and non-migrants and countries relevant to the process, not limited to the home and host country perspective (ibid.).

While some may argue that transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, and can be also understood as an ‘updated’ version of diaspora with its origins in ancient Greece, (denoting ‘scattering’ and primarily referring to city-state colonialisation practises) (Castles & Miller, 2009:31), its conceptual popularity has certainly increased due to advanced technologies, such as cheaper communication and travel opportunities enabling people to maintain close links with their areas of origin (Portes, 1999:218).

Transnationalism draws attention to the diminishing of the importance of borders, blurring the distinctions between sending and receiving countries, or as White (2011:7) suggests: it is better to think of Polish society spreading across the borders. Thus, it enables migrants to maintain their former national identity and connections while they are abroad. It denotes an alternative that enables migrants to sustain the presence in both societies and cultures and to exploit both political and economic opportunities emerging from such a dual life (Portes & DeWind, 2004:834).

Economic transnationalism offers some immigrants and their fellow nationals an alternative to low-wage dead-end jobs performed in the receiving country and gives them an opportunity to find their way into the middle class through relatively higher wages earned abroad (Portes, 1999). Political transnationalism gives them a voice that otherwise they would not have, whereas cultural transnationalism allows them to reassure their identities, their collective sense of belonging and values, as well as transmitting these to
their children without necessarily blocking their successful integration into the host society.

The notion of transnational community denotes the links between immigrant groups in the advanced countries with their sending nations and hometowns (Portes, 1999). The key area within which the transnational practices affect the sending country is heavily emphasised on two grounds: economic and political. Remittances sent by migrants and investments in the country of origin promote growth and thus contribute to the stability of the country of origin (Vertovec, 1999:455). In political terms, however, such activities tend to be aligned with the promotion of democracy and liberal values. Transnational corporations are seen as the major institutional form of transnational practices and the vital element to understand globalisation. Political parties often establish their offices abroad to canvass immigrants, while immigrants themselves organise to lobby the home government (Vertovec, 1999:455).

Building on the theories of migration networks, a transnational approach argues that its importance exceeds the conceptualisation on a micro-level (Castles & Miller, 2009:31) and with the heavy influence of globalisation leads to the rapid spread of transnational communities that become an increasingly significant means of organising activities, relationships and identities among those associated with more than one country (Vertovec, 1999:447,449). While it overcomes the solely individual perspective, the notion of transnational community emphasises human agency and the role of migrants in those networks, especially as regards the gendered aspect of migration and involvement in transnational communities on various levels.

Nonetheless, transnationalism is built on the assumption that identity (ethnic identity in particular) fluctuates and is being constantly re-shaped under external influences, such as migration experience (Castles, 2002:1158) by the ‘diaspora consciousness’ (Vertovec, 1999:450). Through the individuals increased awareness of multiple attachments, such as ‘being away from home’, ‘here and there’ etc., migrants might identify themselves with one society more than another or to be connected simultaneously to more than one nation (Vertovec, 1999:450). This leads to the paradox of diaspora shaping the awareness of multi-locality that significantly influences the autonomy of migrants: it assumes solidarity in the host country, but it also indicates connections maintained with the country of origin. Some scholars even move beyond the argument of multi-locality and argue that
transnationalism does not necessarily have to bind by migration or geographical locations as such (Cohen, 1996).

As Cohen (1996) argues, in the time of advanced technology, a diaspora can be re-created through mind, cultural values and shared imagination. Change in self-identification and the process of renegotiation of self-identification among migrants who are exposed to transnational practises is very likely to take place (Portes, 1999:470). However, this does not suggest that migrants change their national identity and in the case of Polish migrants, while they may lose certain cultural aspects from their former identity research shows that many still identify themselves as Polish (White, 2011). Bielewska (2012) in her research on national identities of Poles in Manchester argues that there are two distinct types of Poles who through engagement in transnational practises constantly re-construct their national identities. The first type is those whose transnational practises are embedded into everyday life to a degree that it leads to a strong model of national identity abroad. The other, on the contrary produces a more postmodern and individually self-defined mode. The concept of transnationalism allows an understanding of how migrants construct their own unique identities, maintaining a sense of where they come from within the host community.

Transnationalism is not without criticism. Firstly, it may imply that ethnic identity is homogenous, emphasising the sameness of being Polish across borders (Temple, 2001). It is also often perceived as disturbing social cohesion and promoting segregation in the receiving societies, where migrants, rather than integrating into host society tend to cluster within their own communities. Moreover, if examined closely, transnationalism is also criticised for trying to explain everything that migrants do (White, 2011:8). Nonetheless, today migrants are able to create and maintain relationships despite geographical distance. Those living apart can consequently become ‘transmigrants’ developing the ability to maintain their livelihoods in more than one location across borders due to their interconnectedness (Vertovec, 2007; Bash, et al., 1994). Such interconnectedness is particularly easy to maintain in 21st century when new technologies, such as the internet (including software such as WhatsApp, Viber, Skype, Messenger) and inexpensive travel makes it not only possible but also easily accessible (Vertovec, 2007; cf. Chapter Seven on the strategies for maintaining contact with transnational social networks). This approach is particularly relevant for Polish migrants in Ireland, and it will be addressed throughout the thesis.
2.7. Female perspectives

Research on migration and gender show contrary results related to the role of the gender and women in the migratory process. On the one hand the literature shows the potential empowerment of women following the migration (Duda-Mikulin, 2013; Siara, 2013) and on the other perpetuation and enforcement of traditional and even patriarchal norms and family structures (Hofmann, 2014; Urbańska, 2015; Mazurkiewicz, 2018).

From the early 1980s, authors such as Phizacklea (1983) and Morokvasic (1983) were among the first to point out the bias of the male figure in theories of migration. In her work, Morokvasic (1983) highlighted how women were neglected in migration research across disciplines, and if included, tended to be described in a highly traditional and stereotypical manner that portrayed women as dependent on a male, usually uneducated, unable to speak the language of the host society and fixed to their own ‘culture’ brought from their country of origin. Thus, if mentioned at all, women were considered in their roles as wives or mothers, more significantly, as a family member. Such a position has been addressed by feminist scholars, who argued for recognition of the diversity of women’s experience and how in many instances it is the women who initiate the migration process and are the active agents in the labour market (Morokvasic, 1983).

Morokvasic’s call to perceive women as economic migrants has been acknowledged in the literature on migration to southern Europe, by (female) scholars who started recognising the presence of women in migratory trends (Zontini, 2010:26).

Zontini (2010:25-26) incorporates elements of gender into transnationalism, paying great attention to two vital elements of women’s reality: their position in the labour market and their role in the family (often extending across the borders). Those two elements are the most interlinked and complete in the construction of social reality among female migrants.

After the analysis of inward migrants to Italy in the 1990s, a typology of migrant women was developed, dividing them into two binary categories: autonomous and dependant women (Zontini, 2010:27). The former group involved migrants such as Filipinas or Latin Americans, described as ‘solo-migrants’ usually moving for employment reasons, while the latter was ascribed mainly to Moroccan women who were described as ‘followers’ of their husbands. Studies carried out on the Italian case of women’s migration previously
have been framed in terms of push factors enclosed mainly within economic reasons, such as poverty and destitution (Zontini, 2010:27) and it is only in the mid-1990s when pull factors were acknowledged.

Mazurkiewicz (2018) in her work on migrant women in Ireland addresses the issue of maintenance of traditional gender norms among Polish migrant women following migration. According to Mazurkiewicz (2018), the process of relocation pushes families to readopt their traditional values and through those traditional values, to enable migrant to maintain the sense of security and stability. Consequently, Mazurkiewicz (2018) argues, mothers resign from the labour market or simply do not enter employment at all after migration. While migrants tend to fall in the trap of the gender role reproduction following the migration, Erdal and Pawlak (2018) argue that the renegotiation of gender role is a constant continuity that is continuously shaped by their experience and relationships with others, both in their home and host country.

Bell and Domecka (2017) analysed the experience of Polish migrants in Belfast, particularly through the gendered lens of Polish women participating in the migration process. Although their also focused on the migratory experience and initial settlement practice, Bell and Domecka (2017) argue that migration does not always equal opportunity to renegotiate gender roles and women often find themselves in the situation where they simple maintain the norms and roles already adopted from Poland, where a male takes the traditional breadwinning role, while women additionally to her employment (which is treated as supplementary income in the family) takes care of everything else. Bell and Domecka’s (2017) findings are quite contrary to Siara’s (2013:111) results on Polish migrants in London whereby migrant women find themselves on “the opposite ends of a gender continuum” and use the migration to completely renegotiate the gender roles.

This might be to do with the fact that London, being rather a unique global city is quite different to Belfast. Thus, it might be asserted that gender norms are not necessarily renegotiated only through the migration process but are also influenced by the gender norms present in the host country or even more so, city. It is also shaped by the life stage when migrants decide to relocate: women who migrate prior to motherhood have more opportunities to arrange their career life and education, whereas those who migrate as mothers, particularly with small children are likely to be constrained by the childcare
duties that remain their responsibility. As Bell and Domecka (2017) highlight in their research, migrant females were steered towards occupations drawn on the traditional gender roles (i.e., the interviewed women tended to perform jobs such as domestic and care workers, cleaner or beautician while their male counterparts were employed as construction workers). Nonetheless, the construction of gender roles within migrant families should not be considered fixed. Quite contrary, the analysis should account for economic changes and the fluidity of labour markets, particularly during the economic crisis when the construction workers had been hit the most (Bell & Domecka, 2017; Russell et al., 2014).

Women tend to build their networks around gendered aspects of their lives, i.e., childcare and motherhood in particular (Lentin & De Tona, 2010). For mothers, new networks in the receiving societies built around child-related activities are the means through which migrant women integrate into wider society (Ryan, 2007). While previous research shows that coupled mothers automatically benefit from their husbands’ networks, resources are not always equally distributed within migrant families (Lentin & De Tona, 2010:187). The size of social networks, their density and composition also serve as reinforcement tools for cultural and gender relations (Curran & Saguy, 2001).

Migrant mothers may rely on friends or siblings living nearby or invite grandparents who would look after grandchildren. That cannot be done at a distance and requires physical relocation, on at least a temporary basis. Also, as pointed out by White and Ryan (2008), ethnic Polish networks based in the receiving country appear to be of the utmost importance for the migrant parent. Mothers might also maintain their social networks through Facebook groups, care centres, toddlers’ groups or by helping each other with dropping each other’s children to school. This type of informal support might be provided by ‘weak ties’ – those who have the necessary knowledge but are not necessarily part of one’s intimate social circle (Granovetter, 1983). However, the prior existence of social networks and close circles does not necessarily imply that the support required is always available for mothers (especially if the closest members of the social circle have remained in Poland). It creates the need for mothers to not only establish more transnational ties or connections in the ‘host’ society but simultaneously maintain the existing ones.
2.8. Family migration

The family constitutes “a place where there is a dynamic interplay between structure, culture, and agency, where creative culture-building takes place in the context of external social and economic forces and refers to emigration cultural frameworks” (Foner, 1997:961 in Zontini, 2010:51). A household, on the other hand, is a unit within which decisions and strategies are made and mediated between individuals and the larger structural setting in which he/she is living (Zontini, 2010:31). Members of a household are deemed of available resources and make decisions for the sake of family as a whole.

Feminists, however, have criticised this view and suggest a more sophisticated and gendered version of the household strategies model. Zontini (2010:51) sources a following definition from Chant and Radcliffe (1992:22-23), which considers a household as:

…a social institution that organises resources (land, labour, tools, capital etc.), recruits and allocates labour in combination of reproductive and productive tasks. Gender divisions of labour are crucial for this pattern of livelihood and provide a basic template for households’ decisions about who will migrate and who will stay.

Its importance lies in the recognition of gender roles and relations in different cultural and economic contexts; it considers production as well as reproduction and highlights the power distribution within the household.

The notion of ‘family migration’ is a much more contested area that moves away from a simplistic understanding of family as an objective and knowable entity, focusing instead on the complexity and variety of ‘family practises’ performed by immigrant families (Zontini, 2010:33). While what is considered to constitute a ‘family’ varies between circumstances and context, there seems to be a shared understanding that the family framework and its role in migration remains an important meso-level for analysis not only of the migration process itself but also the experiences of integration and settlement. Yet scholars argue the traditional family migration model still avoids references to gender roles and power inequality within the family and overlooks how this unequal distribution of power influences and determines who will migrate and in what circumstances (Zlotnik,
Zontini (1995), in her work on migration and family, provides the female perspective and identifies key elements of why such a family perspective is highly relevant to the analysis of female migration processes.

While researchers such as Krings et al. (2012) argue that Polish migrants strive for better opportunities and therefore can be considered as free movers, others such as Bygnes and Erdal (2017) based on Polish migrants in Norway, argue that migrants aim to establish grounded lives. Indeed, the discrepancies should account not only for the different countries and therefore various characteristics of migration, but also for the hidden life course perspective, particularly concerning age and migrants’ stages of life. Bygnes and Erdal (2017) argue that also through leading a transnational life, in particular transnational commuting may be chosen as a strategy to ensure secure and settled livelihoods for migrants and their families.

Women as major participants in migration process and simultaneously in the family unit hold a paradoxical role. On the one hand, their economic activities are closely related to the needs of the family. On the other hand, they are usually more likely than their male counterparts to face the constraints that the family and childcare related responsibilities may pose to women and their employment opportunities. Their decision to migrate is often directed by the aspiration to improve the economic status of the family or at least to provide the basic resources for the family members to survive. However, it does not happen independently: to achieve this, women require other forms of support from their family members, such as the emotional support that would enable them to make the decision to emigrate (Zlotnik, 1995).

More recent research done on Polish migrant mothers (in the U.K.) took a slightly different stance. Erel (2011) suggests reframing our perception of women’s mothering and draws on how migrant mothers and their children construct belonging, locating it both in the context of the sending as well as the host country. Erel (2011) identifies competent mothering that is crucial to a mother’s perception of being a good citizen. Thus, through negotiating not only national but more so class and racialised identity, mothers aim to fulfil the idealised child-rearing image of the well-educated Polish child that symbolises legitimate mobility and belonging.

Due to the strong influence of economic theories in migration research, the role of the family in the study of transnational migration is heavily under-researched. Consequently,
the dominant approach tends to emphasise productive activities and to ignore reproductive ones (Zonitini, 2010:34). A family perspective is crucial in understanding women’s strategies particularly because women’s potential dependency on men during the migration process is more visible in the family unit (Zonitini, 2010).

2.9. Conclusions
This chapter served as a first building block for the theoretical understanding of migration and its development over time. Traditional theoretical approaches to migration developed over the past fifty years do not adequately address the complex needs of contemporary migration. All the aspects of the migration process cannot be explained by using only one of the theories presented above. Recent theoretical developments significantly contribute to a better understanding of the causes of migration and the subsequent mechanisms involved in the migration process. However, most available theories tend to focus on economic and employment-related migration, ignoring not only family but also gender dimensions.

Polish migration, like many other migration flows, is impossible to capture by one single and universal theory. Instead, certain elements should be recognised and highlighted from one theory more than from another. While they are useful to explain certain aspects of the phenomenon and are more applicable to one context but not another, they cannot be employed fully to capture the whole issue, and this raises the need to develop theory that combines approaches to micro- and meso-level practises that are crucial in understanding how Polish mothers in Ireland construct their livelihoods. In such cases push-pull theory and macro-level theories can explore reasons and the initial process of migration.

By using dual labour market theory one can only investigate liminal conditions that shape migrants’ employment circumstances. While the new economics of the labour market focuses on migration considering strategy employed on the family level, the existence of transnational social spaces might be important to analyse the links between migrants and their countries of origin through transnational practises.

Finally, migrant network theory provides an explanation of how migration waves are sustained over time and how they shape migrants’ lives abroad. A clear gap has been identified in available theories – gender is an important factor that influences migration
experience. Inevitably, it is the social foundation of migration rather than purely economic origins that underpin contemporary Polish migration. Nonetheless, both ought to contribute to each other rather than being perceived separately as the sole element of migration. A transnational perspective is crucial in understanding the transnational social practises that take place on both sides of the spectrum and connections between ‘here’ and ‘there’.

Transnationality connotes the social practices of agents on multiple levels: individuals, groups, family and networks across borders, with most of the practises located between the familial and personal level as well as the various spheres of social reality such as socio-economic, cultural, economic and political. Within the above elements of migrants’ reality, women’s perspectives are also crucial to understand, and yet again should not be researched only in economic dimensions but rather in consideration of family role and position within the household. The following analytical chapters will provide context-specific discussion on the current literature applicable to the research questions and the hypotheses assessed.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous chapters set the scene regarding what is known about migration, both theoretically and concerning the situation of Polish migrants in Ireland. This chapter is devoted to the methodological considerations underpinning the research and the methods used to generate empirical data.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews combined with a participatory mapping technique conducted with 61 Polish working mothers living in Dublin. The maps focused on the participant (ego) and her network members (alters). The framework adopted in this research project bases on the concept of ego-centered social networks, whereby ego draws the support from the alters. Crucial to note, is that due to the limitation of the data available, the flow of the services between alter and alter is largely limited and therefore excluded from the overall ego-centered networks framework. Thus the key focus of both, research questions and the further analysis is on the relations and flow of services between ego and alters, namely participants and the connections that they have with others. The data was collected between November 2014 and November 2015. Having outlined the research aim and objectives in Chapter One, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description and rationale. The processes involved in data collection and analysis and how this relates to the relevant methodological standpoints is now set out.

This chapter is structured as follows: firstly, I provide a discussion of the methods, tools and procedures used throughout the project. In particular, I describe the dataset composition and variables used throughout the thesis. In contextualising mixed-methodological research design within more traditional approaches to social networks and support networks research, I argue that such an approach helps to develop rich insights into phenomena that cannot be fully understood using only qualitative or quantitative methods alone. Secondly, I discuss the tools used and procedures that I followed for data collection and handling.
3.1. Social Networks
We are increasingly aware of the interdependencies of social life. We live in a world that is paradoxically small and wider; each of us is embedded into local communities, but we also hold an increasing number of contacts who connect us with others across the globe. Yet there seems to be a big gap in terms of the intuitive understanding of how the social world operates, and precise analysis of those relations and interactions. To fill that gap, many approaches have been undertaken to provide the most comprehensive take on analysing social networks.

The first study of social networks in the 1930s was based on an anthropological study of interests in social structures and the ‘web’ of social life (Scott, 2011). Researchers focused on the relations through which social action is organised, and in the 1950s the concept of ‘social network’ began to emerge. Since then, the investigation of the topic has focused on more structured elements such as ‘density’ and ‘texture’. From the 1970s, the quantitative approach was gradually developed with new analytical techniques and specialist applications. One of the most commonly-employed quantitative approaches is social network analysis (SNA). An essential element of SNA is graphic representation of the data. A graph is a visual representation of a social network, where actors are represented as nodes (the structured element within the network) and the ties are presented as lines (links between the nodes that represent relationships or interaction), also called edges or arcs (Crossley et al., 2015). In this approach not only does terminology derive from graph theory but many fundamental mathematical concepts are also borrowed. In addition to the structure of networks, the direction of relationships also matters, namely how resources are transmitted between actors (Crossley et al., 2015; Small, 2009) and whether the support is uni- or bidirectional.

3.2. Ego-centred networks
Contrary to the broad and complex web of connections, one of the most widely-used strands of social network analysis (SNA) is ego-centred social network analysis (Crossley et al., 2015) where network is considered from the perspective of the participant as the one that manages and shapes the composition of his/her network. Burt (1992) highlights
the fact that the central person of a network, the ‘ego’ manages its diversity and controls potential exchanges between the ‘alters’ who make up the network and the flow of favours and services between them (both ego – alter and alter – alter).

Figure 3.1 shows a sample representation of ego-centred network. This type of network involves an ego (participant) and other n actors (alters) with whom an ego enjoys a particular ‘link’ type of relationship and interaction between actors that constitutes a platform for the transfer and ‘flow’ of resources (Crossley, et al., 2015; Wasserman & Faust, 1994)

Figure 3.1 Visual representation of the ego-centred network as a graph

Members of networks interact, they influence each other and exchange resources and are therefore viewed as interdependent rather than independent, autonomous units (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Additionally, the elements of the social network may also include a set of node attributes that characterise alters. Of course, the interactions and ties make a difference. For instance, where there is a tight cluster of connections, there is also a higher level of mutual influence that in turns reflects on the similarity of attitudes, practices and preferences (Coleman, 1988). Egocentric network data comprises the network neighbourhood around an actor (ego), including alters. The neighbourhood includes the ties from ego to each alter, and often alter-to-alter ties.
3.3. Mixed methods
A mixed-methods approach incorporates various elements and stages of the research design, processes and philosophy. Creswell and Clark (2011) argue that:

...in mixed methods the researcher collects and analyses persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on the research question). [S/he] mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one with another. [The researcher] gives priority to one of both types of data (in terms of the research emphasis) and uses the variety of these procedures in a single study or multiple phases of a study design. The researcher also frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses and combines [these procedures] into specific research design that direct the plan for conducting study (2011:5).

Understanding the nature of mixed methods involves more than knowing its definition and when it should be used. Research problems suitable for the employment of mixed methods design are those in which one data source might be insufficient, results need to be explained, exploratory findings need to be generalised. This eventually leads to the point when the second method is needed to enhance the first one and an overall research objective can be best addressed with multiple tools.

In this project, a mixed methods design provides findings that one method alone would not be able to yield. Interviews alone would not provide sufficient data without a structured map of the social networks. Maps of several networks alone would not give enough background about the individual circumstances that the narratives provided. During the process of analysis, the narrative alone – despite its rich insights – cannot provide structured, systematic outcomes or the confirmation of trends that can be observed across the sample. A comparison of support strategies dependent on the structure of the network is nearly impossible without a quantitative approach. Similarly, a quantitative approach alone does not provide enough insight into the motives for choices and support strategies.

Qualitative and quantitative research provide different perspectives, and each has its limitations. When the project focuses on a few individual cases, the ability to make any general conclusion across the sample is lost. When those cases are examined
quantitatively, in many cases the individual experience is diminished. Hence, the limitation of one method can be offset by the strength of the other and a combination of quantitative and qualitative data provides a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach by itself.

Quantitative research is weak in understanding the context in which people talk. Also, the voices of participants are not directly heard in quantitative data. Furthermore, a quantitative researcher’s own bias and interpretations are rarely discussed. So, qualitative data makes up for those weaknesses. On the other hand, qualitative research is seen as deficient because of the personal interpretations made by researchers, the bias created by this and lack of rigorous approaches to the analysis. Qualitative findings are nearly impossible to generalise with (even across the sample studied) because of the small number of participants as well as the volume of narrative and the individual approach. Therefore, the combination of the strengths of one approach compliments the weaknesses of the other.

A mixed methods research design provides a bridge between what is often seen as two, oppositional stands of quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Thus, mixed methods encourage those multiple worldviews and paradigms, different to those typically associated with narrowed, already defined approaches. In turn, it seeks to overcome the paradigms assigned to qualitative versus quantitative research and encompasses a pragmatic approach to social research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This highlights the practicality of mixed methods research in the sense that a researcher is free to use the method that is most suitable to address the research problem. Beyond that, completeness is a key reason for adopting a mixed methods strategy. Completeness, as explained by Bryman (2008), refers to the ability to answer the question of inquiry in a more complete manner by including both qualitative and quantitative strategies. It implies that one research strategy can fill the gaps left by another method. In other words, bringing two methods together can provide a more comprehensive account of the area of inquiry.

However, mixed methods research is not without challenges. The first challenge addressed by Creswell and Clark (2011) is the issue of the skills of the researcher. Undoubtedly, relying on two binary types of data, designs and analytical strategies requires familiarity and fluency with qualitative as well as quantitative methods. In
addition to my own experience and skills gained while obtained my MRes degree, I attended numerous workshops to expand my skills in both of these fields and gained proficiency in using NVivo, SPSS and STATA.

Further, the question of the feasibility of the project must be addressed. While dealing with quantitative along with qualitative data collection, data handling and analysis, time was a scarce resource. The practicality of data collection and further quantification of all the ties and their connection was more challenging. Each transcript and map had to be revised and analysed individually in order to further code it into SPSS, which took a considerable number of hours.

3.4. Mixed Methods Design and Procedures
Mixed methods have often been presented as mixing both qualitative and quantitative methods; others adopt a more liberal approach to mixing by combining various qualitative with other qualitative tools, such as interviews and visual methods. However, through the process of quantification, this research design is unique. Most research designs either embed qualitative research within a quantitative approach (cf. Morse, 2010), treat both approaches equally (cf. Bryman 2008; Natasi et al., 2007) or prioritise one over another (cf. Creswell & Clark, 2011 on various types of mixed methods design).

It is important to note that the quantification method used in this project is different to the one commonly used by scholars who transform qualitative data into quantitative. While both procedures refer to converting qualitative data into numeric information, the approaches differ. Data transformation refers to reducing codes or themes that emerged during qualitative analysis into numeric data, for instance, by creating dichotomous categories (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In other words, it refers to quantified scores of the frequency of the theme occurring in the interview, percentages of certain themes associated within the phenomenon or number of significant statements and so on.

The quantification method used in this project moves beyond frequency count or dichotomous themes count. It transforms qualitative data (before as well as during the thematic analysis) into quantitative data by using the narratives from every interview to code data into variables. Following the literature review and hypothesis formation, the variables have been defined. For each hypothesis, the required variables have been specified and extracted from the interview narrative and further engaged in the analysis. Certain variables, such as the year of arrival or the number of children, were directly
extracted from the interviews and coded into the numerical variables. For the categorical variables, the categories were also pre-defined, and the information matched to the categories. If the category had not been previously specified – it was added to the variable. For the further analysis, the categories were merged and grouped, if required.

In order to convey the complexity of the mixed methods research design adopted for this project and to ensure the understanding of the reader about the steps undertaken, figure 3.2 presents a procedural diagram that incorporates details about the steps and procedures (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Morse, 2010; Natasi et al., 2007). Later in this chapter, each step is described separately.

**Figure 3.2: Procedural diagram**

First, data was collected through 61 semi-structured qualitative interviews that were guided by the following themes (see Appendix III for detailed list of themes, questions and interview guide):

- Migration: circumstances and arrival to Ireland
- Motherhood
- Employment: job history, current employment and its connection with childcare responsibilities
- Daily routine (including people involved in participants’ routine)
The themes were developed based on my previous experience of research with migrants. Further, following the literature review done prior to beginning the fieldwork, the themes were also discussed with supervisors and other specialists in the field. I have presented my work at numerous seminars and conferences and all the feedback received there was taken into account prior to the start of the interviews.

Maps of personal support networks were also collected during the interview process. The first step in managing the data while transcribing was to pre-elementarily develop the key areas of analysis and identify the key analytical themes. This step process was constantly revised and complimented by new narratives until all the interviews were transcribed. I then focused on constructing the first database that is built on the ego level. Next, while completing the second database for alters and ties, the initial themes were further enlarged by the themes related to the network members. The quantification process was done manually. Key variables were identified, and data was pulled from the interviews and coded accordingly, accounting for relevant categories within the variables.

The next step: analysis was conducted after completion of datasets as well as the codes for thematic analysis. These codes (themes) as well as the ones that emerged in the process of coding, writing and literature review were used to code narratives for Chapters Five and Seven (NVivo). Quantified data (entered into SPSS) was analysed in STATA. In Chapter Four, the data was analysed through Poisson regression of network size and personal characteristics of the ego and network members. In Chapter Six and Seven, I employed multi-level logistics models (random effects) to explore various dimensions of social support. In Chapter Six, the mixed-methodological approach was undertaken and concentrated on the use of both qualitative analysis combined with multi-level quantitative analytical procedures.

3.5. Recruitment and data collection
Through semi-structured interviews combined with a participatory mapping technique, this project focuses on 61 Polish working mothers who live in Dublin. Network maps as a visualisation tool and name generators were used, as their simple and intuitive handling makes them easily adaptable in the context of foreign cultures and with people from
various levels of educational background. The data was collected between November 2014 and November 2015.

The chosen group was not only difficult to reach but also difficult to arrange meetings with, since working mothers had very tightly organised work and childcare routines. Thus, reaching participants and conducting full interviews had to be precisely timed and the schedule planned. In line with the research questions that drive the thesis, potential participants were approached personally and through various sources to ensure diversity of the sample: adverts/posters in Polish Saturday Schools, workshops and play dates for Polish families, Polish shops in Dublin, media (Polish radio and magazines) and Polish websites (see Appendix I). Initially, in order to diversify the recruitment strategies, I also used non-Polish speaking colleagues who knew or worked with Polish mothers. That allowed me to reach participants such as those who were in a relationship with an Irish or other non-Polish partner. However, this was a relatively low percentage of the overall sample. In schools and organised groups, I approached ‘gatekeepers’ with the information poster and asked them to disseminate the information about my study and recruitment (Bulmer, 2008:152). I also used Facebook to recruit those who I was not able to approach in person. Facebook sampling is proven to enrich the potential of obtaining greater sample variety within migrant population (Potzschke & Braun, 2017). Apart from this purposive sampling, I also used a snowballing strategy through previously interviewed participants providing contact details to friends who would be keen to participate. Each participant could provide up to three contacts to avoid overlap of the network members. While recruiting potential participants, relevant information regarding the project was provided and widely available (Miller & Bell, 2005:54) (see Appendix II).

Following the research design and specified research aims and objectives, following participation criteria have been identified:

- Employed (regardless of hours and type or place of employment)
- Polish
- Have at least one child in primary school age or younger (under 12) in Ireland
- Live in Dublin or Dublin commuting belt area
Employment and nationality were selected based on the general research objectives. The ages of the children aimed to find mothers who still require childcare to some extent as their primary school children require some form of supervision. Location, and Dublin in particular, was selected for two reasons: first Dublin is found to have the biggest number of Polish migrants, and also due to the pragmatic aspect of the research – as single researcher I was only able to commute around Dublin.

All interviews were collected in Polish and further transcribed and translated to English.

3.5.1 Sample description
Overall, 61 mothers participated in the study. Due to the qualitative nature of the data collection process, all the demographic data and other variables were created during the process of quantification and are self-reported. Due to the purposive sampling strategy, this sample is considered to be a convenience sample (Bryman, 2008). As indicated in Table 3.1., the average age of participants is 34 (sd=3.6), with most women falling into the age bracket of 30 and over. At the time of interview, all women were employed. Fifty women (82%) were employed and the remaining 18 per cent were self-employed. Thirty-eight women (62%) worked full-time and 23 (38%) part-time. Nearly half of the participants were employed in semi-skilled/vocational occupations, 20 (34%) were unskilled and ten (17%) were employed at the higher skilled/professional level. Twenty-one of the participants had completed third-level education with all but one participant completing it in Poland. Over 30 per cent of the participants had acquired further qualifications in Ireland. Those qualifications ranged from postgraduate degrees to vocational training and certification in Ireland.

The year of participants’ arrival to Ireland ranged between 2000 (one participant arrived prior to EU enlargement) and 2014. The median figure for arrival year was 2005 (mean=2004; sd=2.51). Most participants arrived after EU enlargement and during the Celtic Tiger (77%). However, almost 20 per cent of participants arrived in Ireland during the economic downturn. Only a quarter of participants had a prior migration experience before arriving in Ireland. The majority of women arrived without children (84%), but with partners (72%), which in turn is reflected in the migration motives of the participants. Most women decided to migrate to either follow their partners (family reasons) – 31 per cent, or for economic reasons – to search for a better job and quality of
life – 51 per cent. The majority of the participants had one child (67%), 26 per cent had two and seven per cent had three children. Fifty-one mothers taking part in the study were partnered and nine mothers were single.

Table 3.1: Key socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (participants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or younger</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 and older</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment mode</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled/vocational</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/professional</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High education level</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low education level</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional qualification completion in Ireland</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arrival**

<p>| Year of arrival | Before EU- | 3       | 5%     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-2003 enlargement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2008 (Celtic Tiger migration)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2014 (economic downturn)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children on arrival</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner on arrival</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for migration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and improvement of quality of life</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous migration experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Current situation – Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2 presents key characteristics of the network composition. Participants’ networks were largely feminised, with women constituting 66 per cent of the overall network members. The majority of alters were of Polish origin (76%) and then Irish (19%). Other nationalities constitute five per cent and vary greatly (both EU and non-EU nationals). Sixty-seven per cent of network members were employed. The second-biggest group (although considerably smaller) were retired members (14%) and part-time workers (10%). Students and unemployed made up the smallest group (9%).

As regards the strength of the ties and composition of the network strong ties, family members (33%) and other close friends (26%) constitute half of all network members. The remaining 41 per cent are weak ties.6 The majority of the connections were resident in Ireland (71%). The remaining transnational ties lived in Poland (26%) and other countries (3%).

Most network members (ties) reported by participants and placed on the visual maps were also parents (79%). The primary source through which participants met their network members was through their children (16%), while family members (16%) were the most common bridges through which mothers formed relationships. Furthermore, participants also formed connections through work (15%) and the internet (12%). Partners (11%) as well as connections from Poland (10%) were also fairly common sources of connections for mothers participating in this study. Local connections with neighbours (8%) and friends (8%) as well as hobbies (4%) were less common in facilitating network formation.

Table 3.2: Key socio-demographic characteristics of the network members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1110</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time/self-employed</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 Mates and acquaintances.
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Family member</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mates and</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acquaintances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other European/World</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Maternity</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source/mode of meeting</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hobby and personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.6. Qualitative data

*Storytelling is a fundamental form of human communication [that] serves essential function in our lives. We often think in a story form, speak in a story form, and bring meaning to our lives through the story.* (Atkinson, 1998:1)
Through narrative and stories constructed by participants, this project examines not only the experience of being a migrant mother in Ireland, but also the strategies of organising support and the motives behind their choices. The following section discusses the qualitative data collection tools used and my rationale for employing them. Semi-structured interviews were employed to allow participants to give their own accounts of the processes that shaped their childcare strategies, the constraints they experienced and the meanings of the relationships with their support network members (Crossley, 2010). Interviews were informed by the themes of migration, employment, motherhood and plans for the future, as these themes constitutes the key area of interest in relation to the thesis focus and constitute an inseparable set that enabled me to look into participants experience of managing work and employment as a migrant in Ireland. Participants were interviewed about how they managed childcare and employment and the role played by their support networks in facilitating the work/childcare balance. The interviews provide detailed accounts of what services and goods were exchanged for childcare and who was most likely to provide such support.

3.6.1 Interviews
Interviewing is one of the mostly commonly employed methods used in the social sciences. There are various types of interviews with formal, structured questionnaire-based interviews on one side of the spectrum, and completely open-ended, unstructured interviews on the other. Qualitative interviews are a valuable source of providing data on issues that cannot be explored by observation or when the events need to be reconstructed (Bryman, 2008). Unlike other qualitative tools, interviews offer a means to explore participants’ experiences, opinions or feelings (May, 1997:109; Robson, 2002:272).

There are several advantages to conducting interviews over other methods used in social network research. Firstly, the interviewer can prompt for additional alters when generating names on the maps (Robins, 2015). The interviewer can also ensure that all relevant data has been collected and can answer any queries on the spot. On the other hand, despite richer data collection, conducting the interviews on my own was both a costly and labour-intensive procedure. Although a qualitative process enriches the data, it adds to the resource costs but is useful in understanding the social processes and motivations of the participants (Robins, 2015).
In order to encourage deeper reflection through open-ended questions concentrated around the guiding themes related to the subject, questions were based on the information disclosed by participants and to a great extent driven by them, along with the guide for the themes (Skinner, 2012) (Appendix III presents the interview guide that has been used throughout the interviews).

Initially, I explained the purpose of the study, secured consent and clarified all the points included in the information sheet. At this stage, I also allowed participants to ask questions and made sure that the atmosphere was relaxed and that participants were happy to proceed. The first topic focused on the circumstances of arrival and served as an easy introduction into the interview process. It also allowed me to gather the context of the participants’ circumstances. Talking through the motherhood experience was a positive process for most participants. I then proceeded to their employment history. In some cases, however, motherhood (especially for single mothers) was slightly difficult to talk about, but participants had the freedom to leave out information that they were not happy to provide, such as one single mother who asked me not to discuss any topic related to the father of her daughter in the presence of the child.

Next, I proceeded to the map. If there had been any stress or anger related to the topics of the interview, it was balanced with the drawing exercise. Here again the first two steps were considered fairly neutral. The third step asked about a sample crisis situation and that again could potentially cause distress when recollecting a crisis. So afterwards the topic moved on to the question of information support, which again was free of distress. In order to end the interview in a relaxed manner, I enquired about plans for the future. Putting the most important or potentially difficult questions and topics in the middle allowed me to first establish a relationship and trust with the participant but at the same time, due to the other easy topics following the difficult moment, participants could be put at ease and we tended to complete the interview on a positive note.

3.6.2 Visualisation tools
While mixed methods alone can provide useful insights into social networks, visualisation tools play a key role in facilitating such mixed approaches to data collection and analysis. For instance, Edwards (2010) argues that SNA as the most common form of social network research represents a unique opportunity to mix methods because of the
interdisciplinary approach developed from sociometry and graph theory (Moreno, 1960) and from early ethnographic studies of the structures of personal relations (Bott, 1957). Visualisation can be integrated with a range of other methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to facilitate data collection, inform analysis and illustrate results (Tubaro et al., 2016). Thus, visualisation can be used to bring methods into dialogue with each other, not necessarily to generate compromise but also to show tension, discrepancies and to complement other methods along with which the visuals tool are being used.

Visualisation of social networks has been described as making invisible social relationships visible (Conway, 2014) and making those abstract ideas more tangible. In this project, visual maps provide a structured and integrated view of the relationships that would not be immediately illustrated from a narrative alone. Sociograms, like the one used in this project allow both participants and researchers to think in terms of social structures and allow exploration of network narratives as they arise. They also investigate the relationships between participants and their network members as well as the dynamics between networks (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980). Therefore, visual tools should not be treated as a picture in itself or a map, but rather considered as a visual narrative, along with the story provided by the participants (Emmel, 2008). The physical presence of the map constitutes an important feature of the map. It allows the researcher and participants to return to elements included in the map and construct the interview to unfold around the process of description–elaboration–theorisation (Emmel, 2008:2).

When dealing with personal networks, the respondent is the only informant on the network and its members, which may raise concerns about the reliability of the responses (Hogan et al., 2007). Therefore, a clear connection between the theoretical foundation of the research and subjective meaning of the data gathered should be established. Maps must always be analysed and understood with the meanings and explanations provided by the participants who produced them. Maps do not stand alone but they require the interview transcript and any other information that was used in their making.

During the interviews, participants were asked to complete a map of their network. The network maps were created using A3 paper and markers (Gamper et al., 2011). The maps were structured into three circles that indicate the importance of the alter’s contribution, ranging from: “very important” (central circle) “important”, “of little importance” to “not important at all” (outside of the largest circle) (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980). The main
colours, indicating nationality and residence, were defined prior to the interview to make it as easy as possible to follow up: green (Irish living in Ireland), purple (Polish living in Ireland), red (Polish living in Poland). The other colours were used for different nationalities living in Ireland, those members of networks living in various countries (different to Ireland and Poland) or to distinguish between human and institutional ties (Emmel, 2008).

The layout of the maps and the participant’s location was explained to the participants, who first located the names mentioned in the narratives and then any other person involved in the support dimensions. The attributes of all names generated were discussed in a conversational style (Herz et al., 2015). After placing names already mentioned during the interview, participants were asked to name others who were important in each of the four spheres described. There was no minimum or maximum limit for the names. Prompts were used to generate other names, such as “what do you do when your child is sick and you have to go to work?” or a description of a typical crisis situation were used to prompt answers were used in the same manner across the participants.

Figure 3.3 presents an example of the network map used during an interview. The questions during the map drawing were focused on the narration about the map, ties and actors participating in the following arrangements:

1. Everyday/routine (oriented towards childcare provision as well as professional ties)

2. Free time, weekends and holidays (socialising, hobby, visits in Poland)

3. Emotional support/crisis situations

4. Information provision
In addition to the information about the participant’s place of residence, nationality and the importance of network members collected, these maps were also used as aids to generate additional narratives around the network members’ role in support provision. They prompted details about the type of support provided, the nature of the relationship, the basis of exchange, and the characteristics of the network member that were later coded quantitatively in order to set up nested datasets. These combined detailed personal and relational information about the participants and their active network members.

Unlike other research designs that employ name or position generators (cf. Lin, 1999), the approach used in this project builds on Van der Gaag and Snijder’s (2005) resource generator sampling idea. However, instead of asking if participants know anyone who could fix the car or could babysit their children, women taking part in this project were simply asked who is the person that fixes the car or babysit their children in particular situations.
3.7. Generalisation approach
For the purpose of the mixed-methods chapters – namely Chapters Six and Seven – I employed a two-step strategy known as a ‘generalization model’ (Mayring, 2001; Auer-Srnka & Koeszegi, 2007) that converts existing qualitative data into structured, numerical data (Domínguez & Hollstein, 2014). An integrated data collection strategy and a two-step analytical process characterise the ‘generalization model’. Firstly, the qualitative data was inductively explored. The qualitative approach offers in-depth understanding of processes, changes, content and context of the support provided (Crossley, 2010; Edwards, 2010). This leads to a description of how the participants develop their support networks and of the relevant situational and tie characteristics that influence the mobilisation strategies of the participants. These characteristics form the basis for the second step. Secondly, the data was systematically coded for quantitative analysis. This quantification maps and measures the elements of social relations in a precise and systematic manner (Edwards, 2010; Crossley, 2010). In particular, the quantitative analysis allows confirming or modifying research hypotheses developed in the first step.

This generalisation model aims to accomplish two goals: “Firstly, it provides significant insights into the research problem and thus responds to the many calls for discovery-oriented research. Secondly, it assures scientific rigor and allows deriving generalizable results from qualitative data” (Auer-Srnka & Koeszegi, 2007: 34). While strict testing of hypothesis is not possible given that the sample is not a random sample of any well-defined population, the combination of explorative qualitative analysis and confrontation with quantified data allows one to ascertain the consistency of the relationships suggested by the qualitative analysis. Moreover, while the qualitative analysis is confined by the view and perceptions of the interviewed mothers, the quantitative analysis allows the examination of additional features and relationships visible, such as how different types of ties combine or what characteristics of the total network influence the functionality of specific ties in the network (Crossley, 2010; Edwards, 2010).

3.8. Data Quantification
In order to convert data to a suitable quantitative form, narratives had to be transformed into numerical values. Two separate data files, corresponding to the different levels of the data were created.
• An ego-level file which contained all the attribute data collected on the egos
• An alter-level file which contained attribute data about each alter, as well as the ego to which each alter refers (this is the variable that links cases across the different files), and data about the relationship between ego and alter (such as the type of the tie, strength of the tie, type of support that the tie is involved etc.)

Depending on the analysis, the files were used separately or merged by using a common PID (participants identification number) variable.

The first stage of data quantification required the creation of a codebook that contained a broad list of variables, which provided basic information related to ego and alters, such as age, year of arrival, location (Appendix VII). These were not only essential to provide sample description but also to serve as further variables required for the analysis. Secondly, after a detailed literature review and formulation of research questions, further variables (if required) were developed and coded from the transcripts.

3.9. Analysis strategies
The analytical chapters of the thesis are designed in a way to address different research questions related to the mobilisation of various elements of social support among Polish mothers in Ireland. As a result, modelling and analytical strategies used throughout the thesis vary and depend on the hypothesis that is being tested in the relevant chapter, as well as on the level of measurement of the dependent variable. The regression models used include Poisson regression and multilevel mixed-effects ordered logistic models.

During the analysis and data interpretation, it was important to remember the relatively small sample size and the effect of it on the significance of the results as well as the fact that the given sample is considered a convenience sample, and thus cannot be generalised among the population of Polish mothers in Dublin. Therefore, it was important to keep in mind not to over-interpret test statistics considering the setting and use the results in a heuristic way (cf. Geven et al., 2016).
3.10. Ethics of the research
The research was conducted in compliance with the Trinity College Dublin, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy Research Ethics Policy. The Policy on Good Research Practice that guides this project’s ethical principles is imperative for any research activity and ensures that any research led for Trinity College Dublin is conducted to the highest standards of integrity, professional conduct and probity (SSSP, 2014). The College’s Policy on Good Research Practice states:

*In all research, in addition to the Law of the Land, the over-arching ethical principles for Trinity College can be summarized as: respect for the individual subject or population, beneficence & the absence of maleficence (research should have the maximum benefit with minimal harm) and justice (all research subjects and populations should be treated fairly and equally).* (SSSP, 2014:1)

An application for approval to the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy Research Ethics Panel at Trinity College Dublin was submitted and approved in year one of the Ph.D.

3.10.1 Informed Consent
Informed consent consists of participants’ comprehensive understanding of the research process and their voluntary agreement to participate in it (Israel & Hay, 2006; Bulmer, 2001:49). Participants were provided with information regarding the “*purpose, methods, expectations, risks, discomforts and possible outcomes of the research, including the information regarding how the results might be disseminated*” and protection of their identity (ibid; Silverman, 2010:154; Miller & Bell, 2005:65; Wiles, 2012:25-32, Bulmer, 2001:49). Before the interview, I provided a written informed consent form, read and explained all the elements of it, asked participants to sign, and gave each participant a copy. For a better understanding and a less stressful atmosphere, it was written and explained in Polish. In particular, I emphasised that participation was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw at any stage of the research (Silverman, 2010:153). Appendix IV presents a sample consent form that every participant signed prior to their interview. The consent was written both in Polish and English and was read out loud and explained before signing.
3.10.2 Confidentiality
The data obtained in this project enquired about the participants’ personal as well as professional lives. Participants entrusted me with their information involving work or personal conflicts and details of a sensitive and private nature. Thus, I assured participants that the information given to me would be used for the project purposes only, and would be treated as private, unless participant asked otherwise (Israel & Hay, 2006:61; Wiles, 2012:42).

3.10.3 Anonymity
All participant identifiers were changed: their names and ages were removed, and pseudonyms were randomly assigned and any references to their geographical location were limited (Israel & Hay, 2006:83; Wiles, 2012:51). Names of children were changed and places through which participants could be identified (such as workplace name, school or group etc.) were anonymised. In the process of writing the findings, I used short quotes in order to make it more difficult to follow individual stories and potentially identify the participants through their experience (White, 2011:20), while maintaining meaning behind the narrative. In relation to the anonymity of the mapping exercise, I allowed participants themselves to decide. Some mothers wrote different names to the actual ones, others used general names such as “neighbour I”, “friend K” etc. Other participants encouraged me to use their ‘real’ maps. The maps that were approved by participants to be used were used during the presentations while describing the mapping technique and exercise. For publication, I have drawn the general sample map in a way that avoids possible recognition. The names from the map were used in the ‘alter-level’ file to allow for easier follow-up while coding. No real map pictures were used in the findings chapters, and in the cases of reference to the network structure, the report is descriptive without using pictures (Flick, 2002:152; Knowles & Sweetman, 2004:12-13; Wiles, 2012:53).

3.10.4 Avoiding Harm
I am fully aware of the potential risk of harm and discomfort that this research project might have provoked and throughout the fieldwork my aim was to keep these factors
reduced. Therefore, I explained to my participants that I would not put any pressure on them if there was an issue that may cause distress and that, if needed, the interview would be immediately aborted (Gray, 2009:391). On a few occasions, participants said that they did not wish to discuss certain topics, or that, for example, the issues around the father’s absence in a one-parent family would not be discussed around the child. I also informed my participants that in case of any concerns, I would seek the advice of my supervisors in the first instance. On the occasions when I was asked for help with landlord disputes or issues at work, I directed my participants to the relevant agencies that could help.

It is not uncommon during face-to-face interviews to notice that the subject becomes upset or uncomfortable. Although my participants were not considered as vulnerable, some topics discussed were distressing. For some mothers it was a reminder of difficult life situations, the death of a spouse or upsetting incidents with close network members. I realised that it was more significant that I listened and behaved as a human, empathic, sensitive and understanding listener (Atkinson, 1998; Berg, 2007:75). Thus, while I was prepared to remind my participants of their right to withdraw, I was also gentle and sensitive to allow them to continue as long as they were comfortable with the topic. Researching personal information may cause distress and my aim was to reduce those factors. Questions were based on the information provided and therefore participants set the boundaries. If they felt the question was too personal or they did not want to answer, they had been advised to say: “It is personal/I don’t want to talk about it” and I would not seek an answer. In a few cases (regarding problems with an employer or a difficult family situation), participants asked me not to include it or to change the names. I believe the interviews created the opportunity to speak up, reflect about issues in their lives and gave them the feeling that somebody was interested in their lives, which enhanced the responses.

3.10.5 Bilingual research – translation issues
Since the research study involves two languages: Polish (native for me and my participants) and English (working), there were numerous issues related to the translation and bilingual nature of the project. On the one hand, I am based at an Irish university and the dissertation must be available in English. On the other hand, I am researching Polish migrant women, and due to the various English language competencies of my
participants, certain documents needed to be available in Polish. Despite providing a choice of the language for the interviews, all participants preferred to speak in Polish. The only exception was the topic of work. When asked to describe their position at work and area of responsibilities within the organisation they used English as this was the language they used at work.

For the convenience of the analysis process as well as communication with English speaking supervisors, the content of the interviews was translated while transcribing (Appendix VIII presents a sample excerpt of a transcription). Though this process was highly time-consuming, it allowed me to gain an in-depth familiarity with the data. However, the translation process was not without problems. While I made every effort to translate the content of the interview as precisely as possible, due to the contextual and socio-linguistic differences, some expressions were domesticated – adopted and explained to the target language cultural values (Venuti, 1995). This was done in order to make it as understandable as possible for the non-Polish reader. In cases where this strategy was not possible, the original expression was noted and the English translation with further explanation is included in the results.

In some cases, participants used ‘ponglish’ [Polish words mixed with English] such as “być na socjalu” – to receive social welfare payments; “dostać holideja” – to be given holidays/day off; “landlordka” – landlady; despite some expressions such as “Irole” – Irish people (Irolski – Irish); “ciapaty” – person typically from India or Pakistan of slightly darker skin colour – being perceived as inappropriate, participants considered them as a normal part of their everyday language. In some instances, regional differences caused confusion. Interviewees who grew up in different parts of Poland than me or those with whom there was a significant age gap used at times used unfamiliar expression. This was resolved by asking for clarification on the wording.

3.10.6 My own position
An interviewer’s role is limited to releasing of what is already there (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003:13), however, it is crucial to reflect on the researcher’s identity and attitudes and how those elements influence the data generated. Although Holstein and Gubrium (2003:13) advise that interviewers should keep their selves out of the interview process, inevitably my identity influenced the construction of the empirical data at every
stage of this project. Atkinson and Coffrey (2003:426) emphasise the importance of active reflexivity through which a researcher should acknowledge the elements of social events and reality that they observe.

My identity as native Polish speaking female who experienced migration and active involvement in the Polish community prior to the interviews was useful in accessing and understanding the reality of migrants. I also had prior experience of conducting research with Polish migrant in the U.K. Essentially, this was a key element that enabled me to access the participants and conduct interviews. In addition, being a young woman appeared to be helpful and every participant was very friendly and keen to participate. Nonetheless being apparent insider (cf. Pustulka et al., 2019) created a number of issues that I had to deal with. The fact that I am a Polish migrant living in Dublin and that we shared some knowledge about Poland and Ireland often led to the situations when some cultural issues were ‘taken for granted’ by both parties – me and my interviewees. Based on my previous experiences of conducting research with Polish migrants in the U.K., I was aware of this issue and whenever a participant said “you know what I mean” or “you know how it is like” I asked more in-depth questions to explain their account of that matter.

The fact that I am a woman and that I was younger than my participants might have had an influence on the answers I was given. The fact that I was considered a ‘student’ helped to keep the interview less formal and more open. Also, in cases during the initial contact, participants were more formal (linguistically: Pani) I asked for a switch to the informal language form.
Chapter 4: Social capital of networks – the structure and mechanisms behind the formation of egocentric networks

4.1. Introduction

Networks are a valuable source of social capital and constitute a vital element of everyone’s life on every level. Existing across time and space, social networks are crucial for the study of not only the process of international migration but also for understanding how migrants structure their lives in a new country. Researchers in the 1960s and 1970s studied the process of chain migration and the role that kin and friends play in providing information and facilitating the migration process (e.g., MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964; Ritchey 1976). By binding migrants and non-migrants together in a complex web of social roles and interpersonal relations, these personal networks are conduits of information and social assistance relationships (Massey et al., 1989). Current migration trends and the new way of conceptualising migrants highlight the role of family, friendship and community-based networks and the flow of favours between them (Boyd, 1989).

There are several ways in which migrant networks can be studied. Firstly, it is important to discuss the ways in which social networks are used in the migration process. Much of the developed work on how migrants use their network for migration and post-migration processes assume the prior existence of those connections. So, in that way family and a bad economic situation in Poland proved to be ‘pushing’ migrants out of Poland (in search of a better life). On the other hand, friends and kinship ties can impact on the decision to migrate as a ‘pull’ factor. They can also influence the decision of potential destination, facilitate the process and provide initial support after arrival in the destination country (Haug, 2008; Heering et al., 2004; White & Ryan, 2008). Moreover, networks can be looked at from the perspective of already settled migrants and their connections with natives and other migrant groups.

Networks can be useful in providing accommodation, jobs, information, emotional support or childcare (Boyd, 1989; Roeder et al., 2017). Other scholars focus on access to employment (Ryan, 2011; Rainer & Siedler, 2009; Dominguez & Watkins, 2003).
integration into the labour market (Muhlau, 2012; ESRI, 2020; Arnold, et al., 2019) and access to information on job offers and availability (Granovetter, 1983, 1974; Smith, 2003).

Others have looked at the process of settlement or links with ‘home’ in the form of cultural and economic remittances (Parrenas, 2001; Vertovec, 1999; Curran & Saguy, 2001). However, much academic work on how migrants use their networks for migration and post-migration processes assume the prior existence of those connections. While indeed some networks do continue across borders, new connections are also made in the host country, these being both inter- and intra-national. Moreover, migration networks are often studied in a gender-neutral way (Ryan, 2009). Women migrants are often assumed to be the ‘trailing wives’ and ‘tied movers’ (Bruegel, 1996; Cooke, 2001) and followers of their male counterparts. Despite women now constituting a large and continuously growing proportion of the migrant population across the world (Zlotnik, 2003; Lutz, 2010, Caritas, 2011), they are still considered to be dependent on men in the process of network formation, as the men are usually thought to be an initiating link.

While this literature has demonstrated the usefulness of social networks to migrants in a variety of ways, it does not show how migrants form their networks, what determines the size and features of their networks, and why certain people have more connections than others. In addition, some people do better because they have more ties than others; it is then vital to examine why certain people have bigger networks than others. Thus, the main research question of this chapter is: What elements of individual (ego) characteristics matter in forming ties?

Embedded in the theory of social networks as social capital, this chapter aims to develop a framework for explaining which individual characteristics of migrants influence the structure and characteristics of their networks. It considers how those individual social networks are accessed and constructed by Polish mothers living in Ireland. The choices behind the network members are often influenced by the structure and purpose of the friendship, such as childcare availability, employment type and work schedule, or else similarity and shared experience. While further chapters will focus on the mobilisation of support networks for childcare (Chapters Five and Six) and other types of support and favours (Chapters Six and Seven), this chapter will first examine the size of networks and
the relationship between the personal characteristics of the ego and features of the network members. Then I will examine composition in relation to nationality (inter- and intra-national) and location, with major focus on ties created in Ireland.

Even though, on average, the overall number of informal ties in one’s social network is relatively large, the social support studies focus only on the small fraction of those ties, namely active ties which are the ones that mostly provide not only general cordiality but also much of the social support that relatively close network members receive (Wellman, 1990). This is the case in this research project. In his work, Wellman (1990) explains the general proportion and composition of the active members of social support networks. He estimates that 25 per cent of the active ties, four to seven connections, are usually particularly close and supportive intimates. Usually, half of those intimates are kin and the other half are close friends. Neighbours and workers, he explains, are rarely intimates but they do comprise ten or so active ties that the ego is in frequent contact with (Wellman, 1990). A few immediate kin who are in frequent contact are also usually intimate.

4.2. Networks as social capital
Social capital refers to social networks and the norms of reciprocity associated with them (Putnam, 2000). The basic idea of social capital is that family, friends and other members of a person’s social network constitute an important source of resources that can provide material aid, opportunities for social participation and enjoyment, support in crisis and other assets (Wollcock & Narayan, 2000). Social capital theory argues that people do better when they are connected to others because of the benefits embedded in the social relationships, through common obligation and a sense of solidarity. So, people who are socially connected have resources to employ the capital whenever they need to.

Social networks facilitate the use of social capital, both individually and collectively which can only be possible through presence and connections with particular ties (Coleman, 1988). The concept of social capital originates in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) who understands social capital as one among the number of ‘capitals’ that is distributed in society. Among those different capitals he distinguishes:

- Economic capital (financial assets)
• Cultural capital (cultural resources such as education qualifications or ownership of ‘high’ cultural artefacts)
• Symbolic capital (status and recognition)
• Social capital (the degree to which individuals are better connected than another and therefore benefit from those connections)

Additionally, Mazurkiewicz (2018) building on Bourdieu’s notion of capital, looks into the unique position of gender being treated as the element of social capital that shapes mothers’ experience and perception of gender norms and the support obtained from their networks.

Although it is not possible to separate each of them, this chapter focuses primarily on social capital. The general principle behind building social capital is that the investment in social relations will expect return (Lin, 1999). Individuals will engage in interactions with others in order to prompt the outcomes of the values embedded in the social networks. If the individual is inclined to attend, for instance, cultural events such as the opera, then this attendance will increase the chances of meeting others of similar status and thus will increase their social capital.

Bourdieu’s take on the mechanisms of forming social networks, however, was also a perception on the form of “investment strategies [...] aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short term” (Bourdieu, 1986:249). While indeed migrants use networks in the host country for migration decision processes as well as settlement, the source of available networks is limited and so is the opportunity to return the favour. Despite potentially shared similarities of social status, when discussing the social capital of networks, other aspects such as language proficiency (Djundeva & Ellwardt, 2019), childcare availability or work schedules play a vital role in determining the availability of resources required (such as time and money).

Social relations strengthen identity and recognition. Being assured and recognised as an individual and a member of a particular social circle that shares similar interests and resources not only provides emotional support but also allows public acknowledgement of a membership of this group and also entitlement and access to the resources (Lin, 1999:31).
People’s social capital depends primarily on the organisations in which they participate routinely and thus those organisations can create and reproduce benefits of involvement in those networks in ways their members may not expect (Small, 2009). Even though some organisations may be more effective than others, in order to understand people’s connections and inequalities related to them, it is vital to look at the organisations within which the networks are embedded. Lin (1999) argues that social network structures facilitate the flow of information. Social ties located in a particular strategic location or taking on certain hierarchal positions (and therefore being more informed about market needs and demands) can provide individuals with useful information about opportunities and choices that would not be available otherwise without this connection. Those social ties might exercise influence on the recruiters or supervisors who play vital roles in the decisions-making process of whether to hire or promote someone (Crossley et al., 2015). Such influence might be present in the form of exercising power in the decision-making process for hiring or promotion practices within an organisation. Regarding migrants, such referrals have proven to be a common strategy used by Polish migrants in organising employment for newly arrived migrants in the U.K. (White, 2011; Ryan, 2009; Ryan, 2011) and Ireland (Bobek, 2011 Krings et al., 2013).

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus assumes that through early experience, actors tend to act in a way that will reproduce their social position. Those social and cultural practices resemble the theme of homophily in social networks (Crossley et al., 2015). Further, Bourdieu argues that actors prefer to form bonds with others who share their interests because that makes the interaction easier. Through common social interactions, similar actors are also more likely to meet each other in various situations, such as encountering another Polish mother at the local playground. Mothers attending playgroups with their children will have a greater chance to meet other mothers (possibly even of the same nationality) who are there for the same purpose and therefore through shared experience of being a (migrant) mother and in similar circumstances are more likely to enter each other’s social network (Crossley et al., 2015). In this way, their first shared point of interest will be their children and matters related to being a mother. The shared interest that they have in common will make them enjoy the topic and discussion (Crossley et al., 2015) and therefore might affect the composition of the ego’s networks.

Another vital take on social capital is offered by Putnam (2000) and it entails social capital understood as strong bonds between social actors and the trust, mutual
cooperation, support, sense of solidarity to name a few; those bonds tend to be cultivated and looked after. Putnam (2001) identifies two forms of social capital that determine access and availability to information and other resources. ‘Bonding capital’ refers to strong tightly knit sets of ties of people similar to each other. Contrary to Bourdieu and Lin’s argument, for Putnam, bonding capital does not only mean to have access to certain individual connections from which an individual can benefit. Here, bonding capital is understood as a property of collectives such as neighbours, groups, town or regions.

‘Bridging capital’ refers to contacts with people who are different from oneself (Putnam, 2001). Those ties reach across groups and communities, facilitating the flow of ideas and resources between people belonging to different groups that could not be accessible otherwise. An individual who moves in various social circles enjoys the bridging capital and access to various resources, ideas etc. This individual will also contribute to the circles to which he belongs, as he will serve as the conduit of information and ideas (Crossley et al., 2015). Thus, contrary to Lin and Bourdieu, social capital in Putnam’s (2001) understanding is not a matter of who you know, what is the position of the person you know, but it is rather concerned about the pattern of connections for both individuals and collectives. In other words, from Putnam’s perspective it is better to have friends and acquaintances, even if they are not in higher position, they may always know someone who is of a higher status and therefore can be beneficial to an ego.

The concept of bonding ties echoes important work done by Coleman (1988) on social capital. Coleman (1988), however, rather than looking at the benefits of knowing those of higher status, focused his work on how actors cultivate trust, cooperate and mutually support each other. In this case, actors that are part of dense networks due to the close relationship between them feel obliged to help and offer support. However, Coleman (1988) perceives this obligation as constraining rather than an opportunity. In any case, once the dense network feels obliged and committed to help, an ego will find themselves in cooperative and supportive relationships and the ego will benefit from the fact that the alters are ‘constrained’ to help the ego.

Despite networks being able to provide access and connections to various resources and investments, not all of them are equal. Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) theory of ‘The Strength of Weak Ties’ (SWT) draws on the example of the information and flow of favours that individuals use from when, for instance, moving job. He notes that alters who are ‘strong
ties’ are often less useful for jobseekers than those with whom we have ‘weak ties’ (ibid.). He suggests that our acquaintances (weak ties) are less likely to be socially involved with one another than are our close friends and family (strong ties). Thus, the set of people who consist of any individual and his/her acquaintances comprise a low-density network, *i.e.*, one in which many of the possible relational lines are absent; in other words, where the connection is more frequent only with ego, as opposed to the connection between acquaintances. Those sets, which consist of the same individual and his/her close friends would be also more likely to know each other and will represent a dense network (many of the possible ties between alters are present). The argument of SWT theory implies that only bridging weak ties are of the special value for individuals, thus the significance of weak ties is that they are more likely to be bridging ties than strong ties and therefore are more valuable.

4.3. **Transnational networks**

Cross-border movements entail cross-border ties and practices. Research on transnationality focuses on the movements by actors and phenomena, which cross nation-state borders (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002; Vertovec, 2009). As already touched upon in Chapter Two that means that the formation and maintenance of social relations should be examined beyond nation-state classification. Transnationalism defines migrant as “*an actor placed simultaneously in two or more social fields: those of the societies of origin and of destination*” who maintains social ties on economic, political, cultural and social grounds (Portes et al., 2003). Social ties, as the smallest analytical unit of the transnational space, represents an on-going series of personal transactions to which people ascribe common interests, obligations, expectations and norms (Faist, 2013; *cf.* Chapter Two), for instance, through visits of family members and exchange of childcare provision. The most common type of transnational tie is a strong tie, typically a family member. Although Chapters Four and Five focus on the practices and exchange of services across borders, it is vital to understand that those practices are crucial for transnationalism to continue between the ties and strengthen the connections. The transnational connections are also the ones that usually continue to exist after migration (at least at the initial stage). The hypothesis based on transnational relations states that due to the importance of the connections with the country of origin, despite the distance, this would still significantly impact the size of the whole ego-network. Connections that remain in Poland, because of the fact, that they are the strong ties, will continue to play an
important role in participants’ support network composition. Thus, the hypothesis states that:

\[H1: \text{There is a strong correlation between the overall network size and the transnational connections.}\]

### 4.4. Socioeconomics and status orientation

The influence of socio-economic status on migrant ethnic networks has long been documented in the literature. For instance, Ryan et al., (2009) in a study on post-accession Polish migrants in the U.K. found that lower skilled migrants tend to rely more commonly on their networks both prior to the migration and after in order to settle in the new country. On the other hand, they found that:

*Migration strategies of the professionals were often marked different from those of other migrants, and involved developing contacts with other groups rather than maintaining exclusively ethnic networks. They tended to develop both professional and personal relations with a wider group of people, including both Poles and non-Poles (ibid:157).*

Therefore, migrants with a higher occupational status are more likely to work with people from various ethnic backgrounds, including the native population. That in turn will reflect on their integration level and fluency of language and therefore the composition of their networks in the host country (Djundeva & Ellwardt, 2019).

People need weak ties (acquaintances, colleagues) because these become a crucial bridge between densely-knit groups of friends (Granovetter, 1983). Consequently, the individual with fewer weak ties will have less access to information because of the greater reliance on closer friends who are more likely to be similar to the ego in their socio-economic characteristics. This deprivation will then affect not only the exclusion from latest information or membership of various groups but may, for instance, put them in a disadvantaged position on the labour market, where according to Granovetter (1983;1974) advancement can depend on knowing about appropriate job openings at the
right time. In other words, the weak tie becomes valuable along with the information and resources ‘flowing’ through that connection (Granovetter, 1983; Ryan, 2011).

This role of weak ties can be well illustrated through the example of Polish migration and labour market recruitment during the Celtic Tiger in Ireland. To facilitate migration and initial settlement, migrants relied on informal co-ethnic social networks (usually weak ties) for information about possible job openings and accommodation (Krings et al., 2013). Employers too relied on the recommendations put forward from already employed workers, particularly in engineering and IT jobs.

Based on these assumptions, the first set of hypothesis focuses on whether networks of participants are ‘status-oriented’:

\[ H_2: \text{the higher occupational status the Ego has, the number of weak ties in the network composition is greater, thus the overall network size will be greater.} \]

Further, due to an overreliance on strong ties in sourcing various forms of support:

\[ H_3: \text{The Egos with higher levels of education will have larger networks.} \]

\[ H_4: \text{Further, those with higher education (and employment) levels will have a significantly greater number of Irish connections in Ireland.} \]

\[ H_5: \text{Regardless of the number of connections with Irish people, those of higher level of employment and education status will also have a greater number of Polish connections in Ireland due to their ‘attractiveness’.} \]

Vital to note is that overall size of social networks does not give us a full picture of how individuals structure their networks in the host country. Participants’ networks consist of both local and transnational ties, with each of them being driven by different mechanisms. Migration scholars tend to look at transnational networks as sets of kin, and sometimes friends, through which information and other resources are channelled because they are easier to maintain with online media (Massey et al., 1989). Transnational ties tend, however, to consist of strong ties, as the weaker the ties are, the harder it is to maintain the arrangement at a distance. Therefore, transnational migrant connections differ from
those networks built locally mainly due to the distance related to it constrains the ability to maintain the connection and services flowing between network members.

4.5. Employment and time availability
Numerous studies describe the strategies used by migrant families to balance work and care. Where possible, relatives play a key role, and in some cases grandparents are either invited to live with family or they float between countries if permanent settlement is not possible (Barglowski et al., 2015; Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015, Wyss & Nedelcu, 2018). Doyle and Timonen’s (2010) study of migrant workers in Ireland found that migrant families relied almost exclusively on bringing their own parent(s) to Ireland for extended stays or exchanging childcare services with other migrants. Simultaneously, higher skilled individuals have greater financial resources to avail of formal childcare, while the lower skilled either use no childcare at all or make informal arrangements with their network members (Debacker, 2008). However, in the absence of family support, families must juggle the responsibilities within the nuclear family or organise informal child-minders via their ethnic networks (Bonizzoni, 2014). Whether it is for childcare purposes, socialising or emotional support, accessing networks and creating connections undoubtedly depends on their working schedules. Irregular and unsocial working hours with low pay further contributes to the difficulty of combining care and work (Datta et al., 2010) and finding time to spend with others who are not themselves time-limited because of those activities.

Women’s employment in Ireland has risen substantially, and attitudes have also become supportive of women’s paid employment. Yet in relation to the division of housework and childcare, little progress appears to have been made (England, 2010). In Ireland, economic costs and benefits cannot explain the differences between families, and both gender norms and values have to be taken into account. Catherine Hakim’s (2000) ‘preference theory’ argues that women’s participation in the labour market comes from individual preferences, not economic constraints and it is women’s choices that drive their decisions about their return to work. However, this approach has been heavily criticised for downplaying the importance of structural constrains such as job availability, the cost of childcare and social class, that still have major impacts on outcomes (see, for example, Duncan & Irwin, 2004; McRae, 2003).
In particular, after the first child is born, gender roles become ‘re-traditionalised’ (Grunow & Evertsson, 2016), when women take on the main childcare and household responsibilities, withdrawing, at least temporarily, from the labour market, and further returning to work only on the part-time basis (Roeder et al., 2017). The temporary withdrawal from the labour market, reorganisation of daily routine according to the child encourages the creation of networks with other mothers in similar employment situations. In particular, this happens when mothers attend playgroups or other places where their interaction is organised, and they meet other mothers in similar circumstances. In contrast, successful networking requires the investment of time and resources (Roeder et al., 2017), which in turn depends on the number of hours spent in paid employment. Therefore, since working full-time poses time restrains on creating and maintaining networks, the hypothesis here examines whether the employment status affects the size of the network:

H6: Participants who work full-time will have smaller network, regardless of the nationality.

4.6. Role of family structure
Beyond all of this, one must remember that networks are far from static; instead, they are fluid, changing participants depending on participants’ needs and change of circumstances over time (Morgan, 1990). Thus, the support system required by, and available to the ego shortly after migration may differ from the size of the network and type of connections that are established when becoming more familiar with the new environment (Ryan et al., 2008). Initially, mother who migrate with their children may struggle to find sufficient time and opportunities to form networks in the new country. Further network-building strategies are enriched by networking skills and social confidence, through which ‘associability’ is employed in order to build a wider network (Cox, 2000). Thus newly arrived mothers may need time to gain the confidence and skills to access connection with other women. Which in turns would impact the structure of their networks initially after migration.
The ‘homophily principle’ relates to the observed tendency of “like to associate with like” (Kossinets & Watts, 2009; Small, 2009). Friends, partners, colleagues and other associates all tend to be chosen when they are more similar to each other than randomly met members of the same population. The choices are driven by a variety of dimensions, including race, gender, socioeconomic status or education (Small, 2009). In particular, ‘mothering’ activities, which in turn will reflect where they can create the networks and what people they are more likely to bond with while doing those ‘assigned’ activities and are usually the first one to turn to (Ryan, 2011).

By performing more frequently gendered tasks related to childcare, women are more likely to deal with other women who are also mothers and perform their tasks in a similar fashion. Mothers tend to engage in more localised networks and create their networks with other mothers in the neighbourhood through schools and other organised playgroups (Ryan, 2011; Small 2009). Consequently, one should expect that it is easier to form trust and solidarity with similar, rather than dissimilar counterparts (Kossinets & Watts, 2009), which in turn reduces the risks and eliminates the ‘time and effort investment’ needed in forming new ties. Thus while having a child appears to be a good excuse to approach other mothers it requires time and effort to form those connections. Consequently, the cost of maintaining similar ties should be lower between similar rather than between dissimilar ties. The benefits might be greater as well, which implies that homophilious ties should be more stable and last longer (Kossinets & Watts, 2009; Leenders, 1996). However, rather than consciously choosing similar network members, through performing gendered tasks, the organisational structure of those activities provides the ego with the opportunity to meet similar people. In the case of migration with a child, networks with fellow Polish mothers are often the first step towards creating their own networks, independent from their partners. It does, however require time and puts mothers who migrated with a child on a disadvantage position, due to the fact that her time is more limited with childminding responsibilities as opposed to the woman, who migrated without a child and can therefore prepare and invest into their networks throughout their pregnancy and maternity leave. Therefore, the hypothesis here will focus on the influence that having a child prior to migration would have on the network size.

H7: Participants who had a child prior to migration will have smaller network.
Nonetheless, in establishing those networks one cannot overlook the role of the partner. This is particularly important in the case where mothers arrive as followers, with their partners constituting the sole connection in the new country. In those cases, partners are already established in Ireland and often constitute the first bridge with other people and no other networks, beyond those formed through the partner, exist. In further stages of settlement, the partner too has their own networks and access to resources is often shared within the family. In further stages of settlement, the partner too has their own networks and access to resources is often shared within the family. Therefore, the hypothesis here will focus on the current relationship status (having a partner or not).

**H8:** Participants who have partners will have significantly greater number of connections formed in Ireland.

4.7. Method

The data was obtained through interviews conducted with 61 Polish mothers living in Dublin and the greater Dublin commuter belt. The maps were used as a visualisation tool and name generators and the data was quantified. Therefore, this chapter examines the composition of networks, differences in network sizes and what individual characteristics influence various compositions of networks among participants. It then further estimates the network composition in Ireland according to nationality (Polish and Irish). Poisson regression with robust standard errors was estimated on overall network size in order to model the probability of having a greater size of the network based on the elements of social capital and ego characteristics. To further determine the factors influencing the formation of networks based in Ireland, two models of sub-networks groups were estimated: Polish people living in Ireland and Irish people living in Ireland. While the latter provides an indicator of how much egos invest into intra-ethnic ties, it can also be used to estimate the degree of integration in the host country. Further, to look at intra-ethnic ties, the Poisson regression of the influence of transnational connections (Polish in Poland) on the overall network size has been estimated.
4.7.1 Modelling technique

Poisson regression is a technique used to model count data, i.e., the variable that takes on non-negative values. However, one of the main problematic features of the count data is that it is often over-dispersed (Cameron & Trivedi, 2010). One approach is to continue the assumptions of the Poisson model, which suggests that the mean and the variance are equal; however, that assumption is often violated in application (Gould, 2011; Wooldrige, 2002). In the analysis this is dealt with through specification that variance-covariance matrix is estimated using the Huber/White/Sandwich linearised estimator. That estimator of the variance-covariance matrix does not assume that variance is equal to the mean; in fact, it does not even require variance to be constant (Gould, 2011). Thus, Poisson regression runs together with Huber/White/Sandwich linearised estimator for robust standard errors constitutes a good alternative to log linear regression. Additionally, when modelling using Poisson, there is no need to transform the dependent variable into a logarithmised variable, because Poisson already accounts for it.  

4.7.2 Dependent Variables

In the first model, the dependent variable is: The network size variable that has been created from an aggregation of the number of ties connected to each participant. The size of the participants’ networks varies greatly: the smallest network has only eight alters and the biggest 49. In line with the crucial assumption of Poisson modelling that mean value and the variance are equal, the mean value equals 25 connections (sd=9.03; md=25).

In further analysis, the variable representing the size of the network in Ireland has been created from an aggregation of the number of ties connected to each participant and then further split according to Polish networks in Ireland and Irish networks in Ireland. Other nationalities, due to the very small number and wide range of nationalities distribution have been excluded.

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7 Poisson regression, unlike log linear regression deals with outcomes that are zero or have small non-zero values (Gould, 2011). The latter can be influential in log linear regression because small non-zero values may indeed be close to each other, but in the logs they are not close at all. Poisson regression understands that non-zero values are indeed nearly equal. In this study, Poisson regression has been estimated to model the probability of various demographic characteristics affecting the size of the overall network and then further those characteristics affecting the size of sub-groups of networks.
Another variable considered in the analysis is the network sub-group: *Polish network in Ireland*. The size of network ranges from 0 connections (with Poles in Ireland) to 34. The mean value in this sub-networks group is 10.7 connections (sd=5.92; md=10).

The second sub-group considered in the analysis are *Irish networks in Ireland*. The size of Irish networks ranged from 0 to 20 connections, with a mean value of 4.1 (sd=4.08; md=3).

### 4.7.3. Independent Variables

*Education level* is a dummy variable (0=high level; 1=low level) and has been recoded accordingly from categorical variable that ranged from Vocational Education to PhD. Due to the small number of cases, the seven-scale variable has been divided for *low educational* level including Leaving Certificate (and Polish equivalent – *Matura*); Post-Secondary degree (Polish equivalent – *Studium*) and Vocational Training. *High education* encompasses third level degrees: Bachelor, Master, Post-Graduate and PhD completed in any country.

*Occupation level* is a set of dummy variables of unskilled, semi-skilled and high-skilled with the latter being a reference category in the regression. Both employment and education level variables are used in order to determine how status oriented the networks are.

*Partner* is a dichotomous variable (0=no partner; 1=partner) of whether the participant had a partner at the time of the interview or was a single mother.

*Having children on arrival* is a dummy variable (0=no children on arrival to Ireland; 1=at least one child on arrival).

*Full-time employment* is a dummy variable with part-time employment being a reference category and is used to measure time availability, necessary to create and maintain networks.

*Time living in Ireland* is a continuous variable, coded from the information about year of arrival and the year of the interview. Time living in Ireland is used as a control variable in the models.
4.8. Description of the sample
The key demographic characteristics of participants are summarised in Table 1. Due to the qualitative nature of data collection, all the demographic data and other variables were created during the process of quantification and are based on self-reported information given during the interview and visualisation tool (a detailed description of the use of the visualisation methods can be found in Chapter Three). The average age of participants was 34 (sd=3.6). Eighty-two per cent of women were employed and 18 per cent self-employed, either full-time (62%) or part-time (38%) at the time of the interview.

The majority of participants had one child (67%) and the remaining 26 per cent had two children and seven per cent had three children. The year of participants’ arrival to Ireland ranged between 2000 and 2014 with the average being 2006 (sd=2.51). Nearly half of the participants were employed in semi-skilled/vocational occupations, 34 per cent in unskilled type of jobs and 17 per cent were in professional employment. At the time of the interviews, 85 per cent had a partner and 15 per cent were single mothers, with 72 per cent having a partner on arrival while the other 28 per cent arrived either alone or with other friends or family members. Only 16 per cent arrived in Ireland with at least one child.

Table 4.1: Key socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>30 or younger</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 to 36</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37 or older</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-employed</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment mode</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of arrival</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before EU- enlargement (2000-2003)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 – 2008 (Celtic Tiger migration)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 – 2014 (economic downturn)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled/vocational</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/professional</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High education level</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low education level</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternity status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coupled</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children on arrival</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner on arrival</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 The majority of participants received their educational qualifications in Poland.
4.8.1 Size of the networks and network characteristics

The information about participants’ networks was gathered while drawing the network map during the interview. While some basic characteristics of alters were simply quantified and coded into the database, others such as the size of the network variable has been created by an aggregation of number of ties drawn on each map. The key demographic characteristics of networks are summarised in Table 4.2.

The participants’ networks are largely feminised – 66 per cent of the total networks constitute women. Among those, 78 per cent of those women are mothers while 22 per cent are childless. A majority of network members are Polish (76%), followed by Irish (19%) and other nationalities make up to five per cent. With regard to the nature of relationships between egos and alters, 41 per cent constitute weak ties – mates, acquaintances and strangers, 33 per cent family members and 26 per cent close friends. Participants’ ties were largely resident in Ireland (71%) followed by ties in Poland – 26 per cent and ties in other locations (other European countries and overseas) – three per cent. Existence of a tie prior to becoming a mother has been distributed relatively evenly with 58 per cent of ties being created prior to the ego becoming a mother and 42 per cent being post-maternity ties.

Table 4.2: Key socio-demographic characteristics of the network ties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1110</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time/self-employed</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and students</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family member</th>
<th>424</th>
<th>33%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>330</td>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mates(^9) and acquaintances</td>
<td>527</td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>376</th>
<th>26%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pre-maternity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>880</th>
<th>58%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>626</td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Females with children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>513</th>
<th>78%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.9. Bivariate analysis

The following analysis demonstrates the correlation between the various network components such as nationality and country of residence (looking at the transnational aspect) and socio-economic elements.

### 4.9.1. Inter-relationship between network components

Table 4.3 presents the correlation table of the overall network size and its components that consider the nationality of two main groups and location of the ties. The table indicated the strong correlation between Polish network based in Ireland (r=0.67) and Poles in Poland (r=0.63). Strong correlation with Polish networks based in Poland indicates the importance of connections in the home country and links with transnational practices addressed in the further analytical chapters. The correlation also suggests that participants indeed tend to rely on and drift towards other co-nationals when making connections in the host country, which has been long established in the literature (White, 2011). Weak correlation with Irish nationals indicated the possible language barrier as well as greater reliance on their co-ethnic communities. In line with Djundeva &

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\(^9\) Polish: kolega. This is a language specific term. Mates used in this analysis is the closes to denote the level of friendship as the term friend means przyjaciel and assume much closer relationship.
Ellwardt’s (2019) findings, language proficiency is indeed the most important predictor that influences networks composition and allows for the formation of larger, heterogenous (non-Polish migrant) and non-kin-based networks.

**Table 4.3: Correlation table of the overall network size and other network components with nationality and location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polish in Ireland</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish in Poland</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish in Ireland</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most respondents had some sort of connections in Poland and other countries. The size of transnational networks ranged from 0 (having no connections in Poland) to 21. On average participants had six network members based in Poland, who are also Polish (sd=4.01) with one Irish and one Danish person living in Poland. Although overall the transnational connections are not limited to those in Poland, for the purpose of this study transnational connections outside of Poland have been excluded, due to the small number. Additionally, this study, by referring to transnational connections, aims to focus on the connections ‘back home’ with other close or extended family members. The transnational connections were largely feminised with a majority being considered strong ties: kin (147 ties); parents (92) and long-term friends (88).

**4.9.2 Socio-economic and status orientation**

Table 4.4 shows the series of correlation effects of the overall network size (and the relevant local sub-networks) and the socio-economic factors and therefore shows whether the networks tend to be status oriented. In general, there is a small connection between the overall size of the network and occupation level as well as educational attainment. Negative correlation of the overall network size ($r=-0.41$) and low education level suggests that participants indeed are keener to form networks that can be beneficial in the socio-economic terms. The correlation of the education level and Polish connections in Ireland, despite being relatively low ($r=-0.26$) still remains negative, which also support
the status orientation hypothesis. Similarly, considering occupation level, those who perform an unskilled job are slightly less likely to form connection with Irish ($r=-0.20$).

**Table 4.4: Correlation table of the overall network size other network components with socio-economic factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network size (overall)</th>
<th>Polish networks in Ireland</th>
<th>Irish networks in Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low education level</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.9.3 Employment and time availability
Looking at time availability (Table 4.5) there was no correlation between full- or part-time employment and the effect it has on any of the network groups.

**Table 4.5: Correlation table of the overall network size other network components with employment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network size (overall)</th>
<th>Polish networks in Ireland</th>
<th>Irish networks in Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Part-time employment is a reference category.
4.9.4 Family structure
Table 4.6 shows the effects of current marital status and of having a child at the time of migration on the network groups. The results show that the marital status (having no partner on arrival) has negative but weak correlation with the overall network size (-0.14) as well as the local sub-groups (-0.13 for Polish in Ireland and -0.11 for Irish in Ireland) highlighting the role of partner in accessing and forming networks after migration.

Having a child upon arrival has also a weak negative effect on forming Polish networks in Ireland (r=-0.25).

Table 4.6: Correlation table of the overall network size other network components with family structure factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network size (overall)</th>
<th>Polish networks in Ireland</th>
<th>Irish networks in Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No partner</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having children on arrival to Ireland</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.10. Multi-variate Results
Table 4.7 shows Poisson regression. The results are robust. Additionally, all three models were controlled for the time spent in Ireland. The influence of education still significantly influences the likelihood of having a smaller network size among these participants with a lower education level. This is particularly significant for Polish networks in Ireland (p<0.01) and overall network size (p<0.01). The results were also negative for Irish connections, but this was not significant. Regarding the level of employment, previous results of bivariate analysis are slightly less prominent. Coefficients for Irish networks were negative but not significant. For Polish networks, the coefficient was positive and significant (p<0.05), indicating that those who perform unskilled types of employment are
more likely to have a greater number of Polish connections than their skilled counterparts. The coefficient for overall network size for unskilled workers was negative but not significant.

Having a partner has a significant influence on the size of Polish networks (p<0.1). Partnered women are less likely to have larger networks in comparison with their single counterparts. The coefficients for the overall network size are negative but not significant. While arriving with a child, in the bivariate analysis, constituted a significant factor affecting both Polish and Irish networks, here the effect diminished. While having a child has a negative coefficient with Irish connections this outcome is not significant. As regards the time availability and the mode of employment, no coefficients were significant. Finally, controlling for the time living in Ireland significantly impacts the size of Polish networks. The longer the ego lives in Ireland, the smaller the number of Polish connections (p<0.05). Looking at the Irish connections, the coefficient is positive but not significant.

4.10.1 Post-estimation
In order to test for the over-dispersion of the data, Poisson post-estimation tests were run. In the case of all three models, the tests were highly significant (p<0.001 for all) indicating that Poisson characteristics have not been met and the data is over-dispersed. To compare the suitability of the Poisson model and deal with the over-dispersion, negative regression models have been estimated on the same variables. The models have been compared individually for better fit. Appendix V contains comparison between Poisson and binominal regressions on overall networks composition and related subgroups. Appendix VI contains binominal regression on overall networks composition and related subgroups with consideration of ego characteristics.
Table 4.7: Poisson models outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network size (overall)</th>
<th>Polish networks in Ireland</th>
<th>Irish networks in Ireland</th>
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<td>Unskilled</td>
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<td>No partner</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>-.432*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children on arrival</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.144</td>
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<td>F/T work</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.036</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time in Ireland</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.056**</td>
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*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

4.11. Discussion and Conclusion
To date, social network research has focused mostly on the flow of support within social networks (Wellman, 1991; White, 2011; Bilcen & Sienkiewicz, 2015; Barglowski et al., 2015; Herz, 2015). Regarding migration research, social networks have also been studied in respect of how the migration process and initial support required for the settlement is facilitated (Krings et al., 2013; Ryan 2008; White, 2011). However, no real investigation has been done on how the network support is formed in the years after arrival.

First of all, the importance of transnational ties has been determined with a significant indicator of transnational ties contributing to the overall network composition. Thus, the first hypothesis is confirmed. Personal networks in which network members, mostly family and people from the country of origin, are highly present are associated with ethnic exclusive self-identification (Lubbers et al., 2007).

The second set of hypotheses investigated how ‘status oriented’ the networks are. The results prove the significant role of social capital in the formation of ties. Supporting the concept of social capital, the results show that the higher the educational and employment status is, the greater the size of networks indicating that higher-level professionals tend to
have more weak ties in their networks and are more attractive to others, and in line with the social capital theory, then can potentially facilitate greater support. This confirms the second and third hypothesis. This is certainly the case for co-ethnic ties, where educational status might link with language competency or access to information. Nonetheless, the theory of social capital is considered simply to be a function of accessing few contacts with information regarding employment and influence (Smith, 2010).

The theory of social capital rarely takes into consideration that to create any connections, certain conditions should be considered. Those conditions vary between each migrant group (Smith, 2010; Berger, 2007). In other words, in order to provide a channel to transmit resources that networks can provide, networks tend to be created in accordance with shared norms, expectations and commonly earned trust that can be only ensured to exist within given community (Smith, 2010).

When looking at the level of employment, the case is quite contrary for sub-groups. It shows that those working in unskilled, low-paid types of employment are more likely to form ties with other Polish people. This too can be linked with language fluency or simply the fact that there are other co-nationals working together in the same workplace. The case is the opposite when considering Irish connections, indicating that those who perform higher jobs have more ties with Irish people. Although the coefficient was significant in the bivariate analysis, in the final model the coefficient remains negative but not significant. The reasons behind this may be twofold. First, in forming connections with Irish ties, language proficiency indeed matters (Djundeva & Ellwardt, 2019). Another reason is that mothers migrated and joined Polish networks already established by a partner. Nonetheless, the outcome compliments Ryan’s (2008) finding suggesting that one needs more than just shared nationality to form meaningful connections, especially for those performing higher-end jobs.

The sixth hypothesis stated that those who work-full time, due to their limited time-availability, have less time to form and maintain networks. The results for this hypothesis were not significant.

The final set of hypotheses investigated the marital status and whether the fact that the ego migrated with a child affected their network size. Indeed, the partner plays a significant role as a bridging tie in the formation of connections with other Poles. This is...
particularly important since it reflects the role of a partner in facilitating migration and accessing new connections after arrival. There is no significant link between having a partner and connections with other Irish people. In the final model, the relationship between having a child on arrival to Ireland and the size of the network or any sub-groups was not relevant. Nonetheless, the relationship was significant in the bivariate analysis, indicating that the child would affect the number of Polish connections.

Gender identity influences and shapes the kind of ties within the networks (as well as the overall network characteristics) (Curran & Sagun, 2001). As the networks are largely feminised and consist of mothers, this may point to the initial formation strategies of connecting with other mothers. This is in line with the argument put forward by Small (2009) regarding the organisational embeddedness of mothers connecting with each other through institutions and organisations, such as playgroups, playgrounds or other child-related facilities.

Controlling for time, while the results indicate that the number of Irish ties increases with time living in Ireland, the result is not significant. Interestingly, the results indicate that the longer an ego lives in Ireland, the fewer Polish connections they have. It is well recognised that social ties are particularly important to migrants, because as newcomers they often lack skills or knowledge specific to the receiving country (Massey et al., 1999). Newly-arrived migrants are more likely to connect not only with other newcomers but also with long-established migrants (Comola & Mendola, 2015). They also require more diverse support in order to settle in the country of destination. Massey et al. (1999) differentiated between the two main purposes served by migrant networks, namely social/cultural interaction and exchange of information. The former, in particular in the initial period of settlement, presumably due to the lack of information available, indicates that migrants might rely on the larger number of informal network-based resources. As with time, the need for the number of informative ties decreases; Comola and Mendola (2015) in their research on migrants in Milano found that the formation of migrant networks takes a U-shape. Their results indicate that after an initial drop, the number of connections in the network doubled (ibid.).

The network resources change with the length of residency. As the period of settlement grows, family reunification is more likely to occur, increasing the existence of family-based networks in the host country. The volume and value of remittances may decline,
and membership in ethnic and non-ethnic based voluntary associations may increase (Boyd, 2004). Thus, migrants who have already established strong and trusting relationships and who develop the necessary skills, for instance language skills, may be able to adapt them to establish more extensive relationships beyond their own ethnic ties (Djundeva & Ellwardt, 2019). Since their research looked at the long-term perspective, compared with how long participants of this study have been living in Ireland, participants may have reached the lowest level predicted by Comola and Mendola (2015), suggesting that with time the number of connections should rise again.

Finally, large networks do not always equal large support levels. Larger networks tend to provide greater support, especially for women (Wellman, 1991). The greater supportiveness and opportunities available from the network might be because the weight of numbers in larger networks may produce more people willing and able to provide support. Hence to some extent the results are obvious – the more connections one has, the more support can be expected from the network. However, it is not size that matters but who are the ties that compose given network (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). The characteristics of the ties can also tell us a lot about the ‘usefulness’ of the network and therefore the quality of the connections can outweigh the quantity. Also, although bigger networks can provide more support, the satisfaction gained from this support may not necessarily be greater (Stokes, 1983).

This chapter contributions are largely towards the literature of social networks and social support, namely by filling the gap and looking at what circumstances and personal characteristics affect the size and composition of networks. In other words, what factors determine how many ties one has in their personal circle. Further, the analysis not only determines the significance of transnational connections but also investigates the grounds of network formation in the host country. It further compliments the field of migration, by shedding the light on the composition of networks which can further inform and be linked with the integration level in the host country. It also provides an important insight into who do migrants, a difficult to reach group, turn to for support. Thus it provides a hands-on information about which services are accessible for migrant groups. Additionally, the results here clearly indicate that participants are feminised and they lean towards co-ethnic ties (particularly those who perform unskilled jobs), both formal and informal.
Methodologically, it demonstrates the quantification strategy in practice and by systematically assessing qualitative data through rigorous quantitative analysis provides insightful information that has often been ignored, namely the mechanisms which drive the formation of support networks. The data obtained here should also serve as a information ground for the exploration of livelihoods of other migrant groups. Qualitative approach provided insightful motives behind participants’ choices whereas quantitative analysis provided insight in general patterns behind network formation. To this date, those mechanisms behind the network formation have not been explored not only in Ireland but also in the other European context. Thus the outcome here may also provide an indication of how migrants in other countries structure their net of support.
Chapter 5: Mobilising Social Network support for childcare support – Qualitative approach

This chapter works in conjunction with Chapter Six and is based on a qualitative thematic analysis of social support mobilisation strategies, everyday practices and the experience of being a working migrant mother in Ireland. In the first stage, this chapter’s qualitative thematic analysis explores the kinds of support obtained from different types of connections and how mothers combine various sources of support. Moreover, the analysis considers the location of the ties and their importance in support provision depending on whether the tie is based locally or transnationally. This in-depth investigation serves as the analytical baseline for the further quantitative framework of the analysis in the following chapter. In Chapter Six the analysis involves the second stage of the investigation and follows a two-step strategy known as the ‘generalisation model’ (for details, see Mayring, 2001; Auer-Srnka & Koeszegi, 2007 and also Chapter Three for a detailed description of the steps undertaken), whereby qualitative data is converted into structured, numerical data (Domínguez & Hollstein, 2014), with the aim of testing whether strategies reported by some mothers are more generally sustained within the sample.

First, this chapter briefly addressed the limitations posed by the organisation of public childcare in Ireland, in particular the high cost and limited availability. It further reviews the relevant literature on social support networks and transnational context (cf. Chapter Two for the detailed literature review). Following transnationally sourced support, it examines the strategies for support mobilisation in the local contexts as well as the basis for exchange of such support. Since mothers rarely rely on one single childcare solution, it is vital to assess the combination of supports, both formal and informal that mothers avail of. The qualitative analysis presented in this chapter serves as a future base for quantitative assessment (Chapter Six) of the more complex dimensions and types of support, and tests whether the results can be generalised for this sample and applied on a bigger scale.
With ever increased mobility, research on families has become a vital element within the field of migration studies which predominantly has focused on the migrant as an economic actor. As international mobility has increased in recent decades, research on transnational families and transnational care has also gained a more prominent place in family and migration research (Barglowiński et al., 2015). In the case of incomplete migration, that is when only one member of the household migrates, researchers have studied how care is arranged for children left behind in the country of origin (e.g., Parrenas, 2001 or see the concept of distant mothering (Boccagni, 2012) or transnational parenting among Polish families in Norway (Bell & Bivant Erdal, 2015) or other care practices such as looking after elderly (Krzyżowski, 2013).

By migrating and settling in the new country, migrants experience a major turn in their lives that severely limits their access to previously available and already well-established social support arrangements (Wingens et al., 2011). Whereas previously largely ignored, now research on transnational mobility brings families to the forefront of the migration agenda and shows that care giving practices are not spatially bounded (e.g., Parrenas, 2001, Zontini, 2010, Ryan, 2011, Mazzucato & Schans, 2011; Kilkey et al., 2018) because “transnational families hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely ‘familyhood’” despite the geographical distance (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002:3). Thus,

... transnational caregiving, just like caregiving with any other families binds members together in intergenerational networks of reciprocity and obligation, love and trust, that are simultaneously fraught with tension, contest and relations of unequal power (Baldassar et al., 2014:7).

Families are tied with mutual obligations and expectations related to caregiving, this is assumed regardless of distance as migration is not a simple decision for the benefit of the individual, but rather part of a collective strategy for the whole family to support and care for their children, parents, spouses and extended kin, and to plan for their future family life (Baldassar et al., 2018:431). However, the relationship between migration and social reproduction of care and support is rather contradictory (Baldassar et al., 2018; Kilkey & Urzi, 2017). On the one hand, migration is often a response to a crisis of social reproduction in the country of origin and may secure better livelihoods (Kofman & Raghuram, 2015; Kilkey et al., 2018). This has been documented not only in the recent...
work of Kordasiewicz et al. among Polish migrants to the U.K. (2018) but also around the world. At the same time, however, migration can put at risk other aspects of migrants’ social reproduction as their opportunities to form and reshape their families and households, as well as to maintain links with their kin across national boundaries. These are constrained by a range of structural factors including, migration, welfare, gendered care and working-times regimes (Kilkey & Merla, 2014).

This chapter contributes to previous findings by exploring the roles of family relations but also of local or transnational connections in the organisation of informal childcare provision among Polish migrant mothers in Ireland. These include both strong ties (such as close friends or siblings) and weak ties (such as neighbours). In particular, this chapter focuses on how working Polish mothers mobilise their social support network to combine childcare and employment responsibilities.

5.1. Limitations of public childcare
Finding suitable childcare is challenging for families regardless of income or nationality, but the availability of affordable care is particularly constrained for migrants, especially those from low-income families (Mahon & Bailey, 2015; Murray et al., 2016; Fahey & Russell, 2006). As more parents, particularly mothers, seek to combine parenting duties with paid work outside of the home, the issue of childcare becomes an even more pressing one for everyday family life. Thus, the issue of equal access to quality childcare is prominent for two reasons: first non-parental care enables parents to work outside of the home, and thus increase their income, which in turn links directly to the second reason: namely, direct family income and its ability to afford a range of services (including childcare) that benefits the child (Murray et al., 2016).

Over the years, Ireland has had the highest childcare costs in the EU (Mahon & Bailey, 2015). The OECD data from 2012 claims that a child costs almost 40 per cent of a lone mother’s family income and 24 per cent of a couple’s income in Dublin. The costs of childcare ranged from €730 to over €1,100 per month in the Dublin area. Mahon and Bailey (2015) argue that over the years, the Irish government has been reluctant to provide affordable childcare schemes, especially for those with children under the age of three, forcing working families to rely on an expensive private sector (cf. Chapter One for more detailed discussion on development of childcare strategies in Ireland in recent years). A lack of public and affordable childcare provision, and thus its implications on
women’s labour force participation, has been long discussed in Ireland. The implications are not only relevant for native mothers but are particularly pertinent for migrant mothers, who are often found in a more disadvantaged position. Furthermore, while indeed the cost of childcare serves as a primary limitation, the availability of an alternative to public childcare should also be addressed (not everyone has a family member nearby to provide childcare or suitable a childcare centre in the local area) as well as childcare arrangements for other children in the family.

According to Murray’s et al. (2016) 2010-2011 report based on GUI data, the most common form of childcare provided for infants at age of nine months was given by relatives (most commonly by grandparents) followed by non-relative care, most of whom were childminders (paid), followed by childcare centres such as crèches. For older children (from the age of three) childcare choices were more clearly linked with socio-economic class. Those parents within the most advantaged professional positions had the highest percentage of centre-based care (Murray et al., 2016). The other social class groups made significantly less use of non-parental care, but where it was used, centre-based care remained the most frequently availed of among other categories (relative, non-relative, centre based). Also, when considering older children (from the age of three) Murray et al. (2016) state that the choice for children is not entirely driven by the pure need of ‘supervision’ as such, but rather suggests that choices of childcare account for other factors, such as quality of care, location, qualification of the childminders or ethnicity. Results for older cohorts from the GUI study confirm the rise in centre-based childcare use (ibid.)

Murray et al. (2016) in their report estimate that Irish nationals are more likely to avail of non-parental childcare in comparison to non-Irish nationals. Social class and income remained significant in all estimations conducted, for those with the highest income being more likely to use non-parental childcare for their children (above three years of age) (Byrne & O’Toole, 2015; Murray et al., 2016). Third, the most significant factor regarding childcare choice was the mother’s employment.

Childcare needs vary depending on the child’s age. Throughout the first year of life, individualised infant care is preferred by parents, either by a parent or a relative. Quality centre-based childcare becomes significantly more important for older children (ages one to two); from the age of three to five the childcare focus broadens and does not only
consider care as such but also the educational dimension (Fahey & Russell, 2006) From age six and upwards, primary schooling takes over and both additional education and care requirements shift to care outside of school hours and during the school holidays.

Beata, who moved to Dublin in 2006, is the mother of three-year-old Simon. During the interview she portrayed migrants as ‘us’ versus the Irish as ‘them’. ‘They’ were in a much more advantageous position not necessarily due to economic factors, but predominantly because of the availability of informal care from relatives and other family members. Beata was employed full-time and when asked about her plans for the future, she mentioned her dream of having another child. However, in her eyes another child meant more expenses, in particular childcare expenses. In addition, having another child would mean giving up her job to stay at home with her children due to the costs associated with crèches in Dublin.

[Public childcare] It’s obvious when you’re Irish and you have family here, you can just drop your kid off to granny…but us? Crèche, nanny…it all costs money, a lot. If it was cheaper even half of this price … so many mothers are staying at home because they can’t afford to work … I know that if I had another child now, I would have to stay at home because we can’t afford another crèche…[Beata, 31]

During the interviews, parents of young children also expressed concerns in relation to the quality of childcare services provided by Irish crèches but also the limited care time available in crèches. Additionally, parents felt obliged to align their shift pattern with the crèche schedule in order to facilitate transport to and from the crèche and other extracurricular activities.

For mothers of school-age children, the regular timetable is not the only difficulty when trying to combine typical working hours with the number of school breaks that are scheduled throughout the year. Standard holiday days available at work are not sufficient, forcing parents to avail of informal childcare that incurs additional costs and also the frustration of having to adjust holiday time to school holidays. Kasia is a single mother of ten-year-old Mateusz. Although she usually works during school hours, as a single mother she cannot afford to provide her son with additional childcare during the school holidays. While the long summer break is much easier in terms of managing employment and childcare for her son – Bartek (10), the extra weeks off during the school term are the problem. Due to the limited number of days available for paid holidays, she has to leave
her son alone in the house. Although she is aware that such a solution is dangerous, she feels she has no other alternative that she can afford.

I think that childcare in this country, is organised so bad that you have no idea…schools are closed every second month, for a week or two…and you have four weeks of holiday…I counted that during the year, kids have nearly four months free from school…and I have twenty days of holiday…summer break-nine weeks, mid-term break – a week, for Halloween. Christmas break – two weeks, February – another week again…later St. Patrick’s Day – again week, Easter – two weeks…then mid-term again – a week, and summer again…” [Kasia, 40]

Due to the severe limitations of affordable and accessible childcare, migrant mothers are forced to rely on an informal solution to a large extent. The following sections discuss a wide variety of informal childcare strategies employed by the interviewees. First, transnational support is considered as a vital contribution to informal childcare solutions, especially the provision of care during longer breaks and holiday time. Further, migrant mothers employ child minders or use a combination of arrangements available to design the most functional, cost-efficient and yet good quality care for their children. However, these informal arrangements are often unregulated and unlicensed, typically provided in a child’s home or the home of a relative, neighbour or friend. The following section will first discuss transnational support and then proceed to discuss paid and unpaid childcare arrangements.

5.2. Childcare and work patterns between Irish and migrant families
There are large differences in the childcare and work patterns between Irish and migrant families from EU accession countries after having a child. Migrant parents find themselves in quite a disadvantaged situation. It has been shown that non-Irish working mothers are more likely to use centre-based childcare (Murray et al., 2016). On the one hand they often lack any form of informal support network that would consist of family and friends. Thus, migrant parents can face obstacles not only due to the lack of pre-established network but also in pursuing institutional support due to the lack of language skills, relevant knowledge of the new system or simply financial limitations. This situation may be even more complex for migrant parents who come from a country or family with traditional views of gender and childcare practices and who have moved to a country with more progressive attitudes to childcare, female employment and gender
roles (Bartova & Karpinska, 2019). Although both Poland and Ireland constitute rather traditional societies and uphold traditional gender roles, by far Ireland has progressed towards more egalitarian policies of childcare and female employment (Murray et al., 2016).

Little research in Ireland has looked at employment and the organisation of informal childcare, when formal childcare fails or is simply insufficient. This thesis contextualises childcare support within the larger social support networks that women have, providing not only instrumental support but also emotional support and companionship. Moreover, research evaluating childcare needs and the use of informal childcare (cf. Share & Kerrins, 2009 for the role of grandparents in providing informal childcare in Ireland; Bordone et al., 2017 on the use of grandparents and formal childcare; Wyss & Nedelcu, 2018 on the transnational care practices of the Zero Generation (Go) – mobile grandparents) rarely focus on non-Irish participants. Finally, while previous studies on informal childcare provision analysed only arrangements for ‘regular’ childcare (e.g., Roeder et al., 2014), this chapter examines childcare in ‘crisis’ situations, when the need for childcare arises in an unpredictable fashion (e.g., due to illness of the caregiver), as crisis childcare poses particular obstacles for the involvement of transnational support.

Mothering as emotional labour linked with care is inevitably a source of inequalities in terms of class-related disadvantages (Rodriguez-Bailon et al., 2017). Having a childcare option means that a woman can decide on becoming a stay-at-home mother, using available networks of family members, hiring help (ethnic/local or both: ethnic and local) or availing of institutionalised, publicly available childcare and education. However, living in a transnational space often means that women have very limited opportunities to negotiate their livelihoods and circumstances, and have a lack of knowledge of welfare system and social protection in the host country. Therefore, mobilising a variety of informal and trusted strategies into combined strategy is often the only solution that women reach for.

For working, dual-breadwinner families (the families where both parents are in full-time employment), the pressure to balance life between childcare and employment usually remains the responsibility of the mother (Roeder et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2009), regardless of their migration status or nationality. Numerous studies show that expensive
childcare constitutes one of the major obstacles for women to enter employment since they cannot afford formal childcare (McNally et al., 2014, Millar et al., 2008, Murphy et al., 2008). Indeed, Ireland is known to be one of the most expensive among all OECD countries and its supply is limited (OECD 2004, 2011). Other limitations might occur due to the non-availability of other childcare options or its insufficient accessibility (limited opening hours). Despite some improvements, there is agreement that childcare and related employment policies are still not adequately provided to working migrant families, with a particular lack of facilitation of a mother’s return to employment and this issue has been addressed for over a decade in the literature (OECD, 2004; NESF, 2005; Roeder et al., 2018; McGinnity et al., 2013). Consequently, informal care arrangements constitute a crucial component for many working mothers in Ireland (Roeder et al., 2014).

For native families, care provided by locally resident kin, particularly grandparents, is the prevailing form of regular informal childcare (Roeder et al., 2014; Bordone et al., 2017). This option is not always available for migrant mothers due to the lack of presence of family members to support them in this regard (Roeder et al., 2014). Organising informal childcare becomes even more difficult when we consider rearing a child in the country that is different from the parents’ country of origin and implies various limitations in structuring childcare (Ryan, 2011), such as initial lack of established support networks after migration as well as the time and effort it takes to establish new networks. Hence, working migrant mothers rely predominantly on the occasional childcare provided by non-family members (Roeder et al., 2014). That in turn has implications on the time and resources required to create and maintain relations with those who could provide childcare services. However, the relatively short distance between Poland and Ireland, cheap flight costs and free movement law for EU citizens do provide opportunities to mobilise transnational support.

Research shows that fewer mothers from EU accession countries return to paid work at the end of maternity leave and are more likely to juggle work and childcare without support (Roeder et al., 2017). Both general and maternal employment rates tend to be lower among non-native women, which is often attributed to human capital and cultural preferences (Antecol, 2000). Although the fundamental understanding of human and social capital will be further discussed in the forthcoming chapters, it is crucial to note that human capital refers to knowledge, skills and experience that potentially increases an individual’s productivity on the labour market (Becker, 1975). This, however, in the case
of migrants is not a straightforward process, as further structural reasons are also considered as potential explanations to develop a better understanding of how migrant status impacts on work and childcare decisions (Roeder et al., 2018).

From the structural point of view, the shortage of childcare and the relatively brief period of paid maternity leave curtail maternal employment. When considering additional time for unpaid leave, such long parental leave seems to put a brake on women’s employment, and unconditional child benefits and joint couple taxation all negatively influence women’s employment (Ferragina, 2019). Furthermore, migrant families have been shown to rely disproportionately on informal childcare (Bonizzoni, 2014), and also make less use of pre-school education (Sylva et al., 2007). The Irish case is particularly interesting, as the reliance on comparatively expensive private childcare provision on the one hand (McGinnity et al., 2013), and family – mostly grandparents – on the other hand (McNally et al., 2014) ensure a particularly challenging environment for those that may not have access to either but still require significant support in managing care and employment (cf. Wyss & Nedelcu, 2018 and Bordone et al., 2017 for the cross European comparison of the interplay between publicly available childcare, grandparental support and flexible working time).

Murray et al. (2016) found that childcare and non-parental care provided to infants is heavily influenced by the employment status of the mother, which in turns reflects socio-economic trends. Highly-educated mothers, and those with resident partners, were more likely to return to work at the end of statutory maternity leave (ibid.). Contrarily, lone mothers were divided into two dichotomous groups: on the one hand due to economic needs, they were in a group considered as ‘early returners’ and on the other they were among those who were not in active employment when the child was nine months old (Murray et al., 2016). In addition to the maternal employment status, Murray et al. (2016) report that other important factors in childcare use in infancy were income (the greater the income, the bigger likelihood of using childcare) and family size (the more children, less likely to avail of childcare).

According to Murray’s et al. (2016) report the reason for mothers’ return to their employment by the time their baby was nine months was predominantly financial. This suggests that at this early stage the use of non-parental childcare was more of a necessity.
rather than a choice. Despite this, not all the children participating in the non-parental childcare had mothers in active employment (ibid.). Market forces will encourage women with higher earnings potential to enter paid employment during their child-rearing years, while women with lesser earnings potential will not have the same incentives and will therefore be more likely to give up careers and therefore lack independent incomes (Fahey & Russell, 2006).

Social class and its reproduction constitute yet another factor that shapes mothers’ decisions about childcare choices. Women with white-collar positions and of higher educational background tend to find childcare solutions through networks, financial resources, knowledge and capacities (Rodriguez-Bailon et al., 2017; Barglowski et al., 2015). On the contrary, since migration is perceived as an economic necessity (in order to improve economic circumstances of the family or the individual) or family reunification (to join their partners), for working-class women upward mobility and career progression does not constitute the principal reason of migration, despite their high aspirations (Barglowski et al., 2015; Barglowski et al., 2015). Barglowski et al. (2015) studied women who performed blue-collar jobs and had limited childcare choices. Due to these circumstances, they were forced to make the decision to stay home and sacrifice their career opportunities (ibid.). The circumstances driving the decision were not based on the women’s preferences but rather the family’s necessity, mainly because they perceived their employment to be less rewarding in economic terms and in terms of self-fulfilment (Mazurkiewicz, 2018; Barglowski et al., 2015). Hence, women tend to adjust their labour market activity to the routine of other household members (Barglowski et al., 2015; Ausurg et al., 2017).

Studies that examine childcare practices among migrants often focus on the use of publicly available childcare services as well as welfare state provision. Scandinavian scholars have focused predominantly on the question of whether family migration and a strong attachment to family roles affect their participation in and development of egalitarian society (e.g., Siim et al., 2007; Eggebø, 2010). Bjørnholt and Stefansen (2018) in their recent qualitative study found that Polish families in Norway indeed adapt to the dominant dual-earner family model prevalent in Norway and by availing of welfare state provision they shape new and more gender-equal family practices. Bartova and Karpinska argue that in order to fully explore how migrant parents adapt their childcare practices, they ought to be compared with both parental practices in their home country as well as in
the destination country. Other research on Polish migrants in London (Ryan, 2008) and Germany (Barglowski et al., 2015, Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015) focused on the roles that family members play in providing support and care. This research underlines the importance of local and transnational family relations, in particular grandmothers (Barglowski et al., 2015; Ryan, 2011a; cf. Da, 2003) and younger siblings and cousins (Ryan, 2011). These family relationships combine positive and negative aspects. Furthermore, scholars have also stressed the importance of recognising the interconnection between informal care arrangements and formal care provided by the state or organisations (Barglowski et al., 2015; Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015), suggesting that mothers negotiate childcare arrangements taking into account both formal and informal options.

The following section discusses the results of the qualitative thematic analysis. The analysis focuses on the location of the tie involved as the fundamental aspect and how it shapes provision of support. First, it looks at the overall context and motives behind the given choices of childcare. It then moves on to discuss transnational support as an important component of transnational family migration and care organisation. Nonetheless, as location poses a clear obstacle to organising regular care, the discussion attempts to address the relevance of locally-based strategies, where family, friends, acquaintances and neighbours are involved and become the basis of exchange for such support.

5.3. Transnational social support – ‘floating grandmothers’
A profound increase in the importance of cross-national activities in constructing the experience of migration and settlement has led to the emergence of ‘transnational[ism]’ that denotes “the connections which migrants keep with their home country, the persistent and fluctuating ties that bind across the borders” (White, 2011:7). Portes (1999: 464) suggests a definition of “transnational activities as those taking place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants” in both sending and receiving countries. Faist’s et al. (2013) take on the transnational approach focuses on the role of the individual in pursuing and constituting those practices within transnational spaces. These take various forms such as kinship groups, communities or circuits that operate in the continuum of cross-border
transactions (ibid). Despite the distance, migrants still remain in the frequent contact with close family ties (Koelet & De Valk, 2016)

Ties built within the community with friends and family are the principal means by which people receive supportive resources from others. The term ‘social support’ refers to a broad array of resources provided by a community networks of friends, neighbours, relatives and workmates and can range from emotional support to large-scale material aid (Wellman, 2007). As argued by Wellman and Wortley (1990), the kinds of support provided vary with the characteristics of the relationship and with the nature of such support. Support that involves substantial costs in terms of time and effort from the provider is mainly received from ‘strong ties’ (ibid.). The strength of the tie is mainly dependent on the time spent together and the length of relationships, emotional intensity, the level of intimacy and the kind of reciprocal services involved in the exchange of support (Granovetter, 1973).

Family, intimate partners and close friends are typical examples of strong ties, while connections with neighbours; acquaintances and colleagues are typically weak ties. Strong ties have been shown to be important for the provision of emotional support, small services and company. Another salient dimension besides tie strength is the location of the ties, which is of particular importance for the study of transnational support networks. Geographical proximity facilitates regular face-to-face encounters and is of particular importance for forms of support that require the physical presence of the provider (e.g., Mok et al., 2010). For example, local relations (neighbours) are more likely to provide small services, such as ad-hoc childcare and emotional aid (Herz, 2015). In line with the social support perspective, previous studies have further highlighted that strong ties (for example, grandparents or partners) are particularly important for the provision of informal childcare services (cf. Stoloff et al., 1999; Bordone et al., 2017; Wyss & Nedelcu, 2018) because “care is the glue of kinship and in many ways constitutive of family life” (Baldassar, 2016:20). For migrant mothers, those strong ties frequently reside in the country of origin. The lack of geographical proximity poses obstacles for the mobilisation of ‘transnational care’ (Ryan, 2011a, Barglowski et al., 2015). Thus, mobile parents of adult migrants, namely floating grandmothers (Bojarczuk & Muhlau, 2018), also called Zero Generation (Go) (Wyss & Nedelcu, 2018) significantly contribute to the transnational care circulation providing valuable support to their children and grandchildren in the host country.
Although Irish research rarely focuses on the transnational aspect of informal care, research conducted in other countries provides evidence that family members from Poland contributed towards childcare. Research done in the U.K. emphasises that geographical distance does form an obstacle for transnational support, but family members based in Poland, particularly grandmothers, often contribute to the organisation of childcare (Ryan, 2011; White, 2011). Prolonged visits of grandparents to support working parents with childcare and to assist with domestic chores are common practices to facilitate migrants’ labour force participation. Although grandparents are not immediately available for ad-hoc crisis situations, planned extended visits are important in managing the balance of work, care and household tasks. This is especially the case with specific events that affect parental routine, such as extended school breaks or a return to employment. They are used in order to fill predicted care gaps that may arise in the childcare schedule.

Kordasiewicz et al. (2018) refer to this concept as the moral equation of care which despite being quite indicative (migrants do not carry out exact economic calculations for the support they exchange) stresses evaluation of moral obligations. Kordasiewicz et al. (2018) found that parents back in Poland feel they have a moral obligation to support their children when they start their own family abroad and need additional support. Migrants who are in full-time employment are in greater need of care which then prompts their parents to come and help them with childcare in Ireland.

Karolina is a full-time working mother of two. Her daily routine of juggling work, childcare and home duties is at times overwhelming. Therefore, to enable her to reduce the pressure, she invites her mother for extended periods of time (i.e., a month or more) in order to receive her support in daily household and care duties. At the time of interview, Karolina’s mother was also in the house. Interestingly, when questioned about her support for Karolina, her mother saw it as a form of obligation, because Karolina lives abroad, and she does not have anyone else to support her; thus, it is the responsibility of a grandparent to come and help. The time spent in Ireland was also a significant opportunity for spending time and building relationships with the grandchildren.

*And now my mother for sure, when she comes, she is a real help: it’s cooking, laundry, ironing, homework...everything* [Karolina, 40]
Similar to Karolina, Ola also actively engages her mother in care provision. Her mum visits Ireland at least twice a year, for at least one month each time.

*O: Mum…she visits us too, I should put her closer [in the network map…she comes every summer, and every winter break […] so there is a good contact with grandma.*

*SB: Does she come for week or two or longer?*

*O: No no, six weeks. [Ola, 30]*

Although she is focused on spending time with her grandchildren, rather than helping around the house, for grandmothers they see these duties as inseparable. Thus, the overarching type of childcare support from grandparents means more than just looking after children. Another reason behind engaging grandparents in prolonged childcare is economic. The decision to return to, or undertake, employment depends not only on the availability of childcare, but also on the general calculation of costs and benefits, namely the possible income acquisition versus the cost of working in relation to having less time available for care (Becker, 1981). The human capital that mothers possess consequently determines the benefit of work, not only in terms of income but also in terms of longer-term career prospects and satisfaction from work (Konietzka & Kreyenfeld, 2010).

Childcare costs, however, are outside the influence of the human capital of mothers, and the main way to reduce this cost is using informal arrangements, particularly support by family members. Unsurprisingly then, research shows that the higher skilled have greater recourse to formal childcare, while the lower skilled either use no childcare at all, or make informal arrangements (Debacker, 2008).

Joanna works 20 hours per week in a warehouse in Dublin. Her hours were reduced to part-time due to her childcare needs for her ten-year-old daughter after her husband’s death. A few days before the interview, she was offered a full-time position. However, this entailed an increased number of working hours and shift work. For Joanna, full-time employment would mean a significant wage increase but that also posed a challenge in relation to childcare. Thus, she asked her mother-in-law, who had lived on her own in Poland to move to Ireland and provide childcare while Joanna works.

*They often need extra people to work so there will be a chance to work up to 40 hours or even more so I decided that I need my mother-in-law to come…she was*
very happy to come, she had enough of sitting 10 months with no work. [Joanna, 27]

It has been well documented that being actively involved in grandchild care holds numerous advantages for the elderly person (Villar et al., 2012). Most importantly it provides a sense of purpose and allows grandparents to maintain relationships with their grandchildren, despite the distance. However, prolonged and frequent childcare provision can also pose a strain on their physical abilities (Breheyn et al., 2013). Providing childcare to young children is physically challenging itself and the visits are not only limited to childcare. Grandmothers also take over the chores and other home duties, such as cleaning and cooking. Nonetheless, grandparents constitute a vital element of informal childcare support, enabling mothers to juggle employment and childcare duties.

As already addressed by Kasia, summer school holidays are yet another period when the usual childcare routine is disrupted for mothers of school-age children. Different strategies have been developed by participants to fill this care gap during the summer holidays, and the most common informal one involves grandmothers. However, during the summer break childcare provided by grandparents does not always take place in Ireland; on many occasions, children are sent for prolonged holidays to their grandparents while their parents remain in Ireland. The duration of such holidays varies from a few weeks (for the youngest ones) to nearly three months for older children.

Iwona is a mother of two. She sends her sons to Poland every summer. She usually stays for holidays for a few days herself and then leaves her children in Poland. At the end of the summer break the parents or grandparents travel back with the children. The time that children stay in Poland is gradually increased. Iwona left her then one year old son in Poland for two weeks. She gradually increased the time in Poland and her sons now go to Poland for two months of their summer break.

It was summer I send boys to Poland…we went for the holidays and I left them in Poland for few weeks, both of them…Marek was slightly over a year, but I left him only for two weeks or so, the older one for the whole summer break… [Iwona, 31]

Like Iwona, Alicja, whose daughter was four when she went for the whole summer for the first time, also avails of the opportunity for her child to spend time with her grandparents. Alicja’s parents-in-law, however, were not keen on staying for the entire summer in Ireland so they offered to look after her daughter in Poland.
When the crèche finished, parents-in-law offered to take Maja for the whole summer, so we took her for whole summer to Poland, she was four when she went for whole summer to Poland because they didn’t want to come here to help they preferred to take her. So my husband took her there, and then we flied together to pick her up... [Alicja, 26]

At the time of interview, Ania sent her eight-year-old son to Poland for the first time. Although she was delighted with her son to have an opportunity to spend time with family and speak Polish, from her perspective it was emotionally challenging.

Wojtek is now on holidays in Poland, he went to grandparents...granddad came here and took him back...for four weeks, so it’s empty, quiet and sad...it’s first time we done it. [Ania, 31]

Different opinions were expressed regarding sending children to Poland for extended periods of time. For many it holds symbolic meaning. Children can maintain bonds and relationships with their family members in Poland. They can meet and visit relatives who often would not be able to travel to Ireland due to age or economic difficulties. They can practice their Polish language and nourish their bilingualism. They also learn more cultural aspects, such as food or rituals, than in Ireland where these are perhaps not as explicitly celebrated. The time spent in Poland is also a good opportunity to learn about Polish history and Polish roots and simply to sightsee in the country. On the other hand, however, some parents perceive those practices as an example of ‘bad parenting’ to send children alone to Poland for such a long time.

5.4. Local ties
Due to the clear obstacles posed by physical distance, the location of available ties is a vital element in organising childcare and other related supports. Moreover, due to the various adaptational processes associated with time in Ireland, migrants’ networks can often be expected to be highly heterogenous (Koelet et al., 2017). Locally-based family, friends and acquaintances constitute the backbone of mothers’ support networks. This support is demonstrated by co-renting accommodation with siblings or simply reliance on those who live in proximity for managing regular childcare as well as in the crisis situations. Kordasiewicz et al. (2018) calls on the ‘local sibling’, namely a person who provides support for the grandparents that stayed behind in Poland. The analysis here further extends that claim by involving ‘local migrant sibling’ – namely other family members who also migrated, live nearby and support participants.
Not every participant has a family member living nearby, however, among those who do Jola stands out for her childcare arrangements. Jola is a single mother of one and lives with her sister. Since her sister is the only sibling she has in Ireland, she is the main source of support. Every day they organise childcare responsibilities around each other’s work schedules without having to rely on anyone else.

*[For childcare] it’s me and my sister, and it is a comedy how it all works...everything is synchronized to a minute [...] sometimes it is really, all counted to every minute...sometimes I run to pick up Kasia, because my sister picks her up from school and brings her to work to me. [Jola, 33]*

Extended family members who live nearby have proven to be a great source of support in crisis childcare situations, when no other options were available. Agata, for instance, when one of her children was sick, had to take her other child to school while her husband was at work. Having nobody else to turn to, she relied on her extended family, her husband’s brother stayed at home with the sick child so she could walk her daughter to school.

*When my child got sick, I had to drop another one off to school...I had to manage myself. I took a child to the buggy and dropped off another one...I couldn’t count on anyone. Friends here also have children so they couldn’t help me, and in Poland...they don’t understand. I didn’t have anyone who I could rely on then...now my husband’s brother is here with his wife...we help each other a lot. They also have two children and nobody else but us... [Agata, 32]*

Other participants such as Alicja do not have any family member nearby. Consequently, like for many other mothers taking part in this study, her husband is the main source of support. Although Jola’s story as a single mother makes the arrangements much more difficult, the principle of relying on each other because we don’t have anyone else remains the same, whether it related to her sister or husband.

*We support each other because we don’t have anyone [...] if we need anything it is either me or my husband, so we don’t need to count on anyone. [Alicja, 26]*

Nonetheless, for mothers who are in the relationship, their partners are the greatest source of support. Families who decide to leave Poland do so in order to be together. The
importance of being together is a salient motive for participants migrating with or joining their partners. This is reflected in the strong reliance between partners.

Żadkowska et al. (2020) in their study on male participation in Polish migrant households in Norway, found that indeed migration and gender equality in the host country also enhances gender equality within the household, which helps Polish couples sustain equal arrangements regarding their household duties and parental roles. Recent research among Polish migrants to the U.K. and Germany showed that mothers usually share childcare shifts with their partners, and so they structure their employment around childcare shifts (Barglowski & Pustułka, 2018). Through the mutual share of childcare duties, it is clear that the traditional model of family has somewhat disappeared and has instead created a family type where both parents support each other (Szast, 2020). They also suggest that mothers usually work when their spouses can take care of their children, therefore arranging their own economic and professional activity on their partner’s employment schedule and willingness to share the duties. For example, regular childcare is often exchanged on a shift basis, depending on working hours and flexibility of employment between parents.

*I start work earlier and I finish earlier…[husband] starts later and finishes later, so dad in the morning drops him off, and I pick up after work… [Marzena, 33]*

Since most of the participants migrated with or joined their partners, the role of the male counterparts as bridging ties is vital in making new connections (the role of partners in establishing networks has been described in Chapter Four). Since their partners often arrived in Ireland first, they have already established connections, either through their employment or other channels. Men’s supporting role in helping their female partners to meet other women is in introducing them to other couples, so the women can get to know each other. Alternatively, men introduce their Polish female colleagues to their female partners. Initially, after moving to Ireland, due to the limited number of independent, pre-established connections in the host country, mothers employ numerous strategies to overcome this barrier (see Chapter Two for a more detailed explanation of various migration motives and patterns).

Marysia’s and Paulina’s stories are similar and certainly not isolated cases. Marysia arrived in Ireland a year after her husband came to work in Dublin. She joined him when
she was already pregnant and without any employment. After her daughter was born, Marysia did not have anyone apart from her husband to socialise with. Maciek, her husband, introduced her to his Polish colleague who is also a mother. Their shared motherhood ideas and therefore common ground for conversation and socialisation opportunities brought them together to the extent that they have now become very close friends. Moreover, the lack of a language barrier and shared linguistic and cultural understanding allowed them to connect.

*Kasia is also my close friend, and we know each other through my husband…he used to work in the insurance company and he met Wojtek there, they got on very well…and [she] is his girlfriend. [Marysia, 40]*

Although the connections accessed through husbands are initially confined to socialising, over time the relationships may strengthen, particularly between mothers as a common ground for interaction. As a result, those ties also become a source of emotional support between women.

*She works with my husband…but we met, she started coming to our house, we started meeting…and right now we are good friends…so when she has a problem, or me then we chat or meet or walk…or when I go out with kids, she comes over for a chat…or shopping sometimes too… [Paulina, 37]*

Other ways of generating new ties included meeting other mothers through children’s activities (schools, playgrounds). For a mother who does not have a relatively well-built and secure network, the generation of new ties can be difficult. Hence, one of the most commonly-employed strategies by the participants was reaching out to other mothers at the playground. Mothers who were spending time with their children at the playground were also actively looking for other mothers who spoke Polish.

*A: Mothers…in the park…when I was going to the park with the first child to the playground or something, there were always many mothers…so from word to word, everyone in Polish…*

*SB: So you were looking for Polish mothers?*

*P: Yes. Or when another one heard that I speak Polish, she also started talking Polish…so that’s how. [Paulina, 37]*
Language constitutes a key factor contributing to the generation of bonding ties (Putnam, 2000). Such ties generated within the homogenous group of other mothers through child-related activities are the most accessible because they do not require English language proficiency or other forms of social capital (already pre-established networks that can serve as the source of information). It is also easy to identify a mother who speaks Polish to her child. Once in the park, mothers can initiate contact with other mothers in Polish. The mothers interviewed have indeed referred to the playground as being the easiest point of creating new friendships.

Although having family members in close geographical proximity is associated with strong bonds and mutual support, this option is not always possible some mothers. Rather than emphasising the need for support from family members, they structure their support locally, namely through other co-ethnic ties comprised of neighbours and migrant mothers. Local support networks that consist of other Polish mothers are more reliable and therefore more often available for crisis situations when transnational connections (i.e., grandparents) are not available. Monika is a mother of 12-year-old Maja, who attends primary school. Monika lives in the Dublin commuter belt in the district that is quite popular among Poles. Her neighbour who is also Polish has two children of similar age to Maja. Even though both families are dual-breadwinner families, with both sets of parents working full-time, they create a form of community, where they exchange ad-hoc support. Whether it is dropping children off to school or simply providing childcare for a few hours occasionally, they can always count on each other.

[Neighbours] They both also work, but we know that if there is a crisis situation then I know I can knock to their doors and they will definitely stay with Maja…or even if they want to go shopping and want to leave kids with us for an hour or two, they do... [Monika, 32]

Similarly, Marta, a mother of three, struggles with sourcing reliable and affordable childcare for her children. Marta’s neighbour who is also Polish supports her with childcare and in other domains, such as emotional support. Because they live close to each other and have children of a similar age, they exchange additional childcare if needed as well as socialising at weekends.

Anial is my loveliest neighbour…she also has three kids…they’re our neighbours,
While building those weak ties, geographical proximity matters more than the strength of the tie, due to common family culture and child-rearing styles. Additionally, the shared experience of migration also contributes to building close friendships with other Poles living nearby through a common understanding of the needs and circumstances of not having any close family members around. Although Iwona usually sends her children to Poland for the summer break, during the school term the situation is much more complicated. With no family members available for a crisis situation, Iwona also supports her neighbour who is a single parent with childcare.

Even though the contacts built through child-related activities are based on an exchange of childcare and socialising, these are the ones that participants can rely on and thus often refer to them as very close friends (Polish: przyjaciel). Those close local friendships often took an even closer position on the mind-map than some of the family members.

Due to their particular circumstances, single Polish mothers organise their support differently. Keim (2018) in her research suggests a typology of the composition of the single mother’s networks. The typology distinguishes between four network types, according to their composition: family networks, networks centred around conjugal relationship, extended networks and restricted networks. Even though Keim (2018) considered native German mothers, clear commonalities can be observed. Indeed, the extended networks are proven to be useful for single mothers. Kamila is a single mother of a seven-year-old daughter. Her husband passed away three years ago. Since then, throughout her struggle she has managed to complete her qualifications and she is now
working as a nurse. Her support circle consists of other single mothers, who support each other both emotionally and with childcare as needed.

In Poland we would have grandma, granddad, aunties, uncles….and here we have to organize that ‘family’ somehow….so mostly, lone mothers get on together with other lone mothers because she is not the only one friend of mine who is a lone mother…I have another one too and to be honest we’re on the phone all the time…so if one needs anything, we help each other…when you need give “next in kin” we really just give each other…another mum…it’s wonderful and it is the only one way you can have a normal life without the family… [Kamila, 27]

For Kamila, the circle of other women, who share the common struggle of being single mothers substitute for the family that cannot be available for immediate support in Ireland. Being able to organise her life in Ireland without having to engage other family members also enriches her of strength and independence.

Those networks are crucial in establishing single mothers’ well-being. While family-based networks were not only a precondition for the provision of support, they were also a consequence of the strains (Keim, 2018), the networks based around conjugal relationships were identified as enriching well-being to various extents. Keim (2018) thus argues that in terms of the structural features, networks that included the woman’s own or her partner’s mother and/or sisters, and heterogeneous relations, were associated with well-being. However, purely relying on these structural features is not sufficient. Not the pure existence of supportive network matters, but also their meaning to the respondent: only if the ties are not perceived as conflictual and if the support provided is evaluated as adequate, these ties can foster well-being and thus provide the crucial elements of the support for participants.

5.5. Combination of ties and support strategies

Participants combine paid childcare with various types of informal support depending on circumstances. Daria, a mother of three, has always been responsible for her children’s transport to and from school. Shortly after migrating to Ireland, she became pregnant with her middle child. When she was back home with the baby after the hospital stay, she still had to organise school transport for her older daughter, as her husband started work very early each morning. Despite the lack of established support networks, the
teacher helped her and walked her daughter to school, so she did not have to drive with a new-born to school.

*We used to live in [Dublin 5] then and there was a teacher who was also living there and she was teaching in the same school as Sara was going to, so when I gave birth she was helping me, I was just dropping her to the bus stop and she was taking Sara to school…*[Daria, 34]*

Since then, Daria’s three siblings as well as her husband’s brother have also moved to Dublin. Because her extended family live nearby, she manages crisis situations within that small circle. Thus, she no longer has to rely on acquaintances for childcare. Instead, the small but local and reliable network of kin provides the support she needs.

*When the kids are sick or the school closed] either I have to take sick, or husband takes day off or either sister or whoever has a day off…I ring around and there is always someone who would come and sit down with them. [*Daria, 34]*

As discussed previously, the schedule of regular childcare for Jola’s daughter is organised around her and her sister’s shifts. Nevertheless, she too has crisis situations, particularly when both she and her sister have to stay at work longer during a busy time. Jola does not have any other family members located in Ireland except for her sister; however, her support network consists of two more people. Her story is quite unique, as not many participants referred to relying on other Irish people. Her sister’s Irish boyfriend Steve and a close Polish friend who she works with are her main supports in a crisis situation. Steve, however, has a special function in her life as the only Irish person with whom she has contact. He not only looks after the child during crisis situations, but also provides Jola with vital information in relation to organising her life in Ireland, such as social welfare, employment or places she could go with her daughter.

*Steve, he’s my sister’s boyfriend…he doesn’t walk my daughter to school, but he stays with her sometimes, when the situation in the hotel is really extreme and we can’t manage, then he stays for about three hours with her at home….but he helps me a lot…like supports me with all the things here. [*Jola, 33]*

In contrast, Danuta does not have any family members who live in Ireland, but she has a very close friend, who used to be a nanny to her son. Now, since her son is old enough to go to crèche, her friend is still someone who she can call anytime in case of childcare emergencies.
I know that when I need... I think she would be the first person to call if I need help with Michal... if I need someone to help it’s her [...] so [friend]... I don’t abuse it, I could leave him more often I think I left him also for a night once... but I don’t want to put too much on her shoulders because she also has work, child... [Danuta, 38]

As illustrated by the example of Danuta, Monika and Marta, mothers who do not have family members living in proximity in Ireland structure their closest support network differently and tend to rely on friends and acquaintances to a greater extent. Those friends are usually other Polish mothers. Their role is initially limited to just childcare, but once the relationship strengthens, it evolves and those friends also serve as emotional support.

5.5.1 Child minders
Many participants also use child minders who are external to the established social support networks. The grey market of care provision is unregulated but crucial for both sides – providers and clients. A ‘Polish nanny’ is usually another mother, or a person who used to work in a crèche in Poland and can be found online on Polish social media. The key driving force of availing of such services is its price. As explained by the participants, nanny’s hourly rate varies from €3 to €7, depending on how many children are being taken care of. Kasia and other participants, who availed of such solution motivated their choice by comparison with formal centre-based childcare. Thus, the nanny can offer full-time care for approximately half the price.11 It provides a significantly more affordable alternative, which is also suitable because it eliminates language barriers and limits the differences in parenting styles because co-nationals provide it.

The cultural and social values are maintained through having a Polish childcare provider constitute a significant factor and have been document by scholars such as Bartova and Karpinska (2019). In their work they argue that Polish migrant parents appear to be immune from adopting childcare norms of the native population, and instead (in particular, for younger children) employ strategies that involve other Polish migrants as nannies. Sometimes, ‘nanny childcare’ is arranged between friends when one of them does not work.

11 The price has been calculated for 40 hours per week with the price of approximately €5 per hour.
Before Kasia’s son started school, a nanny looked after him. Someone else from the school recommended the nanny. Her day-care was based at home, while some pre-school children were dropped off in the morning, the older ones were picked up from school and brought back to the day-care for organised after school activities. Kasia paid €4 per hour and there were four other children together with Bartek. The nanny was Polish and based locally, and thus was the perfect solution for Kasia’s busy schedule.

She was like you know, through recommendation someone from [my son’s] class who had an older child… [...] but she said she can only take him for three days, she said she had too many children…she was picking up children from school and she was taking them home, for a walk or something. It was really nice, very friendly and family atmosphere, I think there were up to five children, couple of smaller children- crèche age, who were there before teachers finished school…around 2.30-3.30 they were picking them up. Bartek really liked it, he liked it a lot. [Kasia, 40]

The woman offered me [a job] two days a week and asked if I want to come on Monday or Thursday. So, I run to the neighbour, if she can look after my daughter […] yeah no problem, 5 euro per hour so I went to work… [Joanna, 27]

However, such solutions are not without disadvantages. Adverts placed online are viewed with limited trust. Women often treat that kind of job as additional income while on social welfare or while unemployed. Adriana, a full-time working mother of five-year-old Kate, had a rather bad experience with a Polish nanny.

We had a trial with two Polish child minders…it was horrendous…Katie was going to this Montessori, for those free three hours at the beginning and then someone will pick her up and look after her…so we had two Polish girls…one didn’t come at all, second came and after three days she said: sorry she can’t come anymore, she went to another job that she got because she was bored here… [Adriana, 39]

After such a bad experience, Adriana decided to reduce her working hours and asked her neighbour for help with childcare for the time between crèche and Adrianna’s return home.

Marzena returned to work when her baby was seven months old, and she did not feel she could trust a babysitter. For her it is not only the inability of the child to communicate their needs, but most importantly the source through which parents seek and find these
arrangements. Anyone can be on Facebook, with no qualifications, previous experience, references or even necessary legal checks.

*I always knew that child would go to crèche...I don’t know; I don’t trust babysitters for such a small baby. I would be scared to leave a child, that is not able to communicate clearly with me and child minder with someone strange...and when sometimes I see on Facebook when women just put there: I need a babysitter for seven months old baby for next week with no problem, and take whoever writes there...everyone can write to you there, right? It scares me that women give their children to strangers so easily...for me crèche, yeah...well someone can say the same, you don’t know what’s happening there but it is all regulated, controlled...I don’t know, somehow I trust them more, definitely...*[Marzena, 33]

The fact that the childcare is regulated and provided by certified child minders, for Marzena, is much more important than the price or nationality of the childcare provider.

5.5. Reciprocity
For relationships with weak ties, reciprocity (exchanging things for mutual benefit) is a key for the smooth mobilisation of support. While the support provided by strong ties is often perceived as taken for granted and not enumerated, for some weak ties this was also the case. Although monetary exchanges for services are embedded into reciprocal relationships where childcare provision is traded between the parent and network member, reliability and trustworthiness are embedded into favour exchange and friendships and are crucial in balancing exchanges with close networks. For some, paying extra money for school drop-off constitutes a clear solution between network members, for others it is not always based on the economic exchange, but rather a favours exchange system. The mutual exchange also differs when considering the strength of the relationship. The favours are more likely to be taken for granted when exchanged with other family members. Asking for favours would be less likely when dealing with an acquaintance. Alicja’s example illustrates the mutual exchange of various forms of favours. In exchange for support with finding a job, Alicja walks Marzena’s daughter to school in the mornings.
With Marzena...she is the one who got me the current job, she lives close to us. I help her with child...she knows I go to work for the afternoons so I walk her daughter to school...she helped me with job, because she was working in the same company...and I help her... [Alicja, 26]

On the other hand, Joanna who lives close to the city centre has better access to the shops than her friend who lives further away from town. She buys clothes and other items that her friend needs.

[Friend] she lives outside of the city centre and I have a lot of second-hand shops, so I always buy clothes for her children or I do some shopping for her. Often I have a possibility to take my daughter there [...] I go with the same bus to work and her so I can drop my daughter for few hours and come back to work and my husband can pick her up on his way back from work. Shopping, Cooking, care...there is all sorts of help. [Joanna, 27]

In exchange, her unemployed friend occasionally looks after her daughter, when her regular childcare arrangements fail. In light of how Aga and Otylia describe childcare exchange being based on general reciprocity, it is often treated as a pure favour embedded into reliability and trustworthiness.

...she is my best friend...with her son...we met here, our sons used to go to crèche together...she lives quite close...at the beginning it was like ‘Hi, Hi’ on the street, but I was also taking her son to the crèche, or when I was picking up mine I was taking hers too and that’s how we got to know each other... [Otylia, 35]

Overall, the system of favours often serves as a ground for creating and maintaining friendships with those who could be the most useful in providing childcare and emotional support. Such friendship, built on frequent contact and mutual understanding, is then also enhanced and provides other types of support. The exchange of childcare is often treated as a pure favour embedded in general reciprocity and experienced as a highly reliable and trustworthy part of people’s relationship (Small, 2009).

Reciprocity also involves monetary exchange while Polish friends’ and neighbours’ arrangements tend to be reciprocal, either through mutual childcare exchange or other favours, the support from Irish networks tends to be exchanged on a monetary basis. The reason for this is twofold: mothers’ networks mainly consist of tight Polish circles and the
support tends to be organised between co-nationals. Many parents go beyond the idea of the childcare provider meeting children’s basic needs. They expect that the child minder will contribute towards and promote their child’s development, both in social terms but also in the linguistic aspect.

5.7. Discussion and Conclusion
This chapter demonstrates how Polish migrant mothers in Dublin mobilise their support locally and across borders. While the analysis focuses predominantly on childcare, the motives for emotional support and other favours based on material exchange and reciprocity were also discussed. It highlights the high reliance of mothers on partners and family members as the main components of the support network for childcare services and the less important role of other friends and acquaintances, supporting Wellman and Wortley’s (1990:581) argument that “delivery of support is not based on who you know but how [do] you know them”. While mothers’ support networks are largely composed of women and fellow Poles, the mobilisation of ties within networks is largely independent of the gender and ethnicity of the tie, but depends crucially on the kind of relationship and the practicalities.

Inevitably, for many women their partners constituted the greatest source of support. Reiterating recent studies on gender, migration and employment – indeed the childcare strategies supported arguments of Żadkowska et al. (2020) – migration enhances gender equality within the couple and prompts partners’ participation in childcare share and thus more equal arrangement of care (and household duties). On the other hand, women’s earning potential is often overlooked because it is the woman who bears the burden of childcare and thus sacrifices her own career choices to support family childcare strategies.

The mobilisation of support from others depends greatly on the type of relationship and on practicalities. For transnational support, distance is a clear obstacle for mobilisation of childcare services. This serves as a clear limitation of the effectiveness of support networks. The constraint of transnational support is evident when considering the need for immediate, crisis childcare support in an unpredictable manner that in turn requires mobilisation of local ties that can be without prior plans and arrangements. Nevertheless, transnational ties, grandparents in particular, play an important role in providing
childcare, especially for summer holidays and planned, prolonged visits. Thus, the limitations of transnational support are, to some extent, compensated for by the strength of the tie, and thus the quality of the relationship. The findings of this chapter are therefore consistent with previous research done on Polish migrants in the U.K. by Ryan (2011; 2011a) and White (2011) highlighting the importance of family members in the destination country for various supports around childcare. In the case of participants in this study, care provided by grandparents extends also beyond the given age. Care provided by relatives, for example, is often preferred not only because it is more affordable, but because it is seen by many parents as providing emotional benefits (Wheelock & Jones, 2002). However, the research also demonstrates that although locally-based family members provide a ‘safety-net’, in particular for childcare and emotional support, locally-based friends and neighbours, and especially other co-national parents, are the most actively involved in providing childcare support, both on a regular basis as well as in crises.

In line with Bartova and Karpinska’s findings, the result in this chapter, indeed this whole thesis, suggests that parents are most likely to rely on each other when seeking childcare for their small children. Moreover, as they themselves claim, parents support the childcare practices they know from their home country, rather than merging their childcare strategy with host country practices, especially for the younger children under the age of three (ibid.). Moreover, not every parent has an opportunity to source childcare informally, from friends or other family members. Some mothers who participated in the study used the option of public childcare, as one of the strategies to combine the responsibilities of care and work.

The analysis also shows the important role of the partner as the vital connection through which women made a first step to build their support networks, largely consisting of co-ethnic ties and other women. More independent ways of accessing connection with other mothers is largely driven by language and takes place in the playground. Nonetheless, the network of local support is important in providing crisis childcare support. Other mothers are also a source of socialising and information exchange.

Strategies of support mobilisation depend on individual circumstances and geographical distribution as well as the availability of both family members and weak ties. While some
exchange childcare for money, others exchange childcare on the basis of non-material favours. Such results are in line with Bonizzoni’s (2014) ‘kinscripting’ strategy of enlarging support networks by locally-based friends and neighbours; participants have also employed a similar strategy to mobilise local informal childcare. The qualitative analysis shows that mobilisation of support from social ties, childcare in particular, depends on three crucial elements: the strength of the relationship, time availability and the location of the tie involved. Although the location of available ties differs, the analysis indicates that family members, grandmothers in particular, are commonly mobilised for transnational prolonged childcare support for planned childcare gaps. Family members and close friends based locally serve as the basis for immediate and crisis support due to their greater availability and reliability. Nonetheless, partners as the closest ties (in terms of relationship and location) are most likely relied upon for childcare and emotional support.

Overall, the results show that the role and limitations of transnational ties can be usefully studied in a support network framework. The findings presented in this chapter are consistent with the results of the studies conducted on the support networks in the ‘national’ perspective (Wellman, 2007) with an emphasis on factors such as: the type of relationship between individuals, geographical proximity and resource availability (time) influencing network activation and support use. In Ireland, while state investment in early childcare for children aged three has improved, it remains at a relatively low level, and is certainly not sufficient for every parent to avail of. Thus, the private sector within the area dominates provision of those services and costs to most parents are indeed remarkably high (Murray et al., 2016). Additionally, the scale of the informal grey market childcare provided within migrant communities rises in its popularity due to the cost efficiency and opportunity to maintain language and strengthens migrants’ preferences towards childcare being provided by a Polish co-national (Bartova & Karpinska, 2019).

The decision to return to work is a constant juggle between employment opportunities, costs and childcare options available. These, in turn, are shaped by the socio-economic position of the family and the extent of support they can draw on. For example, if no relatives are available to help with childcare, then a return to work will typically only be possible with the use of paid childcare, which in turn is only feasible if the family can afford it.
It is nearly impossible to fully estimate the number of grandparents and the extent of their childcare contribution, especially considering the transnational aspect as it is not known how many grandparents act as regular carers for their grandchildren. It is also not known how such care varies depending on the age of the child as well as the circumstances, i.e., considering employment status, mode of work, and most importantly, nationality, with migrants being most disadvantaged due to the lack of close kin available to provide such care and support.

Finally, much literature focuses on the childcare strategies among parents of children aged three and under, assuming that those who are old enough to avail of public childcare do not require any further support. The childcare needs of those families are often overlooked, assuming that by qualifying for the publicly provided childcare provides the solution for care needs. This, however, is often insufficient as frequently it does not cover the same timeframes that parents are required to work.
Chapter 6: Quantitative analysis of social support – multilevel approach

6.1. Introduction
So far, Chapter Four focused on the structure of social networks and the characteristics affecting the composition of the network, while Chapter Five explored participants’ accounts and experience of organising childcare. This chapter serves as a continuation and verifies the outcomes of inductive, qualitative analysis within a more structured framework of analysis of social support put forward by Barry Wellman (1990), adjusted to the nature of the data. Looking through the transnational perspective, this chapter specifically examines whether the support strategies of women with strong transnational ties (STN) differ from women with more local networks (SLN – strong local network). It builds on it and focuses on evaluating how the characteristics of the ties and overall network groups affect the type of support and the resources they access.

The fundamental dimensions of social support considered here are emotional support, crisis situations support (mainly in relation to childcare), regular childcare, financial aid, as well as everyday socialising activities (companionship) and information provision. Peoples’ ties with other acquaintances, friends or relatives are a major source through which people and households receive support. This chapter seeks to explain what types of ties provide which kinds of supports. The analysis will look at the strength of the tie, kinship, location/residence (access) as well as the transnational context. The provision of the support is further controlled for similarities in participants’ personal characteristics such as gender and ethnicity. Consideration of transnational versus local ties is particularly important to assess he role of transnational connections in support mobilisation and further, the role of local connections and their impact on mobilisation strategies engaged in the host country.

Central to this chapter is the social support network perspective, explored through an ego-centred approach. In this work, social support is seen as a subset of a larger social network to whom the ego (participant) turns or could turn for assistance (Vaux, 1988). A link (relations) between the ties is characterised based on what flows between connected individuals. When people need support, they usually turn to accessible and trustworthy sources – typically someone who understands their personal situation, whose help is at

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12 Regular childcare is considered here in a form of everyday (Monday to Friday), daily care provision.
minimal cost, carries a reduced potential of stigmatisation, and is based on the notion of reciprocity (Litwak et al., 2010).

In line with this approach, different network members provide different types of support – instrumental, emotional, informational and social (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). The kinds of support provided are more related to the characteristics of the relationships rather than the network members themselves (ibid). Support that involves substantial cost in time and effort from the support provider is mainly received via ‘strong ties’. The strength of the tie depends on the “combination of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy and the reciprocal service that is being exchanged with the tie” (Granovetter, 1973). Family, intimate partners and close friends are typical examples of strong ties, while connections with neighbours, acquaintances and colleagues are typically weak ties. For instance, locally-based intra-ethnic ties can provide childcare and emotional support, while connections with Irish friends may be a source of information.

Kin relationships are an important source of general emotional, financial assistance or practical support (Miller & Darlington, 2002; Moskal & Tyrrell, 2015), however, the extent of this support varies, especially when located in a transnational perspective. For example, local relationships (friends, neighbours) are more likely to provide both large and small services and emotional aid (Wellman & Wortley, 1990) that requires immediate reaction or advise on issues that ties in Poland are not familiar with. Geographical proximity facilitates regular face-to-face encounters and is of particular importance for support that requires the physical presence of the support provided (e.g., Mok et al., 2010). Research has shown that mothers rely to a large degree on their informal social support networks in managing childcare; in particular for employed mothers (Small, 2009). Close ties, for example grandparents or partners, are particularly important for the provision of childcare and maintenance of transnational circulation of care (cf. Stoloff et al., 1999; Small, 2009; Wyss & Nedelcu, 2018). For migrant mothers, those close ties frequently reside in the country of origin which in turns poses obstacles for the mobilisation of ‘transnational care’ (Ryan, 2011; Barglowski et al., 2015).

Both social support and remittances are built on culturally determined kinship obligations, which constitute them as self-enforcing. Drawing on Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993), this process is mediated by the composition and characteristics of networks, as well as the norms that are being transmitted within these networks. Individuals’ embeddedness into
dense and tightly-knit networks provides opportunities and resources that then in turn motivate individuals’ sense of obligation to support the members of that group. Another factor that shapes self-governance of social support is the degree of the strength of the kinship ties within the networks (Curran & Saguy, 2001).

There has been a particular focus on the role of kinship and friendship networks in encouraging and facilitating migratory movements. Krings et al. (2013) in their work on Polish migrants to Ireland point out the role of the social network in the migration process and in sustaining the continuous migration flow of new arrivals. Informal and rather short-term weak ties provided information about accommodation and job-starts. In their study, participants relied both on ‘word of mouth’ (Kings et al., 2013:63) and connections with other weak ties in searching for information about employment opportunities.

Stoloff et al. (1999) explored the role of social networks in the constrains and opportunities which women face in the labour market. While having gender-diverse networks can prove beneficial on the labour market, childcare arrangements are a clear obstacle in career progress, especially for low-income, female-headed families. Thus, to find paid employment, women need ties that provide the kind of social resources that men cultivate. In other words, they must gain access to a different type of social support and social capital traditionally associated with women’s role (Stoloff et al., 1999). However, it is women who are more likely than men to have networks that would provide more social support. Yet, to facilitate entry to employment, unlike men they need not only connections in the better structural position, but also ‘gendered’ social support to allow them to combine employment and childcare responsibilities.

Wellman’s (1991) research suggests that the degree of how connected the networks are affects the level of support the ego receives. Large services, such as emergency support chronic health care or prolonged childcare tend to be provided predominantly by kin and closely-connected network members. However, in their study they found no particular connection between the number of ties, degree of connections and the provision of emotional aid and small services. Like other studies, Wellman (1991) and more recently ones (cf. Barglowski et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2009; Herz, 2015) have found that weak ties provide more companionship and ah-hoc tangible support that can inevitably be provided due to the greater availability (if the weak ties are based locally). Perhaps, as Wellman (1991) suggests, the type and degree of support depends strongly on mutual connectivity.
6.2. Social Support networks
In the simplest terms, Wellman and Wortley (1990:558) define social support as “the conditions under which community help each other”. That support constitutes the principal means by which people and households receive resources. Social support provision is based on reciprocity between the ties – the mutual exchange of favours and services. Those ties that provide relevant supports constitute a form of social capital that people employ in order to deal with everyday life situations, opportunities and crises (Molina et al., 2014). Those connections are fundamental for everyone to form and maintain their social support (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). While for some the support exchanged between the two people serves as a foundation for a given connection to exist, for others the prior existence of a relationship results in the social support being provided.

Social support is a relational phenomenon; unlike the often-used concept of social protection, it relates primarily to interpersonal networks of individuals and the support that flows between them (Bilecen, 2013; Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015). While social protection investigates formal protection, the labour market situation or social security, by looking instead through the lens of social support one can fully explore the relations and mechanisms behind the provision of mutual support regardless of the welfare state situation.

However, not every tie that people have is supportive and not every tie provides the same type or the same degree of support as others (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Everyone’s ‘personal community network’ is a set of active ties that are socially and spatially diverse. With some ties the relationship is closer than with others and those ties also vary in relation to the type of support they provide.

During the last thirty years, there has been an important development in the research within the field of migration and social networks. Firstly, probably one of the most significant changes was the recognition that there are significant differences between men and women in relation to the motivations, risks and norms governing kinship ties (Curran & Saguy, 2001).

Migrants’ personal communities serve different dimensions of social support not only during but also after migration. Undoubtedly, the process of migration affects the size and
dynamics within the support networks (Molina et al., 2014). New migrants have a lower level of support available in the new country in comparison with the local population. Hence, the size and characteristics of the support available for migrants plays a fundamental role in the adaptation process as well as interconnections with other available support dimensions (Molina et al., 2014). Generally speaking, support networks grow gradually through time. Molina et al. (2014) assert that during the initial settling stage, the social circle tends to be smaller, mostly consisting of relatives, close friends or compatriots, and there is high contact frequency between the ego and members of her network. With time, however, other members of the host society enter the network, changing the network not only in size but also in dynamics and diversity.

Looking at the case of Polish migrants in the United States, one can observe the strategies of segmentation of the instrumental and emotional functions (Molina et al., 2014). The main source of emotional support consists of other co-nationals who have migrated within a similar time period. Already established co-nationals provided instrumental support and information. Immigrants who migrated around the same time provide primarily emotional support because they lack material resources that can be exchanged. On the other hand, those already established migrants provide tangible support, and because they have less in common with ‘newcomers’ they are a less adequate source of emotional support.

A study of immigrant women in Canada, distinguished three stages of networks formation among women (Molina et al., 2014). Initially, contacts are limited to the close circle and relatives, and there might be some relationships or intimate friendships. In the case of having a partner, their role is vital at this stage. In the second stage, this circle becomes insufficient to respond to women’s need for various types of support, so relationships expand and involve other members of ethnic or religious communities (or any shared-experience groups) who share the same values and with whom it is easier to communicate. Finally, with time, relations with native members of the community develop, lessening the segregation but simultaneously building their confidence outside of their already established group.

Herz (2015) argues that transnational ties, despite being involved in the tangible dimensions of social support (such as instrumental, companionship) are predominantly involved in the provision of more intangible (emotional) support. In his study, he claims that the structural characteristics of the network (size and density) as well as ego
attributes (e.g., age or gender of the ego, time of residency in the host country) are significantly less relevant than relational characteristics (such as frequency of contact, the strength of the ties). Particularly, he highlights the importance of transnationality in explaining how migrants draw on social support.

Wellman and Wortley’s (1990) framework provides a complex analytical device that can be employed in order to analyse the provision of various support domains. According to their framework, relationships are the means for transfer of the social support. The supportive function of the tie is based on the following elements:

1. the strength of the relationship
2. access that people have to each other
3. degree of kinship
4. Similarities and dissimilarities between the individuals

Together with the cultural elements, crucial to the support provision are also normative obligations between kin. Moreover, the connections with similar types of people will be more empathetic and more flexible with regard to the support provision, while dissimilar ties can provide wider access to different resources (i.e., people who are different to us tend to have also differently composed social networks).

Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) in their work on Polish migrants in the Netherlands employ distinctions between the network types and the various type of support that they provide. They identified four categories that were divided according to the dimensions such as size and kin and non-kin, homogeneity and contact frequency and most importantly – transnationality distinction (ibid.). They identified five different distinct network types: “no confidants” (associated with high level of loneliness); “detached” (cf. Karpinska & Dyksta, 2018) which is similar to “restricted” type (cf. Djundeva et al., 2018) and typical “diverse” social network type (characterised by the large non-homogenous networks and less transnational) (Djundeva & Ellwardt, 2019). The last type
is the ‘virtual’ connection (characterised by the high probability of the support being based in Poland with selected kin and non-kin ties) (ibid.).

Due to the differences in datasets, the framework employed here has been adjusted to the context of this study. The first two indicators to be considered are relational (strength of the relationship and access that people have to each other). The analysis further compliments the framework and accounts for five (transnational) element of social support:

- Childcare
- Crisis Situation
- Emotional Support
- Information provision
- Financial Support

6.3. Transnational support
Migrants’ personal communities are often composed of both local and transnational ties. So far, little is known about how the transnational dimension influences the provision of different dimensions of social support in migrants’ personal networks (see Chapter Five, especially section 5.1. for a detailed review of transnational support among migrants). Structural and relational characteristics of personal communities, as well as the attributes of egos, are seen as explaining how social support in provided. As explained in Chapter Three, those elements are significant in the formation of social networks, including those providing social support.

As recent studies show, the practices of constructing belongingness and support are not spatially bounded and can be pursued across borders. The transnational lens looks at:

...people, social groups, networks, communities and organisations that frequently operate beyond border of one state. A transnational perspective on migration [...] focuses on how the cross-border practices of migrants and non-migrants, individuals as well as groups and organisations links up in social spaces crossing national states, mould economic, political, cultural conditions, and are in turn shaped by already existing structures. (Faist et al., 2013:2)
The second line of research within transnational support focuses on the existence of networks with a high number of family members involved in the organisation and provision of the support (cf. Mazzucato et al., 2006 for work on financial remittances). Migration studies have looked at the role of the transnational family and care, mainly for children and the elderly; concerning the wellbeing of children (Bernardi, 2011); mothering at a distance (Boccagni, 2012); or children left behind (Parrenas, 2001). Yet those cases – frequently used as the common example of transnational families and their livelihoods – do not adequately reflect the transnational family and parenting within the Western context for intra-European migrants. Studies about transnational caregiving so far tend to focus mainly on American immigrant groups, such as Filipinos (Parrenas, 2001), Italian migrants to the U.K. (Zontini, 2006) or Australia (Baldassar, 2007). Some more recent studies of support provided by social networks have been also done on Polish migrants in the U.K. (Ryan et al., 2009; Trevena et al., 2013) and Germany (Barglowski et al., 2015).

Ryan et al. (2008) in their research on Polish migrants in London show that emotional support is not only provided by ‘local ties’ (i.e., relationships that are at close geographical distance) but also by transnational relationships. The analysis of qualitative data in this project indicates that transnational relationships also provide instrumental support, for instance when close relatives babysit during their visits. Another form of support identified by Ryan et al. (2008) is the financial support received by transnational ties.

De Miguel Luken and Tranmer (2010) in their study on migrants in Spain show that material help is more likely to be exchanged with the native population whereas accommodation and information support are much more likely to be exchanged with other ties that have migrant background. Finding a job is equally associated with both native and non-native members of the network (ibid).

Thus, as shown, social networks can be useful to explain the dynamics of international movement, both in terms of migration flows and of the processes of integration and further livelihood strategies. While interest in the transnationality of migrants’ personal communities and social support is becoming particularly prominent, the importance of the relationships after migration is assessed differently. On the one hand, migration entails some sort of discontinuity in interaction with people in the country of origin (or previous
residence). Sonn (2002) argues that migration often entails a dissolving of community ties, at least a partial loss of already established social networks and familiar bonds. On the other hand, transnational studies show that migrants’ personal connections are often characterised by cross-border relationships (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Researchers argue that nation states cannot be conceptualised as geographical ‘containers’ (Boccagni, 2012; cf. Wimmer & Schiller, 2002; Beck 2007; Sager, 2016; cf. Chernilo, 2017 on the failure of the methodological nationalism and the need to move beyond it).

Dahinden (2009), for instance, in a study done in the French-speaking part of Switzerland shows the importance of transnational connection in migrants’ as well as local peoples’ personal networks. With an average of over 30 per cent transnational ties among participants, Dahinden (2009) shows the strong correlation between the pattern of relations and transnationality, confirming that not only local and national ties matter but also that relationships with transnational members of the networks can generate various types of social support.

6.3.1 Dimensions of support
Social support can be divided into several dimensions: instrumental, emotional and social companionship. Instrumental support is defined as supplying material or tangible help through goods and services, and emotional support comprises of giving advice and talking about personal problems, whereas social companionship means the sharing of social activities (Vaux, 1988; Herz, 2015). Instrumental support is particularly related to direct interaction, regardless of whether it is assistance in the home or in care-giving services. Close friendships are both a source of positive feeling and experiences. On the other hand, the ‘paradox of close friendship’ implies that close friendships can also be a source of conflict and disappointment. The negative ties, despite being occasionally mentioned in the narrative as part of the experience, are not listed in this study since the map only enquired about active network support.

There is, however, little known about which dimensions of social support are transferred through transnational relationships. As transnational relationships cover a wide geographical distance, those cross-border connections are regarded as spatially more distant. This in turn involves the assumption that with the increase in geographical distance between people, the degree of spontaneity of social relationships as well as the forms of interactions may be reduced (Herz, 2015). Thus, if the services require an
extended stay or ongoing presence, such as when providing extended care for small children, the distance constitutes a major barrier in the organisation of those services. Except for socialising on the web (online chats, video conferences, calls etc) physical co-presence is also required for social companionship and most leisure activities.

Emotional support, unlike other types of support, is less affected by geographical distance. A phone call or skype video call can be organised transnationally with no geographical restrictions to not only enhance emotional support but also strengthen intergenerational solidarity (Share et al., 2017) and transnational family (Moskal &Tyrrell, 2015). Mok et al. (2007) show that frequency of physical co-presence decreases with increasing spatial distance between individuals, which in turn affects the provision of social support between members of personal social support network. Thus, large distances hamper tangible types of support, when face-to-face interaction cannot be substituted by any other form of virtual contact. However, geographical distance has little effect on emotional support and other intangible types of social support (Herz, 2015).

Therefore, when looking at transnational relationships as relationship over distance and differentiating between tangible aids (such as instrumental support, companionship) and intangible types of support (emotional aid), it can be assumed that intangible types of support are less dependent on the spatial proximity than tangible ones. Thus, while transnationality of relationships weakens provision of instrumental support and social companionship (tangible support), the same transnationality of the relations increases or has no effect on the provision of emotional aid (Herz, 2015).

6.4. Analytical framework
The analysis examines the role of the dimensions identified by the qualitative analysis in Chapter Four (strength of ties, location, time availability) for the activation of network members and whether the role of these dimensions differ between respondents with more extensive local strong-tie networks and respondents with more extensive transnational strong-tie networks. In particular, I focus on the question of whether respondents with stronger transnational networks substitute the lack of local strong ties by support from weak ties. The dimensions of support identified are further incorporated into the analytical framework of social support put forward by Wellman, adjusted to the data and integrated into a transnational setting.
Do strong ties provide more support? Does this support differ when a transnational perspective is taken into consideration? In the work of Wellman and Wortley (1990) strong ties are known to provide broader support than weaker ties. For instance, strong ties are involved more in emotional support, minor services such as childcare and other solutions for low-cost and flexible means of dealing with everyday crisis situations, as well as companionship. In relation to larger services or financial aid, they claim that as well as strong ties, active weak ties also participate in this support provision.

Nonetheless, most of the social support is received from the small circle of strong ties, as they are the main component of an active support network. Among the supports from strong ties, the study conducted on young single mothers distinguishes family as the most important segment of social support, particularly the important role of a mother’s mother in the organisation of support such as financial, emotional or large and small services (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014). Another important dimension of support from strong ties is companionship, which significantly reduces loneliness and anxiety (Marangoni & Ickes, 1989; Wellman & Wortley, 1990).

Not all strong ties are, however, supportive and others may specialise in the narrow dimension of support they provide. Sometimes that support may or may not be voluntary and more constrained. Moreover, people avoid burdening close network members with requests for support to avoid overstraining the extent of support (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Thus, the first hypothesis focuses on the support provided by strong ties.

**H1:** Strong ties will be more likely than weak ties to provide support in all of the support domains: childcare, emotional support, information, financial aid and companionship.

**H2:** Partners, in particular, will be present in providing all support dimensions.
Kinship

There are cultural and structural elements that influence kin to be supportive for one another. The densely-knit structures of kinship ties encourage family welfare, the sharing of resources and access to them as well as cherishing long-term reciprocity (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Furthermore, kinship ties behave differently from friends but also within those ties the relationships and patterns of support provision are different. For instance, the parent-child bond is the most supportive of all types and ranges from small services to substantial help in buying a house or providing financial aid (Wellman & Wortley, 1990).

Other kinship ties, such as siblings, are similar to friends in providing emotional support and small services (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Extended kin are the least likely of all the networks members to provide any kind of support (ibid.). When considering companionship, this is most often provided by friends as without social interaction friendship would have little reason to exist (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). On the contrary, kinship ties can still be strong ties without them being frequent companions. However, people related by kinship – immediate kin or extended kin – are usually in contact with one another more often than those who are not related. The only exception is face-to-face contact. Friends and neighbours see each other more than extended kin. In terms of tie strength, intimates contact their community ties more often than non-intimates, either by meeting, phoning or e-mailing each other (Mok et al., 2007)

*H3: Among kinship ties, parents in particular are more likely to be supportive of all types of help: from small services to substantial financial help.*

Access

While the strength of the relationship looks at the closeness and the level of intimacy, the frequency of contact looks at the degree of the level of interaction. Wellman and Wortley (1990) argue that the more frequent contact between the network members, the more supportive the relationship. Residential proximity facilitates frequent contact, and frequent contact encourages the provision of support by cultivating shared values and awareness of mutual needs and resources, which eases the level of loneliness as well as encouraging reciprocity. Neighbours, especially female neighbours, are more likely to provide companionship, child minding, emotional aid and help with domestic chores (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Thus, the lack of physical distance makes it easier for
people to deliver services, even when their relationship is not strong. Neighbours and other people who are in frequent contact with each other can exchange small favours and services such as childcare or school drop-offs.

Several lines of research invoke extended family network as a major factor of family functioning regardless of the location of family members. For those based locally, the accessibility is less of an issue. However, for those living across borders, with modern communication modes and cheap transportation, the problem of a distance can be overcome, especially for support that does not require physical presence at all times. In those other cases, the individual relies on those based locally.

**H4: Members of the local network that live in close proximity will be more likely than transnational ties to provide small services, such as childcare as well as companionship, ad-hoc crisis support and emotional support.**

**Similarities and dissimilarities – personal characteristics**

Do the similarities of people affect the supportiveness and the type of support they provide for their ties? Wellman and Wortley (1990) argue that shared employment status facilitates the support of small services and financial aid between individuals. The significance of employment and gender, they claim, reflects on the ways in which gender roles affect the exchange of small services and minor financial aid. Similarly, age dissimilarity also reflects on the small services exchange between generations.

The gender composition of women’s networks should also be considered for the following reasons: gender-diverse networks could perhaps represent wider access to a larger social world and opportunities, as opposed to gender-segregated networks. Secondly, men occupy more powerful positions on the labour market and therefore can represent resources for women, especially when working in the male-dominated sector (Stoloff et al., 1999). However, the social support provided by women to women has long been highlighted due to the vital element of support.

**H5: Other employed network members will facilitate the provision of small services and financial help between egos and their network members.**
The analysis conducted in this chapter examines:

1. Dimensions of support identified by the qualitative analysis in Chapter Four (strength of the ties; location and time availability).

2. The dimensions of support employed in Wellman’s analytical framework on social support.

The analysis further compares the role of the above dimensions between respondents with more extensive local networks and respondents with more extensive transnational networks. In particular, the analyses focus on the question of whether respondents with stronger transnational networks substitute the lack of local strong ties by support from weak ties.

6.5. Modelling
To answer the questions of whether the relational and structural properties of personal connections, as well as whether the level of transnational involvement, affect provision of social support, logistic multi-level models (ties nested in egos) were estimated.

6.5.1 Measurements of the dependent variables
In the following models the dependent variables represent the different types of support:

*Childcare* refers to provision of childcare support, regardless of the location and duration, mainly while parents are working. However, unlike a *childcare crisis* it is planned ahead. The latter implies an ad-hoc situation, where the urgent need for childcare arises.

*Emotional support* refers to both psychological and emotional support. Such support can range from ‘being able to count on somebody’ or simply having someone to talk to (either in person or on the phone). The emotional support can refer both to the issues related to children, work or participants’ own emotional wellbeing.

*Information support* is understood as a broad array of any sort of information required by participants. Most commonly, the information sources were related to children’s
upbringing, knowledge relevant to organising welfare support, life in Ireland or job advertisements.

Social support refers to companionship and spending time together. The activities ranged from small events such as having coffee together or going for lunch, to organising trips and travels together.

Financial support was the last type of support discussed during the interview and although not asked directly it was commonly spoken about with participants. Financial aid includes any economic aid provided by a network member – from small financial loans to larger support while buying a house.

6.5.2 Measurements of the independent variables
The main independent variables used in the models include the following:

Relationship indicates the strength of the tie and kinship (1=weak ties, including strangers, acquaintances and mates; 2=friend\(^{13}\); 3=kin, excluding parents; 4=partner; 5=parents). Children, institutional ties and anonymous ties have been excluded.

Neighbour is a subjective variable created from the question of whether in the participants’ opinion the tie that she placed on the map lives close. The close location is self-interpretative and is used to assess the accessibility of support from the tie.

Residence is more structured that the neighbour variable and looks into the broader location of the tie (1=Ireland; 2=Poland; 3=Other).

Employment status has been used to examine time availability (1=employed, including part-time, full-time and self-employed; 2=unemployed; 3=retired; students and children have been excluded).

The models are further controlled for gender, nationality and strength of transnational network.

6.6. Description of the sample
Before examining the extent of the support for given expectations, it is vital to describe the extent and composition of the active networks of the participants.\(^{14}\) In total, 61 participants held 1549 connections. Institutional ties (e.g., crèche), anonymous ties (e.g.,

\(^{13}\) Polish translation 'przyjaciel' which denotes closer friendship between people than English 'friend'.

\(^{14}\) Only active connects have been collected.
websites/forum names; groups etc.) and children have been excluded. This left a sample with 1238 personal ties for analysis. The participants enumerated between three and 49 personal ties.\footnote{This case of three is a single mother relying for the regular childcare (and partially crisis childcare) in a crèche without a transnational network.}

The vast majority of support network members of the respondents were women, 69 per cent (ranging from 50 to 84 per cent across participants), and Polish, 81 per cent (ranging from 50 to 100 per cent across participants). Regarding relationship type, three per cent \((n=13)\) were considered to be strangers, 14 per cent \((n=65)\) acquaintances, 33 per cent \((n=156)\) colleagues or mates, 18 per cent \((n=86)\) close friends, 20 per cent \((n=96)\) kin or in-laws, five per cent \((n=25)\) parents and four per cent \((n=21)\) husbands or partners. With the exception of one mother being married to an Irishman with two Irish in-laws and one Irish friend as an active network member, all stronger ties (except one friend) are intra-ethnic ties. In terms of residence, 26 per cent \((n=122)\) live in the neighbourhood of the respondents, 38 per cent \((n=295)\) in other parts of Dublin, a further two per cent \((n=11)\) in other parts of Ireland, 30 per cent \((n=138)\) in Poland and three per cent \((n=16)\) in other countries. All of the parents and the majority of kin (76 per cent) and also a substantial share of close friends (36 per cent) usually resided in Poland, while all of the husbands and most of the friends (58 per cent), colleagues/mates (63 per cent) and acquaintance/strangers (85 per cent) lived in Ireland.

\subsection*{6.7. Operationalisation of the framework}

The section below presents the outcome of the quantitative, multi-level analysis based on the quantified data derived from the interviews and the social network maps.

\subsubsection*{6.7.1 Descriptive statistics}

Table 6.1 shows the involvement in all the support domains covered in this project: regular and crisis childcare, emotional support, information, socialising and financial aid divided by relationship, place of residence, gender, employment status and whether the alter is a mother or not. The main support domain provided by a given alter has been indicated as \textit{primary}. If the given support is not a main domain of given alter, then it has
been labelled as *secondary*.\textsuperscript{16} *None* indicates that given ties is not involved in the type of support considered. The crucial role of the partner is prevalent throughout the dimensions of the support. Almost all partners were mobilised in the case of childcare (52 of 53) and crisis childcare (51 of 53).

Partners are also substantially involved in financial support for participants. Table 1 also shows the considerable involvement of the participants’ parents in spite of their distant location. Almost all parents were involved in regular childcare (93 of 103) and half of them in the crisis childcare (52 of 103). Fifty-one of 103 grandparents are involved in the provision of emotional support, despite the distance and frequency of contact. Friends and kin are, as expected, substantially more likely to provide childcare or emotional support than weaker ties. And friends – again in line with expectations – figure particularly prominently in the provision of emotional support (friends in Ireland also play a very strong role helping with childcare during crisis situations). The numbers reported in the table 6.1 are stated in the percentage values.

A comparison between friends and kin living in Ireland with friends and kin usually resident in Poland gives an indication of how much the transnational location matters: 23 per cent of kin residing in Poland provide regular childcare, 21 per cent are activated in crisis situations; 28 per cent of kin network members provide emotional support while only one per cent provide emotional aid and two per cent financial assistance. This compares with 37 per cent of kin in Ireland contributing to regular childcare, 48 per cent contributing to crisis childcare, and 31 per cent providing emotional support. Emotional support provided across the borders, although being prevalent and relatively popular, has been somehow mitigated by the distance factor.

Only seven per cent of kin members of the networks living in Ireland were involved in information provision and rarely did any kin provide financial aid. However, nearly half of them provided companionship. Only five per cent of friends residing in Poland provided regular childcare services, 15 per cent were activated in crisis situations and 40 per cent support mothers emotionally. In contrast, 20 per cent of friends in Ireland contributed to regular childcare, 44 per cent helped in crisis situations and 44 per cent

\textsuperscript{16}Primary/secondary division is a self-reported variable that has been verified through the interview transcript and based on the information and story provided by the participants.
provided emotional support. Twelve per cent of friends and 36 per cent of weak ties located in Ireland provided information. Local friends (58%) and weak ties (76%) were most likely to be involved in companionship. For both types of relationship and in most of the support domains, local network members are far more likely to be relied upon than transnational network members.
### Table 6.1: Involvement in support domain (primary and secondary functions by relationship type, residence and characteristics of the alter)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence: Poland</th>
<th>Childcare (regular)</th>
<th>Childcare (crisis)</th>
<th>Emotional support</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Socialising</th>
<th>Financial support&lt;sup&gt;17&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent (n=92)</td>
<td>Prim. 24</td>
<td>Sec. 34</td>
<td>None 21</td>
<td>Prim. 1</td>
<td>Sec. 20</td>
<td>None 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin (n=147)</td>
<td>Prim. 9</td>
<td>Sec. 14</td>
<td>None 69</td>
<td>Prim. 6</td>
<td>Sec. 15</td>
<td>None 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend (n=80)</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 5</td>
<td>None 95</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 15</td>
<td>None 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Tie (n=45)</td>
<td>Prim. 4</td>
<td>Sec. 0</td>
<td>None 96</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 4</td>
<td>None 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (n=226)</td>
<td>Prim. 11</td>
<td>Sec. 15</td>
<td>None 64</td>
<td>Prim. 4</td>
<td>Sec. 17</td>
<td>None 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (n = 132)</td>
<td>Prim. 9</td>
<td>Sec. 16</td>
<td>None 69</td>
<td>Prim. 8</td>
<td>Sec. 12</td>
<td>None 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (n = 116)</td>
<td>Prim. 5</td>
<td>Sec. 5</td>
<td>None 83</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 12</td>
<td>None 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (n = 3)</td>
<td>Prim. 33</td>
<td>Sec. 0</td>
<td>None 67</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 0</td>
<td>None 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired (n = 121)</td>
<td>Prim. 20</td>
<td>Sec. 36</td>
<td>None 30</td>
<td>Prim. 11</td>
<td>Sec. 15</td>
<td>None 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers (n = 156)</td>
<td>Prim. 16</td>
<td>Sec. 21</td>
<td>None 51</td>
<td>Prim. 4</td>
<td>Sec. 17</td>
<td>None 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mothers (n=21)</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 0</td>
<td>None 90</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 19</td>
<td>None 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence: Ireland</td>
<td>Parent (n=9)</td>
<td>Prim. 100</td>
<td>Sec. 0</td>
<td>None 0</td>
<td>Prim. 33</td>
<td>Sec. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner (n=52)</td>
<td>Prim. 46</td>
<td>Sec. 25</td>
<td>None 6</td>
<td>Prim. 8</td>
<td>Sec. 35</td>
<td>None 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin (n=59)</td>
<td>Prim. 15</td>
<td>Sec. 22</td>
<td>None 32</td>
<td>Prim. 24</td>
<td>Sec. 24</td>
<td>None 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend (n=229)</td>
<td>Prim. 5</td>
<td>Sec. 15</td>
<td>None 44</td>
<td>Prim. 13</td>
<td>Sec. 31</td>
<td>None 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Tie (n=460)</td>
<td>Prim. 9</td>
<td>Sec. 3</td>
<td>None 83</td>
<td>Prim. 4</td>
<td>Sec. 10</td>
<td>None 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (n=575)</td>
<td>Prim. 9</td>
<td>Sec. 7</td>
<td>None 67</td>
<td>Prim. 7</td>
<td>Sec. 18</td>
<td>None 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (n=274)</td>
<td>Prim. 15</td>
<td>Sec. 12</td>
<td>None 59</td>
<td>Prim. 10</td>
<td>Sec. 18</td>
<td>None 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (n=593)</td>
<td>Prim. 14</td>
<td>Sec. 9</td>
<td>None 59</td>
<td>Prim. 9</td>
<td>Sec. 18</td>
<td>None 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (n=28)</td>
<td>Prim. 14</td>
<td>Sec. 14</td>
<td>None 36</td>
<td>Prim. 11</td>
<td>Sec. 25</td>
<td>None 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired (n=15)</td>
<td>Prim. 87</td>
<td>Sec. 7</td>
<td>None 7</td>
<td>Prim. 0</td>
<td>Sec. 47</td>
<td>None 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers (n=337)</td>
<td>Prim. 9</td>
<td>Sec. 9</td>
<td>None 56</td>
<td>Prim. 9</td>
<td>Sec. 21</td>
<td>None 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mothers (n=120)</td>
<td>Prim. 17</td>
<td>Sec. 5</td>
<td>None 71</td>
<td>Prim. 4</td>
<td>Sec. 18</td>
<td>None 72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>17</sup>All the values given represent percentage of the overall numer (n) of ties providing various support types
Furthermore, looking at Table 6.1, we can assess the involvement of alters in various types of support by looking at personal characteristics. Both men and women located in Poland are equally involved in providing regular as well as crisis childcare. Similarly, both genders are involved in providing companionship, with men (74%) being slightly more involved than women (65%). This is compensated for by women (38%) who tend to give more emotional aid across the borders than men (20%). For the locally based support, 27 per cent of men are involved in regular childcare, in comparison with 16 per cent of female counterparts. This can indicate the role of partners in everyday childcare provision.

Involvement in crisis childcare is relatively equally divided with women providing only slightly less (25%) than men (28%). Here again the role of male partner is prominent. Men are also more involved in providing financial assistance (12%) suggesting the strong involvement of partners. With regard to emotional support, 24 per cent of women are involved in comparison with 14 per cent of men. More women provide information support (28%) as well as companionship (67%).

In Ireland, most retired members of the network are involved in childcare arrangements (94%) and crisis childcare support (47%). Emotional support is provided fairly evenly, with no clear distinction between particular employment status. However, while the Ireland-based retired members of the network provide information (mostly related to childcare and upbringing), 23% of employed members of the networks are a source of information for participants. Companionship and socialising is found to take place mostly with employed members of the networks (63%) and further with unemployed (54%). Among those network members based in Poland, retired (56%) and unemployed (33%) members of the networks are involved in childcare provision, but only retired alters (26%) contribute the most to crisis childcare. Emotional support is provided equally, regardless of employment status. Similarly, all employment groups are involved in socialising and companionship.

Finally, Table 6.1 also examines whether provision of support is particularly influenced by the fact that the ego is a mother. Among networks in Poland, mothers are far more likely to provide childcare (37%) and emotional care (39%). Both groups handle crisis childcare situations fairly evenly. Similarly, there was no major difference between the groups regarding involvement in companionship as well as information aid. Locally,
women who are not mothers tended to be more involved in childcare (22%). Among other support dimensions, mothers are more likely to provide assistance, in particular information support. Socialising is evenly shared between the groups.

### 6.7.2 Multi-level analysis

In the following section, the analysis tests the expectations about the tie mobilisation outlined above in a more formal way by using multi-level logistic regressions of involvement in six support domains (regular childcare, crisis childcare, emotional support, information, socializing, financial aid). Besides the relationship types, the regression contains indication of status similarity (and time availability: 1=employed; 2=unemployed; 3=retired), residence (1=Ireland; 2=Poland; 3=Other), living in close proximity (neighbourhood). The regressions are further controlled for gender and the ethnicity (nationality) of the network members.

In line with expectations, the results (see Table 2) show that for all the core support functions, all types of stronger ties (friends, kin, partners, parents) are significantly more likely to be mobilised than weak ties. In particular, partners play a major role in providing both tangible and intangible support in all support domains. Among the stronger ties, partners and parents are of preeminent importance for the childcare domains. Parents are significantly more likely to be involved in regular childcare than either friends (p < .001) or other kin (p < .001) and partners significantly more than friends (p < .001). Moreover, partners and parents are on average significantly more involved than friends and other kin in crisis childcare (p < .001). Except for parents and partners, both kin and friends are particularly important for emotional support (p < .001) and socialising (p <.001).

Although employment status (full-time or part-time working hours) is not significant in most support domains, retired members of the networks are more likely to be involved in regular childcare (p <.05). However, employment status matters when considering provision of information with members in full-time employment being most likely to be able to facilitate the flow of information.

---

18The only exception is provision of financial aid from friends.
Physical distance is of a clear obstacle for tie activation in all support domains. Network members usually residing in Poland are significantly less likely to be involved in any support domain than ties in Ireland as well as local ties. This is significant, in particular in relation to the childcare (p <.001) and crisis childcare (p <.05), when support has to be mobilised quickly and when physical presence is required on a continuous basis. Nonetheless, distance does matters for emotional support where face-to-face contact appears to be difficult to substitute by mediated communication and information provision where local knowledge appears to matter. Although commonly employed, emotional support appears to be influenced by the distance factor. Local support is of vital importance for financial aid.
**Table 6.2: Multi-level regressions (random intercept) of involvement in support domains (logit) on ego and alter characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Childcare (regular)</th>
<th>Childcare (crisis)</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Socialising</th>
<th>Financial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref.: weak tie)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>1.59***</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1.59***</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>2.06***</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>2.17***</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>1.56***</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.56***</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>1.80***</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>3.77***</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>5.17***</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>3.07***</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.69***</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>3.25***</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref.: full-time)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref.: Ireland)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>-0.99**</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-1.18**</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>-0.98**</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-0.74</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives in a close proximity</td>
<td>-1.67***</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.41*</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref.: YES)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ref: Irish/other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender, ref: male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.57**</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.80***</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STN</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Case numbers for each model: n1 = 839; n2=840; n3=840; n4=839; n5=840; n6=838*

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
While the composition of the support networks is rather skewed towards ties of Polish origin and women, within the support networks an alter’s ethnicity does not matter for most support functions except for regular childcare provision. In contrast, female network members are more likely to be activated in all support functions with the exception of financial support, which is more likely to be provided by men.

### 6.7.3 Local versus transnational networks

Do mobilisation strategies differ between participants with weak transnational and strong local networks and participants with strong transnational networks and weak local networks? More than half of the sample had more local ties (n=37) than ties in Poland. Those mothers are referred to here as those who have strong local networks. The other 24 mothers have more ties in Poland than in Ireland. These are referred to as mothers with strong transnational networks (STN) and they serve as a reference point for the analysis in this chapter. The support networks of participants are slightly smaller for women with strong transnational networks, 29.4 members on average, than for women with weak transnational networks, 31.9 members.

The following series of tables show the results of running two analytical models that are random-slope multi-level regressions of involvement in the various support functions. The first model shows the outcome of the analysis accounting for the lack of STN (STN = 0) and therefore assuming a strong local network; Model 2 integrated the ‘strong transnational networks’ (STN) variable and interacts it with the (simplified) relationship variable and the distance variable to ascertain whether and how the network mobilisation strategies differ. The estimates show that women rely to a higher degree on their strong networks for all support functions – partners and parents in particular, and relatively less so on the weak ties and friends or kin.

Table 6.3 focuses on the involvement of ties in childcare support provision: both regular (everyday) childcare as well as childcare support in crisis situations. In regard to the regular childcare provision, the main effect of STN is present among parents (p<0.01) and kin (p<0.01) providing the support. Regarding crisis childcare, partner (p<0.01) and parents (p<0.01) have the greatest effect on this type of support. Prominent throughout the analysis, the effect of strong ties is the most significant above all the other variable
considered. Looking at the strength of the tie, for both types of childcare, the strong ties by far exceed the contribution and participation in provision of this support. In line with expectations, for participants with strong transnational network, parents play a crucial role in regular childcare provision (p<0.01) and, due to the distance being a major obstacle, in crisis childcare to a lower extent, nonetheless it is still significant (p<0.01). Here, in the case of crisis childcare, the role of partners is prominent and significant for both groups, those with STN (p<0.01) and without (p<0.01). For regular childcare, the availability of other kin (p<0.01) and friends (p<0.01) is also more often mobilised for both groups. In regard to crisis childcare, by far the role of partners (p<0.01) protrudes. Interestingly, when considering employment status in providing both kids of childcare, retired members of the support networks are most likely to be involved (for both p<0.05) with crisis childcare being noticeably more often provided by participants’ parents among those who do not have strong transnational connections. Nonetheless, participants tend to compensate for the absence of parents and close kin by engaging local ties as opposed to the transnational connections (p<0.01). In line with qualitative analysis, although not as prominent, participants hold preferences as regards the nationality of the person who provides childcare. While the score is significant for parents with STN leaning toward preference for a Polish child minder (p<0.05), the case of crisis situations challenges the assumption and preferences (p<0.1) suggesting that in the time when the need arises, parents pay less attention to the nationality of the childcare provider, suggesting that they may rely on other Irish parents and neighbours in supporting them in crisis situations.
**Table 6.3: Multi-level regressions (random slopes) of involvement in regular and crisis childcare (logit) on ego and alter characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Model 1 Coeff.</th>
<th>Model 1 SE</th>
<th>Model 2 Coeff.</th>
<th>Model 2 SE</th>
<th>Model 1 Coeff.</th>
<th>Model 1 SE</th>
<th>Model 2 Coeff.</th>
<th>Model 2 SE</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
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<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.60***</td>
<td>0.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
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<td>1.16**</td>
<td>0.41</td>
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<td>0.24**</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<td>-1.63***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.53**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female X STN</td>
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</table>

*Case numbers for each model: n1 = 450; n2 = 389; n3 = 451; n4 = 389;*

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.5
Table 6.4 looks in detail into the provision of the emotional support. Here, the role of family and partner is prominent with significant results for both models (p<0.01) indicating the main effects of the analysis. Inevitably, the provision of the emotional support is a domain that belongs to the strong ties, for both groups. For friends and kin to a lesser degree, strong ties are certainly more likely to provide emotional support for participants. While employment status does not hold any statistically significant result, the location of the ties, however, matters to a certain degree. Interestingly, when considering the strength of the tie, strong ties (likely located in Poland) are significant in providing support, when considering location, ties located in Poland are less significant than those located in Ireland. Even though the result is relatively small, it is statistically significant (p<0.05 for participants with STN and p<0.1 for participants without STN). In line with the expectations and the literature, other women are also more likely to provide emotional support in comparison with their male counterparts (p<0.05 for both models).
Table 6.4: Multi-level regressions (random slopes) of involvement in emotional support (logit) on ego and alter characteristics

<table>
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<td>Coeff. SE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.20*** 0.35</td>
<td>2.04*** 0.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>2.37*** 0.45</td>
<td>2.83*** 0.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>5.87*** 0.59</td>
<td>4.41*** 0.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>3.35*** 0.62</td>
<td>3.05*** 0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend X STN</td>
<td>2.04*** 0.38</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin X STN</td>
<td>2.83*** 0.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner X STN</td>
<td>4.41*** 0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent X STN</td>
<td>3.05*** 0.65</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment (ref.: full-time)</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>0.45 0.57</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>0.13 0.47</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time X STN</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired X STN</td>
<td>-0.30 0.45</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<td>-.077* 0.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland X STN</td>
<td>-1.17** 0.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other X STN</td>
<td>-18.39 431</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Lives in close proximity (ref: yes):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coeff. SE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close X STN</td>
<td>-0.78** 0.34</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity, ref: Irish/other</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coeff. SE</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>-0.11 0.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polish X STN</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.78** 0.25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female X STN</td>
<td>0.81** 0.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Constant: | .689 | .302 | .406 | .385 |

*Case numbers for each model: n1 = 451; n2 = 389

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 6.5 presents the outcome of the analysis for information support. Here, parents and partners are also of utmost importance for information provision (p<0.01 for both models). However, the main effect of STN in Model 2 shows that the participants with STN are more likely to seek information from kin (p<0.01) and friends (p<0.05) than those participants who do not have a strong transnational network. Nonetheless, information provision is the type of support that is indeed country-dependent and, as expected, participants are more likely to mobilise networks based locally in Ireland, regardless of whether they have strong transnational network or not. Participants who lack the presence of their strong ties compensate the distance by organising their support locally (p<0.1 for participants without STN and p<0.01 for those who have strong transnational network). This also reflects on nationality preferences. Although the score is relatively low, it is statistically significant (p<0.05 for Model 1) which indicated that participants indeed source their support on issues related to their lives in Ireland among local, and sometimes also Irish, networks. Further, in line with expectations, the gendered nature and composition of the networks is also prominent here, indicating that participants tend to turn to other women also for emotional support (p<0.05 for both models).

Table 6.5: Multi-level regressions (random slopes) of involvement in information support (logit) on ego and alter characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref.: weak tie)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>0.82*</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>2.65***</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2.74***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend X STN</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.96**</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kin X STN</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3.24***</td>
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<td>Parent X STN</td>
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### Table 6.6: Multi-level regressions (random slopes) of involvement in socialising (logit) on ego and alter characteristics

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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>5.19***</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>3.19***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Kin X STN</td>
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</table>

Case numbers for each model: \( n_1 = 450; n_2 = 389 \)

*** \( p<0.01 \), ** \( p<0.05 \), * \( p<0.1 \)

Table 6.6. shows the outcome of the multi-level analysis of those who are involved in the socialising aspect of participants lives. The effect of STN is also quite prominent here, with partners being key members of participants’ socialising circle. Partners are also prominent in this aspect of participants lives, but no less are parents, kin and friends (\( p<0.01 \) for both models). Due to the tangibility of this kind of support and the fact that participants’ social life is located in Ireland, the network members based in Ireland are indeed more likely to be involved in socialising with participants.

---

<table>
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Table 6.6: Multi-level regressions (random slopes) of involvement in socialising (logit) on ego and alter characteristics
Finally, Table 6.7 examines financial support provided by family members. There is clear evidence that partners are the key network members who financially support participants (p<0.01). Interestingly, participants with strong local connections tend to turn to their parents (p<0.05) and kin (p<0.05). The partner effect is also seen in the outcome of the local ties providing financial support and is therefore statistically significant for both groups (more so for those with STN with p<0.05).
Table 6.7: Multi-level regressions (random slopes) of involvement in financial support (logit) on ego and alter characteristics

Financial Support

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<td>SE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>5.06***</td>
<td>1.19</td>
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<td>Parent</td>
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<td>.430</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.820</td>
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Case numbers for each model: n1 = 4449; n2=389

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
6.8. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how Polish migrant mothers in Dublin mobilise their support networks locally and across borders. The analysis focused on all dimensions of support, including childcare, emotional support, information, socialising and financial assistance. It highlights the high reliance of mothers on partners and family members as the main components of the support network for childcare services, and the less important role of other friends and acquaintances, reaffirming Wellman and Wortley’s (1990:581) argument that “delivery of support is not based on who you know but how do you know them”. Mothers’ support networks are largely composed of women and fellow Poles and mobilisation of ties within the networks directly reflects on this composition, and also the strategies of formation of the networks discussed in Chapter Three. Mothers are more likely to turn to other women (and mothers) in childcare and other support domains.

With regard to location of the employment status of the ties, retired members of the networks are significantly more likely to be involved in childcare (p <.05) and crisis childcare (p<.05) among those with weak transnational ties. Retired ties are significantly less likely to provide information than any other groups among egos with weak transnational network. Due to the limitations posed by distance, mothers with stronger transnational networks elicit support by spreading the burden of support among the members of the wider local networks. Similarly, emotional support and information is more likely to be provided by network members residing in Ireland than any other location. This is significant for both groups. Participants from both groups are also significantly less likely to socialise with those network members residing in Poland. Local ties are considerably more involved in socialising and providing financial aid for women with weak transnational networks.

With regard to nationality and gender, mothers with STN compensate for the lack of Polish strong ties in Ireland by choosing other Poles for childcare support (p<.05) in Ireland. In comparison, those with WTN are less likely to rely on Poles in crises (p<0.1) and for accessing information (p<.05). Mothers with WTN are more likely to rely for most of their support on other women who reside locally, for childcare as well as emotional and informational aid. Those with strong transnational ties are more likely to
receive intangible support, such as emotional aid, information, and companionship, from other locally-based women.

In particular, distance is a clear obstacle for the mobilisation of childcare supports, which limits the role of transnational ties for mothers. Nonetheless, transnational ties play an important part in the provision of support, such as childcare services and the disadvantage of distance is partially compensated for by the strength of the transnational ties.

Grandparents play a prominent, but also limited, role here. While the results emphasise the importance of retired members of networks in assisting in regular and crisis childcare strategies, the findings also show their limitations. For example, only about half of the enumerated grandparents figure as providers of childcare services, and 25 per cent of grandparents are involved in crisis childcare support. This suggests that grandparental support is a common phenomenon but also that this option is not available for a substantial number of migrant mothers. Moreover, the disadvantage of transnational ties is particularly strong for crisis childcare, which requires support in an unpredictable manner and puts a premium on local ties that can be mobilised without much planning and organisation. It holds also for regular childcare that requires physical co-presence between child and childminder. Also, transnational connections for migrants serve as a proxy for informal social protection, such as information transfer or caregiving (Bilcen & Sienkiewicz, 2015; Bargowski et al., 2015), such support is limited to instrumental support (Herz, 2015).

Thus the findings presented in this chapter do not only contribute to the field of transnational migration studies, but they provide a unique connection of various fields relevant to this study, including social networks, gender and employment, and also shed light on how migrants organise their livelihood abroad – locally in a national context, when transnational support is largely limited. The findings show that transnational ties, their role and limitations, can be usefully studied in a support network framework (cf. Herz 2015): the findings are consistent with the results of studies on ‘national’ support networks in the Wellman tradition with their emphasis on relationship type or spatial proximity as predictors of network activation. The findings are quite similar to Herz’s (2015) study on transnational support networks with regard to the importance of relational aspects and the limitations of transnational ties for instrumental support. The research supports Wellman and Wortley’s (1990) arguments on shared employment status as the basis for the flow of small services and information. This is also in line with the
arguments put forward in previous chapters about the value of network members in employment as a valuable source of information provision.

Moreover, this research addresses further the transnational dimension and the network composition. This is a unique analysis that looks at strong and weak transnational network component and has not been previously assessed. The comparison of mothers with strong and weak transnational networks shows more commonalities than differences between the two groups. Taken together, the same rules appear to govern the utilisation of transnational ties and of ties residing in the same country. This suggests that these patterns are not specific to immigrant mothers but also apply to regionally mobile mothers who do not co-reside with their established support networks. While similar data are not available for regionally mobile mothers, the few available studies (Dyck 1996; Galaskiewicz et al., 2008) provide no indication that this is not the case. A study on informal care arrangements among Irish families suggests a similar pattern between immigrant families and geographically mobile Irish families (Roeder et al. 2014). Thus the outcomes presented here, certainly contribute to the knowledge available on mothers’ support strategies (regardless of the nationality) and could serve as a guidance for further exploration of native but regionally mobile mothers by providing detailed experience of the group that is situated in a similar circumstances. It is hoped that the outcomes will provide an insightful point of view on mothers’ lives and their childcare needs and therefore allows for better planning of childcare and other services required for mothers to be in place to allow them to compromise childcare and employment responsibilities.

Furthermore, methodological contribution should not be left without attention. Through combining in-depth qualitative data (chapter five) with structured accounts of the network arrangements, this study creates a unique approach and provides insight beyond what each method of analysis can do on their own. The quantitative element built on the analysis provides insights in general pattern of childcare provision and systematic overview of tie mobilisation. As the analysis of mothers with strong local and strong transnational networks or of the prevalence of grandparental support shows that quantitative analyses further put relationships suggested by the qualitative analysis into perspective.
Chapter 7: Internet and online social networks

As the use of internet and technology expands and integrates with people’s everyday lives, questions go beyond the simple “who uses the internet?” and change into more in-depth analysis of how and why people use the internet, and more importantly what role does the internet plays in stimulating formation and maintenance of people’s social networks. Social technologies, the wide availability and the mainstreaming of internet connectivity and social media are becoming a foundation for immigrants’ experience of family. Online support has been found to constitute an efficient and valuable supplementation to the migrants’ traditional and offline social support strategies (Chen & Choi, 2011). Such computer-mediated social support (CMSS) has been well documented among migrants actively seeking social support, particularly in the early migration stage (ibid.; Dekker & Engbersen, 2013; Davis, 2017). Virtual connections not only enhance the possibilities of maintaining contact with strong ties, family and friends but they also assist access to specific weak ties that are crucial to organising relevant support.

The use of the internet and mobilising virtual ties also allows migrants to complement existing social network with a new infrastructure of support that consists of latent ties (Dekker & Engbersen, 2013; Genoni et al., 2005). Latent ties are the type of “ties for which connection is available technically but has not yet been activated by social interaction” (Haythornthwaite, 2002: 389). These latent ties exist as potential connections within organisations, occupations or professional groups. Thus, as per Haythornthwaite’s description, a latent tie could be said to include individuals working within the same occupational or professional group, who may be aware of each by name or reputation but who have not had previous personal contact.

In the case of migrant mothers and their use of the internet those latent ties might be the connection with people encountered on the support groups or forums, mobilised when the need for the support arises (Genoni et al., 2005). Those ties, often unformal, offer a great source of knowledge, based on their personal experience. Whether it concerns migration or providing information, those mothers share similar experiences and problems, thus
exchanging their strategies and information can enrich and benefit mothers in need of such support.

The discussion in this chapter is on the overall use of information and computer technologies (ICTs) and the effect that they have on participants’ formation and engagement of social networks, as well as the strategies that they employ in order to obtain information and other relevant support though the internet. The focus of this chapter emphasises ‘everyday’ interactions that occur between participants, their virtual ties and family members who communicate across distance and national borders. Here I also engage with current literature on cyber-culture and the use of ICTs in the context of social life, particularly among migrants and women. Technologies, particularly Facebook have transformed the way people communicate and search for support. As new media have become familiar and part of our everyday life, their use has adapted to the needs of individuals (and also across the borders). They now function as a vital means of maintaining work, home and overcoming distance (Haythornthwaite & Kazmer 2002; Salaff 2002).

ICTs, through being incorporated into elements of everyday social life, significantly affect the way people form and manage their social support networks, particularly as regards seeking information support, but also on an emotional level taking place at a distance. ICTs support the transformation of family networks into transnational ones, with potentially significant consequences for the individual’s and family’s well-being and mental health (Bacigalupe & Cámara, 2012). ICTs and communication strategies have facilitated new forms of social relationships, such as cyber-friendship or cyber-communities, to emerge (Wilding, 2006) and are no longer a new phenomenon. Nowadays, online connections are yet another form of social capital (Penard & Poussing, 2014).

In 2010, Mok et al. addressed whether distance matters in the age of the internet. They concluded that while face-to-face interaction remains strongly related to the short distance between network members (see Chapter Five for details on interaction and support strategies among participants with strong local connections), distance had little impact on people’s use of the phone and only e-mail communication had somewhat influenced the way people maintained their relationships. From a time perspective, they concluded that
in terms of face-to-face contact, little has changed between the 1970s and 2000s, except that people are phoning each other slightly more often.

Nearly 20 years after their conclusions, we are now embedded in the network society (Van Dijk, 2020) relying on phones and other technologies not only to search for information or services, but increasingly depending on them for our interaction with social networks. Our lives take place not only through face-to-face interaction but also in a digital world (ibid.). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others serve now as platforms that enable our social life to exist. We share pictures, experiences, information and advice. We get to know people that without the internet would not be possible to encounter – and it all happens across borders, regardless of distance. The internet has become such a convenience that we use it to create friendships and relationships, even in the same city.

Undoubtedly, the emergence and wide use of the Internet has changed the balance between communication and spatial distance. The idea of the ‘global village’ was predicted by Marshall McLuhan long ago (1962). Manuel Castells (2000) in his book on the ‘network society’ described a ‘space of flows’ where connectivity between individuals happens regardless of geographical location. The ‘global village’ implies the potential to know each other and communicate despite distance. This sense of community and belonging with other people through social interaction online is the focus of this chapter. It explores the connections that are held transnationally, the support provided, and the opportunities created.

So far, the previous chapters explored the formation and mobilisation of Polish women’s networks: the type of connections and the kind of support they provide. This chapter is something of a new venture in the analysis. Although the topic of online networks was not directly addressed in the interview guide, through inductive analysis it became apparent that the role of the internet in accessing the networks and mobilising certain types of support should be addressed. Thus, the aims of this chapter are threefold. Firstly, it looks at the general role of the internet in the participants’ lives; in particular, the Facebook group called Polskie Mamy w Dublinie (PMWD) and other relevant forums and
websites.  Both Facebook and the PMWD forum were the two most commonly-named sites by participants.

Secondly, this chapter examines whether the support provided by ties accessed through the internet is different to that accessed through face-to-face interaction. This question not only derives from the fact that virtual ties are more restricted in providing tangible dimensions of social support (Herz, 2015) but also interrogates the characteristics of those ties, including the strength of the tie and the role of geographical location in providing support by virtual ties.

Thirdly, since the sub-group considered in this chapter is relatively small, through a generalisation model, the analysis aims to assess online behaviour and patterns related to any personal characteristics among participants who use forums and internet-based support. The outcomes of the quantitative analysis, while they cannot be treated as representative, aim to systematically map and examine the strategies of online interaction and support attainment.

7.1. The role of social networking sites
Social networking sites (SNSs) are virtual communities that allow people to connect and interact with each other on a particular subject or to just ‘hang out’ together online (Murray & Waller, 2007). SNSs allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social network and establish or maintain connections with others. Such sites can be directed towards professional, work-related contexts (such as LinkedIn), initiation of relationships or other intimate encounters (Tinder, Badoo), connecting people with shared interests on music (Musolist), politics or current affairs (Twitter) or the college student population (the original goal of Facebook). Participants may use these sites to interact with people they already know or to form new relationships and friendships. They can set up their own profile, look for jobs or other professional and informal contacts, create groups of common interests or find the love of their life.

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19 “Polish mothers in Dublin” (PMID) is a closed Facebook group that at the time of conducting interviews had around 5,000 members. At the time of writing, the group had enlarged to over 6000 and branched out – other, smaller groups were created depending on the geographical location of their members. At the time of the interviews, the group was open to every woman who is a mother. At the moment, admission to the group is only based on the recommendation.
The online social network application analysed in this chapter, namely Facebook, enables its users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate ‘friends’ who can post comments on each other’s pages, and view each other’s profiles. Facebook members can also join virtual groups based on common interests, see what they have in common (including common friends with other Facebook users) and learn about each other’s hobbies, interests, musical tastes, relationship status as well as mark important events in their lives (such as engagement, expecting a child and so on). People can also look for accommodation recommendations, services as well as use a virtual ‘marketplace’ to sell and buy items. Facebook constitutes a rich site for researchers interested in the areas of social networks due to its heavy usage patterns and technological capacities that bridge both online and offline worlds.

Ellison et al. (2007) in their study of Facebook ‘friendships’ found the interaction between the use of social media and positive measures of psychological well-being, suggesting that it might provide greater benefits for users experiencing low self-esteem and low life satisfaction. In the case of the participants in this study, the use of Facebook groups played many roles in their lives – most importantly it was a source of (hands-on) information, a forum through which mothers formed connections that then were further continued through face-to-face interaction. They provided a type of intangible help, such as emotional support, through which mothers could form supportive relationships, not necessarily bounded to a specific location.

Steinfield et al. (2008) in their longitudinal panel study on college students, concluded that the intensity of Facebook use at the beginning of young adults’ college experience strongly predicted bridging social capital outcomes in further years of their college education. Further, the outcomes for self-esteem and psychological factors were also linked with social capital outcomes, achieved through the use of Facebook (ibid.). Those with lower self-esteem gained more benefits from their Facebook use in regard to the bridging social capital. Overall, Facebook as a tool helps to reduce psychological barriers that may arise while forming connections that are part of more heterogeneous networks which in turn are the source of bridging social capital. Other research, using data from a random web survey of college students in United States, found a positive relationship between the intensity of Facebook use and students’ life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement and political participation (Valenzuela et al., 2009). Similarly, a web survey among college students examined the relationship between users’ online engagement and
their political and civic participation (Park et al., 2009). Factor analysis, conducted among those students, indicated four primary needs for engagement into Facebook groups: socialising, entertaining, self-status seeking and information.

There is clear evidence that interpersonal social support impacts stress levels and, in turn, the degree of physical illness and psychological well-being. A study conducted by Nabi et al. (2013) on undergraduates, associated the number of friends with stronger perceptions of social support, which they associate with the reduced stress levels and greater well-being. Their study showed that the number of Facebook friends emerged as a stronger predictor of perceived social support (ibid.).

Cheung et al. (2011) examined the use of Facebook among students as intentional action affecting social influence, social presents and gratification. Lin and Lu (2011) based their study on motivation theory and found that people join SNSs for enjoyment, enlarging social networks and the perceived usefulness that may arise from belonging to one. Their results significantly vary when controlling for the gender factor, with women having different and greater composition of networks compared to their male counterparts, which in turn increased their willingness and intention to participate in online network sites. Furthermore, discussing gender differences Boneva et al. (2001) suggest that using e-mail to communicate with relatives and friends replicates pre-existing gender differences. Compared to men, women find e-mail contact with friends and family more gratifying (Boneva et al., 2001). Women are more likely than men to maintain kin relationships by e-mail (ibid.). Women’s messages sent to people far away are filled with more personal content and are more likely to be exchanged in intense bursts. The fit between women’s expressive styles and the features of e-mail have made it especially easy for women to expand their distant social networks (Boneva et al., 2001).

Facebook also constitutes an important factor in assessing migrants’ experience (Komito, 2011). Marcheva (2011) looked into the experience of Bulgarian migrants, who despite everyday negative experiences of social and cultural exclusion in the host country relied heavily on Facebook as a form of stress relief and an opportunity to engage with their fellow nationals. For those migrants, Facebook served as a tool to construct their identity, negotiate a sense of belonging and participate in their transnational reality across borders (ibid.). Moreover, belonging to Facebook groups can also help migrants to navigate through their post-migration experiences not only in their innate perception of self-
identification but predominantly by providing them with opportunities for employment and socialisation and thus allowing them to reorganise their social support and regain social capital in the new country (Davis, 2017; Komito, 2011).

Social support is associated also with higher levels of subjective well-being (Indian & Grieve, 2014). Indian and Grieve (2014) examined the effect of social support derived from an online social network, such as Facebook on the individual’s well-being with particular emphasis on the level of anxiety among participants. This indicates the possibility that support organised through Facebook is more beneficial for those individuals with higher levels of social anxiety compared to face-to-face interaction. Although social anxiety is not discussed in this work, the social isolation of mothers and the possible language barriers that they may encounter while organising their social support locally and transnationally has already been addressed in Chapter Four and should be accounted for despite the virtual nature of support networks considered here.

Thus, in theory, SNSs also constitute a useful tool for immigrant groups, because they help not only to establish social ties in the destination country but are also helpful in maintaining ties with people in the country of origin. Facebook and other social network sites prove useful in developing and maintaining social connectedness in the online environment and Facebook connectedness is associated with overall greater well-being and life satisfaction (Grieve et al., 2013). Despite a variety of evidence presented here, the focal point is that regardless of the group that participants belong to, Facebook and virtual support was imperative in shaping participants experiences. However, considering experience, the research rather than limiting the scope to particular socio-economic groups, should explore in-depth the specific characteristics of the group under scrutiny and their particular need to organise support within the virtual community.

7.2. Internet and social capital
Chapter Six has already provided a detailed assessment of social capital, however, for a better understanding of the concepts underlining this chapter, a short revision will be considered here. In the broadest conceptualisation of the term, social support refers to the resources accumulated through relationships among people (Coleman, 1988). The resources gained from these relationships can differ in form and function based on the relationships themselves. Thus, for the individual, social capital allows a person to draw
on the resources from other members of the networks they belong to. As previously stated in Chapter Four, these resources can take the form of useful information, personal relationship or organisation of instrumental support as needed. Granovetter (1973) argues that access to individuals outside of one’s close circle can be beneficial in providing access to vital information that can then in turn result in, for instance, better employment opportunities.

Crucial to understanding social capital is Putnam’s (2000) division between bonding and bridging social capital. Bridging ties, in other words ‘weak ties’ are loose connections between individuals that may provide typically new or useful information for one another. They are not typically responsible for the provision of emotional support (Granoveter, 1982). The literature in the field of social capital and internet use has been focused significantly on the concept of ‘maintained social capital’ (MSC). MSC is a concept that enables us to explore whether online network tools enable individuals to keep in touch with members of their social networks after being physically disconnected. This is particularly relevant for those participants that not only use social media to seek information, but also use it as a tool to stay connected with the lives and members of social networks that remained in their country of origin.

Internet-based connections have been found to be particularly useful in the formation and maintenance of weak ties, which serve as a foundation for bridging social capital. Such connections can be built through online social networks sites, such as Facebook, that in turn will allow individuals to create and maintain larger, more diverse relationships from which they can draw resources if needed (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Wellman et al., 2001). Social network sites play a huge role in the formation and maintenance of such ties, because technology is well-suited to maintaining these ties in a cheap and easy manner, across the borders with kin and non-kin members of the social network (Djundeva & Ellwardt, 2019). Although in Putnam’s view, bonding capital – namely strong ties with family and close friends – is primarily responsible for the provision of emotional support and access to scarce resources, it is important to highlight that the internet facilitates and impacts on bonding capital regardless of the distance.

The use of the internet has been linked to both a decrease as well as an increase in social capital. Nie (2001), for instance, argued that online interactions diminish face-to-face time spent with others which in turn might negatively impact on an individuals’ social
capital. On the other hand, Wellman et al. (2001) claim that time spent online may supplement or even replace in-person interaction, mitigating any loss from time spent online. Indeed, from the area of community studies, online interactions have had a positive impact on community interactions, involvement and overall social capital (Hampton & Wellman, 2003).

Anderson & Tracey (2001) and Dimaggio et al. (2001) looked at the role that internet use and access play in social and cultural life. Wilding (2006) in her study on ‘virtual intimacies’ explored the use of ICTs from the perspective of transnational families who communicate across distance, and the caring practices among migrants living in Australia who look after ageing parents. The strategies of communication found in the study range from families creating and monitoring family websites, where they posted photographs and documented special family events, to chat rooms where family members could exchange information (Wilding, 2006). In both cases, maintenance of the family ties is somewhat ‘virtual’ and takes place in cyberspace. Some families participating in the above study also used email as a cost-effective communication method. Online social networks tools might be particularly useful for individuals who otherwise would have difficulties forming and maintaining both strong and weak ties.

The composition and active membership of these social networks change over time, as new relationships are being formed and old ones are abandoned. Particularly significant changes in social networks happen when a person moves from the geographical location where the network has been already formed and loses access to the social resources that were available through the given network. This is also relevant when considering relationships continued over the distance, after migration.

On a last note, researchers also focus on people with low self-esteem and psychological wellbeing and the benefits that new virtual connections can bring to the individual (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). Thus, the findings in this chapter also support the argument that Facebook forums and other social media groups can be useful for an isolated migrant mother who is not only seeking information but also uses these fora as a bridge to form relationships that she would not be otherwise able to form. Whether it is to do with language, proximity or simply finding other mothers in similar circumstances, further analysis will examine the role of the internet in the formation of those ties.
7.3. Analysis
In order to examine the strategies of formation and maintenance of virtual ties as well as their mobilisation for information and other related support domains for Polish mothers in Dublin, this chapter employs a mixed methods approach, as before. The analysis of this chapter combines qualitative analysis of the strategies for using and mobilising virtual connections (both locally and across borders) with a systematic quantitative analysis on the use of the internet and the mobilisation of ties for various support types. Similar to Chapters Five and Six, this chapter employs a two-step strategy known as a ‘generalisation model’ (this strategy and detailed data transformation steps have been discussed in detail in Chapter Three; cf. Mayring, 2001, Auer-Srnka & Koeszegi, 2007) that converts qualitative data into a structured, numerical model (Domínguez & Hollstein, 2014). This cohesive model incorporates each step, from data collection to analytical outcomes (The steps involved in the data collection, visual methods, coding strategies and the benefits of such approach have been discussed in detail in Chapter Three).

The qualitative analysis looks at the importance of internet ties; it reflects on behaviour online and strategies for the use of the internet. It further examines the meaning of those connections and how, through the variety of support provided, they enrich (or not) participants’ social capital. Moreover, the analysis in this chapter considers local and transnational connections. According to the models employed, this analysis and characteristics of the online behaviour form the basis for the second step. The data was systematically coded and prepared for quantitative multi-level analysis.

Although it has been already discussed in detail in Chapter Three, it is imperative to reiterate that strict testing of the hypothesis is not possible given that the research hypothesis has been developed based on the same sample and generalisability is uncertain, given that the sample is not a random sample of any well-defined population. However, the combination of explorative qualitative analysis and confrontation with quantified data allows us to ascertain the consistency of the relationships suggested by the qualitative analysis. Moreover, while the qualitative analysis is confined by the view and perceptions of the interviewed mothers, the quantitative analysis allows an examination of additional features and relationships visible, such as how different types of ties combine
or what characteristics of the total network influence the functionality of specific ties in the network (Crossley, 2010; Edwards, 2010).

In the following section, the outcome of the qualitative thematic analysis is discussed. It looks at the overall role of the internet in participants’ lives, both in terms of the coping strategy for organising their lives in the host country and also as a bridge for the further formation of new connections, in particular through Facebook and other relevant social media. Participants’ online activity and strategies for the use of those social media are also discussed. Further, the analysis looks at the mobilisation strategies of the ties in regard to their geographical location as well as the strength of the tie. Purposefully, throughout the discussion the key underlying theme of the analysis focuses on the support domain provided by online connections.

Following the qualitative thematic analysis, the hypotheses are set up and key variables discussed along with the sample description. Thereafter, the outcomes of quantitative multi-level analysis are examined.

7.4. Findings: Qualitative results

7.4.1 Activity online
Despite the varied educational status of respondents, the majority of mothers were relatively young (cf. Chapter two and four for detailed sample description). Many contacts, through which participants were reached, were maintained through the phone, forums, Facebook or email, indicating that they could use internet devices to the extent that they were able to communicate through them. Although search engines such as Google have been found to be the most indicative for informational support, Buultjens (2012) argues that mothers prefer to form their networks through mother-infant activities or other support groups that extend beyond simple search engine. Instead, participants in this research favour forums and support groups where they can reach to other mothers who are in similar circumstances (ibid.).

Research conducted on young and Polish migrants elsewhere indicate that migrants are most likely to use the internet in their communications and in searches for information
(Milewski & Ruszczak, 2006). Moreover, Grabowska-Lusinska and Okolski (2008) argue that the international mobility of Polish migrants post-2004 can be characterised as ‘www migration’. The three ‘w’ stands for (a) ‘www’ – indicating that those currently involved in the migration processes are sufficiently competent in internet usage; (b) higher education (Polish: wyższe wykształcenie) and (c) age (Polish: wiek) indicating that we are talking about relatively young migrants. None of the respondents specified that they struggled to access the internet and Facebook. On the contrary, the narrative throughout the interviews demonstrated that participants held competent skills in accessing and navigating through the web. Mothers had the opportunity to source and combine their friends’ stories and advice with those read on the various websites. Useful not only for the migration process but also for settling and knowledge in relation to how the system operates in Ireland are Irish websites such as ‘citizensinformation.ie’ and ‘fas.ie’ as well as other Polish websites run by Poles living in Ireland, such as ‘gazeta.ie’. The latter was found to be especially useful for those with limited English language skills. Some of them have forums, discussion boards or just simply articles with information related to social welfare, crèches, schools set up or employment laws.

In the analysis of the data, the importance of Facebook in accessing new connections as well as the source of information is prominent. Women not only use Facebook to keep contact with their family in Poland and to maintain their social capital, but they also use the platform to form new friendships and obtain information independent of the knowledge provided by their male partners in relation to child development or schools. In particular, PMWD – a group that consists of other local or Polish mothers – was considered a most reliable source of information and advice. In using the abovementioned group, numerous patterns of activities were identified.

Contemporary mothers use SNs to seek for the information, compare themselves to other mothers, assess their performance and express emotions (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Tosun et al. (2020) draws on mothers’ experience of SNSs use and the fact, that mothers tend to make comparison between each other. Specifically, they found that some mothers feel doubts about the credibility of information in other mothers’ posts, and some others denied they are emotionally influenced by social comparisons. Another interesting finding was that mothers reported to feel assimilative and contrastive emotions simultaneously. Indeed, the pattern of comparison and attitude to the credibility of the information overlaps with this research participants to some extent. The majority of
women, like Monika and Zara, despite being members of the forum, did not actively engage and post their questions online. Their participation was rather passive, so when in need they looked for already given answer but only occasionally posted a query.

\[M: Facebook...hm...well ok, so I find out a lot from this PMWD.\]
\[SB: Do you post there too, or do you read only?\]
\[M: Not too often...when I have a question, then yeah, I look for the advice but not too often...but I have no problem asking. [Monika, 32]\]

\[Z: Yeah, I am on PMWD...some info, yeah, I take from there, but it is not too often... I sold them something, or I bought something from them.... [Zara, 32]\]

For women like Monika and Zara there appears to be a clear limitation to the extent to which they use the internet. It is indeed useful to have, however, they do not fully trust and use its potential. Their use of forums is rather passive and becomes more active when they require precise advice. Interestingly, it is also often used not only for advice purposes but also for selling and buying services.

Thus, prominent throughout the narratives is a limitation of the extent of the use of Facebook. Mothers on numerous occasions expressed their disapproval for the common practice of advice seeking, such as illness symptoms and diagnosis on the forums. Mothers are more likely to express negative emotions over the positive ones while using SNSs (De Los Santos, 2019). Patricia, a mother of four-year old Tony explained the reasons behind seeking health related advice on the forum. Certain topics, such as health related emergencies, should first be discussed with a professional.

\[I put the post up...but when it comes to kids or something, it is very rarely [...] so when I see that my child is ill, first thing is to call the doctor and ask for advice, and if something doesn’t work then I ask...or when I see that a mother has a problem with something that I have been through then I give advice, but to ask...let’s say a child has a huge spot or something and they ask online what it is...of course you should ring the GP and ask if you can come tomorrow not diagnose it on Facebook. First GP, then when she tells me that was allergy or something then I put the post online: be careful with vegetables or fruits because my child got allergy, but I don’t really ask what it can be...because dam it we are not doctors...every child is different...[Patricia, 39]\]
As in previous research discussed in this chapter, the internet is found to play an important role not only for those who are planning to move but is equally important for those who have already settled. Members of Facebook forums often discussed issues of childcare, healthcare or even housing. For many mothers, the knowledge sharing was rather passive: they read and noted the information and advice, but they did not directly post asking for advice. It has been also used to express disapproval and negative emotions (De Los Santos, 2019). Aneta, a mother of two, working full-time, described her strategies in using the Facebook forum for information gathering purposes.

_I think those Polish mothers in Dublin, that group on Facebook. Not that I am asking questions there and looking for the answer, but I read… I read, and if there is any information worth remembering, I remember and save…[Aneta, 41]_

Although women treat the information and advice found on the forum with caution and did not usually actively engage with the discussion online, they agree that the support they can receive from PMWD members at any time of the day or night is prompt and invaluable. As Maja explains in the quote below, not only the quality of information matters (sometimes questionable though, according to the participants) but most importantly the fast response of other mothers who are willing to help is important.

_When it comes to children… PMWD… sometimes it is just so funny, you don’t know how to take it… if it is real or not… weird women but still some of the information are good, you get to find out a lot and usually they give you fast answer too… you start the topic and within ten minutes you get 100 answers, so that forum for sure. [Maja, 36]_

Sharing practical information and discussing experiences of living abroad by migrants online has also been previously discussed by scholars in the context of Polish migrants living in other European countries. Siara (2010:167), in her analysis of the online activities of post-accession migrants living in the U.K., argues:

_The Internet is widely used by these migrants in a variety of forms; many Poles use internet portals for obtaining practical information related to their lives in the_
UK. Poles also participate in range of Internet forums which provide them with an opportunity to discuss various matters connected to their experience in the UK.

Years after this analysis of Polish migrants in the U.K., the evidence in this current study indicates that such strategies of internet use have not changed much over the years and the findings may be applicable to the Irish case. Regardless of the country of residence, the internet is still a key tool for migrants (and mothers) in obtaining information and advice. Whether it is information for newly-arrived migrants or those already settled, concerning childcare or other elements relevant to living in Ireland, Polish communities online are the most popular route for mothers sourcing independent information.

Moreover, connections formed online appear to be somehow resistant to time and limited effort input into maintenance of the connections. Marzena (35), a mother of a one-year-old has her Master’s degree from Poland. She works full-time but at the time of interview she was just finishing her maternity leave. When her son was born, together with her Irish partner she had just moved to the new house in Dublin and she did not know any other mother, so she joined the PMWD and then found another group that was bringing together other mothers from that neighbourhood.

Polish mothers in Dublin and Polish mothers D15…the second one, is more precise and we often arrange meetings with kids…Now I don’t go too often, but I met a girl in that group through and they are great help and advice here.[Marzena, 34]

Like recently, I had a problem because my husband was working and I had to come to Artane with two kids so the girl told me what bus I should take and she picked me up and drove or when I was buying house I have our solicitor from this group someone recommended me…I can really count on them when I really asked about something. [Amelia, 42]

K: We met when I was on maternity leave - thanks to [that] Facebook group. It is not a Polish group; it’s a normal one, I think it was set up by Irish woman…everyone can join there…

SB: Do they live around?

K: Yeah, Orlagh and Siobhan, yes.

SB: Do you go for walks often then?
K: Not that often recently. We try to meet, let’s say every other weekend...they two meet pretty much every day, but I have to join them...I seen Orlagh last weekend, so probably this weekend we won’t manage but let’s hope the other one...[Klara, 32]

Similarly, Agnieszka did not belong to any local neighbourhood group. Nonetheless, together with her close friends, she created a blog for mothers who gave birth in the same month. They then created a Facebook group that became a platform for information and advice sharing among women.

I still have contact with mums I met when I was pregnant with [my son], and we still have a Facebook group where we share information. There are 20 ‘April mums’… these are from the Facebook group... and nine mums from the blog...[Agnieszka, 34]

Martin is my first child and I didn’t have any experience with children earlier...so any kind of question I had in terms of his behaviour and all other issues I asked on Facebook mothers...PMWD. I have to admit I met there so many nice kids and women, to the extent that we are even meeting now...you know, we meet in the afternoons after work...when I know my husband won’t be home till late then we meet – kids play together and we can have a chat as well. [Malwina, 42]

Facebook, especially the Polish online forums on the platform, appears to act as a sort of ‘virtual neighbourhood’ where mothers get information, help and discuss issues important for them as well as to socialise. Virtual neighbourhoods also act as platforms where mothers can meet new people or establish friendships that can be further transferred into the offline world. Mothers can also receive or provide support at a distance for those who are not available to meet in the group.

7.4.2 Importance of internet use

The increased use of technology directly reflects participants’ lifestyle and their strategies in accessing information and online behaviour. The internet and Facebook are increasingly popular and are overwhelmingly present in participants’ everyday lives. From simple target searching for the required knowledge to spending longer periods of time following Facebook groups and other social media, mothers adjusted their strategies
for online behaviour to their circumstances. Cowie et al. (2011) in their study on mother’s online behaviour found that mothers who use online support do so mainly for emotional support and to a lesser extent for information, particularly on topics such as breastfeeding (cf. O’Sullivan et al., 2020 on the experience of Polish breastfeeding mothers in Ireland). They did, however, find that online support during this important stage of early motherhood is imperative for mothers (ibid.). Malwina (33) a mother of two had a difficult journey breastfeeding her youngest son who had spent a long time cluster-feeding. She presents her use of Facebook groups and contact with other mothers online as a “lifesaver of her sanity”. At that time when “you cannot do anything else than spending time on Facebook” she not only used it for emotional support and specific guidelines on how to manage such demanding behaviour from her child but also since she was limited with her opportunities to socialise, she was able to direct her social life into a virtual world for the time that she could not socialise in person.

_ Internet with the ‘big I’…everything is there [Ilona, 38]._

The internet is everywhere; everything can be found online. As the source of the information, its potential is immense. Zaneta spends most of her working day in front of the computer. She works as admin staff in a busy Dublin accountants’ practice. For her, the internet is perceived as not only part of her working life but also due to her busy work life, as the main source of information – reliable and always available.

_ Internet all the time...I spend a lot of time in front of the computer – that’s where I can look for all the information. I am working from home right now and this is my only source of the information. [Zaneta, 30]_

Mothers’ experiences of searching for and subsequently finding (or not finding) emotional and informational support has been documented through various studies. Reinke and Solheim (2015), in their exploratory study, concluded that mothers seeking emotional and informational support embed that support as part of their lives. Mothers participating in their study highlighted that in order to deal with the challenges they face...
raising their children, they need to be connected with other mothers in similar circumstances (Reinke & Solheim, 2015).

Kaja was a single mother who had struggled to find much-needed information related to welfare support and affordable childcare options available upon her return to work. She met Karolina on the PMWD forum. It turned out that they were both in similar circumstances and with time, they became close friends supporting each other in difficult situations. What had initially begun as informational provision, turned into emotional support and a socialising connection.

*Here [would] be also social media and the favourite ones...there is really nice group [ref: PMWD] very useful information, sometimes - not always because it becomes gossip forum sometimes, but I have found a lot of useful things there...[...] then Facebook is for that particular friendship [with other single mother]...[Kaja, 33]*

Even though the internet constitutes a core source of information, its use varies greatly. This ranges from the Facebook groups, which are rather opinion and experience based, to the most reliable official and governmental websites. Some were used in Polish, others in English or they could easily use translation functions.

### 7.4.3 Virtual connectedness

In addition to the information searches on Facebook (and other related information-based websites), in an era of increased mobility and greater time spent apart, using mobile devices and the internet creates a form of virtual connectedness that particularly for migrants may provide a substitute for physical co-presence (Laurier, 2001; Licoppe, 2004). In fact, Licoppe (2004:135-6) argues that communication technologies, instead of being used to compensate for the physical absence of close ones, are being used to mediate interaction for ‘connected relationship’. In such relationships, a distinction between physical absence and presence blur or disappear. Through this online connectedness, migrants substitute physical absence with online closeness with their close friends and kin in the home country. So far, factors attributed related to the structural (practicality of support) and relational (strength of the tie) elements of support provision
have been discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Further, in Chapter Four, the influence that attributes linked with characteristics of ego have on the formation of social support has been also discussed. As illustrated by literature and empirical examples, the nature and the role of virtual connections (including those across borders) somewhat differs.

Those online connections diffuse barriers related to distance, enabling mothers and their transnational connections to maintain intangible support to the extent that the significance of the geographical locations becomes irrelevant. Internet based connections are not only cheaper to maintain but also easier to keep across borders with strong ties.

_Maja – husbands’ sister – she lives in Germany, she is currently in London for couple of months but in general she lives in Hamburg, so same thing…we call or exchange information on Facebook to stay in touch. [Olga, 29]_

Paulina, a mother of two, also uses Facebook as a tool to communicate with her family in Poland and to share her family life with them across borders. Without the online tool she would be completely isolated from them, and her and her children’s contact with grandparents would be limited only to a couple of visits to Poland per year. Instead, despite the distance between them, virtual spaces enable both parties to contribute to their family life, tie maintenance and to build close relationships with each other. This was particularly significant for Paulina – during the initial arrival in Dublin when her husband spent most days at work, she was left on her own in a new country. She suffered a lot of isolation and social anxiety due to the language barrier and lack of any connections with others. The contact with family members in Poland enabled her to survive through that difficult period in her life and also allowed her to build her confidence to the extent that she eventually opened up and began searching for contacts with other mothers online.

_I also put pictures on Picasa or Facebook...so then mother-in-law can open then and see them anytime so I use Facebook as giving my family the information and showing pictures...[Paulina, 37]_

As a single mother in Ireland, Anna has struggled to build up a sufficient support network. She not only has to manage work and childcare responsibilities, but also has limited time and financial resources, which in turn has put a strain on her accessibility of local networks. Back in Poland, she met a Danish woman, Ingrid, who throughout the
years of Anna’s living in Ireland provided her with great emotional support. Since Anna’s mother passed away, Ingrid has become like a mother to her, despite the distance and limited opportunities to meet with each other – their contact and support is maintained throughout the whole time via technology.

And also the Danish friends…we are in touch all the time...Internet, Facebook, Skype – we talk and support each other all the time. She is also alone – well she has a daughter in Denmark, but I am a bit like a second daughter for her so we are very close with each other despite the distance [Anna, 42]

Monika had always struggled to keep positive relations with her sister when they both lived in Poland. Now, at a distance with only the internet as a tool to help communication, their relationship is much closer and stronger, and the contact much more frequent. Despite the distance, due to the variety of possibilities to connect through the internet, the physical distance became symbolic and is no longer an issue in communication or the level of closeness in their relationship enabling her to sustain the emotional connection (Bell & Edral, 2015; King O’Riain, 2015).

So here I will also put my sister...Because of the fact that she lives far away; our communication is mainly on the phone.20 Thanks to Facebook and WhatsApp I feel like she is right next to me. Since I left Poland, we are more up to date with what is going on in each other’s’ life than when I was living there [Monika, 32].

I have friends in Poland. We used to work together, we don’t see each other really any more but we have good contact through Facebook...sometimes we write to each other. It is nothing very close but we can contact each other if we want to [Arleta, 43]

Researchers began exploring the role and behaviours around online communication. Licoppe and Morel (2014) conducted study on migrants’ online communication behaviours by observation of migrant families using Skype with grandparents. More recently, Share et al. (2018) examined the practices of Polish transnational families in Ireland and their use of Skype in communication with grandparents. They found that Skype constitutes a crucial element for family display not only in the perinatal period

20 Here the phone refers to the device that is being used to access WhatsApp and Facebook apps.
when mothers require information and support, but also at the time when they want to share their joy and happiness. However, participants of this project also emphasised the importance of Skype communication during everyday activities. In line with that, Share et al. (2018) also noticed that video virtual communication is important in particular with communication with grandparents for strengthening intergenerational solidarity, in particular at the time of raising a child. It also enables migrants to sustain the emotional support and comfort provided by the close ones (Bell & Erdal, 2015; Moskal & Tyrrell, 2016).

Participants of this study used Skype also to connect to other kin left in Poland. Michalina explains her relationship with sister; she lives in Poland, yet the women are very close emotionally to each other. They use Skype or the phone to stay informed about each other’s lives. More importantly, Skype is a tool used to fill a few free minutes and share emotions, experiences and important life events.

We message each other…ask how they are doing, they ask how we are doing…but we also exchange experiences, like their child lost first teeth and we lost three already…and so on. Whenever we have free few minutes we call on Skype or Phone. We are in touch regularly so we know what’s going on in each other’s life but we don’t have time to meet [Michalina, 37]

Overall, online communication not only refers to locally based connections. It can be employed to facilitate and strengthen the transnational links through substituting presence and tangible support with virtual connections, through cameras and photo sharing. Hence, physical disconnection with members of social networks does not imply termination of relationships. In fact, as discussed above, through the use of modern internet technologies, participants are able to maintain their connections across distances and in the process, people form and maintain social capital.

7.5. Quantitative analysis
The chapter now proceeds to the second analytical step: namely, to addressing the results of the quantitative analysis in order to examine to what extent the qualitative interpretation reflects a more general pattern in the group observed. The analysis examines whether the network size and composition influence participants’ behaviour online. It further examines whether online behaviour differs between respondents with
more extensive local strong tie networks and respondents with more extensive transnational strong tie networks. The second element of quantitative analysis focuses on assessment of whether the support provided by online connections actually differs from the kind of support provided by other types of ties.

This chapter, rather than focusing on active members of social networks with whom the participants maintain face-to-face interaction, focuses on those connections with whom the mode of communication is primarily online, and thus who predominantly contribute to support through this online interaction. During the interviews, participants were asked about their active network members. The choices were not limited only to the human ties, but also other ones such as institutional and the internet connections. (More extensive information about the characteristics of the networks and participants has been already provided in Chapter Two and should be consulted for more details.)

This chapter also looks at the human ties that have been accessed through the internet and the type of support they are most likely to provide. Before further examination of the support types for given expectations, a short overview of the relevant participants features, extent and composition of the active and virtual network members will be provided.

### 7.5.1 Egos
Overall, 1528 ties were composed from 1257 human ties and 271 non-humans. Among non-human ties, 164 were accessed through institutions, such as schools/crèche, workplace or social welfare institutions and the remaining 107 were formed through the internet.

The key characteristics relevant to this chapter are summarised in Table 7.1. The average age of participants was 34 (sd=3.6). The majority of participants had one child (67%); 26 per cent had two and seven per cent had three children. At the time of the interviews, the majority of the first children were still of pre-school age (54%), 41 per cent were in the primary school age (between six-11 years old) and the remaining five per cent were in their teenage years. Among the participants who had two children, at the time of the interviews, the majority of children were under five (33%), ten per cent were of primary
school age and the remaining ten per cent were teenagers. The third child (if applicable) was the youngest, and all the children among mothers of three were pre-school age.

Table 7.1: Relevant key characteristics of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or younger</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 and older</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the first child</td>
<td>Pre-school (1 -5 years old)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school (6-11 years old)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older (14-20 years old)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the second child</td>
<td>Pre-school (1 -5 years old)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school (6-11 years old)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older (14-20 years old)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the third child</td>
<td>Pre-school (1 -5 years)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school (6-11 years)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older (14-20 years)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 If applicable.
22 If applicable.
The number of years participants spent living in Ireland ranged from one to 15 (sd=2.51; md= 10). Seventy-five per cent of participants spent between six and ten years in Ireland and can be considered as well-established Celtic Tiger migrants. Thirteen per cent of the mothers spent between 11 and 15 years in Ireland, whereas the remaining 12 per cent had been living in the Republic between one and five years.

### 7.5.2 Ties

The size of participants’ networks varied greatly. While the smallest network counted as few as eight members, the biggest circle of support counted 49 alters, with an average of 25 connections (sd=9.03). Participants had formed their connections through a variety of sources. Getting to know other parents through children is the most commonly-employed strategy for forming new connections. Further family members and work colleagues constitute the most popular sources through which participants arrange friendships. Twelve per cent of all the connections were made through the internet, including forums (such as Polish Mothers in Dublin). Partners have also been identified as a proxy for new connections in Ireland (10% of the overall number of alters). Other sources include connections from Poland (10%); local connections with and through neighbours (8%); friends introducing another friend (8%) as well as getting to know people through shared interests.

### Table 7.2: Relevant key network characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of alters</td>
<td>8-21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-31</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32+</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5.3 Hypotheses

The analysis here examines the levels and the type of participants’ online activity, particularly on Facebook forums, taking into account dimensions identified in qualitative analysis (type of activity online and on Facebook) and whether the participation in the online network varies depending on the size of the individual’s network and the participants’ personal characteristics. Additionally, mothers with younger and fewer children, due to their lesser experience and overall knowledge, use Facebook forums as an information gathering device and to obtain various kinds of support. Thus, the first model will focus on the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Participants with greater network size will be more active on the internet/forums to maintain connections and meet people.

**H2:** Mothers with young children they will be more active and more likely to form connections through the internet.

A second set of analytical models builds on the arguments, that have previously been set out in Chapters Four and Five. Personal communities as well as the individual attributes of the egos are seen to explain how social support is provided through these connections (Herz, 2015). As already established, virtual connections tend to be involved in rather intangible supports provided through the ICTs, characterised by emotional support and that related to information and well-being (Moskal & Tyrrell, 2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection source</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet (incl. Facebook</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forums)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Poland</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This does not only include transnational connections mobilised through the internet. As Herz (2015) argues, transnational support is particularly helpful for emotional and less so for instrumental support or social companionship. However, since online connections are not geographically bonded, and while those connections do account for transnational ties, the analysis does not limit online connections to a certain location. Nonetheless, since most transnational connections that the participants had were made up of family and other kinship ties (which cannot be formed online), all but three virtual ties in this sample were resident in Ireland. Nonetheless, the internet remains a powerful tool of communication through which some types of support can be provided.

By looking at the form of support and strategies involved information and tie mobilisation it is possible to explore particular ties characteristics that provide certain support. As previously established, certain support domains such as emotional support or childcare are provided by strong ties. On the other hand, since virtual ties are often characterised with lower levels of trustworthiness (Dekker & Engbersen, 2013) further analysis examines whether the emotional support would still remain a key support domain provided by the virtual connections. However, virtual connections rarely remain on the virtual level and are often subject to transformation into real life social networks (Bollen et al., 2011). Thus, the second set of hypotheses will examine whether the ties formed through online tools are perceived as support ties and in which domains they are most likely to support participants. Those two models also account for the online and media tools through which participants maintained contact with their social networks and which is the most effective in providing various types of support.

Specifically, the analysis of the online connections here focuses on the previously-addressed six domains of social support: childcare, crisis situations, emotional support, socialising, information provision as well as financial aid (cf. Chapters Four and Five). As indicated in the qualitative section above, the type of support provided by the ties formed through the internet differs to the other connections. In particular, the Internet is used as a platform for the information exchange. The following hypothesis will be tested:

**H3: The online connections will provide participants predominantly with information support.**
The outcomes will be further controlled for basic demographic characteristics, such as the age of participants, their level of education, maternity status, number of children, residence and relationship of the network members.

7.5.4 Dependent variables

The first set of hypotheses focus on participants’ level and type of activity on Facebook groups (PMWD in particular). Thus, in order to calculate relevant outcomes, the following dependent variables have been considered:

*Daily use of Facebook* is a dichotomous variable of whether participants use Facebook forums daily.

Facebook activity measures have been dealt with through following variables:

*Meeting people through Facebook* is a dichotomous variable (0=no; 1=yes) of whether participants meet people online through Facebook forums such as PMWD.

*Meeting other mothers* is also a dichotomous variable of whether participants use online proxy to meet other mothers, especially for the purpose of socialising and support strategies when accounting for children (both number and age).

*Connections formed through the Internet* has been recoded to dichotomous variable (1=formed through the internet; 0=formed through other proxy) from the variable enquiring about the source of connections.

The second set of models focuses on the type of support drawn from the connections formed through the Internet and accounts for the following support types:

- Emotional support
- Childcare support
- Crisis support
- Financial support
- Information provision.
7.5.5 Independent variables

The following independent variables have been considered in the above-mentioned models:

First model:

*Network size* is a variable that has been generated through aggregation of the number of ties in each individual’s network. The size of each network differs between the participants: the smallest network has only eight alters while the biggest one goes up to 49. The average size of the overall network is 25 connections (sd=9.03; md=25).

*Strong transnational networks* (STN) variable has been generated through aggregation of the number of participant’s ties based in Poland. The overall number of connections in Poland ranged between 0 and 21 (sd=4.3). Participants, whose network contains an average or above average number of connections located in Poland are counted as participants with STN. Due to the characteristics of the network structure, a majority of the transnational connections are strong ties.

*Strong local networks* (SLN) variable has been calculated through aggregation of the number of alters based locally that each participant has in their networks. Participants, whose network contains average and above average number of connections located locally are counted as participants with SLN.

*Number of children* is a scale variable from one to three, representing the number of children that participants had.

*Age of the children* is a self-reported variable enquiring about the age of the children of participants. For this analysis I will focus on the age of the youngest child.

*Number of connections formed through the internet and based locally* is a variable aggregated from the variable that looks at the source through which the connection with the alter has been made. It is calculated as the summary of the connection known through the internet.
Second model:

First, the analysis considers the internet tie as the type of connection formed and/or maintained through the internet.

The models were further controlled for the age of participants, maternity status, number of children and the level of education. Additionally, the variables such as relationship (the same excluded family ties as they cannot be created via the internet) and the residence (as the people who are based in close proximity should be more able to provide support) of the tie have been also accounted for.

7.5.6 Modelling strategies

In order to address the given hypotheses, two series of analysis have been run. The first set of hypotheses are addressed through the Poisson logistic regression models on participants’ online behaviours. Secondly, to answer the questions of whether internet connections play a significant role in a variety of social support provision, as well as whether the characteristics of the ego and their composition of social networks has any effect on the involvement of virtual connections, mixed-effects logistic multilevel regression models were estimated.

The following analysis aims to provide a more detailed picture of participants’ online activity and the mobilisation of virtual ties for a variety of support types.

7.5.7 Network and ego characteristics and Facebook activity

Table 7.3 presents the use of the internet by individual’s characteristics. It addresses the first set of hypotheses formulated in regard to the use of the internet and considers frequency of use and strategies used to form connections and arrange new contacts. Driven by the participants’ response, the main consideration here is the use of Facebook forums. Inevitably, those with greater networks use Facebook daily, which in turns reflects on the number of connections formed through the internet (p<0.1). This confirms the first hypothesis. Participants with larger networks are more active on the online platforms in order to maintain and form connections.
Although the transnational dimension of personal networks characteristics (strong transnational ties) is not statistically significant (H2), women with a greater number of local connection (STN) tend to use Facebook tools more frequently to meet other mothers (p<0.05). Regarding the number of children, H2 can be rejected. On the contrary, the more children women have, the more likely they are to meet other mothers through Facebook and other online platforms. Similarly, when the age of the child is taken into account, which in turns implies practical knowledge and experience of being a mother, the outcome shows that mothers with older children are more likely to form online connections and seek advice through the internet (p<0.1).

Table 7.3: Bivariate analysis of the online behaviour and ego characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily use of FB</th>
<th>Meeting people through FB</th>
<th>Meeting other mothers</th>
<th>Number of connections formed through internet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network size</td>
<td>.009*</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong transnational networks (STN)</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong local networks (SLN)</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>-.510</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>-.352</td>
<td>.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child age 1&lt;sup&gt;23&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

7.5.8 Source of connection, type of relations and type of support

The internet offers a great variety of online communication: from Facebook, through Skype to well-known emails. Table 7.4 presents the involvement of the internet ties in different support domains. In line with previous research and therefore our hypotheses, ties formed through the internet are most commonly involved in the information provision (28%) and to a smaller extent – in the socialising domain (6%).

<sup>23</sup> Due to the small number of cases, only the variable for the age of the first child has been taken into consideration.
**Table 7.4: Involvement of the ties formed through the Internet ties in variety of support domains**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ties accessed/formed</th>
<th>Childcare</th>
<th>Crisis Situation</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Socialising</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Financial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>1% (n=532)</td>
<td>3% (n=463)</td>
<td>2% (n=440)</td>
<td>6% (n=1253)</td>
<td>28% (n=582)</td>
<td>1% (n=92)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ties maintenance constitutes an important aspect in mobilising support. Table 7.5 presents involvement of different connections, considering the strength of the tie, into the various support types, with account of the media used for communication. Inevitably, Facebook is the most commonly-used communication tool. Due to its popularity in local and thematic groups, mothers can join, form and maintain connections online. They can also arrange meetings with the locally-based ties. Facebook’s popularity as a communication tool shows up not only among information and socialising support but includes all types of support except financial (which is confined most often to strong ties, *cf.* Chapter Six). Weak ties contacted through Facebook were most commonly involved in emotional support (45%), socialising (32%) and a crisis situation (31%). Further, those weak ties supported participants with information (30%). Childcare (30%) despite remaining on a relatively similar level of involvement, accounts for one of the least often used types of support for this kind of connection and communication mode. Among close friends reached through Facebook, the division between involvements in a variety of support types remains relatively equally distributed. Those connections are predominantly responsible for socialising (62%), childcare (62%) and support in crisis situations (62%).

The case of kin ties contacted through Facebook is interesting due to its slightly different distribution in support provision and the fact that most of the close family members are not usually contacted through Facebook. In comparison with friends and other weak ties, the strength of the tie is much more important than communication tool and this results in the fact that rather than being involved in socialising (the support type predominantly provided by friends and weak ties), a greater percentage of kin and parents are involved in

203
emotional (kin: 51%; parent: 14%) and crisis support (kin: 52%; parent: 12%). These are
the support types that those ties provide regardless of the mode of communication (for
more information, see Chapters Five and Six). Kin and parents contacted online are also
involved in childcare arrangements (kin: 45%; parents: 16%) and information provision
(kin: 47%; parents: 17%).

Thus, Facebook as a communication and ties maintenance tool, despite being the most
popular way to communicate with network members, tends to be more popular among
weak ties and friends. Inevitably that connects with the type of support that is suitable to
flow through such connections, as well as the strength of the ties and its reflection on the
support provided. Strong ties, although also mobilised through Facebook, tend by far to
be more commonly involved into support already provided by strong ties, despite the
communication route. Thus, while the involvement of the strong ties remains high, ties
compensate for the distance by forming and maintaining weaker ties through Facebook
groups and more target orientated support circles.

Apart from Facebook, Skype has also proven to be a crucial communication tool, which
provides an opportunity not only for written messages but more importantly for free voice
and video call. Skype has been used to maintain contact predominantly with family
members and strong ties (kin and grandparents). Indeed, that reflects on the distribution
of the strength of the tie and its involvement into various supports and Skype
communication. Kin and strong ties are by far the most commonly involved in provision
of emotional support (64% and 92% respectively). Kin contacted through Skype were
also involved into crisis support (62%) as well as socialising (62%) and childcare (62%).
90 per cent of parents contacted through Skype were responsible for the information
provision. Parents and kin were involved in all kinds of support, despite the distance.
Whether it was crisis situation dealt with on the phone or emotional comforting, greater
involvement in different support domains supports the statement that strength of the tie
constitutes the crucial determinant for support mobilisation.

The last communication tool discussed by the participants was the mobile phone. Phones,
despite not being considered online or virtual tools, are inevitably the most popular
among all the ties and types of support. Here, with some minor exceptions of weak ties
involvement in childcare, participation of other types of the ties and support domains
remains high for each category. Thus, it can be asserted that the ties formed and
maintained through Skype and phones should be considered as supportive type of connections (providing more than just socialising opportunities), whereas those who are contacted through Facebook account for unsupportive.

Table 7.5: Involvement of the connections (accounting for the strength of the tie), mode of contact with those connections and their involvement in various support domains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Childcare</th>
<th>Crisis Situation</th>
<th>Emotional Ties maintained through</th>
<th>Socialising</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Financial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>30 (530)</td>
<td>40 (463)</td>
<td>41 (435)</td>
<td>38 (1252)</td>
<td>40 (55)</td>
<td>9 (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Ties</td>
<td>18 (85)</td>
<td>31 (93)</td>
<td>45 (71)</td>
<td>32 (449)</td>
<td>30 (191)</td>
<td>0 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>62 (133)</td>
<td>62 (167)</td>
<td>57 (171)</td>
<td>62 (316)</td>
<td>59 (n=86)</td>
<td>29 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>45 (105)</td>
<td>52 (81)</td>
<td>51 (80)</td>
<td>40 (210)</td>
<td>47 (53)</td>
<td>44 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>16 (93)</td>
<td>12 (52)</td>
<td>14 (51)</td>
<td>15 (93)</td>
<td>17 (41)</td>
<td>0 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>29 (527)</td>
<td>24 (459)</td>
<td>29 (431)</td>
<td>24 (1238)</td>
<td>17 (541)</td>
<td>10 (90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Ties</td>
<td>0 (85)</td>
<td>1 (93)</td>
<td>7 (71)</td>
<td>5 (449)</td>
<td>4 (191)</td>
<td>0 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>5 (132)</td>
<td>8 (165)</td>
<td>14 (169)</td>
<td>18 (315)</td>
<td>12 (86)</td>
<td>0 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>62 (105)</td>
<td>62 (81)</td>
<td>64 (80)</td>
<td>62 (210)</td>
<td>60 (53)</td>
<td>44 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>87 (43)</td>
<td>90 (52)</td>
<td>92 (51)</td>
<td>86 (93)</td>
<td>90 (41)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>93 (532)</td>
<td>96 (464)</td>
<td>96 (436)</td>
<td>87 (1,245)</td>
<td>71 (544)</td>
<td>98 (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Ties</td>
<td>79 (85)</td>
<td>84 (93)</td>
<td>92 (71)</td>
<td>83 (449)</td>
<td>83 (191)</td>
<td>100 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>99 (133)</td>
<td>99 (167)</td>
<td>97 (171)</td>
<td>98 (317)</td>
<td>100 (86)</td>
<td>100 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>99 (105)</td>
<td>98 (81)</td>
<td>100 (80)</td>
<td>97 (210)</td>
<td>98 (53)</td>
<td>89 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>100 (93)</td>
<td>100 (52)</td>
<td>100 (51)</td>
<td>100 (93)</td>
<td>95 (41)</td>
<td>100 (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following descriptive statistics, table 7.6 presents bivariate Poisson regression on a variety of online communication tools and involvement in different support domains. In

\[24\] Values are provided as percent of overall category and the actual nume of connection
line with H3 and previously explained data, the results show the greater tendency towards virtual ties providing information support (p<0.01). On the other hand, online connections are the least likely to provide childcare support and financial assistance. This results not only from the mode of communication and simply difficulties in providing childcare at a distance, but as discussed in the Table 7.6 the strength of the tie. Indeed, the great majority of the ties connected through Facebook and involved in support are weak ties and friends. Connections maintained through Facebook are predominantly responsible for socialising (p<0.01), emotional support (p<0.05) and information provision (p<0.05). This reflects the narrative provided by the participants and their involvement in local support groups on Facebook, mainly PMWD. By far, connections reached through Facebook are not part of childcare (p<0.05) or financial supports (p<0.01). In line with the previous results, these types of support are not only difficult to provide through social media but are also reserved for strong ties and different mode of communication. Similar to the outcome of Table 7.5, support from those involved in the communication through Skype differs. Although Skype connections are involved into socialising practices, the clear difference relates to emotional (p<0.01) and childcare (p<0.01) support. Interestingly, connections contacted through Skype are not part of the information circle (p<0.05) as this type of support is provided by ties maintained through Facebook. The findings align with participants’ narrative of the usefulness of connections formed through PMWD and other local support groups. The phone has been widely used as a communication tool to source all kinds of supports. Socialising (p<0.01) is the most commonly organised through the phone with crisis situations support (p<0.01) being the second place. Emotional support (p<0.01) is also often provided by the ties maintained through the phone, as is organisation of childcare (p<0.01). Importantly ties maintained through the phone are also significantly involved in the provision of financial support (p<0.01) unlike any other virtual connections.
Table 7.6: Bivariate Poisson regression on variety of online communication tools and support involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ties formation</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>-2.16</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.275</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.339</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties maintenance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>-.262</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.457</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>.512</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>-.368</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.621</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>-.200</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Ties maintenance          |        |     |        |     |        |     |        |     |        |     |

7.6. Multilevel analysis
The following multilevel analysis unravels each of the supports and looks closely at the provision of each support type from the internet connections as a whole. It untangles each of the supports discussed, looking at its provision and control variables allowing us to systematically assess the involvement of virtual ties and the kind of people that draw on the support available.

As the first step, four-mixed effects multilevel regression models have been estimated.

Model 1 accounts for the sample as a whole and controls for the age of participants, their education level (low level of education constitutes a reference category), marital status (single or couple) and number of children that participants have.

Model 2 considers the abovementioned control variables; however, it excludes family ties from the sample as they cannot be obtained through the internet.

Model 3 builds on the variables accounted for in Model 2 with an additional control variable: residence considering the location of the tie.

Model 4 in addition to the variables included in Model 3, controls also for the relationship with the ego.
Additionally, as the next step Model 3 and 4 have been selected to be further controlled to assess the effect of the tie’s detailed location of residence as people who live in a close neighbourhood should be more able to provide support if required (Models 3a & 4a). Financial support has been excluded from further modelling due to the limitation of the sample. In addition, the analysis looks at the effect of the PMWD Facebook forum (Models 3b and 4b).

**Childcare**

In line with previous outcomes, the results from Models 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Table 7.7) show that childcare does not constitute a primary support provided by internet ties (p<0.01) in any of the estimated models and that internet ties are less likely to provide routine childcare support than other non-virtual ties. Controlling for location, those internet generated connections based in Poland are also less likely to provide support. Those results are in line with the previous outcomes and further support the argument that childcare support is often mobilised based on the location and pragmatic aspects.

**Table 7.7: Multilevel regression models of the Internet ties and routine involvement in childcare.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet ties</td>
<td>-2.5***</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>-2.17***</td>
<td>.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref: low education)</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity status</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>-.301</td>
<td>.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>-.092</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.834</td>
<td>.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.11***</td>
<td>.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.128</td>
<td>.730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Acquaintance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.01***</td>
<td>.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.80***</td>
<td>.293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.397</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case numbers for each model (n): 1= 1,327; 2=940; 3=885; 4=885

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

---

25 Reference category: stranger and missing.

26 Polish: *Kolega* denotes somebody who is closer than acquaintance but not as close as friend (*pl: przyjaciel*).
Further models 3a, 3b, 4a and 4b\(^{27}\) (Table 7.6) further show the expected direction of the lesser likelihood of the internet ties to provide regular childcare support. Further models 3b and 4b show a negative effect for regular childcare provision considering various sources of the online connections which confirms the first part of H3 indicating that virtual ties constitute different support provision. Nonetheless, in line with the previous results ties based locally, in the neighbourhood, are more likely to provide the support (p<0.01 for all four models).

Table 7.8: Multilevel regression (mixed-effects) of selected models: regular childcare support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3a</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3b</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 4a</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 4b</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet ties</td>
<td>-1.50**</td>
<td>.466</td>
<td>-2.03**</td>
<td>.795</td>
<td>-2.38***</td>
<td>.503</td>
<td>-3.22***</td>
<td>.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>-2.03*</td>
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<td>-1.73</td>
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<td>-1.67***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-2.26***</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>-2.26***</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case numbers for each model (n): 3a = 885; 3b = 892; 4a= 885; 4b = 892

\(^{***}\) p<0.01, \(^{**}\) p<0.05, \(^{*}\) p<0.1

Crisis support

For the internet ties, support in crisis situations has also a strong negative effect (p<0.01 for Model 1 and 2 and p<0.05 for Model 3). Controlling for the location of participants, the results further show the tangible aspect of the childcare support, particularly in a crisis situation with those located in Poland having negative effect in crisis childcare provision.

\(^{27}\)As indicated above models 3a and 4a account for the specific influence of the tie living in the neighbourhood. Models 3b and 4b look at the effect of PMWD forum.
(Model 3 with \( p<0.05 \) and Model 4 with \( p<0.01 \)). However, controlling for the relationship, participants are the most likely to avail of the support of the friends (model 4 \( p<0.01 \)).

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Table 7.9: Multilevel analysis of the Internet ties and their involvement in crisis support} \\
\hline \\
 & \text{Model 1} & \text{SE} & \text{Model 2} & \text{SE} & \text{Model 3} & \text{SE} & \text{Model 4} & \text{SE} \\
\text{Internet ties} & -1.62^{***} & .308 & -1.42^{***} & .321 & -.878^{**} & .338 & -.366 & .417 \\
\text{Age} & -.051^{*} & .027 & -.045 & .032 & -.046 & .031 & -.046 & .040 \\
\text{Education (ref: low education)} & -.245 & .221 & -.163 & .265 & -.218 & .254 & -.052 & .325 \\
\text{Maternity status} & -.049 & .293 & -.191 & .336 & -.256 & .315 & -.295 & .411 \\
\text{Number of children} & -.162 & .165 & -.267 & .203 & -.255 & .195 & -.436 & .249^{*} \\
\text{Residence} & \text{Ireland} & .035 & .588 & .106 & .669 \\
& \text{Poland} & -.909^{**} & .275 & -1.98^{***} & .320 \\
& \text{Other European} & -.747 & .803 & -1.43^{*} & .872 \\
& \text{Overseas} & \text{Relationship} & \text{Acquaintance} & \text{Mate} & .616^{*} & .339 \\
& \text{Friend} & 2.87^{***} & .349 \\
\text{Constant} & 1.51 & 1.15 & 1.44 & 1.38 & 1.71 & 1.31 & .637 & 1.71 \\
\hline \\
\end{align*} \]

Case numbers for each model (n): 1=1382; 2=980; 3=901; 4 = 901

\( *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 \)

Table 7.9 shows further outcomes of the selected models with mixed-effects multilevel regression. Model 3a and 3b indicate a small negative effect of internet connections (p<0.5) and crisis childcare provision, in particular, the PMWD Facebook forum shows the negative effect of sourcing such support online (p<0.5). In line with previously reported outcomes, the location of the support, despite the virtual dimension, matters for the provision of tangible support such as crisis childcare needs. Thus, connections based in Poland have a strong negative effect (p<0.01 in Model 3 and 4) and thus are less likely to provide such support. Inevitably, this is compensated for by those who live in close proximity and thus are more likely to be available (p<0.01 for Model 3a, 3b and 4b and p<0.5 for Model 4a). Furthermore, controlling for the relationship type, close friends are more likely to support participants in that matter (p<0.01 in Model 4a and 4b).
Table 7.10: Multilevel regression (mixed-effects) of selected models: crisis childcare support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3a Coeff.</th>
<th>Model 3b Coeff.</th>
<th>Model 4a Coeff.</th>
<th>Model 4b Coeff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Internet ties</td>
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<td>-.226</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other internet sources</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Mother in Dublin</td>
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<td>-.800*</td>
<td>-.563</td>
<td>.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>-.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref: low education)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity status</td>
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<td>-.138</td>
<td>-.132</td>
<td>-.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>-.278</td>
<td>-.277</td>
<td>-.433*</td>
<td>-.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>-.946</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.752</td>
<td>.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>-.549</td>
<td>-.551*</td>
<td>-.167***</td>
<td>-.169***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European</td>
<td>-.319</td>
<td>-.319</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.35***</td>
<td>1.942**</td>
<td>1.922***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
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<td>-.200</td>
<td>.512</td>
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<td>Mate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.63***</td>
<td>2.75***</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>.575</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case numbers for each model (n): 3a = 901; 3b = 908; 4a= 901; 4b = 908

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Information

As presented in the table 7.10, internet ties, by far have the strongest effect on information provision (p<0.01) across all the estimated models. Among all the kinds of supports considered, information provision is by far the most prominent support type in which virtual connections are mobilised. This outcome further confirms H5. Connections in Poland show a strong negative effect (Model 3 and 4 p<0.01) as well as connections based in other countries. Thus, it indicates that the participant may indeed source information that is relevant and country specific, and can only be provided by connections based in Ireland and is related to life organisation in Ireland (although the effect is not statistically significant).
Further mixed-effects modelling confirms the strong effect that internet connections hold for the information support process (Table 7.11). Assessing for the effects of the particular sources of the connection providing information support, there is a slightly stronger effect of PMWD in comparison to other websites and forums, although both outcomes are statistically significant (p<0.01 in Models 3b and 4b). Connections based in Poland have negative effects (p<0.01 for all four models), indicating that participants are more likely to seek locally-based knowledge relevant to organising their lives in Ireland (although the outcome is not statistically significant).

### Table 7.12: Multilevel regression (mixed-effects) of selected models: information support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.439</td>
<td>2.58***</td>
<td>.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.054</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref: low education)</td>
<td>-.618</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>-.653</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>-.734</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>-.775</td>
<td>.480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.601</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.630</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.634</td>
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<td>.034</td>
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<td>.022</td>
<td>.355</td>
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<td>-.657</td>
<td>.748</td>
<td>-.435</td>
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<td>.372</td>
<td>-1.90***</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>-1.87***</td>
<td>.391</td>
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<td>-2.16*</td>
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<td>-2.06*</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>-2.05*</td>
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<td>-1.59**</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>-5.06*</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>-5.62*</td>
<td>.295</td>
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</table>
Socialising

As shown in Table 7.12, despite the wide use of the internet to source new connections and obtain a variety of information, the result of the analysis shows strong negative effects for internet ties to be involved in the socialising events overall (p<0.01 for model 1 and 2). The education level has a small but statistically significant outcome (p<0.1 for model 1 and 2; p<0.05 for model 3 and 4). Controlling for the relationship status, friends (p<0.01) and acquaintances (p<0.01) are the most likely to be involved in socialising.

Table 7.13: Multilevel analysis of the Internet ties and their involvement in socialising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
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<td>.036</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
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<td>.417</td>
<td>.501</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mate</td>
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<td>.474</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>

Case numbers for each model (n): 1=1409; 2=1007; 3=905; 4=905.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Further, looking at Model 4b (Table 7.13) there is a strong effect of the PMWD forum in participants’ socialising practices (p<0.5), which binds with the qualitative outcome of the analysis that highlights the importance of this group. Those who live locally are also more likely to be involved in socialising practices (p<0.01 in Model 3a and 3b).

Controlling for the relationship type, here also, as expected, the role of friends (p<0.01 in model 4a and 4b) and acquaintances (P<0.01 in model 4a and 4b) has a strong positive effect.

**Table 7.14: Multilevel regression (mixed-effects) of selected models: socialising**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3a Coeff.</th>
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<th>Model 3b Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 4a Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
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<td>-.549</td>
<td>.481</td>
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<td>.276</td>
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<td>Polish Mother in Dublin</td>
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<td>.682*</td>
<td>.395</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>.586</td>
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<td>.038</td>
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<td>-.036</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.650</td>
<td>-1.74**</td>
<td>.671</td>
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<td>.461</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.636</td>
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<td>.653</td>
<td>1.08</td>
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<td>-.428</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.52**</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td>1.52**</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate</td>
<td>2.11***</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>2.07***</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>4.11***</td>
<td>.540</td>
<td>4.13***</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.643</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case numbers for each model (n): 3a = 905; 3b = 913; 4a= 905; 4b = 913

***p<0.01; ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

**Emotional Support**

The results of multilevel analysis in Table 7.14 in regard to the provision of the emotional support are very much consistent with previous outcomes. Overall, virtual ties are not the central domains for emotional support (strong negative effect p<0.01 in Model 1 and 2). Model 4 indicates that participants tend to avail of support that is not based in Poland (p<0.05) and is provided by friends (p<0.01).
Table 7.15: Multilevel analysis of the Internet ties and their involvement in emotional support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 2 Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 3 Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 4 Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet ties</td>
<td>-2.00***</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td>-1.72***</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>-1.13**</td>
<td>.399</td>
<td>-.797</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref: low education)</td>
<td>-.353</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>-.216</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>-.214</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>-.206</td>
<td>.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity status</td>
<td>-.250</td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>-.403</td>
<td>.358</td>
<td>-.344</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>-.356</td>
<td>.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>-.086</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>-.209</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>-.183</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>-.407</td>
<td>.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>-.901**</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>.725</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-.619</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.699*</td>
<td>.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.29***</td>
<td>.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case numbers for each model (n): 1=1384; 2=982; 3=905; 4=905

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7.15 further looks at the effect of location and relationship. Indeed, when emotional support is considered, the ties in the close neighbourhood show a strong effect (p<0.01 for model 3a and 3b and p<0.5 for model 4a and 4b). Nonetheless, the greatest effect of all is prominent when the relationship is considered, indicating that friends have the strongest effect among all in emotional support provision (p<0.01 in model 4a and 4b).

Table 7.16: Multilevel regression (mixed-effects) of selected models: emotional support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3a Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 3b Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 4a Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 4b Coeff.</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet ties</td>
<td>-.895*</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>-.101*</td>
<td>.590</td>
<td>-.670</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td>-.734</td>
<td>.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other internet sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.852</td>
<td>.541</td>
<td>-.812</td>
<td>.651</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Mother in Dublin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.203</td>
<td>.313</td>
<td>-.189</td>
<td>.317</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref: low education)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.219</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>-.183</td>
<td>.402</td>
<td>-.227</td>
<td>.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity status</td>
<td>-.209</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>-.226</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>-.396</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>-.416</td>
<td>.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.834</td>
<td>-.778</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>-.412</td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.776</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>-.778</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>-.412</td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>.513**</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.530**</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>-.641**</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>-.639**</td>
<td>.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European</td>
<td>1.35**</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td>1.36**</td>
<td>.642</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
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<td>1.22***</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.662**</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>.668**</td>
<td>.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>-.142</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7.7. Conclusion
In conclusion, to readdress the questions posed in this chapter, there is certainly some kind of relationship between Facebook use and the maintenance and the formation of social capital. Like previous research, conducted with, for instance, younger participants/college students (Ellison et al., 2007), mothers in this study not only use Facebook as a tool to search for information, but overwhelmingly use Facebook to maintain friendships, as such technologies simultaneously provide the means by which to shrink the distance between ‘here’ and ‘there’ (home in the country of origin).

Social network sites as well as other modern internet technologies allow participants cheap and easy ways to maintain connections with both strong and weak ties, taking the most advantage of the support they have to offer without the necessity of traditional ‘face-to-face’ interaction. Those practices of internet use, maintaining relationships with friends and acquaintances in Poland, gave participants the ability to stay in touch with those far away – which in turn illustrates more clearly the ‘strength of weak ties’ principle put forward by Granovetter (1982). The old and potentially new connections formed through the Facebook forums may be a valuable source of new information and accessibility to new resources when required.

Despite clear limitations of the internet-based support with the tangible domains of social support (Herz, 2015) such as routine childcare and help in crisis situations, the virtual connections prove invaluable in information provision and to a slightly lesser extent emotional support and socialising. The analysis shows that different sources are being used to reach different types of network members with Facebook being indicative for the weak ties and Skype for the strong ties. While Skype can be used to maintain the sense of togetherness with family members living in Poland (Kędra, 2020) and emotional connections (Bell & Erdal, 2015; Moskal & Tyrrell, 2016) this chapter assessed the role of connections accessed and maintained mainly through Facebook that tend to provide information support.
Internet ties are thus more likely to generate and provide information support and this constitutes the key dimension of support associated with this type of connection. Internet ties are also less likely to generate crisis childcare support, social and emotional support, but these relationships become insignificant once controlled for the strength of the tie.

Additionally, the analysis of the data gathered for this chapter (both quantitative and qualitative) has demonstrated the strength of bridging social capital – participants are involved in the forums not only through passive reading but also through practical information use. They are also willing to support its members through online interaction and offline meetings.

It is important to highlight here the fact that relationships are dynamic and fluid, and they shift according to life-cycle events and individuals’ need to rely on the support provided by the members of the networks. The perception of emotional closeness and affection will also vary and be influenced by the frequency and quality of contact despite the distance. Thus, the analysis undertaken in this chapter, rather than focusing on identifying fixed patterns of communication and internet participation, focuses on a once-off snapshot that may vary across time and context.

A clear limitation of the chapter in relation to the connectedness with family members is the issues arising among the elderly members of the family; the loss of abilities such as sight, hearing, or simply the lack of competence of using a keyboard and computer may significantly impact on the level of connectedness and blurring of the importance of physical proximity. Thus, different groups can perceive distance differently and the ability to overcome the distance through internet technology will also vary between the network members. For this propose the use of the phone as a universal and overarching communication tool has been highlighted, supporting Newell and Gomez’ (2015) arguments of the phone being the most popular tool used over any other ICT tool among migrants.
Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions

The study presented here brings together transnational studies, research into families, social networks, gender and migration. Thus, this study allows us to assess the social support provided by the social networks members to be evaluated in the context of migration, studying micro mechanisms not only in the cross-border context but more so focusing on the often-ignored field of research, namely on migrant settlement and life organisation of in the host county. Since migrants differ in their motivation, characteristics and capacities to deal with their support networks, the research assumes that different networks provide different types of support. Indeed, this is the case. It argues that while transnational connections and transnational social spaces remain greatly significant in organising the lives of Polish migrants in Ireland, in particular with the case of floating grandmothers, the local connections in the host country should not be left without attention, and their importance rarely ends on the facilitation of the migration process. In fact, for certain kinds of support, the local networks are crucial to sustain the support that migrants need to establish and maintain the safe and secure livelihoods abroad. The most prominent throughout the thesis is the significance of tangible, ad-hoc support provided by local connections, namely neighbours and other migrant mothers. Present through the findings is also availability of local migrant kin – a fellow family member, who also migrated to Ireland and lives nearby.

Locally sourced support also proves beneficial for intangible types of support, such as socialising and more importantly: information provision on how to navigate in the Irish system. Moreover, the perspective adopted allows us to explore and assess the relational and structural dependencies that drive the strategies that migrant women employ in support mobilisation, namely how and in what circumstances what types of connections are being mobilised: transnational, local or virtual. Nonetheless, thanks to the SNSs, virtual ties and the role of the internet has also been proven of a great importance, even if they are not spatially bounded. Although internet based connections are mainly engaged in the information provision, Facebook groups provide mothers with an invaluable opportunity to reach out and connect with other Polish mothers locally and with those in similar circumstances (similar age of children, shared maternity status), supporting them
through the long and often lonely journey of settlement and organisation of social support abroad.

The aim of this doctoral research was to explore, in-depth, the lives of Polish working mothers in Ireland, focusing on those living in the Greater Dublin Area. Throughout my thesis I have drawn attention to the fact that on many occasions – both in the literature as well as in the solutions provided by social policy – working Polish mothers have not received sufficient attention. The literature review presented in Chapter Two found that the role of women not only in the migration process itself, but more importantly in the strategies that Polish women engage with in organising their post-migratory livelihood in the country of destination, is often undermined and perceived as genderless. This stance ignores the unique aspect and crucial role that women have in sourcing and managing social support.

The context of this research is embedded in the transnational perspective, considering the value of connections maintained across the borders. Thus key throughout the thesis is the theme of social support, not only at local or transnational levels but also via virtual types of supports provided through the internet. Additionally, throughout the analytical steps it became apparent that Polish migrant women not only mobilise their transnational connections, but also avail of significant support networks available locally. Thus, the field of interests addressed in this thesis is unique, because it combines four well-developed strands of research: migration, transnationalism, employment and social networks; it simultaneously identifies the main gaps in each of them, addressing pressing issues within Irish society.

The concluding chapter to this thesis provides some final considerations on what was found and argued throughout earlier chapters. This chapter discussed contributions of this project. These are divided into two subsections: discussion on theoretical implications and empirical contributions as one, and further methodological considerations as the other.

A summary of the key findings in relation to the three main research questions is followed by a more detailed discussion of the core issues that were found to shape mothers’ social support networks and strategies associated with eliciting various supports from the members of those networks, locally, across borders and virtually through online connections. These findings are placed in the context of the broader theoretical debate.
First, the key research question enquired if and how Polish migrant mothers use their social networks to arrange social support. Although migration literature has predominantly focused on how migrants organise their networks prior to or immediately after in the migration process, little has been discovered on how migrants organise their support over the years after migration. Women, as well-established independent migrants, largely access their support networks independently of their male counterparts (White, 2011; Roeder et al., 2014; Kindler & Napierala, 2010). Women use widely employed strategies that were discussed previously in the context of Poles in the U.K. (White, 2011), namely by forming their social networks through looking for Polish-speaking mothers in playgrounds.

Unsurprisingly, since the great majority of participants in this project migrated with or following their male counterparts, initially the male partners became a proxy through which participants accessed other Polish women (often from the husbands’ workplace). This role of men as the initiators of the family migration and in supporting settlement process has previously been documented (White, 2011) and the outcomes here confirm the strategies employed by migrants elsewhere.

A further question was to determine what factors influence the support type mobilised from various members of participants’ social networks. The transnational perspective additionally explained various mobilisation strategies to a certain degree. In line with previous research, the outcomes of the analyses here support the fact that migrants rely on strong ties as providers of services and emotional support (Herz, 2015; Barglowski & Pustulka 2018; Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015; Bilecen, 2013; Moskal & Tyrrell, 2016) and the less important role of weak ties, which in turn confirms Wellman and Wortley’s (1990:581) argument that the delivery of support is based on how do you know people who provide support, rather than on the size of the network. Nonetheless, when the extent of possible support provided by the transnational ties is limited, or the transnational ties are simply unavailable due to the distance – the local ties become the crucial component for certain types of support, in particularly crisis and childcare as well as the information. Thus, the composition of migrant mothers’ support networks largely depends on the kinds of relationships and pragmatic elements.
Highlighted throughout this thesis is the vital role that transnational ties have for migrant mothers. Transnational ties play an important role in provision of both tangible and intangible support. In relation to for instance childcare services, the disadvantage that results from distance is partially compensated for by the strength of the tie and quality of the relationship. In other words, when possible participants preferred to avail of the support from the family member. While families overcome the distance obstacle by advanced planning of childcare, crisis situations by definition cannot be predicted or pre-arranged. Thus, although throughout the thesis and in line with previous research, grandparents were found to play a prominent role in supporting migrant mothers on various support grounds, this role is largely limited due to distance as the key obstacle in mobilising transnational support (Herz, 2015; Bojarczuk & Muhlau, 2018). Moreover, having grandparents over for regular childcare is not always possible for all migrants, as grandparents often have other responsibilities back in Poland. Thus, particularly for crisis childcare that requires support in an unpredictable manner, the local ties come to the forefront of the participants’ support networks.

Nonetheless, *floating grandmothers* increasingly constitute a vital factor for migrant parents to manage work and childcare, positioning grandparents at the forefront of the transnational circulator of care, providing incrementally important support for their children in host countries. Through pre-arranged (and often prolonged) and frequent visits in Ireland, grandparents proven to be invaluable elements of transnational childcare provision and support. Such practices do not only allow grandparents to remain connected with their children and grandchildren but also to feel purpose of life. For migrant parents, *floating grandmothers* often meant less pressure in managing childcare duties and thus allowing them to invest into their employment and career opportunities. Additionally, grandparents have proven to be also invaluable source of transnational emotional support provided across the borders.

This thesis is the first study comparing support mobilisation strategies of migrants with strong and with weak transnational networks. The comparison of mothers with strong and weak transnational networks shows more commonalities than differences between the two groups. Taken together, the same rules appear to govern the utilisation of transnational support and the support provided by the ties residing in the host country, due to the fact that tangible support is heavily dependent on the location and availability of the support networks. This suggests that these patterns are not specific to immigrant mothers but also
apply to regionally mobile mothers who do not co-reside with their established support networks (Dyck, 1996; Galaskiewicz et al., 2008). A study on informal care arrangements among Irish families suggests similar patterns between immigrant families and geographically mobile Irish families (Roeder et al., 2014).

The findings here make a particular contribution to the literature on migration and migrants’ social support by bringing a national framework of analysis, suggested by Wellman, into the picture where the emphasis lies on the relationship type, spatial proximity and resource control (mainly in relation to time) as key predictors for network activation.

The role of virtual ties and connections formed through the internet was the focus of the third main research question posed in this thesis. With the ever-increasing popularity of the internet and ICTs, inevitably the way that migrants source and maintain their support networks has changed. Internet technologies allow migrants to form new connections and maintain those from their home country irrespective of distance. The advent of the internet and virtual connections in mobilising social support is relatively recent, both in the field of migration and social networks. In line with research conducted in the other fields where the use of the internet is well-established for Polish migrant women – the internet also serves as a proxy for sourcing information support, which is most commonly ascribed to these kinds of networks. Due to pragmatics, internet ties are less likely to be associated with childcare support. This aligns with already discussed outcomes from Herz (2015) which indicate pragmatic elements required to mobilise support. Other types of support, including crisis childcare, emotional support or socialising also appear to be mobilised from physical connections. Nonetheless, as shown in the literature, virtual connections have proven to be invaluable in providing information support.

Chapter Four was the first analytical chapter and along with the sets of hypotheses was concerned with the analysis of the factors associated with the features (both personal and structural) that affect the network formation strategies.

Chapters Five and Six are interlinked and aimed to assess the types of networks and their likelihood of providing various support types. While Chapter Five provided qualitative, inductive analysis that aims to provide the participants’ accounts of motives and reasons behind certain support choices, Chapter Six, through quantitative analysis, aimed to
systematically assess the given trend within the sample. It also sought to provide scope for further research and to assess whether the results can be also applicable to the larger scale population and other migrant groups.

The penultimate analytical chapter – Chapter Seven, through a generalisation model, explored and assessed the role of virtual ties in the provision of support. The support domains considered in this chapter are related to the support domains from Chapter Six but investigate those ties that are accessed and/or maintained through the internet.

8.1. Polish migration
Poland has been a country of emigration for many decades for a variety of reasons. Among them, political and economic reasons have dominated scholars’ interest. While political reasons are not explored in this thesis, economic motives have been at the forefront of recent academic enquiry. As outlined in Chapter One, in particular since the 1990s, migration has become one of the livelihood strategies for those living in Poland who are in search of better economic opportunities. Those strategies are further enhanced and facilitated by the existence of pre-established migrant networks which are mobilised to provide a variety of support.

Despite the fact that Poland joined the EU over 15 years ago, and the research strand on Polish migration has now become well-established within the field of migration, the Irish context remains somewhat overlooked. While some attention has been focused on the trajectories of Polish migrants and their interaction with the Irish labour market (Krings et al., 2012; Muhlau 2012), Bobek (2011) focused in her work on the way that Poles use their social networks for the purpose of migration; more recently Roeder et al. (2014) looked in detail at the case of migrant families. Most of the recent studies conducted on contemporary Polish migrants living in different countries focused on the economic aspects of these migratory movements. As discussed in Chapter Two, researchers often apply such analytical framework as Dual Labour Market theory and New Economics of Labour Migration, which in turn underlines that migrants remain ‘outside’ of the social structures of the receiving societies and thus also tend to be perceived as ‘worse category’ citizens who work in lower skilled jobs located at the bottom of the host country’s labour market. Moreover, little attention has been given to examining the livelihoods of those Polish nations who are in better employment and hence higher up the employment ladder.
What emerges from the data collected for this research, however, is that people source various support through multiple options of organising help from their networks. Participants were found to not only create connections that were beneficial for their support strategies but also to mobilise already existing support.

8.2. Transnational versus local support
In migration studies, increasingly more attention is being paid to the importance of migrants’ social networks, however only a few of them focus particularly on the members of those networks and what services and favours flow between them (cf. Herz et al., 2014; Van Tubergen et al., 2014).

Another issue that emerged from the data was that despite the preferences for mobilising support from strong ties, the location effect became apparent in the analysis. While transnational relationships provide all dimensions of social support to Polish female migrants in Ireland, they are particularly helpful for planned childcare support. ‘Floating grandmothers’ are at the forefront of pre-arranged childcare. However, this is not a universal approach and not every migrant is in a position to mobilise transnational support. Nonetheless, the support obtained from transnational relationships is prominent in intangible support. In line with other research on social support (Herz, 2015), the outcomes of the analyses here indicate that transnational connections are particularly useful for emotional support but less so for the instrumental and crises support as well as social companionship. As indicated by Herz (2015:72), transnationality of ties has “an enhancing influence on intangible support and a diminishing one on the tangible dimensions of social support”. Hence, the transnational element here underlines the choice the participants made to mobilise support, because tangible forms of support (childcare, instrumental, socialising) are less prevalent while the intangible are more so (Herz, 2015).

Adhering to other research on transnational social support, moreover, the multilevel analyses in Chapters Six and Seven reveals that provision of the various dimensions of support is explained by the relational aspects such as the strength of the tie, frequency of contact and structural (location of the tie), and to a lesser extent through the structural characteristics of migrants’ personal networks such as size. Migrants’ personal characteristics, such as age or time spend in Ireland, are also less significant.
Herz (2015) argues that social support tends to be organised more on a relational level and less on the structural level (size, density). The results in this thesis do indeed partly support Herz’s (2015) arguments, however, looking at the most pragmatic aspects of the social support structure and organisation, for certain support types such as crisis support, the close location (neighbourhood, within easy reach) of the tie constitutes the most crucial element in determining the decision to avail of the support. Nonetheless, the results here challenge the arguments put forward by Wellman and Frank (2001), which supports the structural determiners of the association between increased density of networks and thus increased opportunities for support mobilisation.

8.3. Network mobilisation factors
Previous studies have severely under-examined the role of women in the migration process and the challenges that they face in the subsequent post-settlement process. For migrant women, childcare remains a particular challenge when their kin are absent, and the hindered norms of work and family life abroad vary from the norms previously experienced as embedded in the country of origin. The issue becomes even more pressing when crisis childcare is considered, which requires support in an unpredictable manner and puts a premium on local ties that can be mobilised without much planning or organisation, but it holds also for regular childcare that requires physical co-presence between child and childminder. Thus, the findings here are in line with previous research on Polish migrants in the U.K. by Ryan (2011), highlighting the importance of the family in the destination country for a variety of supports. However, my research shows that although strong local networks provide a ‘safety-net’ particularly for childcare and emotional support, locally based friends and neighbours, in particular other parents, are actively involved in providing childcare support.

Surprisingly, the duration of stay in Ireland was in many cases not statistically significant to associate it with the social support networks formed in the host country. The findings share similar stand to those presented by Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) assuming the lack of association due to the specificity of the sample selection. Namely, mothers who participated in this research had already been living in Ireland for number of years, and thus the usually greater initial support needs, have settled and thus mothers were also in position to be more free in creating and mobilising relevant connections.
8.4. Social networks and the formation of the ‘community’
Studies on migrants’ networks in the host country often seek to focus on lower skilled migrants when considering issues related to the formation of social networks. Research on Polish migrants in other European countries confirms the theory that networks are status oriented: those of higher skills working in the higher-end occupations and professional jobs tend to form and maintain connections with other, regardless of their nationalities or place of origin. Those, however, who work in lower skilled positions often rely on their co-ethnic network members for a variety of support types (e.g., White, 2011; Ryan et al., 2009). Indeed, results from this thesis show that participants (who by far came as part of a migration chain organised by other Poles) organise their support rather as a mixture of higher and lower skilled workers and adapt the network membership to the required type of support.

The type of the neighbourhood is also important because it is one of the factors affecting ‘localisation’ of the networks. If the family network is localised, that is if the family network members live in proximity to the local neighbourhood so that they are accessible to one another, they are more likely to know each other and have a closer connection than when they are scattered across the country. Family members usually share a similar social status; local networks are most likely to develop in areas where inhabitants feel that they are socially similar to one another (Bott, 1964).

8.5. The role of the internet
The internet has largely replaced other media that were commonly used in transnational practices and is now the most significant tool in transborder communication (Kang, 2012; Parrenas, 2005). Perhaps partly due to its relatively recent emergence and boom and partly due to the emphasis on the importance of physical presence in most support domains mobilisation, there has been relatively little discussion within migration literature, to explore the role that ICT plays in contemporary migrants’ lives. Although the extent and direction of communication across distance varies, nevertheless all the participants have used the internet to source some kind of support.

The internet not only includes here the support of well-known applications such as Skype (cf. Kędra, 2020 for the practices for creation of digital familyhood and emotional
transnationalism; Bell & Erdal, 2015 on transnational communication among Polish migrant families in Norway) but most importantly, as shown in Chapter Seven, allows participants to build virtual communities and support networks, through Facebook groups, for instance. Beginning from consideration in Chapter Two, the greater proportion of virtual ties have been accessed through the Facebook group discussed. For participants, it allows Polish migrant mothers to reach their peers, who might be based locally or may have found themselves in similar situations. Most importantly, Facebook groups provide an opportunity for mothers to access and form connections that are independent of their male partners. Those connections have proven to be easy to reach and flexible enough to allow mothers to avail of them whenever they need.

In line with Wilding’s (2006) argument and clear throughout the analysis in this thesis, is the voluntary nature of the decision about the participation in certain social media. Those decisions were also driven by the social and cultural contexts of the participants’ family life as well as personal preferences, which renders certain groups or websites more desirable than others at certain point in time (ibid.). Participants were indeed more likely to use Polish social media and Polish migrant websites right after migration, as these offered variety of practical advice of how to organise life in Ireland. When later stages are considered, participants shifted their online participation towards Facebook groups and native sources, such as ‘citizens advice’ or ‘social welfare’ websites.

It is important to note, however, that while other research focuses on how transnational families use ITCs to create, support and reproduce social fields in the cross border, transnational context – which requires engagement of both: migrants and their kin who remain in the home country (Olwig, 2003; Wilding, 2006; Glick-Schiller et al., 1992) – this research also brings to light the importance of local connections, and therefore locally-sourced support, which simply cannot always be provided across borders.

Building on the current literature, the outcomes of this research suggest that although ICTs are crucial for maintenance of both transnational and local connections, different forms of communication have different consequences for the relationships they aim to sustain. The analysis in Chapter Seven indicated that while Facebook serves as a useful tool to mobilise support such as information or serves as socialising platform, it tends to be affiliated with weak ties. The specificity of those connections positions them on the
lower grade in providing tangible support, but they are instead considered to be
socialising and informative connections.

Connections maintained through Skype and phones are more likely to be supportive ties,
as those tools are availed of to contact strong ties that complements Kędra’s (2020)
research on the virtual sense of the familyhood, maintained with the strong ties virtually
Bell and Erdal’s (2015) also focused on the transnational practices that maintain the
connection and familyhood with those left behind. Although those connections are
considered as supportive ties, the use of ICTs and the internet did not fully eliminate the
effects of the distance between participants and their family members abroad. Different
physical location posed challenges in support mobilisation, particularly in times of crisis.
Nonetheless, for the transnational connections, everyday use of the internet-based
communication tools inevitably enhanced the frequency of contact and therefore the
quality of the relationship, thus potentially diminishing the sense of distance.

The array of ICTs and communication platforms continuously expands. Video-calling is
now offered as a default on mobile devices in parts of the world where previously there
were limited opportunities for virtual connection. New video interfaces such as Snapchat
and Periscope have become popular among young people and may expand, as have many
social media platforms, into a broader demographic. There is a need to consider how such
platforms and technologies may further impact transnational family practice. In the
context of media and migration research, the evolution of ICTs requires a constant
appraisal of their role in family life and the extent to which they function to bridge the
geographic and intergenerational separation of transnational families.

8.6. Gendered aspect
Above all, gender constitutes the underlying theme in this thesis. Although the topic of
gender roles has not been directly discussed, indirectly it has been addressed on numerous
occasions. The sole fact that mothers remain the primary care providers for children and
that the burden of childcare lands on mothers’ shoulders indicates that indeed, this
research is vital to bring attention to this position. Nonetheless, there are clear indications
of change in terms of gender-role attitudes and the shared burden of childcare among
Polish migrant families.
Following migration, there appears to be a tendency towards less traditional gender role attitudes. As argued by Russell et al. (2009), it is not clear to what extent this shift in attitudes is responsible for, or rather a driving force related to the female employment. Present throughout the quantitative analyses was the ‘partner factor’ indicating that partners are mostly commonly engaged for childcare (sharing both regular childcare and crisis situations) and other tangible support, including financial assistance. It challenges scholars such as Mazurkiewicz (2018) who argue that following the migration, families undergo return to traditional gender roles and patriarchal family model in order to achieve stability and security. Instead, the results here follow rather equal approach suggested by Szast (2020). For majority of two-parents families, disappearance of the traditional family form has been present throughout the narrative and quantitative analysis. This was further supported by qualitative outcomes, which emphasised that following migration participants rarely had anyone else for immediate support that they could rely on, and therefore partners were the main support providers as they had only each other, positioning partner at the forefront of their social support, in particularly related to the regular childcare (Szast, 2020).

8.7. Methodological considerations
Additional to the empirical contribution, the methodological approach here should also be accounted for its originality and innovation. Throughout the thesis, several significant issues involving methodological approach have been raised.

Firstly, while Chapter Three serves as the stand-alone quantitative element, the remaining chapters combine in-depth qualitative data with structured accounts of the network arrangement. Such a combination provides insight beyond what each method of analysis can do on its own. The qualitative analysis as a first step develops an understanding of context and provides the ground for the quantification and statistical analysis of the data. The second step allows the researcher to acquire the ‘outsider’s’ perspective on the network structure. While simultaneously gaining an ‘insider’s’ understanding of the network, such as content, quality and meaning of ties and services that are being exchanged (Edwards, 2010; Crossley, 2010; Pustulka et al., 2019). Moreover, moving beyond the quantitative scope, this thesis contributes to the discussion around reflexivity in qualitative research. Although in this project, the researcher herself was part of the
Polish community, yet an outsider due to her position of being a researcher at Trinity College Dublin, it was not without problems. Indeed, belonging to the same minority group and being able to speak the same language became problematic at times as the participants assumed commonalities which had to be addressed for clarification to ensure that participants’ account has been considered.

As explained in Chapter Three, the relationship and differences in positions between researcher and participants should be clearly outlined and defined and thus the researcher should be aware of the potential influence of commonalities as well as the differences on the data gathered. Although the researcher aimed to remain an outsider, in some cases participants perceived the opposite. Indeed, the researcher ought to be aware of the positions, and if required this was negotiated throughout the interview. Nonetheless, the positionality of the researcher should be acknowledged and carefully considered.

On a more methodological note, qualitative analysis provides a rich insight into the participants’ accounts of the processes that shape their childcare choices and allows detailed accounts of what services and goods are being exchanged. Quantitative analysis provides insights into general patterns of childcare provision and a systematic overview of tie mobilisation. As the analysis of mothers with strong local and strong transnational networks or of the prevalence of grandparental support shows, quantitative analyses further puts the relationships suggested by the qualitative analysis into perspective.

Notwithstanding all of this, the study has clear limitations. First, the sample of participants is small and thus no random sample of any well-defined target population has been reached. This limits both the examination of the moderating effects of participants’ characteristics and circumstances and the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, the situation of Polish migrants in Ireland as mobile European Union citizens is in many aspects akin to the situation of other migrants in this country. For other forms of migration involving larger distances and stricter national boundaries, the mobilisation of transnational ties may face much stronger barriers and consequently develop in different forms.
Secondly, the data collection brought together two well-established yet complex strategies. Combination of semi-structured interviews with visual tools opened up the potential for obtaining unique data that could not be achieved by a single method alone.

Thirdly, the study is considered to represent a bilingual strand of research. Conducted in Polish, yet translated, written and presented in English. As discussed in Chapter Three, when bilingual research is in play, the researcher needs careful consideration of the issues around translation of the participants’ accounts. Although Chapter Three carefully reflects on this matter, aspects such as additional time and costs involved into translation should be considered. While the researcher acted as a sole translator (to avoid additional involvement of the third parties and its effect on the data), this undertaking has been extremely time consuming. Moreover, the discrepancies between meanings between two languages was accounted for and remained in the original (Polish) version (Temple 2002, 2005).

8.8. Limitations
Certain assumptions made in this research and the given research context should be considered critically and will account for the limitations. The first limitation of this work is that the sample should not be treated as representative of the overall population of Polish migrant women in Dublin. Despite making every effort to ensure a variety of sources for recruitment and therefore a variety of the participants, the qualitative nature of data collection and the size of the sample should not be treated as representative and is considered to be a convenience sample. One of the necessary conditions required for the study to be representative is to know the total target population and calculate the representative number of cases. It is impossible to calculate the exact number of the particular migrant group – employed Polish mothers living in Dublin and surrounding area. This is also the reason why, besides the well-known entry channels for obtaining participants, snowball sampling (cf. Chapter Three) was chosen as the most suitable for this particular study. Due to the logistics limitations as a single researcher, the collection of additional cases would be difficult to handle. The qualitative analysis has been conducted to systematically assess the trends within the sample, which indeed can be applied to the wider population, but should be treated as indicative rather than representative.
Although the data gathered in this project is considered rich, and the way through which it was obtained is the only possible way to gain sufficient responses both in qualitative and quantitative terms, social network data cannot be considered and thus discussed in a way that the classical social network theorists, such as Snijder et al. (2005) consider the topic. The overlap and differences between the types of data and approaches to data collection and analyses should be accounted for. Thus, the data here, despite quantitative analysis, do not allow us to treat maps and social networks in quantitative terms. Measurements specific to the social network methodology, such as density, cannot therefore be measured.

Further, the study accounts for Polish migration to Ireland as an example of the intra-European migration phenomenon and it considers quite a specific target group that might not be representative in terms of gender, education or employment status. The motives for migration have also established participants as economic migrants, with the majority being followers of their male partners. Given that already established studies conducted on migrant minorities indicate the geographical spread of migrant communities varies based on their socio-economic status as well as the type of geographical mobility (motives for migration, patterns, rural/urban destination) (Viry, 2012), further research should be conducted to consider the effects of both socio-economic and spatial dispersion of migrant networks and its relation to the various mobility patterns but more importantly how those aspects affect organisation and mobilisation of social support among migrants, both transnationally and locally.

8.9. Final remarks and scope for further research
Throughout the conclusion, the main findings, limitations and suggestions for further research were discussed. Additionally, each chapter specifically addressed how the findings fit into the relevant research field and how the data as well as the overall research design of this doctoral project can contribute to the literature. The scope for future research in the greater exploration of the topic of social support and the use of various social networks lies certainly in looking at the issue from the longitudinal perspective. Further investigation and assessment of the virtual connections should be considered. While the theme of online activity was data driven in this analysis process, being the sole researcher in this project posed practical limitations. Additional parts of analysis could be
implemented, namely content analysis of the PMWD forum along with all the subgroups dependent on location.

Overall, this thesis offered Polish women migrants’ perspectives on motivations and strategies related to the accessing social networks and related to it, mobilisation and organisation of various kinds of social support from them. Social support provided by network members is crucial not only for successful settlement but most importantly for the ability to manage childcare and employment. Nonetheless, other dimensions were discussed as crucial elements impacting female migrants’ experience. This was explored and assessed in the context of Polish migration to Ireland and, more broadly, locating Polish migrant women in a context of European migrants, considering flow of those favours bidirectionally: from Ireland to Poland also from Poland to Ireland, bringing transnational support at the forefront of discussion.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to the areas of migration and gender by providing detailed accounts of migrant women’s experience related to availability and organisation of various supports. Simultaneously, it is hope that this research will also contribute to the Irish policy considerations and research by presenting, for instance, childcare issues that the greatest migrant group faces while entering or returning to the labour market. Hopefully, this thesis will be recognised as a distinctive contribution to the general knowledge not only due to its unique methodological undertaking but also due to the fact that it connects fields and uncovers issues that despite their significance, have not been previously addressed.
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ZAPRASZAM!

Zapewiam kawę, ciastka i miłą atmosferę 😊

Sara Bojarczuk
Appendix II – Consent form

CONSENT FORM

A comparative study of the role of social networks in childcare and employment arrangements among Polish working mothers in Ireland

Yes  No

I have been given enough information about this project

It has been explained to me how the information will be used

I understand that I can leave at any time and do not have to answer all the questions if I do not want to

I am happy for the researcher to record what I say

I give a permission for my words to be used in a report but understand that my name will not allow reader to identify me

Date of birth (participant): ________________________________

Age of child(ren)_________________________________________

Signature........................................................................     Date...............................

Researcher’s Signature...................................................  Date....................... ........
Appendix III – Interview guide

Interview Topics:

1. Arrival
   • Tell me about your arrival to Ireland
   • Why?
   • Who did you arrive with?

2. Motherhood
   • Did you arrive with child or has your child/ren been born here?
   • Tell me about your firsts days of being a mother abroad
   • Who was present?
   • Who helped you and how?
   • How did you access

3. Employment
   • Education
   • Where did you work in Poland? What did you do before migration?
   • Tell me about your first employment? (How did you find it? Where was it? When did you start work?)
   • When did you return to work after maternity leave? Why?
   • How did you manage work-care from the beginning? Who looked after your child/ren and when?
   • Did you meet any barriers or difficulties when re-entering employment? What were they and what did you do? How did you feel about it?
   • Where do you work now? What is your working day schedule?

4. Everyday routine:
   • Tell me about your usual day
   • What about weekends?
   • School holidays?

5. Crisis situations
   • Did you encounter any?
   • Tell me about them (stories)
   • How did you manage? Who helped you?

6. Ideas for the future
Appendix IV – Visual maps – questions guide

*Importance: 'importance' you mean 'most dependent on' in this area of support, or most lost if the person/group would not have provided/ would withdraw the support.

MAPS:

- When listing people:
  - Who? (name)
  - How do you know this person?
  - How often do you see this person?
  - How do you contact with each other? (if need anything)
  - How does he/she help you?
  - What do you do for her/him?
  - How do you keep in touch?
  - How do they help you?
  - How do you help them?

  Type of relationship
  Purpose of relationship

  Any work contacts important? Anyone else?

NOTE: When giving examples of the situation- ask about the stories & descriptions.
Appendix V – Comparison between Poisson and Negative binominal regression for network composition subgroups.

(1) Overall network size.
(2) Polish networks in Ireland.
(3) Irish networks in Ireland.

### Overall network size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poisson</th>
<th>Negative binominal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low education level</td>
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<td>-0.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No partner</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids on arrival</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Ireland</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_cons</td>
<td>3.55***</td>
<td>3.57***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lnalpha__cons</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.76***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

### Polish networks in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poisson</th>
<th>Negative binominal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Low education level</td>
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<td>-0.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
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<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
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<td>0.38*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids on arrival</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time in Ireland</td>
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<td>-0.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_cons</td>
<td>2.71***</td>
<td>2.78***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lnalpha__cons</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.26***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001
### Irish networks in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poisson</th>
<th>Negative binomial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low education level</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>-0.64</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No partner</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids on arrival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<td>-0.01</td>
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<td>Time in Ireland</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>_cons</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.31</td>
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</table>

| lnalpha             |         |
|                     | _cons   |
|                     | -0.42   |

* *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001*
Appendix VI – Negative Binominal Regression output (network composition and ego characteristics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network size (overall)</th>
<th>Polish networks in Ireland</th>
<th>Irish networks in Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low education</td>
<td>-0.209*</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>-0.295*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Skilled</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.232</td>
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<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.384*</td>
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<td>No partner</td>
<td>-0.189</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.467*</td>
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<td>Having no kids on arrival</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time living in Ireland</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>-0.060*</td>
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</table>

* p<0.05, **p<0.01, *** p<0.001
### Appendix VII – preliminary list of variables considered for the datasets

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<tr>
<th>Ego</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Alter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>location on the map</td>
<td>sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level</td>
<td>Distance to ego</td>
<td>age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>frequency of contact</td>
<td>location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>which quadrant is the most important?</td>
<td>nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>(rank)</td>
<td>location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>mode of contact</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job before migration</td>
<td>how often do they meet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of arrival</td>
<td>source of contact</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>time in Ireland</td>
<td>sourced through husband?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single/coupled</td>
<td>return of services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrival with children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reason for migration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>part-time or full-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>number of children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix VIII – Sample interview transcript (English)

Name: PART1

D.O.B: 1984

Child age: 3.5

Notes: *Temporary contract, we met on the 7.01 and her contract is finishing at the beginning of March. So she will be looking for job.

Short info: Married mother, arrived here alone – became a mother in Ireland

1. ARRIVAL

S: Ok tell me how did you arrive here?

K: I arrived 6 September 2006 I arrived with friends; some of them are not my friends anymore. I met my husband here, I haven’t met him before but what’s funny is we were flying from the same airport but different flights, but possibly we must have passed by each other on the airport in Poland. We met here. When I arrived here, I found job immediately I think within a week. It was a time when the job ‘lying on the street’. At the beginning obviously one takes everything, so I was working in the café, not related to my education – I finished international relations, I had a five year plan, within five years I will settle my professional career to decide… so if within five year I will be happy with my career, not really director or anything but I will be happy with my career than I will stay, but if not we will see what’s next. I changed work after seven months, so I started from customer service, in one company for five years till the position of office manager. In the meantime, I met my husband, and we also decided that we’re getting married, that we’re staying and not coming back. We engaged after six months, after a year we bought a house, after a year and a half we had a child…so it all sorted itself out, we didn’t waste time.

S: Why did you decide to come to Ireland?

K: It was very personal. I was never getting on well with my parents, they never accepted my choices. So my choice was either to move out and live in my own way, or I will stay home under mum’s parasol, so I moved out while I was still studying...right after my Bachelor I was thinking about migrating anyway…when I was moving out I knew I would be leaving anyway, but initially I was going to the U.K. but my friends from university decided to go to Ireland, so I just booked ticket from the U.K. to Ireland…why would I stay in England on my own…so I lived a little bit…three months I was living on my own, for my own expense and working as a bar person. I had a change for permanent contract there with tips, but it wasn’t what I wanted because I wanted a bit more…I’m
from small village, so without knowing anyone…like me, after international relations, without knowing anyone from the town hall there was no way to get through…so I packed up and landed up in Dublin.

S: Ok, you mentioned university…I understand you completed bachelors, right?
K: Yes, that’s right.

S: Ok, so you’re here, you started work in the café…how did it go from there?
K: Well, first four or five months were quite difficult, because I had to borrow money from my friend to migrate…they knew the situation, they were supporting me a lot so I didn’t have to pay deposit. Of course it was a credit, so pretty much everything that I earned I had to pay back, but it all worked out at the end…I took some extra overtime so I went on an even keel (wyszłam na prosta). And then parties…less for the first few months, you had to limit yourself…but then I started to organise time a bit differently, meeting new people, I signed up…before Facebook there used to be a forum called ‘Grono’, and that’s when I met my husband and some more people that are my friends and close friends until now. Some of them are back to Poland, some to other place but we’re in touch all the time…we had our Thursday/Friday dinners, we used to meet quite often…it was a party time and so on…that party life shortened down when we wanted to get mortgage, you had to get a bit tighter…especially that the crisis started hitting so the credit situation wasn’t so clear either…so we tighten up and we bought a house, later we had a dog and then [son]. So the first was a dog, for a trial… our ‘fluffy child’. Maternity leave I had for six months and then I returned to work…

S: Ok, but which one was it, you mentioned café…
K: No, no [son] was born in 2011 then I was working after customer service, I got promoted for office manager and some financial responsibilities too: unofficial I was also Accountant’ assistance so I had a bit more responsibilities, but you know also the wage was better. We started thinking about child. Secondly, I didn’t like my job, so the plan was to get pregnant to give myself a break from work– a bit selfish, but I was planning to start looking for a new job after giving a birth anyway. But the first job, even though that at the begging it was very difficult (dala mi w kosc) I gave me a lot of experience…that you know, you can’t do without it. Then when I get pregnant in December, from the end of sixth month I was on maternity leave, because of the situation at work I didn’t want to go back there so I took a medical leave so two months I was waiting for my son at home, he was born in August, six months of maternity…I had a plan to take those additional four months, unpaid but my husband was losing a job, so because I could go back to work because I had permanent contract, it happened that dad stayed home and looked after the child babysitter. I came back to work, but the first month…when I came back I wanted to return to part-time work, but the conditions he was promising to me all the time– he never kept his words so I resigned…so we were both unemployed for some time…

2. MOTHERHOOD
S: Coming back to you becoming mum...how was your first days?

K: My mum...it was weird because she always knows best, I suggested at the first her to visit, she first said yes then she said that the due date in for 19th August, and that’s when the school starts because she is a teacher so she needs to get ready...so she will think about it. But you know, you need to buy tickets and everything...I don’t know why but she decided that I told her that I didn’t want her to come... she decided she would be with me in the hospital room while I was giving a birth, and I said no because we have plans with husband and we decided to be together...she decided to wait outside, so I said that nobody will let her in, in Poland you can do it but not here. She had her own plan of my labour. So she decided she would wait in the hospital, or outside because she wanted to around me. I could understand that, but then her being alone in the foreign city...Rotunda hospital surroundings are not the safest, the labour lasted 26 hours so I can’t imagine her waiting even in the hall and waiting...so I said No, but then she refused to come and visit us...instead my mother-in-law came...I didn’t get on with her at all. My husband is an only-child, so we very very much didn’t get on. Theoretically...I am grateful for coming and helping me...she relieved me a lot, because I put on a lot of weight when I was pregnant...I was like an elephant so some things were very difficult for me but on the one side she was helping, on the other she always had her say...but she was there...being a mother in the begging...I was, and I am still everyday in love with my son...my miracle and my first child...but those first days I struggled with breastfeeding...so I need more help than critique, where the critique was and there was no help...I gave up on it, and I regret it a bit...looking at it from time perspective, it was good that she was there– she helped me to figure out the first...she was shocked, because I was doing things differently than her, she was a bit scared and I was nervous too...after her leave I was furious on her but from time perspective I am happy that she was there– nonetheless, she helped us a lot...I can’t imagine being alone...first week my husband was with me, but I can’t imagine being left alone like some other mothers, when he has to go back to work. He was lucky enough to have a deal with his boss that he takes leave when the child is born, so he didn’t have to book the dates in advance. Those first days... together with my husband we shared a lot of responsibilities...he’s also dad...even later, he said it was even better that he could feed him as well. I had few minutes for myself or he was taking [son] for a walk or something...so it was a lot, lot of help...till today. But I was on maternity, at home so I was getting up at nights during the week but he offered to be up at weekends so I can have some sleep...we were usually up together anyway... I don’t have any help from my parents. They don’t want to come here, they don’t agree with us leaving abroad, parents-in-law accepted that there is no way to come back, but it happens that they would ask if we miss...help from my parents, even though they work and they cannot come straight away, parents-in-law have now retired so they’re more mobile, even when they were working (they’re retired only two years–her, and six months–him); even if I’d ring today that I need help, I bet they will be the ones who come not my parents...so there were very hard times...because of my mum, many things I didn’t want to do as my mum...I went through therapy that helped me a lot.
S: Before or after a child?

K: After...I started to realise that in some cases in terms of raising up my child, I started reacting like my mother...she was always very nervous so when I was [tupalam noga] and I was saying I didn’t want something, she didn’t understand that, she was punishing me and shouting...so I started catching myself that I’m getting angry at my own child...I never raised my hand on him but I started catching up the same behaviours and I decided I won’t let it myself...It also helped me to understand mother-in-law...I stopped blaming myself for migration, for the kind of mother I am...constant critique from my mother...influenced my self-esteem...when you ring your mother and say [son] smiled for the first time, and mother as a pedagogue says in books it says that kids don’t smile till some age and that it is not really a smile, it is just a facial expression...it takes away any happiness...

S: Ok, coming back to first days...when you stood up on your legs again, when it got stable again, how was the contact with others?

K: In terms of socialising...[son] he was always on the first place...so when he was a little bit ill we stayed at home...some friends couldn’t accept it, only when they started to have their own children they started understanding...or when more friends had friends...it wasn’t like I got mental...everyone else was... I never had any problem with choice, going to the party with friends or stay home...up until now, even if I have a choice sometimes on Friday to go for a beer with colleagues, I’d prefer to go back home because I know I haven’t seen my son all day. Evening we’re trying to spend together, always despite my husband having his own company so there’s work 24/7. We both work full-time and there’s a company on top of it so we’re trying...one’s working another looking after child...we’re trying to share responsibilities...weekends, again – family based. So if we have a choice of going for a party or going for a trip with son, we always go somewhere and try to spend time actively...not really like organised time or weekend classes, but together. [Son] will always be on the first place, obviously. I never had a problem to ring to work and say, that the child is ill and that I can’t come...and I didn’t really care how long it was... and we had few accidents during games and plays...or when he went to crèche...this first year, financially...because of the GP visits...of course, first time mother, kid would sneeze differently and I would take him to the doctor...after about a year I realised, that running nose is not an illness so I calmed down...but the first year...we were both unemployed for some time...I was happy because I could spend more time with child, my husband was happy because we were home but financially, we got our butts kicked...it was quite difficult...so the happiness from being a young marriage and having a small child was a little bit too much for us...I was even thinking that maybe it was all too fast together, but we had a lot of support from parents-in-law...we were even thinking about long-term visit of mother-in-law but she had to leave after a month...’unfortunately’...but we tried to compromise...she did everything to help though...

3. EMPLOYMENT
S: When you went back to work, your husband stayed home… you mentioned the problems with your employer – that he didn’t stick to the agreement before maternity leave?

K: […] I was bringing the bad relations with employer back home… some of my responsibilities were a customer service, and some of it was complaints line… and NOBODY wanted to do it. When I started, I was doing it… so I knew everything about it, how to deal with clients etc. and the boss was always happy with the way I was doing it and many times… I had an impression, when I told him about my pregnancy that it is not really according to his plans… maybe even he thought I did on purpose… I never hid it… but I have an impression that he was saying it was on purpose… when I left work, I went to use legal advice in citizens information… in the contract, that I never received, when I become office manager they never gave me a contract… they were saying I’ll give it later, I’ll give it later… there were never any problems with money or anything so I never asked too much about it, but I wanted to know… both girls who was working in English department – they had maternity leave, and the company paid 80% of their wage for maternity, even though after five years I supposed to get 100%… my boss said that he forgot to tell me that they changed and informed us that maternity leave is no longer paid… so before the return to work I needed legal advice about what to do and how to talk to them… also, at work I had a lot of clients who were threatening me… it was about money refund that they rarely get, the threats were sometimes quite serious… my boss was always promising me that he would take someone else on board to help me, and I had more and more responsibilities that I was accepting to get experience, but after I had a child I couldn’t sit at home till 11 or midnight and keep preparing reports and presentations or translations (Polish to English). I was always doing it for free, overtime… and it was in my contract that the overtime is not paid… he agreed about part-time return, but the deal was that I come back and he would take someone else to help me because he said that there is a lot of work, and that customer service… company can’t afford to hire someone else… so as a thank you I handed him my resignation. I was going to go to the court… small child at home, the lawyer said it can take few years, I knew layers from the company quite good and I didn’t want to be dealing with them in court. But with all the documents (I had a copy of all emails, and threats) so I had a lot evidences but I decided not to… and I left and I found another that I was happy about…

S: Did you find that other job straight away or did you have any break?

K: I had three months… at home with [son]… I am a person who has to work… I’m not saying that I don’t love my child and don’t want to spend time with him, but I need to do something for myself… so I started looking for a job… I found f/t job with flexi-hours system… the company was mother friendly, so when the child was sick, I could ring and say he is sick and there was no problem and give back this day as overtime… they were very family friendly… the job was very good, I really liked it… coming back to those three months – it was between April and June so nice weather and a lot of time together… my husband was working there. The plan was to go back p/t but we wanted to continue setting up our company, so we needed two full-time earners at home to be able to do
it…to pay back all the credit cards…I don’t regret…I was finishing work at 4, train back 4.30 at home so I had whole evening to be with [son]…same about weekends – with child…

S: Ok, so we can start working on map…

MAP EXERCISE

S: So tell me about your everyday life….Can you describe one day from your routine?

K: Well now is so much better because husband works from home, I have another job…because the previous job – they moved my department to Krakow, so I found another one 15 minutes away from home so I no longer have to be up at 5.30 we get up at 7am, I’m up; husband goes for a walk with dog; I’m preparing something for the son for lunch and something for us, we drive a small one to crèche, or they drive me, depending on his mood, usually he drives me home and then goes to crèche…son spends the time in crèche…he likes his girlfriends and he likes the girls who work there…I am not fully satisfied from it, but I can see he is happy…he wouldn’t be happy to go somewhere where he is hurt…

S: How about your work, where do you work?

K: I am now office manager with accounts payable…I don’t really like my job…boss has it’s odd moments…I knew it from the beginning, I am on maternity cover – the girl is coming back soon and she warned me about his mood…the office is small, theoretically there is 20 people but three office people, including 1 director – he’s never there, financial director – my boss who sits in his rooms, mumbles and never talks to anyone, and me…and there is one more women, Irish for p/t…thanks god I can talk to her sometimes…but you know, she comes for three or four hours, she has to have her job done so there isn’t much time for chatting, sometimes lunch together or something…and I need to work somewhere where I can socialise, so I have someone to talk to…so I am happy that the contract is finishing…

S: Ok, so let’s place those people on the map…

K: Boss – he is Irish; Trish – from work, the one who works with me, who I can chat with sometimes.

S: You mentioned lunch, is it only work related, or do you also socialise after work?

K: She’s planning it…sometimes we exchange text messages, she lives even further away than me, in Co. Cavan so the distance is quite big…we don’t meet really…I am in touch with girls from previous job…and to be honest, mostly not Irish.

S: Do you keep in touch every day?
K: No no no. I can add Pam, from crèche – I am in touch with her every day; there is Pam and Lisa – two of them, and they change. But as I said, we see each other every day, and we see each other on the street or something, sometimes in the local pub but it’s not friendship.

Brother and I can also put Sylwia – she’s my neighbour, and her children study, her son studies here.

S: Do you meet often?

K: Pretty much every day, we walk together at evening; they also have two dogs so we meet when we walk the dogs out too…

S: Does she help you anyhow?

K: There was two occasions, when I could count on them…once I had accident in Blanchardstown, the ambulance was taking me to the hospital, and [son] had to be picked up from crèche. So, one phone call to her and everything has been dealt with…she couldn’t pick him up herself, but she organised her children to look after my son. And second, when my husband was in the hospital recently and I had to run from work to hospital, so I rang her and they looked after the son, for two days pretty much my son spend with them…because they work as well, so when she worked, her children were looking after my son…even today, we’re meeting for a party later…

S: What do you do for her?

K: Well…to be honest I never had a change to repay the favour…they’re so well organised, and all in love in their dogs, even though we offered them to look after the dogs as a thank you for everything they do for us, we wanted to get something for Xmas for them because they were looking after our dog when we were in Poland… so we asked their son, and he said no don’t even bother buying a dinner or cinema ticket…we wanted to look after the dogs but they won’t leave dogs home alone…children are adults, they now have dogs, but if they even need help…they know that they can count on us, they know who to contact. And also Agata…maybe we don’t see each other every day, but we talk a lot…we try to stay in touch…my husband in a godfather of her son, she also knows she can count on me, and I can count on her anytime…there were many occasions we were helping each other….

S: With childcare?

K: Yeah, well she works from home, so she’s home all the time, she has her business…but we were helping, when her son was born we were driving them, or which doctor to go to…we helped each other like two mums, and of course we complain about our mothers-in-law to each other too…

S: What about your brother?
K: Brother I think is the next after husband and child, the most important person in my life. He know he can always count on me, this is more of a “sister I have a problem – help me”, or “sister I need some money till the end of the month” – very concrete, that’s what I need –please help but I also know if I’d need a help there wouldn’t be any problem either.

S: Anyone else here, in everyday section?

K: Hmm…no I don’t think so…

S: Ok, so let’s move to free time, outside of work…in the meantime I noted few people, you mentioned your mother-in-law?

K: I would put her, maybe not too close but one of the close ones…mother- and father-in-law…of course, Adam and Jacek…Friends, those close ones, these are usually couples…

S: Depends, who are you getting on the best?

K: Ok, so Beata and Marek [writing down the names] and Asia, her husband is Irish…so with Tim I don’t really have any close contacts but when there’s Kasia, there’s also Tim.

S: Do you meet sometimes without Tim?

K: Well, you know, when there’s a girls party, then we meet alone, if it’s said beforehand…but if not then every woman drags her tail behind….

S: How did you meet Asia?

K: Work…girls from previous work…Marzenka – my husband is a very close friend with Jordi, and this is his wife, who he met here, and they also have 1 year old son.

S: Do you get on better with Marzena or Jordi?

K: Girls…it’s always girl, even though I’ve known Jordi for longer, but Marzenka…and it’s always more like a social gathering, when we’re going away for a weekend, or just going out in general or it’s warm outside, so we make BBQ…these are the people that you invite because you like spending time with them…as I said, in my case…I’m a bit difficult when it comes to friendship because of my mum…she never liked my friends so I always had some kind of bans so I spend most of the time at home, this is one of the problem that I cannot, myself look after my own social relations…I have friends that I can rely on and get advice, and they also know that they can count on us if they need to…but I don’t have that very close friend…Well there is Sylwia and Agata, that are the closest to me now, because the third one – Gosia, my friend from Grono, one of the first people I met in Ireland, one of the closest people who count [postawic mnie na nogi] and we would do it to each other, mutually we could give each other a kick…as I said, I am very careful to use “friend” (przyjaciel) word but I can count her as a friend, and I should put her closer…
S: What about other girls you put down, are they mothers as well?

K: Asia is planning to be a mum, Marzenka is a mum…so often when we’re meeting…it’s more social but always with children. Now, we are on the stage of our lives that 90% of our friends have this “baggage”, “tails” …it’s no longer drinking beer till morning and have fun…now parties start at 4, finish at 8…we talk about nappies, rashes…and recently we even met in Beata and Marek, and we realised that all we talk about is doctors, syrups, meds…how was school for kids…not how it used to be before.

S: Did you know them before being a mum?

K: Yes, Jordi – for much longer than Marzena, he was living with my husband…and then I met Marzena, around two years before becoming a mum. Asia, I’ve known her from work for three years…I like to meet with her socially…

S: Ok, what about Beata and Marek?

K: The same, they’re all my friends with who I came to Ireland…we are in touch all the time. One of my close friends came back to Poland, so the contact weakened a bit…he went back with his girlfriend…we send emails etc but it’s occasionally….

S: Do you want to put him down on the map?

K: No…not really. As I said, with three other – we cut off the contact because of the ideological clash (inne swiatopoglady, sie zmienily) so we’re not in touch anymore…so it’s either people from Grono…Gosia and my husband are from Poland…there’s nobody who I came to Ireland with…but Marek and Beata…Marek is a very close friend of my husband from Lodz…she’s his husband, they came here together…they don’t have children but they have two cats. Marek has a daughter from first marriage though. This is a marriage without children, but they like children a lot…I would also add Pawel – he has a girlfriend – Gosia – we don’t keep in touch, Pawel was our wedding (witness? best man?), but we had a bit of argument when he was with his fiancé, then wife and now ex-wife but all the time he’s close to us…we’re in touch, we meet…when I look at this map, it’s mostly people who I met through my husband…sometimes we organise with other girls…you know they have kids and work in different times…but we have our ladies evenings, but it’s not clubs…but we have a drink in the pub and we’re back with the last bus but it’s relaxing a bit…you know.

S: Sure, and who usually goes for those parties? All four of you?

K: Sylwia…if the party is in our place, she’s always invited but…there is usually more people, but I don’t want to put others…because we’re not in touch regularly…some people I know because they’re Beata’s friends, Marzena and Jordi’s but it’s only…you know…and there are some girls from work as well but they’re not Irish…Brother would be a bit further away, because I don’t see him very often. I don’t go to Poland very often because of the situation at home, but either Skype or phone – we talk quite often…I can also put my parents in the same circle…
S: Any other contacts in Poland that you have?

K: To be honest…no…my friends…we are in touch through FB or skype sometimes but it all broke…people migrated and went around the world…and I forgot about someone very important – Polish in the U.S. – Ania, Patryk – Ania is my friend from high school, Patryk went to the same school with us…they’re a couple and they moved to states together. Very close person to me, maybe we don’t talk often, everyday but they are very important to me.

S: Do you see each other often?

K: It’s difficult to physically see with each other…only now he got citizenship and she got green card, so with the travels…we seen each other last year it was quite complicated with the trip until now…and even then we spend together two days, but we planned nearly five but [my son] got ill, and we didn’t know if it’s allergy or what so we had to pack up and come back to the city so a little bit not according to the plan…but we stay in touch they had baby last year in November. As I said they’re very important for me…we’re different in terms of ideologies, politics and ways of living but we love talking and discussing it with each other and we always liked it even though I have been always arguing with Patryk about it but it was more like a positive arguments…

S: Ok, you mentioned your friends from work that are not Irish?

K: I will put two…Asia but there is also Irma and Laura…maybe we don’t meet too often, but…Irma is from Latvia, Laura from Italy– we’re just going for a party…and Steph is from Germany…as I said I met them through work, we are in touch…sometime if one of us find some free time we meet for coffee or lunch…first two have children, third doesn’t always have time because she either studies or have some kind of practices so she can’t always find time either but we meet…only when we have time, gossips…chat about nappies…if there would be a need to stay with children, that wouldn’t be a problem…because of the work situation Irma is just coming back to work, and looking for work, Laura just returned to work, and Steph is studying…she doesn’t have a job…they fired us. In terms of contacts and support in terms of childcare, there has always been Gosia and Agata. We never had to drop children to each other, because we now live quite far away from each other…but if there was a need, there would be no problem but Gosia was the one who was babysitting my son when we wanted to go to the cinema or for a dinner…she often even offered to stay with him – good auntie.

S: Anyone else who you would like to add?

K: As I said…there is plenty of names in my head…from the parties and so on…it works like that: we come up with the idea of going for a trip…we send a message to ten people who wants to go and that’s how it works…I think it has changed, when you have kid…during the week you want to spend time home…it used to be different you know, your week was different…after work I used to go for a beer or coffee, here and there…fitness, gym cinema…now everyone has their own stuff to do after work, and
we’re also getting older…so sometimes there’s weekend, you shut the curtains and you
don’t want to meet anyone…we also neglected our social life because of the financial
difficulties we had…

5. CRISIS SITUATIONS

S: Ok, so we can move on to the crisis situation. You mentioned your accident or
your husband’s health problems, or your son’s illness…could you describe some
other crisis situations and who helped you with them?

K: So for example…I got phone call, it was the second day of my new job….I got phone
call from husband’s colleague, something with heart…you have bad thoughts and you can
hear ambulance somewhere in your head….so my colleague who was just leaving for
maternity leave she gave me a lift to hospital, and also my boss because he said I could
stayed at home, I didn’t have to go to work till it all calms down…Sylwia helped me with
my son so I didn’t have to worry about it…I came back like midnight, he was already
after bath and asleep…I was a little bit afraid to ring husband’s parents and how his mum
can react on the news…so I rang his father but only when I was in the hospital and I knew
what was going on so I can calm them down. Of course, they said that if there is a need,
they will come over asap, the problem was that he was connected to all the machines so
he couldn’t talk…so his mum couldn’t hear that everything is ok so I knew she is stressed
a lot but I rang quite often and reassured them…but if they had to come here, there
wouldn’t be a problem. Sylwia. Parents-in-law – even though they were away, but father-
in-law was calming me down – if everything is ok, then it’ll be fine. I can also write
Elaine, from work because she helped me then. We don’t stay in touch a lot, sometimes
we just like each other kids’ pictures on Facebook and the boss…he didn’t have to care, I
was a new employee…he could say: “tough, you’re at work, you’re staying till the end,
why would I care” but he said I could stay with my husband as long as I was, he even
paid me for it…so I could have used it, and spend extra week at home but as I
said…that’s the situation. Next, further support it was Beata and Marek– when they found
out. It was right before the stag night one of Jacek’s friends so I had to tell them that
he couldn’t make it…so I can put Beata and Marek here, even though they live on the
other side of Dublin. Straight away they asked how they could help us. And the second
person is Agata, to whom I could call and cry to calm down my nerves…

S: All right, any other people present through other situations?

K: Gosia…she used to but now she’s far away…I know that when there’s a crisis
situation every person we know would help…it’s a very small circle…Marcin – friend
met through Grono, no children, single, older…we can always count on him, he always
helps us…but it works both ways…

S: Yeah? How do you help him?
K: He had some problems…he lost his job, he couldn’t find a new one for longer, so he started playing games…my husband was going to his place every day to kind of help him stand up again…something like a kick in the ass…my husband organised the job for him, now he’s producing wine so…and we met quite often for testing… nothing to do with child but he was put down in the crèche as emergency if Gosia couldn’t make it…oh yeah I have to remove her now but he’s send person for contact…he was driving my mother-in-law when she was here and we needed second car….when he had a problem with his housemate and we helped him…because people work, work and study, work and have kids and the contacts are not every day…social contacts of working parents are 180 degrees different than parents who don’t work…

S: Do you want to put your husband too?

K: Yeah well…when I have a problem, he’s the first person who I talk to and also the first one who get the blame (dostaje po głowie) during stressful situations…good that you remind me. I won’t put a child in a crisis situation…but he calms me down…

S: Yeah, well it’s interesting…sometimes husband and kids are the place to relief and have that support but sometimes it is them who cause it…

K: Well, we’re trying not to argue around the little one because he doesn’t like it…he doesn’t like screaming…he associates it with the pain when I had that accident last year…the pain was horrendous so every time they tried to lift me up I was screaming and that’s how he associates it. He doesn’t like screaming so even when we argue we try not to shout, because anytime he hears it, he comes over, stands in the middle and tells us to be quite (NB. in English), don’t shout.

S: You mentioned therapy…was it any support for you?

K: yes, very very very very big support.

S: Was it in Polish or English?

K: The woman was Polish.

S: Ok, anyone else for crisis situations?

K: I still don’t know how to define my parents…I know they still hold it against me, that I don’t talk about the problems…because when I do, they’re so trivial and everyone else has the same problems…so I don’t say anything…when there are any problems, even when we had issues with my husband– my mum didn’t know, when I ended up in hospital he asked me if he should ring my mum…so I said, it’s up to you, it won’t change anything so…I would never expect that I would never treat my parents-in-law so close…now when I look at it, despite hearing a lot of bad words from mother-in-law but being a mum I can understand it…

S: Ok, let’s move to the information. You mentioned already citizens information when you needed advice after returning to work…
K: Yes, so citizen…if I’m looking for things related to Ireland…when I’m reading newspapers, I’m not reading Kurier Irlandzki in Polish, but I’d rather read the original piece… I don’t read reprints. Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner – it’s my deviation…press review every day…my deviation from studies…but also gazeta.pl from Polish side…I also read a lot of blog, for mum…I have few favourite so: matkaprezesa.pl; one of the top ones: klocekikredka – that woman writes very sad stuff and archiwumchaosu maybe it’s not parenting but I like it and natemat – it’s politics and social issues and mama.du – there are all sorts of blogs connected…no, I should move them closer because they’re basics to read…

S: What about Facebook?

K: Well, in general I should put Facebook in the middle…it’s always with me but it will be in the middle…and Pinterest.

S: Any Facebook groups in particular?

K: Polskie Mamy w Dublinie. And I’m staying away from other groups…because I’m getting too angry© for instance…I sell new shoes worn only once…not for me anymore…but because of the company there is Irish party group…

S: Can you tell me a bit more about this company?

K: [description ] and it’s getting better so we’re hoping that at least in year time, at least one of us can resign from work and look after that…and quite possibly it will be me, because my husband he has a very good job right now, we rely on him a lot and you know…your own company until it brings stable level of income for two or three years – it’s risky and also we have a plan…the school is starting next year, we’re planning second child…and then either part-time or husband at home, because with the childcare prices…I’m not going to pay that much for it only to see my child for the weekend…so that’s our five year plan…three maybe even…first five year plan is already done, done even before five years…

6. IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

S: All right, well so you started talking about my last question. What’s next? What’s plan for the future? You mentioned second child…

K: Yeah, second child…we’re slowly thinking about it, we start preparing…and it all depends when and if I find work…my contract is finishing now, so the plan is to find a job to have maternity leave, so the plan is that within a year the bump will get bigger…

S: Cool. Here, back in Poland or somewhere else?

K: We’re definitely not coming back to Poland. The house is here, so according to the bank for the next 30 years we supposed to stay…my first real job, I had a chance to work
two weeks in Poland when I was giving training to people who were taking over our responsibilities from previous work and this is not for me…different environment, different habits…very weird…it’s like rats race: five degrees, eight languages and never enough…I don’t need to get angry about it…although Gosia just moved to Krakow, she used the opportunity… but because she has worked in the company for long time, she didn’t move for the lower position…but they always also wanted to come back, so it’s different…But I think that the canal and 2000 km is enough distance away from mother-in-law is just right…no matter whether it’s me or my husband saying it – it makes sense. My son is now on holidays in Poland, he went to grandparents…granddad came here and took him back…for four week, so it’s empty, quiet and sad…it’s first time we done it. It’s good, many Polish mothers don’t tolerate…I don’t know if you’ve seen this before…my son speaks Polish, and for many it’s not acceptable. It’s weird for them that I don’t want to send him to Polish school and I never will because I don’t want to get rid of the child for the sixth day in a week from home…the only good and only one way to learn is practice, not sitting in the school for six hours…so in terms of history and geography he should know, and he will know…it’s responsibility of the parent, not school. It’s weird that many mums have this attitude: “So he doesn’t speak Polish?”– maybe it would be important for me, if I knew that we wanted to come back to Poland, that’s when it would be very important but right now…I’m not saying Poland is not important, but right now…many people look very weird…grandparents don’t mind…so…

S: Ok, so you’re here with your husband, and your son is in Poland playing out on the snow…how does he communicate with grandparents?

K: We use Skype…oh you mean with them? He speaks English: oh there’s a truck coming and grandma says in Polish: oh yeah the trees are growing…they manage somehow…he knows a lot of Polish words, he has his own connections Polish-English…but now they play Polish cartoons and Polish songs for him…granddad noticed that he knows many Polish words but when he keeps talking a lot and speeds up then he switches to English…but I think we have time…I read a lot about it…he will start school and he’ll mix: Polish, English and Irish…

S: Yes, Irish in particular…

K: My friends was checking the essay for her child…oh no that was like a test, and they said to correct it…

S: Is there anyone else to write down?

K: Yeah, I’ll probably remind myself when I leave…no, I think now it’s time to shape up close relations, those that are not every day but you know you can rely on them, and they can rely on you…like today, Marek – my husband got the job for him because they needed admin with accountancy for his work, and Marek is an accountant who unfortunately worked as security…as I said, it’s more like exchange of favours…or we have our company, so does Beata and they told us about supplier…it’s not only crisis situation, but also everyday things…not trivial but help…it’s obvious when someone
helps me, I won’t refuse when they need it…exchange of clothes, or when my son grows out of them…we have a deal like I got the whole bag of clothes from Agata, I passed it on further, then Kubus was born…you know passing on clothes, exchanging experiences…we have our people for moaning, people for partying and people for more serious stuff…

S: Ok, thank you very much for your time
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