

**OTHER WHITES, WHITE OTHERS:  
EAST EUROPEAN MIGRANTS AND THE  
BOUNDARIES OF WHITENESS**

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## **Declaration**

I, Julia Oktawia Halej, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.  
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the integration experiences of East European migrants to England using the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies. ‘Whiteness’ in this research is conceptualised as a symbolic boundary that is articulated, redrawn, permeated and negotiated by members of both the ‘white’ English host society and by East European migrants to England. The findings of this thesis challenge the notion of ‘whiteness’ as ‘invisibility’, and contribute to an understanding of ‘whiteness’ as a fragmented identity, not solely tied to phenotype, but also to a set of cultural practices, so called ‘whitely scripts’, that migrants are expected to perform in order to be considered incorporated into white English society. The research comprised a media analysis and in-depth interviews with English respondents and East European migrants in high-migration and low-migration areas in England, namely Manchester, Norwich and Winchester. It reveals how references to culture, behavioural norms and manners inform discursive constructions which simultaneously position East Europeans at the center and at the margins of the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’ in the media discourse and individual narratives of English participants. At the same time, the analysis outlines the ways in which East European migrants themselves navigate and articulate this boundary, by constructing sameness with the English mainstream, how they negotiate experiences of racialization and discrimination, as well as the various strategies in terms of ‘passing’ and ‘taking a stance’ that they employ in order to avert or resist these experiences. Moreover, the analysis provides insights into how questions of socio-cultural in/visibility inform the integration experiences of East European migrants and shape their senses of belonging, further informing their understandings of ‘whiteness’. The thesis argues that ‘East European’ has in fact become a ‘boundary term’ in England, with East Europeans being ambivalently and partially incorporated into the mainstream society, featuring in the English imaginary simultaneously as ‘Other Whites’ and ‘White Others’.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*I think that was very surprising for people, to find (...) the market flooded with people who looked the same (Holly, Manchester).*

The recent mass migration of East Europeans to the United Kingdom following the EU enlargements of 2004/2007 has been interpreted as representing part of a ‘novel’ trend in global migration, considering migrants’ circular and temporary migration patterns, their degree of engagement in transnational practices, ‘new’ types of migrants, such as women migrating on a large scale, and their geographical dispersion, with migrants settling in hitherto low-migration rural areas (see Robinson 2010). Stenning et al. (2006: 3) speak in this context of A8 migrants as representing possibly the ‘archetypal new migrant’ to the UK. However, White (2011: 1-3) highlights the limitations of an approach which considers this migration to be part of a ‘novel’ world-wide trend, particularly in regards to shared experiences among migrants who are subject to different immigration policies determined by their countries of origins, the question of the real and perceived ‘temporariness’ of this ‘new’ migration, and whether or not transnational ties indeed represent a ‘new’ phenomenon, or just something that has been performed on a smaller scale in the past.

Whether this wave of migration is a ‘novel’ phenomenon is a matter of theoretical debate; yet, the large-scale economic migration of East Europeans to the UK is undoubtedly unique in a number of respects: first of all, the relative lack of constraints on free movement within the new institutional settings of intra-European mobility, the guarantee of the right to work and settle in the UK, and the fact that the government has little control over these flows (see Osipovic 2010). And second of all, the fact that the majority society in the UK is confronted for the first time since the mass migration

of the Irish in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to such a large extent by economic migrants who ‘look the same’, namely they are ‘white’.

The latter issue is the core focus of this thesis and is conceptualised using the framework of ‘whiteness’, with race being analysed as a socially constructed classification which assigns human worth and social status using ‘white’ as the model of humanity and the height of human achievement in order to establish and maintain privilege and power. As shall be explored in more depth in the next chapter, ‘whiteness’ is here defined as a location of structural advantage, a place from which ‘white’ people look at themselves and at ‘Others’ in society. Moreover, it refers to a set of cultural practices that usually remain unnamed and unmarked, so-called ‘whitely scripts’, which determine the degree to which the ‘Other’ is included in or excluded from the boundary of ‘whiteness’, and which thus have an impact on the degree of integration of the ‘Other’ in society. Integration is here understood as a two-way process: integration is an outcome of equal access to the cultural, social, economic and political resources shared by the established members of society, with the assumption that, in order to gain access to these resources, migrants must adopt the social and cultural capital, as well as social and cultural identities, considered necessary and acceptable in the discourses of the dominant society. Furthermore, this thesis wants to challenge the notion of ‘whiteness as *invisibility*’ (see Chapter 2) and instead understands whiteness as a dynamic boundary that is articulated, redrawn, permeated, negotiated and navigated by members of both the white English host society<sup>1</sup> and by East European migrants<sup>2</sup> in England.

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<sup>1</sup> English participants/respondents are British citizens who reside in the three locations where interviewing took place: Manchester, Norwich and Winchester. They possess British citizenship, are white, and do not identify as Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish. The question of their identification as ‘British’ is raised in the empirical part of this thesis. The terms ‘English host society/mainstream society’ are used in order to refer



The overall aim of this thesis is, therefore, to deepen our understanding of the ways in which race informs the integration experiences of East European migrants in England. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Which discourses shape the boundary of 'whiteness' in England and position East European migrants either at the centre or the margins of this boundary?
- 2) In what way does 'East European' function as a 'boundary term'<sup>3</sup> in England that determines the limitations and opportunities that East European migrants encounter in terms of social inclusion and exclusion from English society?
- 3) How do East European migrants 'perform whiteness' and reflect on the processes involved in 'becoming white' by drawing, redrawing and navigating this boundary themselves?
- 4) To what extent are moral boundaries<sup>4</sup> invoked by East Europeans in order to potentially shift the boundary of 'whiteness' in England?

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to what East European respondents consider to be the dominant culture in England, and in order to refer to my 'white' English respondents and the 'whiteness' discourse prevalent in their narratives.

<sup>2</sup> East European migrants are participants/respondents of Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Romanian origin who possess formal citizenship of their respective countries and who came to the UK in the 2000s, particularly after the EU accession of their respective countries.

<sup>3</sup> Wray (2006: 14) introduces the notion of 'boundary terms' as 'one of the common, everyday ways that boundary work is performed is through the use of words and concepts that serve as socio-cultural dividing lines, or *boundary terms*.'

<sup>4</sup> Moral boundary work is understood as the process in which people react to and enact ethnic boundaries in order to preserve their dignity on the basis of moral superiority discourses in the face of potential stigmatisation due to their ethnic backgrounds (Lamont 2000). Using Wimmer's (2008) approach, moral boundary work can be understood as incorporating the mechanisms of transvaluation and equalisation.

In order to analyse the ways in which this boundary is constructed and how it relates to the experiences of migrant incorporation of East Europeans, I have conducted a media analysis and qualitative interviews with both English respondents and East European migrants (Hungarians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles and Romanians) in three locations: Manchester, Norwich and Winchester.

The choice of locations and nationalities among the East Europeans was determined by the question of socio-cultural visibility and invisibility of these migrants in a particular location. By combining the issue of embodied and socio-cultural in/visibility, I follow the approach of Mas Giralt (2011), who conceptualises the latter concept as an ‘official non-recognition’ of migrants in their host society, in the sense of public unawareness of the presence of particular East European migrant groups in their country of settlement and their ‘lack of representation in the social landscape of the host society’ (ibid: 15) due to low numbers, physical dispersion and a limited presence of cultural and community groups. As the media analysis and qualitative interviews will show, East European migrants in England, and Polish migrants in particular, are generally perceived by the public to be a homogenous group. However, some locations (such as Winchester) have only seen a relatively small migration of East Europeans, and some East European migrant groups, such as Latvians and Hungarians, have a small degree of socio-cultural visibility in England overall. With this in mind, the focus of this thesis includes how issues of socio-cultural in/visibility inform constructions of ‘whiteness’ among English respondents and East European migrants, and how they affect the integration and belonging of these migrants into the English host society, revealing a potential heterogeneity of experiences within the category of ‘East Europeans’.

In the following, I contextualise my research by reviewing the empirical studies carried out on East European migrants in Britain to discuss their relevance to my own project and highlight my contributions to this literature by indicating gaps in the existing scholarship, before presenting an outline of the structure of this thesis.

### **1.1. Researching East European Migrants in Britain**

The large-scale migration of citizens from Central and Eastern Europe to Britain after the admission of these states to the European Union in 2004/2007 has reshaped Britain's demographic and labour maps and consequently inspired a growing body of research across various academic disciplines, which commonly analyses these 'new migrants' from the following perspectives: (i) their motivation for migration, (ii) their impact on the British and home labour markets, and (iii) issues of integration.<sup>5</sup> The studies range from quantitative surveys undertaken by major centres on migration research (most notably CRONEM and COMPASS) and reports for local authorities, which both approach the category 'Eastern European' or 'A8/A10 migrants' more generally,<sup>6</sup> to qualitative research, which is undertaken with a strong local focus, and Polish migrants, who represent the largest migrant group amongst East Europeans in Britain by some margin, feature prominently in this research.

This predominant focus on Polish migrants and generalisations about A10 migrants in UK research has been criticized for 'the risk inherent in such an approach (which) is the possibility of essentialising notions about Polish people, who are thus considered as members of the post-communist bloc' (Kempny 2010: 12). Moreover,

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<sup>5</sup> Burrell (2010) accurately summarises the key themes of research on East European migrants in the UK as 'Staying, Returning, Working and Living'.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Garapich and Parutis (2009) on Redbridge, Garapich (2009) on Lewisham, Cook et al. (2008) on Leeds, Glossop and Shaheen (2009) on Bristol and Hull.

White (2011: 3) highlights the existing hierarchies within the category of East Europeans, in which Poles occupy a dominant role, being the largest and best-established group, and also the differences in immigration policy, in which Romanians and Bulgarians were until January 2014 relatively disadvantaged in comparison to A8 migrants. White (2011: 9) also notes the absence of viewpoints of ‘ordinary’ British citizens about their East European neighbours, which puts migrant experiences at the centre of research attention. This thesis aims to address these two lacunae in the research by including the perceptions and perspectives of English respondents into the analysis and by highlighting the shared and divergent integration experiences of East European migrants from different national backgrounds.

Moreover, as the literature review below will show, relatively little work has been done on the issue of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination, looking at how these East European migrants have been welcomed to Britain and how they are perceived by the host society and how these perceptions influence their social integration. My research not only fills this gap by looking at England specifically, but in doing so also contributes innovatively to those studies on prejudice and discrimination in England that attempt to explain ‘racialisation’ outside the paradigm of colour.

### ***Key Themes in Academic Research on East European Migrants in Britain***

Two approaches prevail in academic research on migration within the social sciences, with some degree of overlap: economic and sociological/anthropological. Whilst the latter focuses more on issues such as social ties, social capital and social networks, the former places migration in the context of changing market forces and emphasises a new era of mass migration in which supplies of migrant labour gravitate towards the industrialised ‘West’ in response to increased economic demands, either

as a result of wage differentials and rational individual cost-benefit calculations (see neoclassical migration theory: Sjaastad 1962, Todaro 1969), or the need to move as traditional economic structures have fallen victim to globalisation (see historical-structuralist positions: Castles and Miller 2003), or as a consequence of household risk assessments (see new economics of labour migration theory: Stark 1991) (for an overview see Massey et al. 1993).

The concept of ‘work’ also recurs in academic research on the most recent migration from Eastern Europe to Britain. Economic reasons are identified as the main push and pull factors motivating these, mostly young,<sup>7</sup> migrants to move to Britain (Pollard et al., 2008): migration is seen as allowing them to escape the post-socialist realities of unemployment and a lower standard of living (Drinkwater et al. 2006: 2). A substantial body of research investigates East European migrants’ performance on the UK labour market (Datta et al. 2006, Gilpin et al. 2006, Janta 2007, Anderson et al. 2006, Ruhs 2006), emphasising the predominantly low-paid nature of employment undertaken by East European migrants, with Drinkwater et al. (2006) addressing the disparity between migrants’ educational background and wage levels (see also: Fihel and Kaczmarczyk, 2009). Equally important in the scholarship are studies of migrants’ experiences of work, which have looked at the mainly temporary nature of their employment, and the accompanying fact that migrants’ work rights receive less protection than those of UK citizens (Anderson et al. 2006). These studies have also focused on migrants’ coping mechanisms in tough working conditions, such as in the hospitality sector (Janta 2007), and the difficulties they face when entering the regular labour market (Thompson 2010). Other studies reveal the vulnerability of these migrants by analysing the strategies they use and the risks they

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<sup>7</sup> An overwhelming majority of East European migrants are aged between 18 and 34, with less than 18% aged 35 and over (Drinkwater et al., 2006)

take to obtain jobs (Ryan et al. 2009). Their reliance on social networks and informal recruitment is here identified as potentially a factor in creating a situation in which migrants are sheltered from mainstream life in the host country and locked into low-productivity jobs (Sumption 2009: 10). Moreover, the issue of insufficient English language skills has been addressed in studies of different occupational groups, such as Polish priests (Grzymala-Moszczynska et al. 2011), Polish entrepreneurs (Lassalle et al. 2011), cleaners (White 2011) and Polish care workers (Judd 2011), and the obstacles that this poses to their job performance. This issue is also analysed in this thesis, particularly in regard to the way accents represent a hindrance for East European migrants seeking to claim membership in mainstream English society.

Various studies have also analysed the impact of these ‘new’ migrants on labour market outcomes of natives in the UK, and their impact on the unemployment of British young and unskilled workers (Lemos and Portes, 2008), as well as attempting to understand the impact of this migration on the economic situation of Eastern Europe, for example by looking at the economic and social implications of remittances (Elrick and Lewandowska 2008). However, while most research focuses on the figure of the ‘migrant worker’, Guth and Gill (2008) look at the ‘knowledge migration’ of East European doctoral scientists to the ‘West’ as an escape from inadequate economic and intellectual returns and the desire to work in a more expert system, identifying the threat of the recent migration from Eastern Europe as not just a ‘youth drain’, but also a ‘brain drain’ for the countries of origin. In this same field, Madaj (2010) focuses on the migration of Polish medical doctors to the UK.

Although they shed important light on issues such as the nature of migrants’ employment, low pay and their impact on natives’ labour market outcomes, these economic approaches to the study of migration from Eastern Europe to Britain do not,

however, incorporate research on perceptions of these migrant workers by the host population; if anything, the focus is nearly exclusively on the experiences of the migrants themselves. This is an important omission because perceptions and their particular expressions in the form of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination are a significant determining factor in the value of social capital in a society; consequently, they thus shape social positions and influence the division of resources (Bourdieu 1986). They can also have an impact on migrants' subjectivities and affect the ways migrants integrate and interact with one another, as well as with members of the host society. Finally, such research can contribute to an understanding of the relations between UK and migrant workers, which is essential for the study of community cohesion and social harmony in Britain.

In addition to the considerable body of research on the economic implications of the East European migration to the UK, research has also been undertaken using a sociological/anthropological approach which investigates the issue of the integration of these migrants. The key themes in the study of integration include an analysis of the duration of stay of these migrants and a concomitant emphasis on their exceptionally flexible patterns of mobility (Fabiszak, 2007; Pollard et al., 2008; Ruhs, 2006; White and Ryan, 2008). In this context, Eade and Garapich (2006) identify four distinct groups of Polish migrants: storks (who stay only for a short period of time, like seasonal workers), hamsters (whose stay is longer and uninterrupted, with the purpose of acquiring enough money to invest in Poland), searchers (the largest group, who regard their migration plan as unpredictable and who keep their options of staying and returning fairly open), and stayers (who plan to stay in the UK permanently). Other key issues in this research include these migrants' opportunities

of social mobility — Eade et al. (2006) conclude that, in this connection also, work is seen by Polish migrants as the determinant factor in social advancement; research on access to welfare (Osipovic, 2010), which reveals that, amongst other things, the difficulties that follow from migrants' ignorance of their rights as a result of the complexity of their legal status; homelessness amongst A8 migrants in London (Mcnaughton 2008); the integration of East European children in British schools (Sales et al. 2008); and the housing conditions which migrants face in the UK upon arrival (Spencer et al., 2007). Taking the research focus away from Polish migrants, Fox (2013) and Morosanu and Fox (2013) investigate the ways in which Hungarians and Romanians in Bristol negotiate their 'white' identities by racialising other ethnic minorities, especially Roma in the process, and also the particular strategies that Romanian migrants use in order to cope with stigmatised migrant identities. Other accounts shed a positive light on: migrants' developing 'cosmopolitanism'; the way they negotiate their identity with other ethnic minorities; and their growing interaction with the wider society and contribution to 'community cohesion' (Datta, 2009, Markova and Black, 2007; Ryan, 2010, Spencer et al. 2007). Less positive accounts, like that of Garapich (2007), show the tensions that can occur between established Polish migrant communities and new migrants – what he calls a 'discursive hostility' between post-war emigration Poles and post-enlargement ones, as well as the problem of racist attitudes towards other ethnic minorities held by some Polish migrants (Eade et al. 2006, Fomina 2009 McDowell et al. 2007, Parutis 2011, Ryan et al. 2007, Trevena 2011, Temple 2010). Moreover, Gill (2010), Ryan et al. (2008) and Fomina (2009) also highlight the fragmentation within the Polish migrant community, which is characterised by class boundaries, minimal contact between social groups and distrust. This fragmentation has also been analysed as a consequence of the different



acculturation strategies displayed by Polish migrants: in her study on Poles in Bradford, Fomina (2009: 1) identifies three 'parallel worlds' amongst Polish migrants: Poles with good English skills who feel Polish but distance themselves socially from other Polish migrants (see also Bobek and Salamonska 2008); 'less resourceful' Poles who arrived more recently and who have strong ties to the Polish community; and the post-war generation. Taking this fragmentation into account, one limitation of this thesis becomes apparent: the condition to participate in this research project was a sufficient level of English language skills, which – also considering the socio-economic background of my respondents and their occupational position in England – limits the focus of this thesis to 'confident' migrants (White and Ryan 2009), thereby to a considerable extent excluding 'less resourceful' Eastern Europeans from the analysis. As the empirical chapters will show, however, the 'world' of 'confident' migrants in itself shows high levels of fragmentation in regard to migrants' interactions with and perceptions of fellow co-ethnics, which arise for the most part from differing interpretations of the risks and benefits inherent in high and low levels of socio-cultural invisibility.

Increasing attention in research on East European migrants has also been dedicated to the emotional consequences of migration, with studies analysing concepts such the need to create a home and cultivate a sense of belonging. Burikova (2006) and Parutis (2007) identify the strategies used by Slovakian au-pairs, Poles and Lithuanians in London to create a feeling of being 'at home', while Rabikowska and Burrell (2009) and Metykova (2007) are especially concerned with the role material culture (East European shops and access to East European products) plays in creating 'normality'. Other studies concentrate on the family life of these migrants, not only emphasising its importance in helping migrants cope with the realities of migration

(Lopez Rodriguez 2007, Ryan et al. 2009), but also analysing family strategies and family motivations behind migration, which seem to be particularly oriented towards increasing the life-opportunities of the younger generation (White 2009).

Research has also been undertaken with a special focus on the experiences of East European migrant women, in response to the tradition of mainstream migration theories, which despite their apparent 'gender-neutrality', predominantly construct individual economic migrants as male (Mahler and Pessar 2006). These studies identify the motivation for migration of East European women to resist and escape the discrimination which faces them in their countries of origin (Coyle, 2007) or treating migration as a means to acquire additional social capital by increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence (Triandafyllidou, 2006). Other studies, like that of Siara (2009), look at East European women's experiences of migration as a change in gender roles, analysing changing relationships and gender roles as they are discussed amongst East European migrants in internet chat rooms. Polish women also feature heavily in analyses of transnational practices (Burrell, 2008b), in which they are identified as 'transnational commuters', because they are often involved in transnational care-giving arrangements (Ryan et al, 2009).

Even within this considerable body of sociological/anthropological research on East European migrants in Britain, however, the process of integration is analysed exclusively by looking at the experiences of migrants, removing the host population from the migration experience; nor does not this research tackle the question of the perceptions of and prejudice and discrimination against these migrants. Looking at the contemporary British media, it becomes apparent that East European migrants are perceived at least with suspicion. In the face of accounts, like Jones' (2008) in the

Guardian, in which he describes being driven out of his home for having a Polish girlfriend and a Slovakian lodger, researchers have called for closer academic scrutiny of the phenomenon of hostility towards East European migrants (quoted in Burrell 2010: 301). To date, several studies have emerged which study the 'elite' discourse of contemporary British media, such as that of Fomina and Frelak (2008) about Polish migrants in Britain, which suggests that Poles are as likely to be depicted as 'hard workers' as they are as the threatening 'Other' to the indigenous population. Other such studies include research at the University of Bristol, which analyses racialised media representations of Hungarian and Romanian migrants in Britain (Fox et al. 2012) and a media analysis of perceptions of Romanian migrants in the British press post EU-accession (Madroane 2012). Moreover, a vast amount of the literature reviewed above addresses the issue of discrimination as experienced in the narratives of East European migrants to a greater or lesser extent, although again – outside of the studies by Fox (2013) and Morosanu and Fox (2013) – this is nearly exclusively limited to Polish migrants.

This thesis, therefore, aims to contribute to the established literature on East European migrants in Britain in several ways:

- 1) By including the perceptions of members of the English host society into the analysis;
- 2) By expanding the focus from Polish migrants and including East European migrants of various nationalities into the analysis, highlighting their shared and divergent experiences;

- 3) By choosing the framework of ‘whiteness’: in order to analyse the perceptions of East European migrants in the British media and in the narratives of English respondents; in order to analyse social inclusion and exclusion as it is interpreted by East Europeans; to investigate the strategies that they employ in order to avert or resist experiences of racialisation;
- 4) And finally, by adding another dimension to the analysis, which is the issue of socio-cultural in/visibility, and how it – together with constructions of ‘whiteness’ – informs not only how migrants are perceived in particular localities by their English neighbours, but also how it informs their own approaches to integration and belonging.

## **1.2. Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is organised into six chapters. In **chapter 2** I explore the theoretical underpinnings of my thesis by reviewing scholarly work that has been undertaken within the field of ‘Critical Whiteness Studies’. While using findings of US scholarship as a backdrop for my discussion, I focus in particular on studies undertaken in Britain, with emphasis on the role of ‘whiteness’ in immigrant reception. What the review will show is that ‘whiteness’ has thus far been predominantly studied with reference to ‘black’ or ‘visible’ ‘Otherness’, while analyses of ‘white’ minorities in this context remain comparatively scarce. Moreover, I will also confront some popular critiques of ‘whiteness studies’, in order to justify my theoretical approach.

**Chapter 3** is my methodology chapter, in which I will begin by discussing boundary theory as an effective methodological approach to ‘whiteness studies’,

before proceeding to outline my research design and methods. I focus in particular on content analysis as my chosen method in conducting the media analysis, and in the process of conducting qualitative interviews. This chapter also contains a critical discussion of the ethical issues that arose during the research process.

**Chapter 4**, my first empirical chapter, is split into two large sub-chapters. The first subchapter (4.1.) contains a media analysis about the representations of East European migrants in the British press and is structured according to a typology, revealed by my analysis, of ‘valuable’, ‘vulnerable’ and ‘villainous’ Eastern Europeans. In the second subchapter (4.2.) I analyse the in-depth interviews that I conducted with English respondents in regards to their perspectives on integration and *Englishness*, as well as the discourses which were employed which placed East European migrants at the centre and at the margins of the boundary of ‘whiteness’.

**Chapter 5** is another long chapter in which I analyse the in-depth interviews conducted with my East European respondents. It is divided into six subchapters. I start off by providing an overview over the politics of in/visibility in Britain (5.1.), before moving on to discuss East European interviewees’ individual migration stories (5.2.) in order to provide the background for the empirical analysis of their constructions of sameness to the ‘white’ English mainstream (5.3.), reflections on encounters of being ‘Othered’ by the host society (5.4.) and the strategies they employed in order to avert or resist experiences of racialisation (5.5.). Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the ways in which East European respondents reflected on their general understandings of integration and belonging into English society (5.6.).

Finally, **chapter 6** brings together the analytical conclusions and presents an overview of the research, as well as the main research findings.

## Chapter 2. Whiteness Studies – A Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I survey the literature that provides the context for my research and the key issues that inform my conceptual framework. My overview begins with an exploration of the theoretical and empirical contributions made in the increasingly popular field of Critical Whiteness Studies. Using findings from the broad body of work conducted in the United States as a backdrop for my discussion, I place special emphasis on studies carried out in Britain in order to account for the role of ‘whiteness’ in immigrant reception and social relations in this country.<sup>8</sup> Fundamental to my approach is the observation that while much research focuses on constructions of ‘whiteness’ among ‘white’ members of the host society vis-à-vis ‘black’ or ‘visible’ ‘Otherness’, constructions of difference and sameness by the ‘white’ majority population in reference to (phenotypically) ‘white’ migrants and minorities have not been sufficiently researched.

I then move on to confront some of the critiques of ‘whiteness studies’ in order to argue for the relevance of whiteness as an analytical tool in the investigation of the perceptions, experiences and integration of East European migrants in England.

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<sup>8</sup> Despite the primacy of Anglophone scholarship in whiteness studies, considerable contributions have been made to the field by researchers working in other languages and contexts, such as in South Africa (Steyn 2001), Brazil (Davila 2003, Ware 2004) and Australia (Anderson 2003). Although I recognise the importance of their findings, my work for the most part builds on Anglophone scholarship, which is more directly pertinent to the locations and cultures under scrutiny in this study.

## 2.2. Gazing at the White Subject ... Critically.

Whiteness Studies, or Critical Whiteness Studies<sup>9</sup> as it is sometimes known, is an interdisciplinary field of research that gained particular popularity in the United States at the beginning of the 1990s. It has since produced a broad body of work with a diverse disciplinary span, ranging from legal studies, cultural studies, geography and anthropology to history and sociology. Analyses pertaining to this field trace the historical development of the construction of whiteness in the American context, uncover its meanings and discursive properties, and finally evaluate its consequences for both 'white people' and 'people of colour'. In her seminal analysis *Playing in the Dark* Toni Morrison (1992: 90) describes her approach to the study of 'whiteness' as '[...] an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served.' In their attempt to explain privilege and structural inequalities, Critical Whiteness scholars have thus shifted the focus from studying (exclusively) minorities in analyses of racial communities and race relations to studying majorities, from the 'Other' to the mainstream.<sup>10</sup> Put simply, the 'whiteness' project is about including 'white' people in discussions about diversity, as their lives too are held to be framed by race and racism, which, it is further understood, do not just frame the lives of the 'people of colour' who find themselves victims of prejudice and discrimination. As Frankenberg argues: 'To speak of whiteness is, I think, to assign *everyone* a place in the relations of racism' (Frankenberg 1993: 6, emphasis in original; on including majorities in the study of multiculturalism, see Doane 2003, Foley 1999).

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<sup>9</sup> I prefer the term 'Critical Whiteness Studies' as it emphasizes the prerogative to critically examine, challenge and unravel 'whiteness' as a social construct, and not to celebrate it or elevate white identity over other identities as the term 'Whiteness Studies' might suggest.

<sup>10</sup> This shift of perspective is also congruent with the trend in gender studies from analysing femininity and female identities to masculinity and male identities (see for example Weis et al. 1997, Connell 1995).

By shifting their gaze to the ‘white mainstream’, Critical Whiteness scholars aim to problematise ‘whiteness’ and ‘white’ identity in order to reveal and explain the power structures that sustain it and illuminate the ways in which ‘whiteness’ is constructed, enacted and expressed both on the macro, institutional level and in the micro-localities of everyday life as well. ‘Whiteness’ features in this research not just as a racial category, but also as a privileged social identity, as a perspective from which ‘white’ people evaluate others, and as a social and economic position that functions as the ultimate site of social domination not only in the United States, but – due to ‘Western’ imperial power – globally as well (see Frankenberg 1993, Nayak 2002, Wray 2006): ‘Whiteness inheres in subjectivity, the fabric of personhood itself, as well as in bodies, social relationships and social activities [...] it is simultaneously structural and personal’ (Knowles 2008: 168-9).

Some view the spread and popularity of Critical Whiteness Studies in the US context as a response to the ‘Race is Over’ theory that emerged at the turn of the millennium, and according to which race was believed to become insignificant in societies due to interracial marriages and demographic trends. The cover of the 1993 September Special Issue of Time Magazine was dedicated to this topic, featuring the figure of Eve, a computer-generated portrait of a woman comprised of 14 models of different racial backgrounds, under the headline ‘The New Face of America’ (for an analysis see Roediger 2002). In response to this, Critical Whiteness scholars maintained that while a change in political discourse could indeed be observed, racism and racial differentiation still featured strongly in cultural discourses (Roediger 2002: 13). Now labelled the ‘new racism’ (Bonilla-Silva 2003), ‘neo-racism’ or ‘xeno-racism’ (Sivanandan 2001), which is based on cultural differences (such as lifestyles, habits, customs and manners), as opposed to ‘inegalitarian’ racism,



which is based on genetic, biological inferiority (ibid: 7), such racial differentiation could only be defeated through a ‘pedagogical’ reconfiguration of ‘whiteness’ in ‘anti-racist, anti-homophobic and anti-sexist ways’, in order to achieve changes in public policy (Rodriguez 1998: 33).

The premise of Critical Whiteness Studies is thus didactical and anti-racist; it is designed to influence and change the relations of privilege and power in society. Numerous publications in the field are, therefore, dedicated to the experiences and findings of anti-racist activists and instructors outside of the academy (see for example Griffin 1998, Kendall 2006, McIntosh 1988, Wray et al. 2001). Within academia, a group of so called ‘neo-abolitionists’, centred on the journal *Race Traitor* have even called for the ‘abolition of whiteness’ as the sole means by which the concept of race, and with it the consequences of racism, can be eliminated altogether (Roediger 1991, Ignatiev 1995, Winant 2001). In order to facilitate the development of an anti-racist identity, Yancy (2008: xxiii) advocates the necessity of ‘undoing whiteness’, a process he understands as consisting of countering

material, institutional and discursive forces that involve the reassertion of whiteness as privilege and power. [...] Disarticulating the white gaze involves a continuous effort on the part of whites to forge new ways of seeing, knowing and being.

Since Whiteness Studies gained in popularity and established itself as part of Critical Race Studies, its development and contributions have been traced in several reviews. One of the most relevant to our current aims is probably that of Twine and Gallagher (2008), who classify ‘three waves’ of whiteness research.

The first wave of Critical Whiteness Studies, according to Twine and Gallagher (2008: 7-10) is represented in the seminal work of W.E.B. DuBois and African American scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century who problematised the 'colour line' in American society and who made use of an analysis of the dialectic relationship between race and class to illuminate the ways in which white privilege operates outside of the consciousness of 'white' people, whilst sentencing people of colour to bearing its consequences, such as limited access to material and social resources, and thus lower social status, and the concomitant narrowing of opportunities to acquire social and cultural capital. These initial, ground-breaking attempts to 'mark' 'white' privilege were then developed by the second wave of Critical Whiteness scholars (ibid: 10-12), which consisted of 'black' and 'white' feminists (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992, Frankenberg 1993, Morrison 1992,), legal theorists (Harris 1993, Lopez 1996), and American labour historians (Allen 1994, Jacobson 1998, Roediger 1991). At a time when the rest of academia tended to focus on the pathologies of the 'racist mind' in individuals, ignoring the broader implications of 'white' privilege in Western (American) society, second wave Critical Whiteness scholars exposed the workings of institutional racism and structural inequalities by identifying 'whiteness' as 'property' that granted legal rights and benefits to people on the basis of somatic features (Harris 1993, Lopez 1996), and, what is more, revealed the ways in which European immigrants acquired this property in early twentieth-century America thanks to shifts in racial discourse. Finally, the third wave of Critical Whiteness Studies (ibid: 12-15), of which this thesis is also intended to be part, has revised existing assumptions with innovative methodologies and empirical research, focusing on 'white' subjectivities and the intersections of 'whiteness', class, nation and gender, predominantly on the micro-level. The current wave of Critical Whiteness Studies

strives to reveal the discursive strategies that, in a world after imperialism and the Civil Rights movement, construct

whiteness and white privilege [...] at the same time [as] a taken for granted entitlement, a desired social status, a perceived source of victimisation and a tenuous situational identity. It is these white inflections, the nuanced and locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented, that is the central focus of third wave whiteness (Twine and Gallagher 2008: 7).

In comparison to the ‘blizzard of whiteness studies’ (Bhabha 1998: 24, quoted in Swan 2010: 481) in the United States, in Britain Critical Whiteness Studies appears still rather sporadically and has been employed with a great deal of hesitation on the part of researchers. As Garner (2009: 1) notes in a review of British sociological fieldwork, research that in the US would clearly fall into the rubric of ‘whiteness studies’, is often conducted in Britain without any explicit reference to ‘whiteness’, possibly because racial reflexivity on the part of ‘white’ people is distrusted in the context of identity politics. American and British ‘whiteness’ research also differs in their respective contexts and methodological approaches: while in the US discussions of race and ‘whiteness’ predominantly pertain to the context of a post- Jim Crow era,<sup>11</sup> segregation and poverty, in Britain the primary arena for the investigation of the issue of race (and, more hesitantly, ‘whiteness’) is immigrant reception and integration, with the legacy of empire remaining particularly salient. British studies,

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Jim Crow era’ refers to the years between 1876 and 1965 in the United States, when racial segregation laws, so called ‘Jim Crow laws’, were enacted at the state and local level. These guaranteed ‘separate but equal’ rights of African Americans *de jure*, however, in practice, Jim Crow laws and segregation led to African Americans being in a socially, economically and politically disadvantaged position in comparison to the ‘white’ American mainstream society.

moreover, tend to be qualitative investigations with a strong focus on localities, whilst US researchers make more use of empirical, statistical data on poverty, housing, unemployment, health, and aim to reveal power relations on the structural, institutional level (see Garner 2009, Nagel 2002, Rex 1996).

In the following I explore the major findings of Critical Whiteness Studies in the United States and in Britain in order both to identify caveats and points of connection on which to build my research and to formulate a response to popular critiques of Whiteness Studies and defend Critical Whiteness Studies as a useful prism through which to analyse perceptions and experiences of East European migrants in England.

### **2.3. Whiteness Uncovered**

One of the most recurrent findings of Critical Whiteness Studies and a common point of the ignition of analyses of and discussions about ‘whiteness’ is its ‘invisibility’. This ‘invisibility’ is expressed in ‘white’ people’s unawareness of the ways in which race and racism determine their lives and of the privileges that ‘whiteness’ conveys, which subsequently leads them to maintain a self-perception as ‘raceless’ individuals. However, whilst ‘whiteness’ may represent an unconscious identity and oblivious social position, it still contributes to the essentialisation of racial minorities as collective ‘Others’, reinforcing through its ‘invisibility’ the power structures that sustain it. This is because by remaining unmarked it also remains unchallenged, and thus finds itself in a position to formulate the norms and criteria against which every ‘Other’ is measured. This is the conclusion Dyer (1997) and Morrison (1992) draw in their cultural analyses of American cinema and literature, in which they reveal the discursive strategies which construct ‘whiteness’ as an absence,

a non-category, but also simultaneously as ‘everywhere everything as a fact’ (Dyer 1997: 46). Ahmed (2007: 156), who performs a similar tracing of the phenomenology of ‘whiteness’, suggests that ‘white bodies do not have to face their whiteness [...] it “trails behind” bodies, as what is assumed to be given’. Mills (2008) has termed this phenomenon as the ‘white epistemology of ignorance’, by which whiteness is evaded and renounced in regards to race.

By remaining out of sight, ‘whiteness’ has also managed to secure itself the position of representing the ‘norm’ and defining what is ‘natural’ in society. This ‘norm’ is orientated around values and attributes such as Christianity, Godliness and strength, freedom, skin-colour, rationality, disinterest, objectivity, authority, respectability, autonomy and civilised behaviour (see Dyer 1997, Frankenberg 1993, Hartigan 1997, Jacobson 1998, Morrison 1992, Paynter 2001). At the same time, ‘whiteness’ is formulated as a negative identity, constructed as a binary in opposition to nature, savageness, irrationality and heathenism (Morrison 1992: 45; see also Puwar 2004). In this sense, being considered other than ‘white’ is held to represent a deviation from the norm; being ‘white’ ends up being equated with being human, to being ‘just people’, while everybody else needs specification in terms of colour, ethnicity or nationality in everyday language (Dyer 1997, Frankenberg 1993, Montag 1997). By seeming ‘natural’ and ‘normal’, ‘whiteness’ also naturalises the power relations that frame it. Feagin and Feagin (1996) locate the reason for normative white understandings and practices on the structural level in the fact that whites have historically controlled major institutions of American society and have been able to appropriate the social and cultural ‘mainstream’. I contend that the same can be said for Great Britain.

A range of empirical research in the American and British context has been conducted in order to analyse such ‘invisibility’ and ‘normativity’ in particular social settings, investigating, amongst others, the ways in which racial obliviousness shapes the lives of high-school students (Charmaraman and Grossman 2008, Perry 2002, Phoenix 1996) and college students (Gallagher 1994, Griffin 1998, Jackson and Heckman 2002, McKinney 2005, McIntosh 1988); how middle-class white women and feminists evade mentioning race and power in narratives about their experiences of social and cultural diversity (Byrne 2006, Frankenberg 1993, Kenny 2000, Lewis and Ramazanoglu 2009, Ostrander 1984); how in academic research, for example on the *War on Terror*, the positionality of ‘white’ researchers (and the ‘whiteness’ of readers) is taken for granted and remains absent from analysis, whilst at the same time historicising and particularising the analytical ‘Other’ (Thobani 2007). In the specific context of American law, Flagg (1997) demonstrates how what she has termed the ‘transparency of whiteness’ affects the way in which ‘white’ people make decisions by remaining unaware of the fact that many criteria reflect ‘white’, race-specific norms, so that ‘whiteness’ acts as institutional racism, and – unchallenged – again contributes to the maintenance of ‘white’ supremacy (see also Ahmed 2007, Hartigan 1997). ‘White’ people thus fail to draw a connection between their race and their life-chances and opportunities, and tend to interpret success exclusively in terms of personal, individual achievement (Lipsitz 1998).

There are, however, occasional ‘turning points’ (McKinney 2005) in a ‘white’ person’s life, during which he or she becomes aware of his/her own race and has an opportunity for self-reflexivity. This can either take the shape of a more *constructive* awareness, through personal relationships with non-‘white’ people in the course of which knowledge and experiences are shared and reflected upon, such as in the case

of mixed couples or couples with adopted children (Frankenberg 1993), or mothers of mixed-race children (Byrne 2006). Moreover, a 'turning point' may be the effect of a *destructive* feeling of threat, usually at a moment when 'white' people acquire 'momentary minority status' (Gallagher 1997). In the US, research has demonstrated the discourses of loss expressed by 'whites' who believe themselves to be living in an era of 'white' superiority-breakdown (Hill 2004, Lamont 2000, Weis and Fine 1996). Feelings of injustice and unfairness are also often expressed by 'white' people in the context of affirmative action (Bonilla-Silva 2003, McKinney 2005). In the UK, one of the major 'turning points', particularly for working-class men in urban areas, is believed to be the feeling of threat posed by post-colonial subjects who migrate(d) from the peripheries to the core; this 'turning point' is thus implicated in the context of empire (Gilroy 2004, see also Clarke and Garner 2010).

However, while 'white' people remain oblivious of their 'whiteness' outside of particular 'turning points', it is very much visible and experienced by people who are not commonly thought of as 'white'. In his powerful *Black Face, White Masks* Frantz Fanon (1967) illustrates not only how the 'black' person becomes accustomed constantly to living with the 'white' gaze upon him, but also how the 'black' mind adopts a self-image constructed out of the perception of him by 'white' people. Similarly, bell hooks (1992) claims that 'black' people possess a special knowledge of 'whiteness', understanding its borders and delineations and how to navigate them. Furthermore, Roediger's insightful anthology *Black on White* (1998), a collection of black writers' views and thoughts about 'whiteness', highlights further the ways in which 'black' people negotiate 'white' norms, with 'whiteness' featuring simultaneously as a source of fear amongst 'black' people, but also as a source of humour.

Empirical studies in Britain, on the other hand, have shown how ‘black’ youth in England avoids certain, predominantly white, suburban areas out of fear of experiencing hostility (Hoggett 1992, quoted in Clarke and Garner 2010: 42), and how the English countryside in particular creates an unpleasant and unwelcoming atmosphere for ‘visible’ minorities (Back 2002, Garland and Chakraborti 2004).

In rural England residues of empire are also especially salient, as in these localities a normative understanding of ‘whiteness’, formulated around the values of Christianity and middle-class behaviour, is operationalised as closely tied to *Englishness* (Agyeman and Spooner 1997, Bonnett 2000, Garland and Chakraborti 2006, Lopez 2005, Rutherford 1997, Tyler 2003). In her study of post-imperial ‘whiteness’ in rural South Devon, Knowles (2008) points to the importance of the ‘Raj factor’, retired people from service in the British Empire who returned to the countryside and contributed to the ‘production and re-inscription of practices of empire’, which formulate British masculinity and femininity as ‘white’. These practices were based on a supposed ‘superiority of the white race’ the alleged civilising mission of which was and still is frequently used to legitimise the colonial and imperial endeavours of the West (Alcoff 2000, quoted in Swan 2010), and which is characterised by the differential exclusion of minoritised subjects. Through military and socio-economic power it was not only possible to claim that ‘whiteness’ is a ‘uniquely European attribute, (and) getting other people to believe this, but also (to erase) the fact that white identities ever had a history outside Europe’ (Bonnett 1997: 197). The model of social hierarchy propagated by empire is still dominant in living memory. In their fieldwork on identities in Britain Clarke and Garner (2010) show, for example, how while empire is not explicitly referenced in the narratives of their interviewees, it is still used in historical arguments and narratives when creating the



racial 'Other'. Moreover, post-colonial feminist accounts also trace the ways in which imperialism constructed 'normative white bourgeois femininities', which were believed to represent the future and the demise of *Englishness* at the same time (Hall 1992, Ware 1997).

Feminist analyses in general provide particularly interesting insights into 'whiteness', as they study the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class. 'Black' feminists have long demanded a higher degree of critical self-reflection on the part of 'white' feminists, who in their critiques of 'white' masculinity have assumed the role of spokespersons for all women's experiences of oppression (Ahmed 2004, Frankenberg 1993), without taking into consideration the ways that gender, race and class exist in a mutually interpenetrating triangular relationship.

Moreover, as Hunter et al. (2010) point out, 'white' feminists should analyse not only how 'white' femininity resists, but also how it supports 'white' masculinity. Research undertaken with this premise has revealed how 'white' women often tend to focus on culture and other identity markers, such as class and gender, when talking about diversity, whilst at the same time defining 'whiteness' through difference (Byrne 2006, Frankenberg 1993, Lewis and Ramazanoglu 1999). However, Ferber's observations (2007) regarding the US also apply to Britain: there is a gap in the research in respect to female representations on perceptions and negotiations of 'whiteness' because of the predominant analytical focus on working-class men (see also Garner 2009).

The preceding represents, of course, only a selective insight into the body of work that has been undertaken within Critical Whiteness Studies in order to 'uncover' 'whiteness' and its power. It does reveal, however, several important points of

connection with my own research and raises questions of considerable interest in relation to my study. The first such point of connection is the definite necessity that I, as a 'white', female researcher, should be aware of my own positionality and discuss how this frames and potentially impacts upon my analysis in terms of potential complicity with a 'white ideology'. Secondly, my study represents a response to calls for research that is not only conducted with subjects other than urban working-class men, but which also includes the perspectives of middle-class men and women in suburban and rural areas (see Garner 2009, Clarke and Garner 2010). Thus my study does not only include high-migration urban areas, but also 'white habitus' locales (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2007), in which there are not significant minority populations.

Taking into account the major positions and issues of Critical Whiteness Studies sketched above, the fundamental questions addressed by my research are whether, for 'white' East European migrants, the moment of migration, moving from their predominantly racially homogenous countries into a new racial setting, represents a potential 'turning point' in the way they think about themselves and their race. How do they interpret and experience multiculturalism in England and the 'privilege' that comes from embodying 'whiteness'? Are they aware of that? Do they *become* aware of it? How do they narrate and negotiate their own 'whiteness' in this setting? And can the legacy of empire, which predominates in British discourse around race, be detected in the narratives of East Europeans?

However, in order to further our understanding of how English interviewees construct sameness and difference in regard to East European migrants and vice versa, it does not suffice to view 'whiteness' as a homogenous category of privilege and power, operating along a reductionary and essentialising 'black' / 'white' binary. As

Hartigan (1997: 500) suggests, we should take inspiration from the efforts undertaken to establish 'blackness' as a heterogeneous category and apply the same principle to 'whiteness'. Numerous accounts thus conceptualise 'whiteness' as a situated, complex social identity with 'malleable and porous borders' (McLaren et al. 2000), and aim to reveal the internal boundaries that are drawn between those who are considered at the centre of 'whiteness' and those who are pushed to its margins. This research shall be explored below.

#### **2.4. Whiteness Fragmented**

One trend in Critical Whiteness Studies challenges the notion of 'whiteness' exclusively in terms of invisibility and privilege and conceives 'whiteness' as a subject to 'continual contestation and reinterpretation' (Winant 1997: 13). These studies thus challenge the notion of 'whiteness' as a homogenous category vis-à-vis an essentialised oppositional category of 'blackness' and focus on the ways in which phenotypically 'white' people who are marginalised and racialised due to class, gender, sexuality or nationality experience and narrate their racial identity differently from those who live with the direct benefits of 'white' skin privilege (Wray et al. 2001). Being phenotypically 'white' is thus not equivalent to 'embodying whiteness' (Keating 1995). Bailey (1998) introduces in this context the term 'whitely scripts', which go beyond the physical markers of whiteness and include performances of certain behaviours and manners that are considered to be 'coded white'.

The 'naturalness' of 'whiteness' is quite obviously questioned in the influential historical accounts of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American immigration by Allen (1994), Roediger (1991) and Ignatiev (1995), who show that 'whiteness' – as a key signifier of status and power – did not remain undisputed in a racialised

society and economy. In fact, it was denied to those European immigrant groups who were initially socially and economically excluded from the Anglo-American elite (Irish, Southern and Eastern Europeans). Antebellum depictions of Irish workers in the USA showed striking similarities to the traits ascribed to 'black' people in the same period (Roediger 1991: 133). Mink (1990: 73) argues that the Teutonic origins theory, which racially distinguished Eastern, Central and Southern Europeans from Northern and Western Europeans, was the main basis for race thinking in regard to immigrants; Jacobson (1998: 278) shows that in the late nineteenth century, migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were not unambiguously perceived as 'Caucasians': legislation restricting immigration to the USA at the beginning of the twentieth century stated that Slavs are 'undesirable and injurious', grouping them with 'black' people and 'Orientals'. The term 'Caucasian' became synonymous with terms like 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Nordic' (Guglielmo 2003). These historical accounts demonstrate the way in which the domain of European racial 'whiteness' in the US could expand and contract and how it was literally and symbolically fought for amongst Europeans. As Jacobson puts it neatly: 'Caucasians were made, not born' (Jacobson 1998: 243). European immigrants did not automatically become 'white' on the shores of the US: they had to learn and claim this status as they acculturated (see Goldstein 2006). Nevertheless, in the case of the Irish, it was much easier to defend jobs and rights as 'white' entitlements, that is, in terms of race rather than ethnicity or class, and thus gain access to better jobs. One can understand the assimilation of Irish immigrants over a period stretching from 1890 to 1945 as 'whitening as a process', starting from an initial status of 'inbetweenness' (neither securely white nor non-white) and culminating in being 'fully white' (Roediger 2007: 8, quoted in Webster 2008: 297).

This history is not confined to the US. Within Europe there also exists a wide variety of historical examples of ethnic exclusion from 'whiteness': for example, in the case of Britain, one might mention the 'racialisation' of Travellers, Jewish and Irish people in the process of constructing national identities (McDowell 2009). However, in Britain the focus on the colour paradigm has limited the range of racist ideologies examined. For instance, a great deal of post-war British sociology excludes the Irish from consideration, 'providing tacit support for the "myth of homogeneity", developed in the 1950s and 1960s, of white people in Britain against the supposedly new phenomenon of threatening (Black) immigrants' (Hickman and Walter 1995: 5, see also Hickman 1998). However, an analysis of nineteenth-century attitudes shows unambiguous depictions of the Irish as 'Other' in the construction of British nationalist myths. Their status as colonial subjects rather than agents has been marked both by their categorisation in Victorian science as a lower race and by their persistent cultural representation as uncivilised and primitive (Innes 1994, Curtis 1997, Cohen 1988, Garner 2003). What is more, in late twentieth-century Britain evidence shows that in popular discourses the Irish were presented as problematic because of squalor, fighting, alcoholism and welfare-abuse (Hickman and Walter 1995, Ryan 2001); for their part, Irish people frequently reported verbal abuse and racial harassment (O'Flynn et al. 1993). In this case particular prominence was given to the stereotype of 'Paddy', which draws on the notions of the single male construction worker, prone to alcoholism and violence (Kircaldy 1979, quoted in Danaher 1992: 227). Feminist accounts by Hickman and Walter (1995) also challenge the post-war 'invisibility' of the Irish and emphasise the stereotypical construction of Irish women and their racialised exclusion from British society on the basis of a presumed lack of intelligence and support for violence (see also Lennon et al. 1988). In so doing they

expose the dangers of ignoring the racial discrimination of migrants who might not display phenotypic or biological difference to the host-society, but who are still constructed around representations of inferiority and difference within British culture. A similar attempt to 'deconstruct whiteness' and go beyond the colour paradigm when analysing racial discrimination in Britain can be found in the study conducted by Franks (2000), in which she captures the experiences of white Muslim women wearing the hijab in Britain. Her research provides an examination of the interstices of racism and religious discrimination, in which she demonstrates how women are located at the intersection of religious and racial boundaries and subsequently poses the question of whether it is possible that the boundaries of whiteness might shift (ibid.: p. 925).

A recent study by Fox et al. (2012) is the first to focus on East European migrants within the framework of 'whiteness', investigating the 'racialisation' of Hungarians and Romanians in British immigration policy and the media. Drawing parallels with instances of 'moral panic' in response to previous 'coloured' immigration to the UK, they conclude that the ways in which Hungarians are 'lightened' and Romanians 'darkened' by immigration policy is also reflected in the degree of racialisation those two cohorts of migration receive in the British media.

However, with the exception of these isolated studies, the racialised internal boundaries of 'whiteness' have not been sufficiently analysed. In the British context, Webster (2008: 294) identifies the underlying causes for this in the continuing difficulty social science has in conceiving of 'whiteness' and 'white' ethnicity 'other than in terms of privilege, power and superiority over other ethnicities'. In his study he deconstructs 'whiteness' as a racialised category by examining it as an extension of class analysis. He discusses 'white' ethnicity and class with reference to crime.

Previous analyses in the US have established that ‘whiteness’ can be mediated by class: studies of ‘white trash’ and ‘wiggers’ (‘white niggers’) have revealed the hierarchies and internal borders between the more or less ‘white’ that are evident within the ‘whiteness’ spectrum, exposing the instabilities and inequities of ‘whiteness’. Haylett (2001: 352) explains that the discrimination against these ‘abject whites’ is a result of the perception that they are, ‘by dint of their very existence, a threat to the symbolic and social order’ (quoted in Wray 2006: 2).

According to Skeggs (2004: 118), class contempt ‘through distance, denigration and disgust’ towards the disadvantaged ‘white’ working class also serves darker and more disturbing purposes that lead to the ‘racialisation’ of this group. Webster’s study shows that in Britain ‘whiteness’ is most visible and most likely to be racialised and criminalised in its marginalised and subordinate form. This form is represented in the figure of the ‘chav’, a term which encompasses feelings of class contempt against the ‘undeserving poor’ in Britain (see Hayward and Yar 2006, Jones 2011). ‘Chavs’ are denigrated for their lack of respectability, separated along moral lines from the rest of society. ‘Chavs’ in Britain, like ‘white trash’ in the US, are identified and stigmatised as a ‘race apart’ by their visible comportment, body shape, dress and physical appearance – their ‘pathological class dispositions in relation to the sphere of consumption’ (Hayward and Yar 2006: 10, see also Adams and Raisborough 2008). Appearance is used as a sign of moral evaluation. In the popular perception ‘chavs’ represent a segment of society that is characterised by unemployment, degradation, welfare dependency, crime, excessive sexuality and broken families; estates are seen as sites of social deprivation (Bauman 1998: 86). Nayak’s (2002) empirical study amongst working-class youth in Newcastle shows how class boundaries are established between the underclass and ‘respectable’ and

‘hard-working’, but equally poor, ‘white’ people; ‘whiteness’ is based on entitlement and respectability, and the ‘white’ underclass are accused of not contributing to society, and are perceived as feckless, hedonistic and abusive.

In some discourses, this ‘white underclass’ is represented as a bulwark against ‘black’ inferiority, in others as relinquishing the superiority of ‘whites’ to the inferior race, and in others as a contamination that could undermine the ‘white’ race (see Hartigan 2005, quoted in Webster 2008: 298). In Britain, Skeggs’ (1997) study of ‘white’ working class women has cast particular light on their often painful awareness of being ‘othered’ and pathologised, and their subsequent struggle for respectability, their ‘desire to prove and to achieve’ in order to be valued and legitimated (ibid.: 1). Tyler (2008) studies the pathologisation and fetishisation of the ‘chavvy mum’ as a ‘new outpouring of sexist class disgust’, intended to racialise ‘white’ poor femininity in order to distinguish it from upper and middle class normality and respectability (ibid.: 26: see also Lawler 2002).

‘Whiteness’ and ‘being white’ is thus about more than colour and race. Whilst it does have indisputable racial meaning, of course, I find it more fruitful to understand it as a social category, and – as the empirical findings above have shown – one whose borders and meanings are mutable, not static, and dependent on a particular time and a particular place. ‘Whiteness is not simply constituted in relation to Blackness as research focussed on ‘invisibility’ and ‘power’ expertly shows, but is also fashioned through and against other versions of whiteness’ (Nayak 2002: 243). Whether in relation to the Irish and Southern and Eastern Europeans in antebellum US, or to ‘chavs’ in twenty-first century Britain, research demonstrates ‘whiteness’ to be a process rather than a descriptive category, constantly shifting in order to delineate those who are considered ‘white’ from those who are not ‘white enough’



and finally those ‘cast beneath the shadow of whiteness’ (Nayak 2002: 258). This is, of course, not to forget that even those at the bottom of the hierarchy of ‘whiteness’ benefit from it if they are phenotypically ‘white’: I stand strongly behind Mills (1997: 41) when he says that any in-depth discussion of the internal boundaries of ‘whiteness’ should be conducted with an awareness of this fact. For the same reason, I am, *pace* Fox (2012), apprehensive about the use of terms such as ‘darkening’ of East European migrants. Whilst both the illustrative function and metaphorical nature of such terminology are self-evident, it is, I propose, slightly misleading and takes advantage of existing racial markers in a way that promotes a false equivalency with experiences of ‘blackness’. Consequently, I prefer – if we are to talk in metaphors – an image of ‘whiteness’ as a boundary,<sup>12</sup> consisting of a centre and periphery, according to which East European migrants are still always ‘white’ as opposed to ‘black’, and will be analysing the discourse that put them at the centre and at the margins of ‘whiteness’ in the media analysis and in the narratives of English respondents, and the ways in which East European migrants navigated this boundary.

My study thus contributes to the body of work surveyed above in several ways. ‘Invisible’ due to the skin colour of those involved (McDowell 2009), the recent migration from Eastern Europe occurred over an exceptionally short period of time. However, thanks to the rapid proliferation of explicitly East European shops and businesses these migrants became ‘visible’ in the British public landscape – and some ethnicities more so than others, and in some localities more than in others. East European migrants do not share the colonial past of the Irish, and hence were never part of British colonial superiority discourses; they are predominantly Christian and

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<sup>12</sup> see chapter 3.1. on boundary theory and ‘whiteness’.

they do not share the long historical persecution of Jewish people or Travellers. An analysis of the construction of sameness and difference towards East European migrants in England as part of Critical Whiteness Studies and an analysis of how they themselves negotiate their 'whiteness' would contribute to existing, still comparatively limited, attempts to shift the literature away from the overwhelming and predominant focus on 'black'/'white' relations in the study of 'whiteness' and immigrant incorporation, and from the exclusive focus on the 'white' majority, ignoring 'white' minority experiences, and thus open 'whiteness' up to interpretation as a category representing a range of racialised subject positions. To quote Garner: 'It would lead to the deconstruction of 'whiteness' necessary to problematise a construction of the nation in Britain in which colour is not taken as the only marker of exclusion / inclusion, and thus enable us to encompass a wider variety of experiences of oppression and name them' (Garner 2006: 269).

## **2.5. Facing the Critics**

It has been found that one of the main problems that every 'whiteness' researcher faces is 'the need to assert the importance of whiteness against a wider audience that is perceived to be sceptical or indifferent' (Bonnett 2008: 185). I thought there is no better way to battle both inflections than by trying to respond to some of the more compelling criticisms of Critical Whiteness Studies and presenting an argument as to why I still consider 'whiteness' to be a useful heuristic tool when analysing the perceptions and integration of East European migrants in England – and all the more so when those criticisms are internalised and scrutinised.

Scholars such as Arnesen (2001) and Kolchin (2002), whilst sympathetic to Whiteness Studies, have offered severe critiques of the field. They argue that

Whiteness Studies is facing a problem of definition and challenge the findings of labour historians about immigrant groups from Southern and Eastern Europe and Ireland, particularly in regards to using the terminology of these migrants ‘becoming white’ on arrival in the United States. Furthermore, they cast doubt on the assumption that speaking of the material and psychological wages of ‘whiteness’ represents any sort of academic novelty. The latter two points certainly brook no argument in relation to historical analyses of ‘whiteness’. I see particular validity in Arnesen’s argument that Roediger and others revert to ‘passive voice construction’ and ‘psychohistory’ in the absence of actual immigrant accounts, and that they disregard particular identities and beliefs that migrant workers might have already arrived with and that might have shaped their perceptions of race and reactions to people of colour. This shortcoming has been remedied by more recent studies, such as those by Guglielmo (2003) and Jacobson (1998). Arnesen’s critique points to the difficulty of studying ‘whiteness’ as part of the discipline of history. In contrast, in sociology empirical research and in-depth interviews can avert these potential pitfalls, potentially creating a body of reference for future historiographic analyses of narratives about race and social relations in a particular place at a particular time. That the concept of the ‘wages of whiteness’ does not constitute a novel finding is indisputable. Nevertheless, the research discussed above shows that the situation is not always perceived this way by ‘white’ people, which has consequences for the ways in which people create and perceive ‘Others’, and that the embodiment of ‘whiteness’ does not translate into equal access to these wages. This fact demands further empirical analysis and refutes any notion that Whiteness Studies is redundant or predictable.

I have acknowledged above that, as many critics also argue, ‘whiteness’ is indeed a difficult concept to define. However, I would not agree with Arnesen that it is necessarily ‘a blank screen onto which those who claim to analyse it project their own meanings’ (Arnesen 2001: 1). I consent to Wray’s assertion (2006: 5) that precision is not paramount when operating with the category ‘whiteness’; it is more useful to conceive of it as a series of flexible boundaries around the social category ‘white’, drawing scholars’ attention to the processes and agents that generate these boundaries (see chapter 3.5. in this thesis). These boundaries are constituted by race, certainly, but this instance of boundary construction is only one of a range of strategies adopted by the ‘white’ majority in constructing social difference. Arnesen’s criticism—that social constructs such as ‘whiteness’ are vulnerable to manipulation by researchers seeking to take advantage of the constructs’ flexibility to promote their own interpretation without due justification or self-scrutiny—is valid, but it could equally well be applied to any socially constructed category (such as gender or sexuality).

Let us now turn to a more recent critique by Kaufman (2006) of what he refers to as ‘White Studies’. His critique is interesting because he emphasises the importance of problematising majorities, but proposes the concept of ‘dominant ethnicity’ (grounded in the subjective myths of origin and community shared by the majority population) as a superior heuristic category to ‘whiteness’ (in which is to say race, based on visible phenotypical traits). He believes that a re-orientation of scholarly attention to ‘dominant ethnicity’ would correct five omissions that he identifies in ‘White Studies’:

- 1) a constructivism that fails to recognize the cognitive and social processes that underpin social ‘reality’, 2) an excessive emphasis on ethnic boundaries

as opposed to ethnic narratives, thereby overstating the degree of malleability possible in ethnic identity, 3) a tacit belief in *white exceptionalism*, which overemphasises the ideological character of whiteness and deifies whites, 4) an elision of dominant ethnicity and race, and 5) a threefold parochialism in terms of place, time horizon and the role of race in ethnic studies (2006: 231-32; emphasis in original).

Although Kaufman's article is very insightful and makes invaluable contributions to the discussion by drawing attention to the role of race and ethnicity in various international contexts, such as the Middle East and Greece, I believe that Kaufman's presentation of Whiteness Studies is so unfairly narrow as to create a straw man from it. Furthermore, I would like to show how his criticisms do not pertain to my research. Arguing from a realist perspective, Kaufman inveighs against 'whiteness' as a pure sociological construct, suggesting that Whiteness Studies seek to ignore the lived reality of the existence of different phenotypes. Now I have already stated above the importance I assign to the fact that phenotypical 'whiteness' brings with it easier access to the 'wages of whiteness'. In this connection one recalls Ware and Back's (2002: 6) analogy of the 1996 Ralph Lauren paint catalogue which boasted thirty-five shades of white: once up on the wall shade does not make much difference as long as it is still recognisably white. However, as my overview of literature on 'whiteness' has shown, 'whiteness' carries with it a baggage that is more than just skin colour. Even if we conceptualise 'whiteness' as tied to phenotype, to a significant extent it remains a constructed concept, due to the differing experiences and access to the 'wages' different metaphorical 'shades of white' entail, as well as

the cognitive processes and agents that can render even the darkest shades of skin colour in many ways 'white' at particular times.

I agree with Kaufman that the concept of 'dominant ethnicity', based on the idea of a shared myth of origin, may be more globally applicable to the study of tensions around social and cultural diversity, especially in certain cases, than 'whiteness', especially in its original form as a subset of American historiography. I believe this certainly to be the case in Austria, which Kaufman mistakenly gives as an example for a country where 'invisible' East Europeans are the 'main irritant for ethnonationalists'. At least as far as the main far-right party, the Freedom Party is concerned, the 'visible' Muslim minority represents still the most demonised 'Other'. Instead, I would argue that the concept of 'dominant ethnicity' applies to Austria insofar as it can be traced back to the imperial paradigms of the Austro-Hungarian empire, where ethnicity, not race, was indeed the determinant factor in dividing up the constituent parts of the state. However, as much as I agree with the applicability of the concept in the case of Austria, it does not follow that 'whiteness' has been rendered irrelevant or obsolete in Britain. As shown in works by Agyeman and Spooner (1997), Bonnett (1998, 2000), Garland and Chakraborti (2006), Knowles (2008), Rutherford (1997) and Tyler (2003), the imperial experience of Britain has led to a merging of 'whiteness' and 'dominant ethnicity', which is to say in *Englishness*, which has also led to colour being a determinant in the ways in which immigrant incorporation strategies have been formulated in the post-war era (see below). I argue that East European migrants represent a 'novelty' in immigration discourse in contemporary Britain exactly because they are phenotypically 'white', which renders them on the level of policy and discourse to be constructed not only in terms of ethnicity, but also in terms of colour. Moreover, Kaufman does not recognise that, in the case of East

European migrants in Britain, the concept of ethnicity is very problematic. As my research will show, the category 'East European' is used in the popular imagination in a pan-ethnic way, essentialising the origins of the migrants without taking into account their significant heterogeneity. The prism of 'whiteness' thus offers a broader formula when approaching the study of these migrants than is permitted by the narrow concept of ethnicity (although one would not wish to do without the latter). As Roediger (2006) argues in his reply to Kaufman, we do not have to make a stark choice between either 'whiteness' or ethnicity; we can analyse 'whiteness' in its sometimes strong and sometimes weak relationship to class, ethnic, religious and language divisions.<sup>13</sup> After all, it is interesting and important to trace how somebody with a strong (dominant) ethnic identity coming from Central and Eastern Europe experiences being stripped of that ethnic identity when consigned to the category of 'East European', or even being mistaken for another ethnicity, which has more socio-cultural visibility in a particular locality (such as Polish). This fact poses an integral challenge to the use of dominant ethnicity as a heuristic tool, as it is not the functional unit English people use when talking about East Europeans: to be included into this category it often suffices to be foreign and 'white'. In contrast, one does not speak of Germans and French as 'Western Europeans' in everyday language.

Kaufman poses an interesting question regarding the future of East European migrants in Britain. He believes that they will never become part of the 'dominant ethnicity'. I believe it is impossible to comment with certainty on this from today's perspective, but one could argue that if assimilation does take place—which, considering the experience of the fully integrated post-war Polish immigrants, is not entirely unlikely—it will be the migrants' 'whiteness' that will enable an invitation

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<sup>13</sup> One must also not forget the case of South Africa, where the applicability of 'dominant ethnicity' would be very misleading outside of a consideration of 'whiteness'.

into the ‘dominant ethnicity’ club and it is going to be ethnicity which will be demoted in the transaction.

Studying ‘whiteness’ carries with it the dangers of the ‘epistemological slipperiness’ of using a term that is not habitually used by respondents as a means of self-identification and superiority (Clarke and Garner 2009). However, whilst this epistemological problem might be difficult to solve, it does not render ‘whiteness’ obsolete as an analytical tool or detached from reality, because one can still deduct constructions of ‘whiteness’ from white interviewees’ assumptions about entitlement, belonging, and the ways in which they verbalise ideas of sameness and difference. As Clarke and Garner (2009: 200) suggest,

Being “white” and English does not say that your identity is not also inflicted by class, gender, age, education, etc., it merely draws the attention to the configuration that draws your identity into line with the other people who fall into that category in relation to specific contexts.

Furthermore, I think that it is necessary, and entirely possible, to refute Kaufman’s claim that Whiteness Studies is about ‘deifying’ whites. As my preferred version of the term, ‘Critical Whiteness Studies’, implies, the goal of the field is the critical dismantling of ‘whiteness’, thus marking it as an identity. It is categorically opposed to celebrating ‘whiteness’. However, leaving ‘whiteness’ unmentioned and focussing exclusively on the ethnic or racial ‘Other’ merely distracts from social stratification and way that immigrant incorporation has been problematised in the UK. Nevertheless, it is of paramount importance that Whiteness Studies do not become a solipsistic exercise of ‘white narcissism’ (Chow 2002, see also Ahmed 2004, hooks



1992), which thus further excludes the ‘black’ experience from academia. It is necessary, therefore, to maintain a ‘relational analysis’ (Knowles 2008), which is not only concerned with where within the boundaries of ‘whiteness’ East European migrants are positioned, which discourses position them there, and how they themselves understand these boundaries and navigate them, but which also takes into account what this tells us about the boundaries between ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’, and also about other social localities in England.

## **2.6. Summary**

In this chapter I have outlined some of the key findings in the field of Critical Whiteness Studies conducted in the US and in Britain and demonstrated how they contribute to the theoretical framework of my thesis. I highlighted the tendency in British scholarship on ‘whiteness’ to focus the analysis on immigrant reception solely in those cases when the ‘white’ majority population is confronted by ‘visible’ or ‘black’ minorities. The aim of my research is to contribute to studies which challenge the notion of ‘whiteness as invisibility’ and conceptualise ‘whiteness’ as a fragmented social category and identity which goes beyond considerations of phenotypes and includes reflections on migrants’ abilities to perform so called ‘whitely scripts’ - that is, to abide by the behavioural norms, manners and traditions established by the ‘white’ majority society. Moreover, I have confronted some of the main criticisms of Critical Whiteness Studies in order to justify my theoretical approach and emphasise its applicability to the study of the perceptions and integration experiences of East European migrants in England. In the next chapter, I will elaborate further on my approach by discussing boundary theory as a useful methodological approach to the

study of 'whiteness', outline my main research questions and describe my research design and methods.

## Chapter 3. Methods

This chapter contains both a discussion of boundary theory as an effective methodological approach to ‘whiteness studies’ as well as a description of my research design and methods. I will also undertake a reflexive exploration of the ethical concerns that arose during the research process as well as of my own positionality as a researcher, and in particular concerns relating to the fact that I used my own phenotypical ‘whiteness’ and ability to ‘pass’ as member of a different ethnic group in order to generate a better research outcome.

### 3.1. Boundary Theory and Research Questions

The social world is both the product and the stake of inseparably cognitive and political symbolic struggles over knowledge and recognition, in which each pursues not only the imposition of an advantageous representation of himself or herself... but also the power to impose as legitimate the principles of construction of social reality most favourable to his or her social being (individual and collective, with, for example, struggles over the boundaries of groups). (Bourdieu, 2000: 187, quoted in: Wimmer, 2008: 1025)

As suggested in the title of this thesis, I conceptualise my analysis of East European migrants in terms of ‘whiteness’ and in relation to intra-racial ‘boundary work’ (Lamont 1992, Lamont and Fournier 1992, Lamont and Molnar 2002).<sup>14</sup> Boundary work is the process of social differentiation by which individuals distinguish and establish their identities by comparing and contrasting themselves to other people (Lamont and Fournier 1992). Of primary analytical importance in this thesis is the boundary of ‘whiteness’ itself and the ways in which it is articulated,

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<sup>14</sup> As discussed in the theoretical chapter, I acknowledge that boundary work focussing on ‘whiteness’ predominantly understands being ‘white’ as a social location in opposition to a ‘racial’ Other. However, given the nature of my case study – East European migrants - I focus on *intra*-racial boundary work, not *inter*-racial boundaries, considering their white phenotype.

redrawn, permeated and negotiated by members of the white English host society and by East European migrants to England.

The notion of ‘boundary work’ is a particularly valuable theoretical approach through which to analyse my main research questions because of its emphasis on agency and relationality: the construction, re-configuration and definition of boundaries between groups is understood as a process operating on an intersubjective level in the everyday interactions of individuals in various social fields (see for example Brubaker 2001, Brubaker et al. 2006, Lamont and Molnar 2002); moreover, it captures both those processes in which the agency of one group (such as East European migrants) determines their social position in a particular social space, and the ways in which other actors (such as members of the English host society) participate in this social process. As my key research questions concern not only the ways in which English participants in this research project construct ‘whiteness’ and reflect on East European migrants in this context, but also the question of how East European migrants themselves draw, redraw and navigate this boundary, employing this approach allows me to highlight the agency involved in the process of making the boundary by both sets of agents, filling it with particular discourses and meanings. At the same time, it also allows for an analysis of the relationality between the two groups of actors in making this boundary through the ways in which they think of themselves as different, equivalent or compatible with one another in terms of ‘performing’ whiteness and in terms of the processes that are considered necessary in order to ‘become white’ in England.

In the context of Whiteness Studies, Wray (2006) is a particularly staunch advocate of boundary theory, since he finds that it mitigates against the frustrations caused by ‘intersectional’ approaches, in which markers of

social difference, such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and nationality are studied in isolation from one another before the researcher attempts to draw broader conclusions on the nature of their interaction and on the question of which some markers can be considered to have a higher explanatory value than others. Boundary theory, on the other hand, allows for an interrelated analysis of simultaneously occurring and recurring processes of identification and group formation. To quote Wray (2006: 6):

We need not decide in advance of our study which, if any, of the Big Four categories (class, gender, race, ethnicity) will prove most salient or offer the most explanatory power. To resolve tired and tiring debates about how much analytical weight to give to race versus class, or gender versus race, and so on, or about whether we are conceiving of such terms in essentialist or antiessentialist ways, or about what exactly it means for something to be socially constructed, we should allow our methodological focus to resolve to a level of greater abstraction – social difference – and a larger domain of social practices – social differentiation. It is at this most fundamental level that new knowledge will be found.

Lamont and Molnar (2002: 168) introduce a useful distinction between symbolic boundaries and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries – or tools to negotiate ‘definitions of reality’ (ibid.) - are drawn with the purpose of categorising individuals and allow for feelings of similarity and group membership. Social boundaries, on the other hand, can be seen as consequences of the former, as the outcome of the politicisation and institutionalisation of symbolic boundaries; consequently, they reflect the way social interactions are shaped in reality. Social boundaries, therefore, are the expression of the stratification of access to resources and social opportunities as encountered by various groups once symbolic boundaries have been established.

As one can argue that the social boundaries of East European migrants are to a large extent ‘protected’ and ‘regulated’ in England because of the migrants’ EU citizenship and other related legislation, I focus specifically on the contents and discourses inherent in the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’ in England, and on the consequences this symbolic boundary has for social inclusion and exclusion in the context of integration and belonging in the everyday negotiations of English and East European respondents.

As Lamont and Molnar (2002: 170-171) note, a focus on symbolic boundaries is implicit in social psychological studies that analyse in-group and out-group formations because this is the framework within which social comparisons occur (Turner et al. 1987). Following social identity theory as it is described by Tajfel (1982), social categorisation can be understood to be the allocation of people into groups or categories with the aim of providing orientation and order in order to find one’s own position in the social world (Mummendey, 1984: 340). In this context, social psychologists make frequent reference to ‘schemas’, that is the general structures of knowledge that represent the most important discourses to which people relate (Fiske and Taylor, 1991: 99). According to Schwartz (1999), schemas represent knowledge on a higher level of abstraction than the memories of certain events, and operate as the main points of orientation around which stereotypes and prejudice are formulated. In the process of establishing schemas, one’s own behaviour is regarded as common and as conforming to norms, while the behaviour of those categorised as ‘others’ is seen, by contrast, as inappropriate and exceptional (Coleman, 1987: 131). The idea of social categorisation has been further developed in social dominance theory (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999), which takes as its point of departure the observation that in the process of establishing schemas, societies tend to structure

themselves according to a system of group-based social hierarchies, with one or more dominant groups at the top and one or more subordinate groups at the bottom of the hierarchy. The dominant group is characterised by its disproportionately large share in positive social attributes (such as ‘whiteness’ and the ability to follow ‘whitely scripts’) and aims to maintain its hegemonic position – in its most extreme form through violence, but more commonly through the use of symbolic boundaries that make the established order appear to be legitimate and just.

In the context of ethnic boundaries, Portes and Rumbaut (2001), for example, study the influence that constructions of symbolic boundaries have on migrants’ identities and processes of self-definition, which are also subject to the assignment of collective identities by others. More specifically, they investigate how ethnic minorities draw symbolic boundaries between themselves, other minority groups and the majority population in a society. Furthermore, they examine how the majority population draws boundaries around itself and ethnic ‘others’. Of particular use for any analysis of ethno-racial boundaries is Wimmer’s (2008) typology of the mechanisms of ethnic boundary making aimed at modifying the meaning of boundaries which have implications for individuals’ lives. Elaborating on Zolberg and Long (1999), who analyse negotiations between newcomers and hosts in terms of boundary crossing, blurring and shifting, Wimmer (2008: 1044) introduces the agency-based and relational concepts of transvaluation, positional move and blurring as mechanisms of modifying ethnic boundaries in terms of their meaning or membership. In this context transvaluation means changing the hierarchical ethnic order either by valorising a previously subordinate group (the group might re-define itself with new, positive meaning, often by stigmatising the dominant majority in reverse) or through ‘equalisation’, which results in the establishment of moral and

political equality between dominant and subordinate groups.<sup>15</sup> The mechanism of ‘positional move’ is aimed at changing a minority’s position in the ethnic hierarchy, whether through assimilation or re-classification (as in ‘passing’ for a different skin-colour due to having a light phenotype) in order to avoid ethnic stigma, or collective re-positioning, which has been achieved, for example, by the Irish in the US, who have ultimately been included in the category ‘white’, although they were initially classified in the same category as ‘coloured’ people (Ignatiev 1995). Finally, a certain ‘blurring’ of an ethnic boundary is achieved by emphasising divisions and identifications other than ethnicity, such as a focus on identities that are based on the local, the supra-ethnic (such as the European Union) or on cosmopolitan attitudes of belonging (universalism).

In the empirical chapters, therefore, my analysis focuses on constructions of the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’ in the public discourse, as well as in the narratives of English respondents, and on the ways in which East European migrants navigate this symbolic boundary: how they fill it with their own meanings and negotiate its contents by creating sameness and difference to English mainstream society, and how they conceptualise their integration and belonging into their new places of settlement.

### **3.2. Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection is based on a media analysis of British newspapers and 79 in-depth interviews (38 English respondents and 41 East European respondents:

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<sup>15</sup> Wimmer (2008: 1038) provides as an example for ‘equalisation’ the civil rights movement in the US led by Martin Luther King, who strived to achieve equal treatment of African-Americans by the white majority in terms of legal and social rights.



Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Hungarians and Romanians) in three distinct locations in England: Manchester, Norwich and Winchester. Before I discuss the recruitment strategies employed for my qualitative interviews and explain the choice of locations, data analysis process and ethical concerns, I will focus first on the media analysis, which represented the first stage in my research design.

### **3.2.1. Media Analysis**

The first stage of my research project was a content analysis of British media, which I conducted in order to identify which cultural stereotypes about East European migrants are prevalent in Britain,<sup>16</sup> and which could therefore be used to guide my in-depth interviews with English people and East European migrants (Chapters 4 and 5). The premise of this approach was to study not only individual stereotypes held by the English, but also the ways in which these cultural stereotypes could potentially affect East European migrants' self-perceptions and social realities. Moreover, as will be shown in the media analysis, the insights gained into cultural stereotypes raised a range of questions that served as an additional source of material for the in-depth interviews that comprised the bulk of this qualitative study.

The newspapers (including their Sunday editions) used were chosen because they are representative both of distinct political standpoints and types of the daily press: *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, a centre-right quality daily with an average circulation of about 500,000 and a predominantly business-oriented readership; *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, a centre-left quality daily with a circulation of about 270,000 and a predominantly young and urban readership; *The Daily Mail* and *The*

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<sup>16</sup> Cultural stereotypes are defined as the socially shared knowledge or social ideologies about the attributes of particular groups or their members. All members of society usually possess that knowledge. (Devine 1989)

*Mail on Sunday*, a right-wing daily tabloid with a circulation of about 2,400,000, and a predominantly lower-middle class readership; and the populist and sensationalist tabloid *The Sun*, with a circulation of about 3,100,000 and a predominantly working-class readership.<sup>17</sup>

The aim of the analysis was, however, not to conduct a systematic comparative study of the varying approaches undertaken by the different newspapers in their reporting of East European migrants, even though some clear differences did emerge, which are highlighted in the empirical chapter. Instead, by identifying recurring themes in newspaper articles about East European migrants, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- In what terms are East European migrants referred to in the British press?
- What are some of the typical qualities ascribed to East European migrants in Britain?
- What qualities are ascribed to East European men and women specifically?
- Can one say that the media discourse about East European migrants in Britain is ‘racialised’?
- Can we see evidence of the formation of hierarchies between more and less ‘desirable’ East European migrant groups?

There is a common assumption that the media has an impact on society as a whole. It is assumed to influence the language prevalent in a community and to reveal power relations, social roles and stereotypes, as well as mirror and influence social hierarchies (Bell 1995: 30-41). The media, particularly when it comes to ethnic minorities, has been seen as playing an intermediary role in the re/production of public

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<sup>17</sup> All numbers on newspaper circulation can be found on [www.abc.org.uk](http://www.abc.org.uk).

discourses, informing social attitudes towards and beliefs about migrant groups, and the processes behind ‘we’ and ‘they’ constellations, that is to say the ways in which social, ethnic and cultural sameness and difference are constructed. It is often through the media that people who may not have personal experience with minority groups receive their knowledge about those groups and the media thus serves as a reservoir of reference for most adult citizens’ opinions about ethnic groups, not only disseminating potentially prejudiced ideologies, but also re/constructing and re/creating them (van Dijk 1987).

These popular discourses, on the other hand, define and shape the realities of minority groups, as they influence majority groups’ social actions towards them, or, as Jäger (2001: 38) puts it: ‘Discourses exercise power as they transport knowledge on which the collective and individual consciousness feeds. This emerging knowledge is the basis of individual and collective action and the formative action that shapes reality.’ The media can thus be seen as an important source for discriminatory behaviour towards immigrants in a society, a fact which makes media analyses all the more essential.

By investigating ‘racialised’ representations of immigrants in media discourse, we look specifically at ‘elite racism’. This term was coined by van Dijk (1991, 1992), who posits that through newspapers, schoolbooks, academic discourse, elite interviews etc., the elite produce and reproduce the racism that is then implemented and enacted in other social fields. This also coincides with Bourdieu’s definition of the elite as dominant within public discourse – the agents who ultimately determine the value of social capital, which in turn shapes social positions and influences the division of resources (Bourdieu 1986).

My media analysis incorporates five analytical categories which were developed by Wodak and Reisigl (2001: 44) in their study of media discourses about immigrants in Austria:

- *Referential Strategies*: How are people named and referred to semiotically?
- *Predicational Strategies*: How are these people described? What qualities or characteristics are attributed to them?
- *Argumentative strategies*: What arguments (explicit and/or implicit) are used to support these characterisations and/or justify exploiting and discriminating against others?
- *Perspectivisation*: From whose perspective are such naming, descriptions and arguments expressed?
- *Mitigation and Intensification Strategies*: These strategies are used either to sharpen or tone down the discourse (by using particles like ‘really’, ‘very’, ‘absolutely’ or ‘doubtfully’, ‘questionably’ etc.) and hence help construct a particular identity for the speaker or writer.

The material for this study was collected through the Lexis-Nexis database using the query terms ‘East European migrants’, ‘Eastern Europeans’ and ‘migrants’ to conduct searches of *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Guardian* and *The Times*, including their weekend editions, between January 2007 and September 2007, January 2008 and September 2008, January 2009 and September 2009, and January 2010 and September 2010. These time periods were chosen after an elimination process, when, following the law of diminishing returns, new data beyond these time periods no longer yielded new representations (see Mautner 2008: 35).

My corpus is organised as follows (time periods and number of articles):

**Table 1: Organisation of media corpus**

|                        | <i>The Guardian<br/>The Observer</i> | <i>The Times<br/>The Sunday<br/>Times</i> | <i>The Daily Mail<br/>The Mail on<br/>Sunday</i> | <i>The Sun</i> |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Jan – Sept 2007</b> | 6                                    | 7                                         | 9                                                | 4              |
| <b>Jan – Sept 2008</b> | 6                                    | 4                                         | 4                                                | 5              |
| <b>Jan – Sept 2009</b> | 2                                    | 2                                         | 7                                                | 2              |
| <b>Jan-Sept 2010</b>   | 3                                    | 0                                         | 6                                                | 0              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>           | 17                                   | 13                                        | 26                                               | 11             |

Conducting this media analysis allowed me to develop a typology of East European migrants on the basis of their various representations in the British media: ‘valuable’, ‘vulnerable’ and ‘villainous’ (see Chapter 4.1.), which served as a useful tool not only in formulating the interview schedule and picking up on particular narratives voiced in the interview process, but also in the analysis of the interview data itself.

### **3.2.2. Qualitative Interviews**

The following sections discuss participant recruitment strategies, the combination of narrative and semi-structured interviews which I employed as my second method in this project, data analysis and, finally, the ethical concerns that arose during the research process.

#### ***Recruitment and participants’ characteristics***

The aim of this project is to compare high-migration and low-migration areas outside of London (for reasons outlined in the Introduction) in order not only to gain a

broader understanding of the perceptions of East European migrants by members of the English host society and the former's integration experiences, but also to grasp the ways in which either the high or low socio-cultural visibility of migrants might have an impact on their social exclusion and inclusion by the mainstream. Manchester, Norwich and Winchester were chosen as fieldwork locations on the basis of accessibility to interviewees, their economic make-up and the variegated degrees of socio-cultural visibility of East European migrants in these locations: urban and industrial Manchester is a high-migration area with a high socio-cultural visibility of East European migrants; Norwich and its surrounding rural areas are a low-migration area, yet with a relatively high socio-cultural visibility of East Europeans; suburban Winchester is a low-migration area where East European migrants remain largely socio-culturally invisible (see Table 1). However, as will be noted in the empirical chapters, most themes and issues that were voiced by respondents overlapped across localities, which led me to limit the comparative approach to eliciting blatant differences in the narratives provided by English and East European participants between the fieldwork locations as and when they emerged.

**Table 1: Presence of East European migrants in fieldwork locations**

|                                                         | <b>Manchester</b> | <b>Winchester</b> | <b>Norwich</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <b>Poles</b>                                            | 6,836             | 470               | 1,480          |
| <b>Lithuanians</b>                                      | 855               | 26                | 558            |
| <b>Latvians</b>                                         | 315               | 9                 | 103            |
| <b>Hungarians</b>                                       | 353               | 119               | 472            |
| <b>Romanians</b>                                        | 785               | 87                | 168            |
| <b>A10 migrants overall<br/>(% of total population)</b> | 13,315 (2.6%)     | 1,078 (0.9%)      | 3,537 (2.7%)   |
| <b>% of international migrants overall</b>              | 19.0              | 5.7               | 7.8            |

(Source: ONS census 2011)

I employed different strategies in order to recruit white English respondents and East European respondents. Access to English respondents was established primarily through existing contacts in the fieldwork locations who referred me to their acquaintances. I then utilised a snowball technique, whereby new contacts recruited other participants from within their circle of acquaintances (32 respondents were recruited this way). The remaining 6 respondents replied to my flyer, which provided information about the research project and which I distributed in various cafes and social service centres that assisted in housing and job seeking (see Appendix A). I aimed for a diversification of my English participants in terms of age, gender and socio-economic background. Middle-class and working-class respondents were defined according to their employment and educational background, with workers in skilled, semi-skilled or low-skilled jobs and no higher education defined as ‘working class’, whereas those employed in white-collar jobs and with at least a university degree were defined as middle-class (John et al. 2006).

Overall, I interviewed 21 middle-class respondents and 17 working-class respondents in all three fieldwork locations between February and October 2012 (see APPENDIX C, Table 1). The slight imbalance in numbers can be explained by questions of ease of access. Considering my own background as a PhD researcher and the social circle that I had established in England, it was easier to form initial contact with middle-class respondents through mutual friends, whose circle of acquaintances rarely permeated social class lines. The sample was balanced in terms of gender, with 18 male respondents (10 middle-class and 8 working-class) and 20 female respondents (11 middle-class and 9 working-class) (see Appendix C, Table 2). English participants were between 20 and 67 years old, with most respondents being in the 35 to 45 age bracket (see Appendix C, Table 1).

East European respondents, on the other hand, were recruited through a multi-strand sampling strategy, which involved the distribution of a flyer in cafes (see Appendix B), as well as invitations to participate in the research project in various internet forums and on social networking sites. The use of internet forums<sup>18</sup> and Facebook proved to be the most fruitful recruitment strategy. On Facebook I first posted information about my research project on the ‘walls’ of specific community ‘groups’ and ‘pages’ that were established in the fieldwork locations, such as ‘Polacy w Norwich’, ‘UK Lietuviai Manchester’, ‘Manchester Magyarok’, ‘Romani in Manchester’ and ‘Norwichi Magyarok’. In the case of Winchester I created a group called ‘Polacy w Winchester’, where I explained my research project and to which I invited potential participants by conducting searches on the networking site with a selection of Polish names and using various clues, such as home towns (‘from’) and

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<sup>18</sup> such as [norwich.pl](http://norwich.pl), [leeds-manchester.pl](http://leeds-manchester.pl), [www.expatsblog.com](http://www.expatsblog.com) (with searches regarding particular nationalities).



place of residence ('lives in'), as well as languages spoken and attended schools and universities. Harder to reach participants, such as Latvians, Lithuanians and Romanians in Winchester and Latvians in Manchester and Norwich, were recruited again through searches on Facebook using similar clues and were contacted through private messages. About two-thirds of East European respondents were recruited in this way; they then proceeded to distribute information about my research project to their friends and acquaintances, engaging in 'virtual snowballing' (Baltar and Brunett 2011). The interviews took place between January and November 2012 in all three fieldwork locations.

My aim was to acquire a variety of respondents in terms of country of origin, gender, age and socio-economic background, which could, therefore, go some way towards numerically reflecting in my sample the socio-cultural visibility of these particular ethnic groups in the fieldwork locations (with Polish migrants representing the largest group in my sample as they are also the largest group of East European migrants in the fieldwork locations) (see Appendix D, Table 1). The sample was differentiated by gender (16 male respondents and 25 female respondents) and age (the youngest respondent was 21 years old and the oldest respondent – 62) (see Appendix D, Tables 1 and 3). While a gender balance was achieved in the East European sample overall, Hungarian women (5) were overrepresented compared with men (1), which was again due to access to this group. While three Hungarian men expressed initial interest in participating in my research, logistical matters, such as agreeing on a time and place to meet, proved to be an insurmountable obstacle in the end with these potential respondents, preventing the interviews from happening. I believe, however, that this circumstance was based primarily on coincidence, and not on other potential explanations for migrant men's limited interest in participating in

research projects due to working unsociable hours or my role as a female interviewer that might have prevented them from participating on the basis of ‘appropriateness’. In terms of the age distribution and educational attainment (see Appendix D, Table 2) of my East European respondents, my sample reflects the fact that most East Europeans in the UK are young and well educated (Eade et al. 2006), with most being between 21 and 35 years old and having completed at least secondary education. Moreover, another explanation for the age distribution in my East European sample could lie in my recruitment strategy: using social networking sites could have limited my access to older migrants who might not be as accustomed to these types of online media as younger generations. In fact, only two participants over the age of 40 were recruited in this way, while the rest of the older participants were recruited through snowballing initiated by contacts that had previously been established through Facebook and internet forums.

Furthermore, the East European participants differed in their motivations for migrating to England (see Chapter 5.2. in this thesis). While most respondents migrated for economic reasons – in order to improve their living standards and/or escape unemployment in their various home countries – others migrated in the course of ‘chain migration’ as well as in order to improve the future prospects of their offspring, or displayed more ‘cosmopolitan’ motivations for migration.

At the time of the interviews, an overwhelming majority of the East European respondents (34 out of 41) had been living in England for up to 7 years (see Appendix D, Table 2), with Romanian respondents in general being the most recent migrants. In terms of their planned duration of stay, 27 respondents declared that they wanted to stay in England long-term, 4 respondents considered the possibility of further migration to another country (US, Australia, Germany), and 8 respondents

could not specify how long they wanted to stay in England. Only 2 respondents were planning on moving back to their respective home countries within 1-2 years.

The East European respondents also differed in terms of their marital status. 14 participants were married (12 with a spouse of the same nationality, 2 with English spouses and one with a spouse of a different nationality), out of which 10 respondents had dependent children. 8 participants were in relationships (6 with a partner of the same nationality and 2 with English partners), 5 participants reported to be single at the time of the interview, and the rest did not specify their marital status (see Appendix D, Table 2).

Finally, in terms of their labour market position, 22 respondents were in full-time employment, 7 were employed part-time, 4 (female) respondents were looking after their children and households, 6 respondents were postgraduate researchers and 2 respondents were looking for work (see Appendix D, Table 2).

Considering the diversity of East European participants in terms of gender, age, state origins, duration of stay, motivations for migration, marital status, occupations and educational attainment, it is not surprising that they also differed in terms of their experiences of and views on integration and belonging in England. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, socioeconomic factors were not the sole determinants in shaping respondents' interpretations of and explanations for social inclusion and exclusion in England. In fact, they represented only one dimension in a complex and interdependent matrix of other issues, such as language skills, self-perceptions about one's role and responsibility as a migrant, evaluations of contact with English people, normative views on the English host society, the level of involvement in ethnic community structures and many other factors.

It has to be noted that the specificity of the East European sample in this thesis differs from a wide range of research that has been conducted about East Europeans in Britain. The latter was often conducted exclusively in the native languages of migrants and therefore centres on the experiences of ‘less capable’ migrants, who have little to no English language skills and remain isolated in their respective ethnic communities. Instead, this thesis focuses largely on ‘capable’ migrants who possess good to excellent English language skills and who work in middle and higher skilled jobs alongside their English neighbours (Appendix D, Table 2). Given the higher social position that they occupy in England in contrast to their ‘less capable’ counterparts, these migrants can be considered to have a high investment in questions of integration, which is displayed in their evident awareness of problems and issues of discrimination, and in their ability to reflect critically and elaborately on these issues. This, in turn, allows for particularly interesting insights into their understandings and constructions of ‘whiteness’ and their experience of migrant incorporation in England overall and in their localities in particular. Moreover, it adds another aspect to the analysis, which is the way in which ‘less capable’ migrants are positioned in ‘capable’ East Europeans’ ‘whiteness discourse’.

### ***Interviews: Combining narrative and semi-structured approaches***

Quantitative data can provide insights into the extent of social boundaries that exist for migrants by measuring, for example, the social distance between the mainstream society and various migrant and minority groups, as well as shedding light on discrimination and residential patterns. However, quantitative analyses do not necessarily allow for any investigation into the underlying causes of these social boundaries. Quantitative analyses are limited in their aptitude for making inferences

into the contents of the symbolic boundaries that are drawn by the host society and the ways in which they are navigated and interpreted by migrants and minority groups. This is why I have chosen a qualitative approach to my research, and combined narrative and semi-structured interviews in order to develop an understanding of the ways in which English respondents and East European migrants ‘make sense of their social world’ from ‘a particular social position and cultural vantage point’ (Eastmond, 2007: 250, see also Dunne et al. 2005). Critics of qualitative research have identified various pitfalls in regards to the in-depth interviewing method, particularly questioning the ‘accuracy’ and ‘truthfulness’ of narratives provided by interviewees, and thus the ‘validity’ of this method (Roulston, 2010: 2). Moreover, the complex interplay between narratives, the interpretation and presentation of these by the researcher, as well as their interpretation by the audience who reads the final research output, makes the qualitative interviewing method more problematic still. However, this research project does not claim to subscribe to a neo-positivist tradition in which social science seeks to discover the ‘truth’ about respondents’ social world through the narratives that they provided. Throughout the process of interviewing and analysing the data I was very aware of my role as a mere ‘interpreter’, in the Weberian sense, of the events that interviewees described and of the meanings that they attributed to them. Thus, the aim of this research was not to provide ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ representations of what English or East European respondents think, but instead to focus on the nuances in experiences, perceptions and identifications expressed by both sets of respondents, with an awareness that they were expressed in situational, flexible and often contradictory ways, in order to create an opportunity for analysis. Each subjective account is therefore considered to be ‘meaningful’, as it provides insights into the social reality of a respondent that he or she creates on the

basis of his or her experiences, interactions, interpretations and knowledge (Mason 2002). Narratives or stories thus represent for researchers 'sites to examine the meanings people, individually or collectively, ascribe to lived experience' (Eastmond 2007: 248) and a focus on narratives prevents from universalising these experiences (ibid: 254).

In my initial interviews, I chose a method similar to the narrative interview (Bauer 1996) in order to 'ease' English and East European respondents into the interview process and allow them to create their own frameworks of relevance by choosing the topics and themes that they wanted to address. However, as my flyers and word-of-mouth during snowballing outlined the general aims of the research project, interviewees did not enter the interviewing process on a completely uninformed basis and were often prepared to address particular issues pertaining to my project right from the very start. This also led me to adjust my interview schedule during my fieldwork, particularly in regards to English respondents, who were often put off by the explicit focus on East European migrants as they often considered themselves to be insufficiently qualified or informed to comment specifically on this migrant group. By choosing the narrative interview method, I was able to mitigate this focus and allow English respondents instead to reflect on the topics that they found important in terms of their localities, their identifications and issues related to migration more generally. This further allowed me to elicit information about their constructions of 'whiteness' that was not explicitly tied to East European migrants and ease English respondents into the interview process. It was only in the second part of the interview that I applied a more semi-structured approach (see for example Mason 2002), in order to include various topics that I considered important for my research but which remained unaddressed in the narrative part, often prompting

English respondents to discuss their perceptions of East European migrants more specifically (see Appendix E).

In the case of the East European respondents, the narrative interview method was employed in order to allow them to recount their migration and settlement experiences in a less constrained manner (Bauer, 1996: 2), which was again followed by a semi-structured approach in order to elicit specific information about their views on their similarities and differences to the English mainstream and their socio-cultural in/visibility, as well as their opinions on integration and belonging, if these topics were not brought up in the narrative part of the interview (see Appendix F).

Choosing a narrative approach to start the interview was also motivated by the need to minimise the potential pitfalls which have been identified in scholarship which deals with structured interviews, such as the control of the interview situation by the researcher through selecting themes and topics, ordering questions and wording them in his or her own language (Mason 2002). However, this is not to say that choosing the narrative method eliminated these issues altogether, even if its purpose was to shift the control over the interview situation to the respondents and allow for the use of spontaneous language (Bauer 1996). Data collected through interviewing always remains subject to inter-personal constructions between researcher and respondent that are dependent on various factors in the interview process: the power relations between researcher and interviewee and the positionality of the researcher, time and setting of the interview, conventions around the discussed issues etc. The main aim behind choosing an interview structure that combined narrative and semi-structured approaches was for participants and myself as the researcher to be able to construct richer interview data, with the semi-structured approach potentially creating more consistency between the accounts.

Moreover, combining narrative and semi-structured approaches also allowed for adjustments to be made the interview situation in order to meet the expectations of the interviewees (Aitken 2001). Some respondents embraced the narrative approach and the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words without being interrupted, and provided detailed accounts of their experiences and perceptions. However, other respondents seemed to feel more comfortable in following a question-answer structure and were thus more receptive to the semi-structured approach. Here in particular my role as an ‘unknowing outsider’, which I assumed on purpose in order to elicit richer interview material and which I will discuss in more depth below, provided a way of circumventing respondents’ questions about the specific aims of the research and what I ‘wanted to hear’, and to elaborate in more depth about issues which might have seemed to be common sense to an ‘insider’.

Interviews were conducted in places that were familiar or convenient for the interviewees. Most interviews with English respondents were conducted in their homes or in the particular job and housing centres. The readiness of English respondents to invite me into their homes might have been based on the fact that I was an acquaintance of their family members or friends and thus not a complete stranger. Conducting interviews in respondents’ homes was also my preferred setting as I believed that it allowed for most privacy and comfort for the interviewees. East European migrants, on the other hand, were mostly interviewed in public spaces, such as cafes, and, in the case of university students, several interviews were conducted on university campuses. Choosing public spaces for interviews represented a security measure for both, the respondents and myself, due to the fact that most respondents were recruited via Facebook and internet forums and we were not acquainted, either directly or indirectly. It was often also a matter of convenience because the interviews



were conducted after the respondents had finished work and allowed for meetings to take place in the centre and not the outskirts of the fieldwork locations so as not to disturb respondents' daily schedules.

Interviews with English respondents lasted from half an hour to an hour and a half, while interviews with East European migrants lasted from about an hour to two hours. All but two respondents agreed to have their interviews tape-recorded. In the case of the two who did not agree, I took extensive notes during the interviews, which were then subsequently coded.

Finally, it is important to note that the topic of 'whiteness' was not addressed explicitly in the interview process, nor was it advertised in my flyers or any information that I distributed to potential participants. First of all, in order not to introduce a fairly recondite theoretical concept into the interviews and potentially create confusion among the respondents, and secondly because – as discussed in Chapter 2 – white people are often unaware of their own whiteness, which means it is something that might be difficult to articulate and ponder directly. Instead, following Brubaker et al.'s (2006: 15) approach to researching ethnicity, I employed 'whiteness' in my analysis of the interview material as an 'interpretive prism' through which I viewed respondents' narratives about their ordinary social lives and experiences.

### *Analysis and presentation of findings*

Interview transcripts were analysed using a 'thematic framework approach' (Ritchie et al. 2003: 220), which allowed me to identify the key themes that were provided in respondents' narratives and organise them according to my research aims, as well as new topics that emerged during the interview process (see also Ezzy 2002). In the first instance, I analysed the data by focussing on recurrent themes, as well as

commonalities and differences between them in the accounts of respondents within the particular sets of respondents, most broadly speaking, the English respondents and East European migrants in the particular fieldwork locations. I then proceeded to refine the analysis by using the thematic framework and applying it to the individual accounts through coding. In this process I was able to include other parameters of analysis, such as gender, social classes, state origins, and motivations for migration. I abstained from using qualitative data analysis software, such as Atlas.ti, even though I had originally planned on doing so. On the one hand, I wanted to avoid the risk of decontextualising the data, a frequent criticism of this type of software (Bryman 2004, Coffey and Atkinson 1996). On the other hand, I decided to proceed with my initial approach of organising my data and identifying key themes within the sets of respondents by using Microsoft Word, in the course of which I created a large number of files and folders organised by themes, which included my fieldwork notes and extensive comments that reflected on particular interview situations and interviewees' characteristics. Considering the analytical work that I had already undertaken before coding individual accounts, the practicality of continuing this approach and just 'copying and pasting' proved to be more efficient and effective, both in terms of time-management and heuristics, than replacing it with any other software (see also Ryan 2004).

Throughout the empirical parts of this thesis, I frequently quote participants' narratives, often at considerable length: the decision to do so was only taken after lengthy considerations about how to present these accounts in terms of language, particularly in the case of East European respondents. All interviews were conducted in English and East European respondents differed in their level of command of English. On the one hand, homogenising these accounts would have improved

readability and avoided the danger of potentially ‘ridiculing’ migrant voices and reinforcing stereotypes in the eyes of the audience of this thesis. This potential consequence of presenting interviewees’ accounts in an ‘untidy’ way was discussed by Standing (1998: 191) in regard to female working-class respondents: in that case the researcher faced the dilemma of on the one hand denying ‘the worthiness of the women’s language’, while at the same time struggling with the potential representation of her respondents as less educated and not articulate (ibid: 193). However, as shall be analysed in the empirical chapters, language skills and accents were a prominent theme addressed by both English respondents and East European migrants, when discussing their integration and issues of social inclusion and exclusion. I therefore decided to leave the accounts as they were, even when some participants only had a ‘limited’ command of English, and to allow East European migrants to express themselves in their own words, as this reflected important contextual factors of the interviewees. I chose this approach also in order to avoid a certain level of irony in my research, as observed by Temple (2006: 14), who discusses the issue of interviewing migrants who required interpreters in order to access social services in England, but whose narratives were represented in the final research output in ‘tidy’ accounts, making respondents appear to be fluent native speakers. Similarly, in this research project, where some East European respondents discussed their accents as prime markers of difference vis-à-vis the English mainstream and English-born minorities, ‘tidying’ up accounts would have meant prioritising presentation over representation – a choice I was unwilling to make.

#### *Anonymity, informed consent and reciprocity*

All interviewees have been given pseudonyms and the policy of confidentiality was rigidly upheld. A list of English and East European respondents, with their pseudonyms and fieldwork locations, can be found in Appendices C and D, Tables 1. Interviewees in general were happy to accept anonymity, and in many cases repeatedly asked for reassurance of their anonymity before sharing potentially controversial opinions or recounting upsetting experiences. The handling of the latter was a particularly crucial ethical concern in this project in regards to both English and East European respondents, in order to ensure respondents' well-being by limiting the potential for 'emotional strain' (Eastmond 2007: 259) during the interview (see also Sin 2005). I therefore not only assured my respondents of confidentiality and anonymity, but also emphasised at the beginning of each interview that I would respect and value every view and opinion, and that the events and stories that interviewees recounted did not have to be 'complete'. However, several interviewees commented on the interview as an opportunity to 'make themselves heard', albeit with different intentions. Jessica (WC, Norwich), for example, wanted to 'set the record straight', as she found that British media portrayed East European migrants in a too negative light, while several other English respondents voiced appreciation for my research endeavour after emphasising that the British government did not represent their interests and underestimated the problem of migration. East European migrants, on the other hand, discussed the interview as an opportunity to 'think things through out loud' (Janusz - Polish, Manchester) and 'just talk about life' (Dora - Hungarian, Winchester), and voiced great interest in the final research output, particularly in regards to potentially shared and differing experiences of other migrants and the opinions of the English respondents.

Considering my choice of a narrative approach as the way to begin the interview process, I contemplated at length the way I would obtain informed consent from my interviewees. My main dilemma was that by introducing a consent form at the beginning of the interview, I would jeopardise the ‘casual’ and ‘informal’ atmosphere that I wanted to achieve in order to give interviewees more control over the interview situation. In the end, I followed Osipovic’s (2010: 82) ‘unorthodox’ approach by opting for verbal consent that was recorded at the beginning of the interview. In order to gain informed consent, I put every effort in outlining participants’ rights and my obligations as a researcher. Respondents were informed about the voluntary nature of participation, the possibility of withdrawal at any point before, during or after the interview, and the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality. Moreover, during the recruitment process and also at the beginning of each interview, I explained my research project and participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about it, also during the interviews.

In terms of reciprocity I initially planned to offer interviewees WHSmith vouchers in the value of £10. However, it became clear in the early stages of the interview process that interviewees felt uncomfortable with this type of financial compensation for their time, with all interviewees refusing to accept the voucher at the beginning or at the end of the interview. Therefore I decided to opt for a more ‘symbolic’ way of showing my appreciation for their time and effort by bringing chocolates or biscuits to the interviews that took place in the respondents’ homes, or paying for coffee if the interview took place in a coffee shop.

Reciprocity can, however, also be understood in terms of the researcher disclosing information of his or her own accord during the interview, sharing personal experiences and opinions with interview participants (Oakley 1981). In my case,

interviewees frequently enquired about my life in Austria, my perceptions of London and the experience of researching and writing a doctoral thesis. These exchanges were also included in the interview material and in retrospect I find them to have benefitted my rapport with respondents, as this form of reciprocity allowed for the interview to take on more the form of a mutual exchange than a strict question-answer structure.

At the same time, this understanding of reciprocity has also been viewed as a potential hindrance for gathering data, as interviewees might construct similarities and differences with the researcher on the basis of the personal information he or she provides, which might affect the contents of their narratives. On the one hand, interviewees might be more inclined to forego information, as they believe that the researcher already knows about a particular issue on the basis of shared experiences; on the other hand, they might not disclose information, believing that the researchers' experiences are 'too different' for him or her to be able to empathise and understand their stories (Adler and Adler 1987, Glesne 1999). This foregrounds discussions about the membership role of researchers as 'insiders' and 'outsiders', an issue that was of particular concern to me when I started my interviewing process, for reasons which shall be explored below.

### ***Researching as an insider and outsider***

I approached English as well as East European respondents with a cover story: I introduced myself as a researcher from Austria at UCL, studying the integration and perceptions of East European migrants in England, with the aim of gathering information about the benefits and problems associated with and experienced by this particular migrant group. My research aim according to this cover story was to learn from the English experience, considering that Austria and Germany only made their

labour markets accessible to Eastern Europeans in 2011 and were anticipating a large number of East European workers.

What I purposefully did not mention to either the English or the East European participants, was the fact that I was born in Poland and am a Polish native speaker. I also specifically asked my already established contacts who knew this fact to withhold this information when approaching potential interviewees. Instead, I chose to ‘pass by default’ (Samuels 2003: 240, see also Ballard 1996), enabled by my own phenotypical ‘whiteness’, a surname that does not immediately disclose my ethnic background, and my German accent when speaking English, to emphasise my Austrian background, which I acquired due to having lived in Austria since I was two years old and being an Austrian citizen. I chose to ‘hide’ my Polish identity for two reasons. On the one hand, I wanted to minimise the risk of potentially skewing the narratives of English respondents by making them comment on a migrant group that I myself was, to a certain extent, a member of. I believed that disclosing my Polish identity to English respondents would create a certain ‘unease’ in the interview situation, with English respondents potentially toning down their opinions out of politeness. Moreover, I also wanted to ensure a certain degree of uniformity in the way I approached East European participants from different ethnic backgrounds. Introducing myself as ‘Austrian’ justified the choice of English as the interview language, and also meant that, when it came to the researcher-participant relationship, Polish respondents did not approach the interview differently as a result of seeing me as a ‘cultural insider’. I also wanted to avoid one potential pitfall of researching as an ‘insider’, which is respondents potentially limiting themselves in their elaborations on individual experiences, assuming that they would be ‘common sense’ to me.

However, due to my method of contacting most East European participants via Facebook, several respondents commented on the fact that I seem to have a lot of Polish Facebook friends and that I occasionally ‘comment’ on my wall in Polish. I therefore explained that I had a vast interest in Eastern Europe, as it was the region I studied in-depth at university, that I made frequent trips to Poland, and that I indeed understood Polish but that I would be more comfortable for the interviews to be conducted in English.

Studies which investigate the implications of membership status of researchers who conduct qualitative interviews have identified several benefits and limitations to assuming the roles of an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. On the one hand, being an ‘insider’ or member of a group that one researches, in terms of sharing an identity, language or social position, has clear advantages in terms of accessibility to this group. Having an ‘insider’ status might lead to the researcher being more readily accepted by study participants and to be conducive to establishing initial trust between respondent and interviewer as they share a common ground from which to start the interview process (Asselin 2003, Serrant-Green 2002). Furthermore, ‘insiders’ are generally assumed to be better equipped to empathise with the narratives of respondents than ‘outsiders’, on the basis of these shared experiences and understandings. At the same time, however, researching as an ‘insider’ demands more reflexivity and objectivity on the part of the researcher, considering that the researcher might introduce ‘too much’ of his or her own experiences not only into the interview situation, but also into the analysis. This could lead the researcher to pay more attention to issues which he or she is familiar with while ignoring others, and thus study the interview material through his or her own prism of experiences, as a ‘member’ and not a ‘researcher’, and/or project these experiences onto the narratives (Kanuha 2000).



Dwyer and Buckle (2009: 61), however, argue that establishing a strict dichotomy between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status fails to recognise the reality of any interview situation. After all, the intimacy of the interview setting never truly allows the researcher to be a complete ‘outsider’<sup>19</sup>, and while a researcher might be not a member of a particular social or ethnic group, he or she still often possesses a significant amount of knowledge on the research topics, through prior immersion in academic literature, which again blurs the dichotomy. Moreover, ‘insider’ status does not guarantee a sharing of experiences (and through this understanding and empathy), considering that no groups are homogenous. Therefore, the authors suggest that researchers should be seen as occupying a ‘space inbetween’, simultaneously acting as ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, thus shifting the focus from discussing the role of the researcher in dualistic terms onto evaluating his or her commitment to the interview and the interview material:

One does not have to be a member of the group being studied to appreciate and adequately represent the experience of the participants. Instead, we posit that the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but the ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experiences of one’s research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience (Dwyer and Buckle 2009: 59).

Even though my aim was to assume the role of an ‘outsider’ with my interviewees in order to ensure uniformity in approach and to guarantee an interview situation that was comfortable for my English respondents, I did not find my

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<sup>19</sup> As the authors state, it is the nature of qualitative research to be ‘with’ participants (2009: 61).

membership role as clear-cut as I had initially envisaged. It was not just that I shared many experiences with Polish and East European respondents by being, to a certain extent, a member of these groups, but that this ‘insider’ status was also based on other dimensions of my social identity, such as being a migrant, a woman, a postgraduate researcher (which made me a ‘member of the club’ in the eyes of some interviewees in the same position), etc. Moreover, the knowledge that I obtained in the course of my research, for example, about the situation and constructions of the working-class in England, enabled me to relate to my English respondents on a personal level, empathising with the fears and concerns which some of them voiced in regards to their future and migration. The main drawback of this is, of course, that English and East European interviewees might have shared more easily controversial opinions on racism, as well as class and gender differences, with a researcher they considered to be a member of their own groups. Research has found that respondents adapt their discourses to their audience, and that the discourses they produce for each category of their audience only partially reveals aspects of their worldviews, but that none of these discourses exhaust their worldviews (Sanders 1995, Davis 1997). However, I believe that my assumed ‘outsider’ status as a foreigner, whose accent located me outside of the national ethnic and racial ‘conflicts’ might have still encouraged both sets of participants to offer explanations of notions that they took for granted, because they assumed that I had little knowledge about their cultures (see Lamont 1992, Chapter 1 for a discussion on these matters).

### **3.3. Summary**

The objective of this chapter was to discuss boundary theory as my research approach, to describe the methods that I used, as well as to reflect on ethical and

practical considerations that emerged in the course of gathering interview data. Having established my theoretical as well as methodological framework, the remainder of the thesis presents the empirical findings of research into the public discourse about East European migrants in the British media, as well as the English and East European respondents' constructions of sameness and difference, the ways in which they use 'whiteness' as a symbolic boundary and the navigation of this boundary in the everyday interactions between the English host society and East European migrants.

## **Chapter 4. Through the Prism of Whiteness: Perceptions of East European Migrants in England**

In this chapter I investigate the representation of East European migrants in the British press and identify three distinct ‘types’ of East Europeans that are featured in the media: the ‘valuable’, the ‘vulnerable’ and the ‘villainous’ Eastern European, with each ‘type’ having different implications for the study of the ‘racialisation’ of these migrants. I then move on to analyse the individual perceptions and stereotypes about East European migrants that featured in the narratives of my English interviewees and which reveal the complexities with which East Europeans are positioned at the centre and at margins of ‘whiteness’.

### **4.1. Valuable, Vulnerable and Villainous: Representations of East European Migrants in the British Media**

#### **4.1.1. Introduction**

The most recent migration from Eastern Europe to Britain, which occurred after the EU enlargement in 2004, has attracted a lot of media attention intended to provide the British public with information about these ‘new’ migrants: their motivations for migration, their backgrounds and general qualities, their experiences of work and life in Britain, their settlement patterns, the intended length of their stays, their successes and their struggles, and, above all, their general impact on British society.

This remarkable concentration of attention has inspired several academic studies which analyse media discourses about East European migrants in Britain. Notable amongst these is the media analysis conducted by Fomina and Frelak (2008), which focuses on representations of Polish migrants and perceptions of their impact on

British society by a broad range of British newspapers and tabloids in 2004, prior to the EU Enlargement, and in 2007. While the authors conclude that tabloids in particular evaluate the *impact* of Polish migrants on British society and the labour market in a negative way, they find that the *portrayal* of Polish migrants is not unambiguously critical. Instead, they regard any criticism and negative representations as primarily directed against the previous Labour government and its presumed inability to have dealt with this unexpectedly large migration. The negative evaluation of the *impact* is moreover concentrated on those topics which Wodak (2001: 13) has identified as salient in every discourse about foreigners: namely, threat to economic interest (migrants are assumed to damage socio-economic interests) and threat of deviance to social order (migrants are assumed to display loud behaviour and to be criminally inclined). However, the authors seem to fail to observe that several ‘problems’ regarding the impact of Polish migrants on British society which are pointed out in the media are often derived from an emphasis on the qualities of the migrants themselves, for instance, the stereotype of the ‘drunken’ Pole being linked to crime, or victim-victimiser reversals which explain hate attacks on Polish migrants by arguing that British hospitality had first been ‘abused’ by migrants (Fomina and Frelak 2008: 68-71). Thus a conclusion which distinguishes between *portrayals* of Polish migrants and *perceptions of their impact* on British society and treats them separately might not necessarily be sufficient and fruitful for a comprehensive study of media discourses about East European migrants in Britain.

Another media discourse analysis was undertaken by Przemysław Wilk (2010), who investigates the representation of Poland and Polish migrants in *The Guardian* in 2004, starting prior to the EU enlargement up until December 2005. The author concludes that, after the accession of Poland to the EU, the image of Polish workers

became negative and highly stereotypical. He identifies these stereotypes particularly in regards to the ways Polish migrants were labelled (or, in the author's evaluation, 'branded') in the press as 'Eastern Europeans' and 'migrants from the former Soviet Union', without, however, focussing enough on investigating the qualities that are ascribed to these denotations.

As noted in chapter 3, my media analysis represented the first stage of my research, undertaken in order to identify cultural stereotypes about East European migrants prevalent in Britain so that I would be able to formulate my interview schedule and relate on particular narratives voiced in the interview process to a wider discursive context. In recent years, several other media analyses about East European migrants have been published, most notably an analysis of the portrayals of Romanian migrants in the British press after the EU accession of Romania in 2011, which analysed the general approaches (top-down, nationalist, elite and expert-knowledge based) by which public knowledge about Romanian migrants was constructed in the media (Madroane 2012). Another recent achievement in this field is the analysis of the 'racialisation' of Hungarian and Romanian migrants in British tabloids undertaken by Fox et al. (2012), whose findings are mirrored to a large extent in the following analysis.

Still, this chapter contributes to the existing body of work not least because it is not limited only to Polish migrants and/or a particular East European migrant group and, what is more, the time frame of the analysis (January 2007 – September 2007, January 2008 – September 2008, January 2009 – September 2009 and January 2010 – September 2010) includes three major public debates: Romania's and Bulgaria's EU accession and the subsequent migration of Romanians and Bulgarians to the UK; the economic crisis and reports about East European migrants' return migration; the 2010

general election and the subsequent rise to prominence of the issue of immigration within the political discourse. Moreover, the various discourses inherent in the representations of East European migrants in the British media have led me to develop a typology of the ‘valuable’, ‘vulnerable’ and ‘villainous’ Eastern European, with each category posing different challenges to the study of racialisation and ‘whiteness’.

#### **4.1.2. General Observations**

Metaphors of water, natural disasters, pollution and animals are salient in any discourse about migration (see Wodak and Reisigl 2001, van Dijk 1991). These tropes also feature in the British media discourse about East European migrants coming to the UK. Their movement is described as ‘pouring’, ‘flooding’, ‘flocking’, ‘waves’ and ‘invasion’, while migrant groups themselves are occasionally referred to as ‘stock’ or ‘hordes’. Depending on the newspaper’s format (broadsheet or tabloid) and to what degree it represents the conservative side of the political spectrum, the metaphors intensify in their negativity (see *ibid.*).

These metaphors are usually part of a ‘numbers game’ which is frequently undertaken particularly by conservative newspapers and tabloids in an attempt to establish (often in an alarmist tone) the number of migrants who have entered and/or remain in the country (van Dijk 2000: 45). The ‘numbers game’ seeks to draw attention to and often exaggerate the scope and scale of migration in order to invite public concern or even incite fear over the number of foreign arrivals. Typically combined with intensification strategies which incorporate adjectives such as ‘enormous’, ‘uncontrollable’, and ‘unlimited’, the ‘numbers game’ is not value neutral, but presents migration and the migrants themselves as a problem for the receiving country.

The 'numbers game' has become one of the major features of reporting about the East European migration to Britain, and did not cease after the initial arrivals in 2004 and 2005. It was notably prominent in *The Daily Mail*, usually as part of a criticism of the previous Labour government for having underestimated the number of East European arrivals, and featured headlines which emphasised the Polish migration in particular, as Poles represent the most numerous East European migrant group, such as: '600 000, the true number of Poles living in Britain' (11 February 2007), 'Poles now live in EVERY local authority in Britain as a million eastern Europeans move to UK since 2004' (30 April 2008), 'Number of immigrants in rural England trebles in three years' (17 July 2007), 'Revealed: East European immigrants swell populations of British towns by 10pc' (3 May 2007) and 'More than 8000 Eastern Europeans arrive in Britain every day' (14 August 2007), to name but a few. The 'numbers game' particularly intensified in the context of the recession, when *The Daily Mail* set out to expose stories of increased return migration as exaggerated: 'Half a million Poles to stay in Britain despite credit crunch' (29 January 2009), 'Migrant workforce surges by 175 000 despite recession' (9 January 2009), 'Polish plumbers return: Number of migrant workers from East Europe hits new high' (18 September 2010). However, the 'numbers game' was not just limited to *The Daily Mail*. *The Times* also engaged in this sort of reporting, featuring headline such as 'Poles in UK may be twice government estimates' (10 February 2007), or for example in an article entitled 'Britain is taking in 20,000 EU migrant workers each month', in which it is stated that: 'Figures published today show huge numbers of young migrants are continuing to head for Britain more than two years after eight former Soviet bloc states joined the EU' (28 February 2007).



A similar rhetoric was employed in the case of Romanians and Bulgarians since their EU accession in 2007, despite arriving in much more modest and regulated numbers: ‘50 000 a month arrive from two new EU nations ... The count, at ports and airports, suggests that warnings of a new flood of immigrants could be coming true’ (DM 10 May 2007). Employing the well-known stereotype of Roma women and Catholics as ‘sites of hyper-reproduction’ (Woodcock 2007: 515), *The Daily Mail* (3 May 2007) published a story about a ‘Romanian family of 101 living in Slough [...] The Demitris are devoted Roman Catholics, many of the womenfolk are obviously pregnant. There will soon be more mouths to feed’ -- an allusion to potential future strains on the British health and social services.

The liberal newspaper in this sample, on the other hand, employed a sort of ‘inverted’ ‘numbers game’. *The Guardian*’s headlines alarmed its readers not so much about the arrival of East European migrants, but about their leaving as a consequence of the recession: ‘Labour gap opens as Poles go home’ (24 August 2008), ‘Number of East European migrants fall as recession bites’ (20 May 2009) and ‘East European seeking work in UK down 47pc’ (25 February 2009), with articles expressing worry that ‘now that the numbers of workers coming to the UK are falling - and more are going home - economists and employers are starting to fret about how to replace them [with] competition between employers for the shrinking pool of migrant workers - widely seen as more hardworking than their British counterparts - hotting up’ (O 24 August 2008).

With East European migrants settling in rural areas to a greater extent than previous migrations to Britain, *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* have suggested that it is not only the English countryside that is under threat of falling victim to the ‘East European influx’, but, by extension, English culture as a whole: the tabloids provide

examples such as ‘Boston: A corner of England that is barely English [which] these days more resembles a corner of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania’ (DM 23 April 2008), or ‘Welcome to Boston, Eastern Europe’ (S 24 April 2008), and ‘picture-postcard districts like King’s Lynn, a medieval market town, and its surrounding district – including the birthplace of Lord Nelson and Burnham Thorpe [which] have now seen 6800 Eastern Europeans arrive’ (DM 13 June 2010). The symbolism of purity and order which is epitomised by English rural life has been extensively documented in academic research on race and landscape (see for example Matless 1998, Agyeman and Spooner 1997). As the English countryside serves as an icon of Englishness and a repository of ‘privileged’ whiteness (Cohen 1997), a large-scale migration such as the Eastern European ultimately may feed into the fear of a loss of English traditions and an undermining of the English way of life.

The ‘numbers game’ is a clear example of the way in which similar language is employed in regards to the recent East European migration as was originally applied to past migrations from the Indian Subcontinent, the Caribbean and Africa to the UK (Light and Young 2009: 286). Considering that in the case of these past migrations ‘race’ was the primary issue (see, for example, Hickman et al. 2005, Cohen 1999, Campbell 2002), the ease with which this language of ‘numbers’ is transferred to white, predominantly Christian Eastern Europeans only emphasises the ‘racialised’ understanding of the present migration, thus linking it to the ‘coloured’ migrations of the past.

The media analysis further reveals another characteristic of general discourses about immigration—the collectivisation process (see KhorsaviNik 2010). As a consequence of this process, migrants are depicted as one single entity ‘all sharing similar characteristics, backgrounds, intentions, motivations and economic status’,

making them appear ‘as the same in terms of nationality, education, health conditions, sexes (mostly male), reasons for coming, intentions for the future, their modes of travel, their economic status, social class, professional skills, and probably their looks’ (ibid.: 14). This assumption of unanimity is a major quality of negative representation.

In the case of East European migrants, the collectivisation process occurs not only through the use of geographical references such as ‘Eastern Europeans’, ‘migrants from the new European Union’, ‘A8/10 migrants’ or ‘migrants from Poland and other East European countries’ (which emphasises the fact that Polish migrants represent the largest group amongst Eastern Europeans in Britain), but also by employing labels such as ‘ex-Soviet’, ‘post-Soviet’, ‘migrants from behind the Iron Curtain’ or ‘arrivals from the former Soviet bloc’, which alludes to the economic and civilisational ‘backwardness’ of the migrants’ countries of origin (see for example Wolff 1994, Todorova 1997), and by extension that of these migrants themselves. Another common label for East European migrants is ‘economic migrants’: whilst this is undoubtedly an accurate label, its repeated use presents their motivation for migration explicitly as a choice (of a better lifestyle), and not as ‘genuine’ need (to escape war or violation of human rights), the latter barring the potential of inciting compassion, while the former often arises suspicion and fears of migrants causing unemployment and a strain on the welfare state (see Wodak 1994: 226). Finally, newspapers occasionally practise the habit of combining economic migrants, illegal migrants and asylum seekers into one single category, like in an article by *The Daily Mail* (22 August 2007), which starts with disclosing benefit claims of East European migrants, before turning to the ‘increasing’ number of failed asylum seekers living in Britain. However, this practice is not only limited to tabloids, but also applies to the

liberal *The Guardian* (28 February 2007), as demonstrated by the following headline: ‘Jobless Poles swell rise in migrants from the east but asylum seekers numbers fall’ (quoted in: Fomina and Frelak 2008: 70).

On the other hand, individualisation processes which emphasise migrants’ different nationalities and social backgrounds are used for different purposes in tabloids and broadsheet newspapers. Tabloids in particular tend to emphasise the ethnic and social backgrounds of perpetrators in negative contexts (such as crime), ‘as if it is an explanation for the actor’s actions in itself’ (van Dijk 1992: 112). The following analysis will provide multiple examples of this sort of practices particularly in *The Daily Mail*.

Similarly, when employed by tabloids, the introduction of personal accounts usually serves exclusively to emphasise the migrants’ negative qualities (KhosaviNik 2010: 14), as shown in the following example taken from *The Daily Mail*, which depicts a Polish migrants’ unwillingness to integrate and his or her intention to prey on the British state:

One Polish hospitality worker, aged 25, said: ‘I will never feel at home in this country. I hope to squeeze as much as possible out of this country and then dump it like an unloved mistress’ (DM 28 May 2007).

On the other hand, *The Guardian* and *The Times* employ personalisation strategies and cite personal accounts as a way to humanise the migrants and to evoke compassion (see also KhosaviNik 2010: 15), particularly in the context of exploitation and abuse:

Alona Tirzite, a 26-year-old economics and law graduate from Latvia, well remembers her picking strawberries and working in a pack-house. Eight young people shared a house in the Midlands, and she worked 16 hours a day, earning pounds 160-200 a week. She says: 'I will never forget my number -137. They addressed you by numbers, not by name. And the living conditions were shocking – one metre of space in a tiny room' (G 24 January 2007).

One 21-year-old Pole, Pavel [sic!], told the Cambridge researchers that he had arrived in England through an agency after paying a fee but the contacts he was given were bogus and he ended up sleeping rough in Victoria. He was introduced to someone who said he could help him, but was robbed of all his belongings, including his ID papers. He ended up in a squat with no electricity or running water run by a Polish gang with other desperate migrants who spent their days drinking and taking drugs (T 15 February 2008)

The quality newspapers in particular are very detailed in describing East European migrants' national, educational and social backgrounds, in what seems to be an attempt to represent them in all their diversity.

More examples of referential and personalisation strategies, as well as perspectivisations which are employed by the British media when reporting about East European migrants will be presented below, in the course of an analysis of three distinct 'types' of East European migrants that I have identified in the British media: 'valuable', 'vulnerable' and 'villainous'.

#### 4.1.3. The ‘Valuable’ Eastern European

The figure of the ‘valuable’ Eastern European was found to recur most in quality newspapers and features in the media predominantly through reference to research reports and personal statements by British employers. ‘Most employers are quick to cite an excellent work ethic as a factor in hiring them [East European migrants]. ... Despite being over-educated for many roles, they have been willing to take on jobs that many other workers do not wish to do’, wrote *The Guardian* (17 January 2010) in an article entitled ‘Young, self-reliant, educated: Portrait of UK’s Eastern European migrants’. The referential strategies employed in the case of this ‘type’ of migrant depict him or her as young, flexible, well-educated and skilled, hard-working, diligent and enthusiastic. Eastern Europeans are primarily valued for their contribution to the British economy: ‘The word Pole has become shorthand for cheap, reliable worker, adored by the middle classes for keeping down prices and by the Chancellor for assisting the battle against inflation (T 16 June 2007). This valuation is further evident in headlines such as ‘Immigrants put UK in Pole Position’ (G 7 January 2007), ‘Migration from Eastern Europe is beneficial’ (T 5 January 2007), ‘Motivated immigrants fill skills gap and solve labour shortages’ (T 17 October 2007) and ‘Immigration: How East European migrants fuel Britain’s boom town [Slough]’ (O 6 April 2008).

The ‘valuable migrant’ is epitomised by the figure of the Polish plumber, who is believed to provide essential services to the British public, and is often juxtaposed to the British worker, as this quote from an English businessman shows: ‘I’d forgotten how much work you can get out of one person before I started employing Poles. ...

The Poles have been taking the jobs because they have a far better attitude to work than local people, and they have much better skills' (G 7 January 2007).

By juxtaposing East European migrant workers and British workers, particularly in the context of the recession, concerns were voiced that East European migrants were irreplaceable and that their return to their home countries would leave permanent gaps in Britain's labour market:

Privately, many employers would prefer to employ migrant staff than locals, not just because many find them to be better motivated and with a superior work ethic, but often because they have more skills than their UK counterparts. Not everyone is confident that UK workers will be able to fill the gap (O 24 August 2008).

In the documentary 'The Day the Immigrants Left' (BBC1, 16 July 2010), the BBC put these depictions to the test. Unemployed British residents of Wisbech in Cambridgeshire were given the opportunity to work in jobs in the fruit picking and service industry which East European migrants had taken over in the town since their arrival in 2004. The British residents did not only fail to live up to 'East European standards' in terms of work-output, but all of them quit their jobs after a short period of time. One might wonder, however, whether this outcome was truly unexpected, given the fact that these British residents were long-term unemployed and hence completely disconnected from modern working life. This in turn raises the question of whether the figure of the 'valuable' Eastern European in contrast to the 'inferior' British worker is the result of a fair assessment, or merely part of a different discourse in which a vast part of the British working class is portrayed as workshy and state-

dependent (on the 'Chav' discourse see Skeggs 2004, Webster 2008, Hayward and Yar 2006, Jones 2011, chapter 2 in this thesis). This kind of rhetoric is occasionally employed by *The Sun* through interviews with locals from areas with a large East European population, such as Jeff: 'The poor working class here have no skills and have been left behind. Many end up on drink and drugs. [...] I don't think many of the local unemployed are resentful, some just don't want to get out of bed in the morning' (S 3 April 2007).

Another quality of the 'valuable' Eastern European as advocated particularly by *The Guardian* is his self-reliance and good behaviour. In so doing *The Guardian* attempts to dispel fears caused by reports of tabloids and parts of the conservative press which problematise East Europeans as putting a strain on social services and perpetuating crime. Instead, the 'valuable' Eastern European is indeed represented as living outside of the welfare state by citing reports such as: 'The hundreds of thousands of Poles and other east European migrants who have moved to Britain in the past two years have been allocated only 1% of council or housing association flats, contrary to popular perception, according to research' (G 17 January 2008). In *The Sun*, too, one can find the occasional East European 'success story', in which it is emphasised that migrants' improved lifestyles are to a large extent a product of 'sheer hard graft, without any handouts from the government' (S 29 April 2008).

What is more, the tabloids' frequent allegations of substantial criminal activity amongst Eastern Europeans are denounced by *The Guardian* as a 'myth' (16 April 2008) by emphasising once more the main qualities of the 'valuable' migrant:

Given the number coming into the country, the problems have been very few in terms of criminality, increases in crime or community tensions. Most



are coming here to earn money, most are professionals with qualifications, and they work then go home.

The 'valuable' migrant thus features predominantly in the quality newspapers in our sample. This type of migrant, epitomised by the figure of the Polish plumber, is depicted primarily as hard-working and reliable, a more skilled and diligent counterpart to the British worker, and one who confers an advantage to the British economy. The main motivations behind the 'valuable' Eastern European's decision to migrate to Britain is work, not the chance to partake in 'benefit tourism', and he or she is reported not to be engaged in criminal activity to any worrying extent.

While *The Guardian* and *The Times* do identify certain problems which have arisen as a result of the unprecedentedly large migration, such as social tensions in the English countryside (see for example G 14 June 2007, T 10 May 2008), increased spending on police services (see for example T 17 April 2008, G 16 April 2008) and the risk of undercutting workers' wage rates (see for example G 6 June 2008, T 26 May 2008, T 16 March 2009), they are generally presented as being outweighed by the economic benefits East European migrants have brought.

If we now try to understand the British media discourse in which the 'valuable' Eastern European is embedded within the framework of 'racialisation' as an expression of deprecatory features which are ascribed to constructed races in cultural terms, then we see that it certainly does not exhibit elements of a 'racialisation' of East European migrants. What is more, the analysis shows that East European workers are depicted, if anything, as 'superior' in comparison to British workers. This in turn poses the question of whether the discourse in which the 'valuable' Eastern European is embedded is in fact not part of a wholly different discourse, which is not

so much about immigration, as about class. The discourse of the 'valuable' Eastern European, whilst not 'racialised' in itself might thus be seen as contributing to the 'racialisation' of a different social group, which is the British working class, further complicating the operation of 'whiteness' in British society.

The analysis of the 'valuable' Eastern European further reveals the public discourse's firm allocation of East European migrants to the working class. This allocation extends so far that 'Pole' in many instances (as in the quote above) simply signifies 'cheap labour' and 'worker'. East European migrants who are in higher-skilled professions with higher incomes stay largely invisible in the media apart from single portraits, for example of a Polish hedge-fund manager (T 16 June 2007), an owner of an East European deli (ibid.), or reports about the increased number of East European students attending UK universities (S 20 March 2008). Whilst it is accurate that East European migrants have to a large extent taken jobs in the low-skilled sector of the working class, given many of these migrants' education and social background in their home country, being regarded as 'working class', with all its positive and negative implication, might still affect migrants' subjectivity in a negative way and might be perceived as discrimination. A study by Eade et al. (2006: 10) shows that East European migrants often define their social class in terms of future opportunities, and not their occupations and economic situation at present. To measure the effect of this discourse on East European migrants, however, a qualitative analysis based on in-depth interviews with these migrants is required. Such interviews will constitute a further part of my dissertation.

What is more, one could question whether the depiction of the 'valuable' East European is not an expression of racism *sensu stricto*, as the migrant's 'valuable' qualities could potentially be ascribed first and foremost to the fact that these migrants

are 'white', in contrast to the previous, coloured migration to the UK which has not received comparable praise (see for example Poole 2002, Phillips 2006). This contention will be explored in the next chapter through in-depth interviews with members of the English host-society.

#### **4.1.4. The 'Vulnerable' Eastern European**

The depiction of the 'vulnerable' Eastern European in the British media is broadly based on individualisation, making extensive use of personal accounts of East European migrants, in which they recount in detail their struggles with their live and work in Britain. East European women feature in this portrayal more frequently than in the other two 'types'.

The figure of the 'vulnerable' Eastern European appears first and foremost in the context of 'exploitation'. In one of its headlines, *The Guardian* (31 May 2007) termed East European migrants 'An exploited workforce'; it went on to argue that they often fall victim to 'cash-in hand bosses [and] gang masters deducting inflated sums for housing and transport, charging vulnerable people relatively large sums in Eastern Europe for the privilege of coming to work on the flatlands of East Anglia'. As a consequence, Eastern Europeans become an expression of 'modern day slavery', working in conditions that 'have returned to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with officialdom nationally turning a blind eye to the exploitation of young eastern Europeans, prepared to work 12-hour shifts, seven days a week, while living in grossly overcrowded houses, often "tied" to the job' (G 24 January 2007). The 'vulnerability' of East European migrants to this sort of exploitation is to a certain extent seen as a consequence of a lack of English language skill, which prevents East European migrants from becoming aware of their rights and seeking help in cases of abuse. In

an article devoted specifically to the experiences of migrants working in the meat industry, entitled 'I'm not a slave, I just can't speak English', *The Guardian* (13 March 2010) depicted in detail the physical and verbal abuse and the 16-18 hours shifts that East European migrants have to endure, citing for example a Polish worker who recounted: 'The managers... they would pull our clothes... and shout. They [threw] hamburgers... those frozen hamburgers are like stones.'

In a similar context, *The Times* (30 June 2007) dedicated an article to Mr Vraja, a Romanian builder who due to his registration as self-employed, which is a requirement for Romanians and Bulgarian to work in the building industry, was left vulnerable to exploitation and lax safety controls, and ended up losing his leg without anyone being held accountable for this accident. *The Times* quoted the editor of the London-based newspaper *Roman in UK*, who stated that 'companies are happy to profit from them, but at the end of the day, there is no one to protect them', and subsequently asked the question: 'If this had happened to a healthy, hard-working British national, would this still be the case?'

The female, 'vulnerable', Eastern European features predominantly in the context of sex-trafficking which is presented as another synonym for 'modern day slavery' (G 21 January 2007). This topic has received considerable attention throughout the British media, which has featured extensive personal accounts from women and young girls who were forced into prostitution, such as Tanya from Bosnia (T 13 February 2007), Maria from Albania (DM 14 February 2007), or Monika from Romania (DM 25 January 2008). These women are portrayed exclusively as victims, 'helpless [...], not imprisoned by chains and cages, but by fear and exploitation' (DM 25 January 2008), who have been lured into the West under false pretences of a legal job, and who have to endure tremendous physical and psychological abuse. The sex-

trafficking itself, however, is depicted first and foremost as a result of actions of individuals and/or mafias from 'the East'. The issue of sex-trafficking thus represents a conflation of the 'vulnerable' East European with the figure of the 'villainous' Eastern European, the third and final 'type' in this analysis, which in this context emerges in depictions of immoral Albanian boyfriends who trick their girlfriends into slavery (DM 25 January 2008), in stories of Romanian fathers who sell their children to sex traffickers for a profit (ibid.), or Polish fathers who hire prostitutes for their teenage sons (S 16 May 2009), as well as in reports of Albanian gangsters forcing East European women into prostitution 'in London's busiest street' (8 January 2010). The issue of sex-trafficking thus reveals a gender division in regards to the representation of East European migrants, victimising East European women and vilifying East European men simultaneously.

Another topic, in which the 'vulnerable' Eastern European is prominent, is homelessness. *The Guardian* and *The Times* in particular have closely followed the everyday lives of several East European migrants after the British government started an initiative to issue return tickets to homeless Eastern Europeans (T 25 February 2007, O 7 February 2010). Their homelessness is explained not so much as a consequence of their qualities or actions, but as a direct result of exploitation and the recession, combined with an inflexible benefits system, which requires East Europeans to work continuously for one year before they can claim any benefits, as well as a lack of sufficient language skills: 'Large numbers of Eastern Europeans had become homeless because of language difficulties, a lack of benefits and limited assistance from their embassies and consulates' (T 12 January 2009). This was the case for the Lithuanian interior decorator Vardas (O 7 February 2010), the Poles Greg (T 25 February 2007), Pavel (15 February 2008), Wojciech Wasilewski (T 12 January

2009), Pawel Damek (T 16 February 2008), Wacław Ziajka (G 20 February 2008), Anton and Jerzy (G 23 July 2008), who were all left to fend for themselves, some of them ending up ‘living on barbecued rats and alcoholic handwash’ (G 13 August 2010), and others, as in the case of Anton and Jerzy, dying of TB (G 23 July 2008).

The exploitation and the failure to protect this new workforce is a recurring motif in contemporary British film and literature. The novel *Two Caravans* (2007) by Marina Lewycka, for example, engages with issues such as human trafficking, migrants’ slum-like living conditions, and their vicious exploitation of workers on strawberry fields and poultry farms in Britain. However, the author draws a clear line between illegal migrants from outside the European Union and legal A8 migrants; whilst the latter still fall victim to exploitation, employers eye them with more suspicion as they are believed to be more aware of workers’ rights: ‘We used to get a lot of Lithuanians and Latvians, but Europe ruined all that. Made ‘em all legal. Like the Poles. Waste of bloody time. Started asking for minimum wages. [...] What’s the point of having foreigners if you got to pay ‘em same as English, eh?’, so one of the characters in the book, ‘Darren’, who is the foreman on a poultry farm. Ken Loach depicts the exploitation of East European workers in a similar way in his movie *It’s a free world...* (2007), in which two unscrupulous women, Angie and Rose, run a sham recruitment agency in which they employ East European migrants. This movie thematises in particular the difficulties and problems which arise when East European migrants lack the necessary English language skills, a fact which makes them easy prey for dishonest employers and forces them into a ‘subaltern’ position in British society (for an analysis see Rostek and Uffelman 2010).

The ‘vulnerable’ Eastern European is thus depicted as a powerless individual, coerced into inhumane working and living conditions in Britain. This figure embodies

the plight of those Eastern Europeans who had fallen victim to exploitation and/or an inflexible benefit system, without a security net to support them. The depiction of the ‘vulnerable’ Eastern European does not employ ‘racialisation’ as such; the frequent use of individualisation and the exceptionally extensive quotation of personal accounts in the media reporting about this ‘type’ of migrant can in fact be seen as an attempt to evoke compassion and sympathy for Eastern Europeans who have fallen into hardship in the UK. However, it is arguable whether this depiction is an unambiguously ‘positive’ representation of East European migrants in a broad sense, as there is an assumption of differential power patterns and a moral high-ground (see KhosraviNik 2010: 19). This, however, might be better described as ‘victimisation’ rather than ‘racialisation’.

The issue of sex-trafficking also reveals a persistent conflation of the figure of the ‘vulnerable’ Eastern European and the ‘villainous’ Eastern European along the lines of gender. In this context, the ‘villainous’ type emerges in depictions of immoral and criminal Eastern European men (boyfriends/fathers/gangsters) who engage in the trafficking of East European women, and will be analysed in more detail below.

#### **4.1.5. The Villainous Eastern European**

The ‘villainous’ migrant features predominantly in *The Daily Mail* and to a certain degree in the *Sun* and is depicted through the referential strategies of primitivisation, problematisation and criminalisation (for more on these strategies, see Jewani and Richardson 2010: 243). This ‘type’ of migrant is constructed to a large part on the basis of perspectivisation adopted from selected British locals and leaders of right-wing institutions, including, most notably, Sir Andrew Green, chairman of the organisation MigrationWatch UK, as well as representatives of the British police.

*The Daily Mail* and the *Sun* employed the strategy of primitivisation on frequent occasions in order to emphasise the uncivilised and immoral qualities and behaviour of the new migrants. In an article devoted to increased public spending on interpreters in various social services, *The Daily Mail* (20 September 2007) emphasised the need of Eastern Europeans for guidelines which tell them not to ‘touch and fondle people without their permission, urinate and spit in public. [...] People may find it intimidating to be stared at, whistled at, shouted at or followed’, clearly implying that this sort of behaviour represents some form of normality in these migrants’ home countries.

Particularly prominent were stories about the alleged river poaching by ‘hungry, knife-wielding Eastern Europeans’ (DM 7 August 2007; see also T 7 April 2007). In a lengthy article entitled ‘The slaughter of the swans: As carcasses pile up and migrants camps are build on river banks, Peterborough residents are too frightened to visit the park’ (26 March 2010), East Europeans were depicted as having adopted ‘the lifestyle of ancient hunter-gatherers [...] raping and pillaging rivers for food’. The article ascribed the alleged poaching of carp and killing of swans by East European migrants on the one hand to ‘cultural differences’, because, according to the article, ‘living off the land is normal in Eastern Europe [and] many Eastern Europeans have a completely different attitude to wildlife [from Britons], with animals caught for the dinner table considered to be fair game’. On the other hand it also cited the account of a local fisherman, who denounced the ‘slaughter’ to bad will on the side of the migrants:



These people have a total disregard for our wildlife and our country... These people know exactly what they are doing. They are catching swans and decimating fish stocks... Killing swans and fish has nothing to do with lack of education. It's to do with decency, manners and respect for the country you live in.

In another article, *The Sun* (28 February 2008) particularly alludes to the involvement of Romanians in these sort of practices, claiming that a 'Romanian bible and cooking gear' was found 'surrounded by rotting food and thousands of feathers'. Quoting Brubaker et al. (2006: 323-4), Fox et al. (2012: 689) refer to these stories as 'alleged', as they seem to represent a repackaged version of an urban legend which used to circulate in Romania in the 1990s about swan-murdering Romanian gypsies in Austria:

It was said several Romanian Gypsies had been arrested in Vienna for eating a swan they had captured and roasted over an open fire in a city park. [...] 'Swan eating' indexed a wide range of 'uncivilised' behaviour allegedly practised by Romanian Gypsies, behaviour that came to be associated with Romanians in general.

Just as in the case of the 'numbers game', the above example shows clearly the ease with which certain language is reused and tropes are repackaged in order to demonise particular migrant groups as threatening, uncivilised and barbaric.

The deliberate attachment of the 'Roma' label to Romanians by tabloids and the cultural baggage this label carries has already attracted extensive academic attention

elsewhere (see for example Woodcock 2007). It is hence sufficient to say that attaching this label to any East European migrant group is done with the purpose of conveying the stigma of cultural backwardness and uncivilised behaviour which the 'Roma' label signifies to that particular group (see also Fox et al. 2012: 688). Romanians, probably due to the fact that the largest Roma minority in Europe is in Romania, have more often than other Eastern Europeans fallen victim to this sort of labelling.

In reporting about East European migrants, *The Daily Mail* and the *Sun* also frequently employed the strategy of problematisation in order to create indignation, with headlines such as 'Benefits bill for East European migrants hits 125m' (22 August 2007), 'Migrants behind surge in child benefit claims' (27 February 2007), 'Britain funds kids in Poland' (S 29 January 2008), 'Poles seeking dole doubles in 2 years' (S 14 April 2009), 'Migrants ARE driving down wages of the poor' (18 January 2010), 'City can't cope: While this Czech family are thrilled with their new council house, such largesse is ruining communities' (10 April 2010), '£1m of child benefit paid out a month – to mothers in Poland' (21 September 2007), to name but a few. East Europeans were depicted as putting a 'huge strain on schools, hospitals and housing' (DM 14 August 2007), and as creating unnecessary competition for local unskilled workers: 'Jobless British builders have been told: "We only want Eastern Europeans and Poles"' (S 3 May 2007). Fomina and Frelak (2008: 46) identified this sort of reporting above all as a criticism of the previous Labour government. Whilst this is indeed a valid interpretation, it only reveals part of the story, as also here the figure of the 'villainous' Eastern European becomes apparent. *The Daily Mail* (21 May 2007) leaves no doubt as to why Eastern Europeans are in the UK: 'to take advantage of the generous benefits system' (DM 3 March 2009). Migrants are

depicted as coming to Britain with malevolent intentions, by making arguments such as: ‘Hundreds have left my Romanian town. What for? British benefits’ (DM 21 May 2007), and articles which denounce Polish newspapers for giving out ‘controversial’ advice on how to ‘reap the benefits’ (S 22 August 2008) and Romanian television for advertising ‘how easy it is to get a British job [illegally]’ (DM 17 February 2007).

The figure of the ‘villainous’ Eastern European emerges again in stories about East European squatters, who are said to deliberately force British families out of their homes. *The Daily Mail* dedicated a lengthy article to ‘Knife-wielding Lithuanian squatters who move in when residents go out’ (DM 24 September 2010), in which Eastern Europeans are depicted as ‘aggressive’ and ‘threatening’, refusing to let the rightful British owners reclaim their property unless served with a court order. The ‘squatter story’ even inspired *The Daily Mail* (*ibid.*) to run the following cartoon:



‘Abusive’ intentions towards their British host society are also ascribed to East European women specifically. An article entitled ‘Invasion of the Russian Gold

Diggers' (DM 31 May 2007), depicted 'Slavic Sirens' who come to London as calculating and manipulative, their main goal being 'grabbing a British boyfriend, a British expense account and a British passport'

The figure of the 'villainous' East European features most explicitly, however, in reports on crime. 'Immigrants push cops to limit', announced a headline in the *Sun* (20 September 2007); 'Massive levels of migration from Eastern Europe have brought social disorder and crime', wrote *The Daily Mail* (17 February 2007), and cited as the main sources of upheaval 'noise and disruption around migrant housing, street drinking, breakdowns in refuse collections, tensions over parking spaces and arguments in libraries where migrants 'monopolise the internet''. Eastern European migrants were on several occasions portrayed as 'putting British lives at risk' (DM 1 August 2007) as they were alleged to engage in drink-driving and carrying knives which were 'pulled to settle almost feudal arguments (DM 7 June 2008). Romanians, more than any other Eastern European migrant group, have been subject to this sort of reporting. *The Daily Mail* (17 April 2008) cited, for example, a leaked Whitehall memo claiming that

[...] Romanian gangs were behind an astonishing 80 to 85 per cent of cash machine crimes in Britain and responsible for a sharp rise in street violence, people-trafficking, prostitution, theft and fraud. Indeed, so many have now moved to London that Romania is enjoying a drop in crime. [...] One police operation alone identified 200 children from Romania who are thieving on the streets of London.

*The Sun*, on the other hand, in an attempt sensationalise Romanians' involvement in thefts announced that 'Gypsy child pickpocket gangs send £1 Billion a year back to Romania' (S 25 January 2008), warning that there are yet more 'criminal elements' in Romania waiting to 'become Britain's problem'.

Also here, criminal activities by East Europeans are explained with reference to their culture, as demonstrated by this statements in a *Sun* article on East European criminals in Cambridgeshire: 'Migrants continue cultural practices which appeared acceptable in their home country but which were highly illegal in Britain' (S 20 September 2007), or a headline in the *Times* on the same issue: 'Crime figures reflect a clash of two cultures' (T 20 September 2007). It is hence not surprising that in an article about a jeweller who banned people referred to variously as 'Romanians', 'Romanian gipsies' and 'Eastern Europeans' from his shop (this example serves as further evidence that in certain contexts these labels are used interchangeably), *The Daily Mail* (18 July 2009) deliberates the question of whether or not such practice is indeed 'racist', as the shop owner had fallen victim to 'Eastern European thieves' first. Similarly in a 'special investigation' of racist attacks against Roma in Ulster, *The Daily Mail* (20 June 2009) wonders: 'As hate-filled mobs drive Romanian gipsies out of Ulster, we ask who's REALLY to blame?', and, by citing extensive accounts from locals about how Roma 'are pretty uneducated and [...] seem to think that the only way they can survive is to bend the rules', they imply a straightforward conclusion: the Roma themselves. This kind of victim-victimiser reversal has also been employed in the context of the rising support of the BNP prior to the 2010 general elections, making 'uncontrolled' immigration and, by association, the migrants themselves responsible for rising xenophobia (see for example DM 10 January 2009, 15 June 2009, 9 January 2010).

The figure of the ‘villainous’ Eastern European thus recurs in depictions of East European migrants which question their moral character. By evoking images of uncivilised, anti-social individuals who prey on their British hosts, these migrants are presented as a threat to stability and the existing order in Britain. This portrayal of the ‘villainous’ Eastern European is clearly an expression of neo-racism: essentialised negative characteristics such as criminal behaviour and moral deficiency are depicted as integral elements of East European values and culture. Moreover, the very problems of migration, such as pressure on public services and an increase in xenophobia, are attributed to the characteristics of the migrants themselves: their condemnable moral character and abusive attitude towards Britain.

Immigrants from Romania have suffered disproportionately from these neo-racist depictions than any other East European migrant group. They are more likely to be stigmatised as ‘Roma’, a label which epitomises cultural backwardness and uncivilised behaviour, which might be related to the presence of a large gypsy minority in Romania. On the other hand, one could also argue that Romanians (and Bulgarians), whose EU accession was delayed for three years, entered into a pre-existing discourse of increasing anxiety about the presence of East European migrants in Britain, which was more susceptible to ‘racialisation’ – a conclusion also drawn by Fox et al. (2012: 690).

#### **4.1.6. Summary**

The analysis of contemporary British media discourse about East European migrants revealed three distinct types of East Europeans: ‘valuable’, that is hard-working, diligent and reliable; ‘vulnerable’—a victim of exploitation and of an inflexible benefits system; and ‘villainous’—uncivilised, abusive and criminal. The

latter figure, the ‘villainous’ Eastern European, can be seen as an expression of the ‘racialisation’ of East European migrants in the media discourse in Britain. I have argued that ‘racialisation’ implies the ascription of deprecatory features to migrants, stressing cultural differences and ‘alien’ values. The analysis shows how *The Daily Mail* in particular has engaged in this ‘neo-racism’, adopting strategies of primitivisation, problematisation and criminalisation to vilify East European migrants in Britain. This is not the racism of slurs and jokes -- a ‘Paddy’ figure has yet to be established for East European migrants, nor are there any derogatory epithets such as in the case of migrants from the Indian subcontinent, for example. Rather, it is the ‘racialisation’ of insinuation, in which East European migrants are deprecated with reference to some assumed condemnable cultural and social traits.

I would argue that the figure of the ‘villainous’ Eastern European is not just an expression of an ‘anti-immigration moral panic which has existed in some newspapers for decades’, as it has been explained by Fomina and Frelak (2008: 40); instead I regard it as a product of a ‘racialisation’ process which not only makes use of language repackaged from previous, ‘coloured’ migrations to Britain (such as the ‘numbers game’) and applied to this migration, but also evokes well-established discourses of a ‘culturally backward’ Eastern Europe (see Wolff 1994; on ‘Balkanism’ see Todorova 1997), and reproduces the stereotype of the ‘uncivilised Roma’ (see Woodcock 2007).

The media analysis has shown that some East European migrant groups are ‘racialised’ more than others, which implies that there might be indeed certain hierarchies emerging between more and less ‘desirable’ East European migrants, even if the particular migrant groups are not directly compared with one another. Whilst for Polish and Lithuanian migrants there are both positive and negative representations,

Albanians, Romanians and, above all, Romanian gypsies are depicted in a negative way almost universally. Other East Europeans, like Czechs and Hungarians are hardly mentioned, most probably because they lack a sufficiently large migrant population and thus socio-cultural invisibility.

Phenotypic ‘whiteness’, an absence of colonial links with Britain (as in the case of the Irish), and a predominantly Christian religious background (as opposed to Islamic) thus does not protect East European migrants from ‘racialisation’ and expressions of neo-racism in the British media. This suggests that ‘racialisation’, as in the case of previous ‘coloured’ migrations to Britain, might in fact still be of importance when it comes to making sense of this ‘new’ migration, and calls for a problematisation of ‘whiteness’ as a homogenous racial category.

This media analysis has not only revealed three ‘types’ of East European migrants which are prevalent in the public discourse in Britain, but has also pointed towards several issues which require further investigation through in-depth interviews. The first is social class, an issue which becomes evident in the discourse about the ‘valuable’ migrants and which points towards the question as to whether or not this discourse might in fact be part of the ‘Chav’ discourse in Britain, juxtaposing East European and British workers; this discourse further allocates East European migrants to the working class (as shall be further analysed in Chapter 4.2) and raises the question as to whether and how such an allocation might affect migrants’ self-perceptions (see Chapter 5).

However, this also points towards a possible issue of ‘whiteness’ and the question as to whether this depiction of the ‘valuable’ Eastern European might in fact be an expression of racism *sensu stricto*, juxtaposing East European migrants and previous ‘coloured’ migrations to Britain.



The figure of the ‘vulnerable’ Eastern European, on the other hand, reveals the issue of gender. East European masculinity is portrayed as brutal and exploitative, whilst East European femininity is victimised and a connotative link is created between East European women and prostitution. This also calls for a further investigation into the perception of the East European ‘gender regime’ by the English host society, and how this perception again affects East European migrants’ self-perceptions and dictates the ways in which they interact with their English counterparts. These issues, amongst others, shall be addressed in the next sub-chapter.

## **4.2. ‘White’, but not Quite: English Respondents’ Perceptions of East European Migrants**

### **4.2.1. Introduction**

In light of the numerous attempts to evaluate the successes and pitfalls of multiculturalism in Britain, the topic of ‘race’ and ‘race relations’ has attracted significant research interest. A vast body of work analyses experiences of integration and belonging, discrimination and (social) exclusion from the perspective of ‘visible’ BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities. More recently, following the trend of Whiteness Studies in the US, the analytical focus has widened to include ‘white’ majority perspectives, and their attitudes towards and constructions of the ‘visible’ ‘non-white’ ‘Other’. These studies have provided valuable insights into the ways in which members of the host society determine who belongs and does not belong to the societal imaginary. At the same time, such bottom-up constructions of society also contribute to an understanding of how the discourse of ‘whiteness’ is shaped in Britain. As discussed in the literature review, ‘whiteness’ does not usually feature as a conscious element of white people’s identities, nor is it explicitly referred to as a ‘site of privilege’ in white people’s narratives of their self-perception (see chapter 2 in this thesis). However, even in the absence of explicit references to race and phenotype, one can still deduct implicit discourses of ‘whiteness’ by analysing the ways in which members of the dominant ‘white’ host society construct themselves and the ‘Other’ – ‘whiteness’ being the norm against which all others are measured, and how they justify social inclusion and exclusion of particular migrant groups.

Nevertheless, as discussed in the literature review (chapter 2), most studies on ‘whiteness’ in Britain have been conducted in the context of ‘visible’ ‘Otherness’, since members of racially marked groups have been found to experience more overt

discrimination than unmarked groups. The racialisation of ‘invisible’ / ‘white’ migrants and minorities by the ‘white’ majority population has not been sufficiently researched, even though such a focus can provide insights into the considerable power differentials within racially or visually homogenous groups. Even though phenotypical whiteness brings important benefits, access to these privileges is also dependent on other intersecting factors such as ethnicity, class and gender. There exists, of course, a body of work that analyses the racialisation of the Irish in Britain, with reference to discourses of colonial superiority (see e.g. Curtis 1997, Garner 2003, Gray 2002, Hickman 1998 and 2005, Hickman and Walter 2005), and in recent years studies have begun to emerge which also include East European migrants in their focus (Fox 2013, Fox et al. 2012). East European migrants represent a particularly interesting case for a study on ‘whiteness’ and constructions of sameness and difference in England: they are phenotypically ‘invisible’, they have not been officially deemed a ‘racially oppressed’ group in Britain, and they do not share a history of British colonialism. At the same time, some ethnic groups (such as Poles and Lithuanians) display nationally a high socio-cultural visibility due to the large number of people who have migrated to the UK since EU accession in 2004, a fact which is reflected in the considerable media attention these ethnic groups have received in the past (see chapter 4.1. in this thesis), while others (such as Latvians and Hungarians) remain largely socio-culturally invisible. This opens up questions for an investigation into how, therefore, English respondents construct this ‘new’ group of migrants as part of their construction of their own ‘white’ identities – which discourses are at play that position East Europeans at the centre and/or push them to the margins of ‘whiteness’? How does English mainstream society evaluate the presence and integration efforts of this phenotypically ‘invisible’ migrant group? And

how much significance can be placed on socio-cultural visibility and invisibility in this context?

As Clarke and Garner (2009) observe, attitudinal studies that focus on ‘white’ majority perceptions of immigration in Britain have predominantly focussed on ‘white’ working class men in urban areas that have a large presence of BAME communities. This focus on the working class appears to be based on an assumption that members of the working class are more likely to engage in racist rhetoric and vote for far right political parties. While research shows that skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers do indeed represent a target group for parties such as the British National Party (BNP) (John et al. 2006, see also Ivarsflaten 2005: 42, Valentine 2010), Garner (2010: 6) observes that a hostile turn towards immigration in public responses has also occurred amongst the middle class, with degree-educated Labour voters becoming less liberal on the topic of immigration. This prompted the author (in collaboration with Clarke, see Clarke and Garner 2009) to include the middle class in his analysis and to focus specifically on areas with a low number of immigrants and ethnic minorities in order to problematize white majority identities further. I follow the authors in this attempt by including middle-class as well as working-class perspectives in both suburban/rural low-migration areas (Winchester, Norwich) and in one urban high-migration area (Manchester). However, as the analysis will show, the issues relating to East European migrants’ integration which were discussed in all three localities amongst middle-class and working-class respondents did not differ significantly and were more dependent on the extent of personal interactions between East Europeans and English respondents, which appeared to be linked more to the social status of English respondents than to the extent of the presence of East Europeans in a given locality. English respondents’ attitudes and perceptions were

thus not necessarily dependent on the socio-cultural visibility or invisibility of East European migrants in an area; accordingly the following chapter is structured thematically according to recurrent themes that emerged in all three localities, rather than dealing with each locality in turn.

As discussed in the literature review, members of the ‘white’ working class in Britain have themselves been found to be victims of racialisation processes undertaken by the majority population. Represented by the figure of the ‘Chav’ (Jones 2011, Tyler 2008), these ‘abject whites’ (Haylett 2001: 352) are perceived not to follow the ‘whitely scripts’ of respectability and entitlement due to not contributing to wider society through work and displaying feckless, childlike and lazy behaviour (Skeggs 1997) and are problematized and pathologised as such in public discourse with particular reference to culture.<sup>20</sup> A recurrent element in this pathologising discourse is also the (perceived) prevalent display of racist attitudes and anxiety over immigration by the working class, which is considered to further differentiate them negatively from the presumably ‘liberal’ middle class.<sup>21</sup> However, as shown in the findings of Clarke and Garner (2009), both middle-class and working-class respondents identified similar problems with immigration and displayed similar attitudes and perceptions; their accounts only differed in terms of the rhetoric chosen and the position from which the statements were made (the ‘insider perspective’ of working-class respondents as opposed to the ‘outsider perspective’ of middle-class respondents). These results are mirrored in my findings. While working-class respondents made frequent reference to the competition for resources that they believed themselves to be engaged in with East European migrants, with reference to

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<sup>20</sup> for example in popular reality television shows such as *What not to wear*, *Wife swap*, *Big Brother* (for an analysis see Skeggs and Wood 2008).

<sup>21</sup> The BBC series ‘White’, for example, is dedicated to working class responses to immigration as if immigration only affects the working class and not the middle class (see Clarke and Garner 2009).

their personal experiences or the experiences of their family members or friends, middle-class respondents tended to use similar discourses but in more abstract terms, positioning themselves outside of these discussions, and thus assuming the perspective of ‘external observers’. Moreover, many respondents employed discourses that valorised East Europeans for their hard work and high levels of education on an inter-class level, while at the same time demonising segments of the working-class host society who were perceived to fail to contribute to the common good to a similar extent – an example of the engaging in the ‘Chav’ discourse.

#### **4.2.2. English perceptions of East European migrants**

English respondents were, to a large extent, apprehensive about discussing their perceptions of East European migrants. Most respondents stated that they had no strong opinions about East Europeans, or, in the words of one respondent: ‘I’m not particularly bothered, it doesn’t really... it’s not really an issue’ (Lucy, WC, Norwich). Nevertheless, following discussions about English identity and perceived problems with integration on local as well as national levels, English respondents did end up sharing their views on immigration more generally, and, when prompted, about East European migrants specifically. The narratives they presented allowed for insights into the ways in which English respondents perceive and stereotype (or respond to popular stereotypes) of East European migrants, which at the same time can be interpreted as their evaluations of East Europeans’ ability to perform ‘whitely scripts’ that are deemed necessary by English respondents for belonging to the English national imaginary. Before analysing the particular discourses that English respondents employed to position East European migrants at the centre and at the margins of ‘whiteness’, I am first going to focus on the explanations that they

provided for the reasons why East Europeans don't really feature as an urgent topic or 'issue' in most respondents' thoughts, as well as on their views about English identity and integration. What became evident in the accounts is that English respondents, with the exception of those who had established friendships with East Europeans of a particular nationality, categorised East European migrants as a homogenous group, often interchangeably referred to as 'Polish', and did not distinguish between particular national or ethnic backgrounds. The discourses they provided, whether placing East Europeans at the centre and/or the margin of 'whiteness', can thus be seen as 'racialising' discourses, because regardless of whether East European migrants were perceived in positive or negative ways, their behavioural and cultural qualities were narrated as fixed and innate to this allegedly 'homogenous' group. Moreover, most respondents were ambivalent about the legal status of East Europeans in England, frequently conflating them with illegal migrants.

#### **4.2.3. English respondents on integration and *Englishness***

The narratives that English respondents provided when explaining why East European migrants do not concern them overly were predominantly subject to English respondents' social positions, which is not surprising given that members of minority groups rarely compete for middle-class economic positions. While middle-class respondents tended to emphasise East Europeans' low socio-cultural visibility in the spaces where they reside and socialise (irrespective of locality), working-class respondents reported more frequent contact with East Europeans, particularly in the workplace, albeit stating that East Europeans' perceived tendency to lead separate lives and thus not interact with the English prevented them from forming any strong opinions.

JOHN (MC, Winchester): I mean Winchester is not the sort of city where you've got large numbers of Eastern Europeans that settle down for short or long periods, so it doesn't tend to come up in conversations, and it's not a... it's a middle class city as well, [...] everyone here's sort of fairly well-off and fairly liberal and doesn't actually ever get into a situation where they want to talk about Eastern Europeans in disparaging terms or any other terms basically.

FIONA (MC, Winchester): [...] most East Europeans are coming to do manual jobs and they're not yet in middle class jobs, so the interactions are on the basis of the plumber or the electrician or whatever, and that's... that's to be expected, you're not going to suddenly find you're sort of going out in the evening and coming across a lot of Poles in the Theatre Royale. Or, you're not going to a concert in Winchester Cathedral and you're going to find your pew full of East Europeans. You know what I mean, it is that, isn't it? In that sense, your activities in this sort of life that we live as middle-class people it's different from the sort of life of the typical East European migrant. It's inevitable you're not going to come across them very often.

INTERVIEWER: Have you had any experiences with East European migrants?

SOPHIE (WC, Norwich): Yeah, too much [at her work place - JH]. [...] But I can't say much about them, really. They just stick to themselves, they speak their own language... So there's a bit of a divide, really. But I couldn't tell you what I think, like, I really don't have any opinions about them.

The 'divide' that Sophie mentions between English people and East European migrants was repeatedly observed by middle-class as well as working-class respondents. This became particularly evident in accounts in which English respondents shared their views on integration, in the context of which both sets of participants engaged to a similar extent in 'When in Rome' arguments, which were based on the idea that if English respondents were to move abroad, they would not choose to pursue the particularities of English culture and would adapt to the rules and traditions prevalent in that country:

CHARLIE (WC, Norwich): I think that anybody that is willing to respect our religion, as a country, respect our laws, respect the things that we do as British people, that makes you integrated. I think those people that try and force to change everything to suit their culture is not integration. I do think the one



thing probably Eastern Europeans don't integrate in is that they don't really have relationships with that many British people. They tend to come over as groups in the first place. So that's probably the one thing that's not integrated. But that's the same as sort of Pakistani, Indian cultures. They refuse to integrate in relationships with British people.

MEGAN (WC, Manchester): 'That's hard that if I went into somebody else's country and burned their flag I could do a prison sentence. Everyone knows that if you go somewhere else you have to follow the rules in that country. But anyone could come over here, burn our flag, do what they want. There's no pride in this country anymore, no patriotism because what's the point. If someone else from a completely different country can come over and pretty much spit on everything we believe in and there's no repercussion, what's the point in being like that in the first place.

JOSEPH (MC, Manchester): It is pretty obvious to me that if I were to go to another country I would first learn the language, learn a bit about the culture, and try to participate in whatever way necessary, whether it would be through establishing friendships in that country... or just not cause any offence, just anything, really. [...] This is why we have so many problems with integration, because immigrants, and I think also East Europeans, come over here without even speaking a word of English and then they just create their own communities and end up not really getting involved with us or try to understand our way of life.

The use of 'When in Rome' arguments by English respondents mirrors findings by Garner (2010) and Clarke and Garner (2009) who interpret this line of argumentation as an expression of cultural assimilation approaches to integration by their English respondents, understood as the process by which the language and customs of a minority group comes to resemble those of the majority group. and one that represents a 'discursive hinge' between middle-class and working-class responses (Garner 2010: 10). While in the accounts above one can indeed deduce an emphasis on the part of English respondents that immigrants should follow English rules, respect English traditions, and overall not try to be 'different', the discourse of cultural assimilation did not emerge explicitly in any of the accounts in my sample. In fact, those respondents who reflected explicitly on East Europeans' impact on culture in England did so interpreting it in terms of 'enrichment' and appreciated their

‘contribution’, and did not emphasise cultural differences between East Europeans and the host society as a hindrance to their successful integration. While research on middle-class attitudes shows that a ‘multicultural capital’ is generally highly valued amongst middle-class parents and influences their choice of schools for their children (Reay et al. 2007), one working-class participant provided a similar narrative:

JESSICA (WC, Norwich): There are some East European children in my son’s school, I think they’re mostly Polish. And I tell you, I think it’s great. I want him to learn about different cultures and just experience a bit more, you know. That’s why I don’t really buy into all the scare-mongering that’s going on in the media, I find it disgusting, really. [...] He came home the other day and told me some Polish words... just colours and numbers, but I was really impressed and I can see that he’s enjoying himself.

KATE (MC, Winchester): I know some [East Europeans] from the school where my kids go. There’s about five Polish kids in my daughter’s class, I think. Three in [son’s] class. Some from Romania as well. Just people here and there, I just hear Eastern European accents all over the place. [...] Yeah, but I can’t really say much, I think... my impression has been quite positive so far. [...] It is always good to have a bit of a mix, if you know what I mean, so the kids can see how life is like for people from other cultures [...] it is always some kind of enrichment for them.

MICHAEL (MC, Manchester): I will always be grateful to Polish people for bringing some proper sausage into this country (laughs). And let’s not forget the bread! I don’t know if you know what I’m talking about... I mean, if somebody were to close down my Polish corner shop, I’d be right there protesting.

Overall, however, integration was mostly narrated in terms of being a choice that some migrants are refusing to make, turning them thus into the sole agents responsible for integration in England, or, in the words of one respondent: ‘You can’t force anyone [to integrate], you know, they have to want to, and some of them just refuse to do it’ (Charlie, WC, Norwich). What remained absent in most accounts on integration were discussions about potential discrimination that migrants can encounter in England that could impede on their ability and/or willingness to

participate in English mainstream life in the first place. The idea of placing the responsibility for integration on the migrants was, in turn, discussed ambivalently amongst East European respondents, with a clear majority advocating an understanding of integration as a bilateral relationship that requires both willingness on part of the migrants and a welcoming attitude from the host society. Only a minority of East European respondents voiced the opinion that integration was primarily the responsibility of the migrants themselves (see chapter 5.6. in this thesis).

If we return to Megan's account above, particularly to her statement: 'There's no pride in this country anymore, no patriotism because what's the point', despite it being voiced by her in the specific context of integration, she highlights a popular perception of respondents in my English sample, namely that English identity is 'weak' and has been 'demonised' in recent years. This went hand in hand with respondents' feelings that they are not 'allowed' to be proud of their *Englishness* in difference to other established nations in Great Britain, the Scottish, Welsh and Irish, as well as other ethnic minorities, and was discussed specifically in the context of the census and the absence of a 'White English' box on the forms (for a similar discussion see Clarke and Garner 2009: 147-151):

CHRISTOPHER (WC, Manchester): When I've got to fill forms in, I will always write I'm English because people say no, you're not English, you're from Great Britain. Sorry, I'm from England. Scottish people are very adamant they are Scottish, they are not part of England. So are we. We're English. [...] It gets frustrating sometimes when you see all these people coming in and they are allowed to be whatever, with their churches and shops and clubs, but when you say that you are English and not British, some people look at you funny.

HANNAH (WC, Manchester): I just... because I was born in England and lived in England all my life, I sometimes think that we have been demonised for being English. You can be Scottish, you can be Welsh, you can be Irish, you can be anything, but you have to be British if you live in England. Like also, Scotland have their own national anthem, Wales have their own national anthem, yet we have to have the British national anthem.

CHARLOTTE (MC, Norwich): Some things are sort of made a deal of unnecessarily, it's as if putting 'English' on a form would upset people or something. I mean, the Scots are proud, rightly so, as are the Welsh and as are the Irish. And now the English are thinking 'well, why can't we be proud too?' So either you put just one box, because the Irish and the Welsh and the Scots are Brits too, or you make separate boxes for everybody.

But *Englishness* was not only perceived as a 'weak' or, in Clarke and Garner's words, 'beleaguered' identity in cultural terms, expressions and elevations of which were believed to be judged in negative ways in comparison to other (British and foreign) ethnic groups, but also as a source for material injustice, as several respondents considered to be 'white and English' to be the most disadvantaged group in the UK in terms of access to jobs and entitlement to social benefits (see also Valentine 2010: 526). In this context, migrants in general and East European migrants in particular were viewed as receiving beneficial treatment from the government, with English respondents being often unaware of the legal status of East Europeans, as in these accounts East Europeans were repeatedly conflated with 'illegals'.<sup>22</sup> These perceptions of structural unfairness towards white English nationals can be seen as an expression of a discourse which Frankenberg (1993) has termed 'power-evasive', highlighting the fact that members of white, dominant societies (in Frankenberg's study the US) often remain oblivious to the privileges and benefits that come with their white phenotype. However, while working-class respondents based their narratives on first-hand experiences with unemployment and social housing, middle-class respondents discussed the same issues in more abstract ways and from a distance, as they were lacking these experiences:

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<sup>22</sup> see Lewis (2005) on how non-white people lumped together into asylum-seeker category; one can elaborate on that that this obviously also applies to people who are generally perceived as 'foreigners' coming from poorer countries.

DAVID (WC, Manchester): I don't know what they [East Europeans] can offer when they come over here. A lot of people seem that they're all coming over here, they're undercutting everything and the poor old English think, 'Oh we'll take them in, we'll do this, we'll do that for them.' And the state at the moment is, 'if you've worked all your life, you get nothing, but if you come in as an illegal, you get asylum and you get everything else, you get everything else for free.' That's my big point at the moment, I mean, my wife can't work. She's the same age as me but can't get nothing, can't get no state benefits or nothing. And then you hear that East Europeans can. Why?

EMILY (WC, Norwich): Being white English is probably one of the most... it's a disadvantage in this country. Because I'm 22, I've worked all my life, I've only ever been on benefits just recently, I'm not entitled to housing, I'm not entitled to any help and I'm being penalised heavier than anyone else I know for going out and getting a job. That's what makes it hard.

LUKE (MC, Manchester): I think if you've got communities where there are fairly large numbers of Eastern Europeans then you probably hear about them taking jobs, and so on, and resentments over them coming here illegally and claiming benefits. I mean, that's the sort of attitude that you, I think, probably hear in those areas, because people are affected by it. Jobs are very scarce at the moment, employers tend to hire East Europeans because they are cheaper and happy to work long hours, and that's ultimately where all the friction comes in.

Competitions for resources and a perceived strain on public services was one of the most salient topics in general discussions about immigration by both, working-class and middle-class respondents, often presenting ethnic minorities and East European migrants as an 'economic threat' to English society. But when English respondents engaged in reflections about the actual settlement of East Europeans in their localities and in England more generally – sharing their experiences of East Europeans as neighbours, co-workers or passers-by in the streets -- these 'structural factors' lost in relevance and were replaced by a focus on culture and behaviour. English respondents were split when it comes to evaluating what they perceived to be particular 'East European' cultural traits and behaviours and to what extent they followed English 'whitely scripts', thus often simultaneously discursively placing East Europeans at the centre and pushing them to the margins of 'whiteness'.

#### **4.2.4. Placing East Europeans at the centre of ‘whiteness’**

Mirroring the public discourse analysed in Chapter 4.1., English respondents placed particular emphasis on valorising East European migrants for their work ethic and willingness to perform jobs that a segment of the English working-class was perceived to be shying away from. As analysed elsewhere, ‘work’ constitutes a fundamental element to ‘respectable behaviour’ (Sennett 2003), and thus also represents one of the most important ‘codes of whiteness’ (Garner 2009: 446). References to work ethic thus established East European migrants as valuable members of English society in the discourses of both, middle-class and working-class respondents, and always in opposition to ‘Chavs’ and members of the white working-class that were constructed as ‘unrespectable’ due to the perception that they were abusing the welfare system in order to be able to maintain a ‘lazy’ life-style:

SOPHIE (WC, Norwich): If we didn’t have so many lazy people happy to accept the job, then we wouldn’t have needed people from Poland to come over and pick up the short fall in the first place. so it’s all a bit... six of one, half a dozen of the other, is what my mum always says to me. [...] So yeah, the government should make it easy for them to become British or whatever so they can settle down properly. At least they’d be people we don’t have to be ashamed of calling them British. That’s my opinion anyway. [...] They’ve improved the environment of the area they work in.

LILY (WC, Winchester): A lot of people [...] are brought up that you go cap in hand to the government and you’re given free money for sitting on your arse, doing nothing all day. And that’s the problem. People are resentful of East European workers coming over here and working, the fact is, if British people weren’t so bone idle and lazy right from the start, they wouldn’t have needed to come over here. [...] I’m more than happy for them to come over, they always get the job done, so yeah – let them come over and stay. Maybe we can send some of ours over there so they can learn something for a change.

LUKE (MC, Manchester): You get a good job done at a very reasonable price that you can depend upon a workman from Poland, say – presumably there are others from the other European countries who’ve taken up that job as well – you can depend on them, they’ll do a good job, they are often very well

educated, and they won't be a cowboy in the way that you get English cowboys if you're not careful when you want jobs done in your house. So that's very positive. I think that's a very positive view that people share of Eastern Europeans.

Class contempt towards segments of the white working class were thus not only voiced by middle-class respondents, but also by those who perceived themselves as members of the 'respectable' working class, as they were in stable employment and made only limited use of public services, such as social housing. 'Whiteness', though not explicit, was in these accounts therefore based on respectability through work, an issue frequently analysed in studies about the perception of the white working class or 'underclass' in Britain (see for example Hayward and Yar 2006, Lawler 2002 and 2005, Skeggs 1997). Garner (2012) refers to this as the 'moral economy of whiteness', in which moral or ethical standings are emphasised instead of people's actual positioning in an economic hierarchy. He concludes that the tendency to make sense of class positions in England on the basis of moral and ethical standings blurs the lines of 'whiteness', as it enables people of colour to be included in the same category as 'deserving' whites, while other ('undeserving' or 'abject') white people are considered marginal. However, his finding that 'Chavs' are still more generously regarded by the English mainstream on the basis of being members of the nation is not reflected in my sample. As the accounts above show, while East European migrants were indeed referred to in terms of 'them', some respondents advocated for their inclusion into English society on the basis of their work ethic, while at the same time suggesting that the 'undeserving' white working class may well be excluded from the national imaginary. Such 'positive' stereotypical assumptions about East European migrants' work ethic can, nevertheless, have also negative impacts on migrants, as explored in the study on Polish nurses in Norway by van Riemsdijk (2010), who were often falling victim to exploitative working hours.

In terms of general cultural and behavioural traits that were perceived to characterise East European migrants, English respondents' opinions were split as to how well East Europeans are performing 'whitely scripts' and thus can claim membership in the host society. 'White' phenotype, socialisation habits and Christian religion were overall regarded as an advantage of this migrant group in comparison to other ethnic minorities and were seen to ease belonging as they did not conflict with English ways and traditions.

ELLIE (WC, Manchester): As far as I can see, they're not doing anything, you know, as a group that would make them any different from the rest of us. They're Christians, probably more Christian than a lot of people here. They come from a country where Christian observance is important. I think this makes them fit in quite well.

HOLLY (MC, Manchester): I think that was very surprising for people, to find they thought the market flooded with people who looked the same. But it does probably make things easier for them, just that, you know, you can't notice them so easily.

ANTHONY (MC, Winchester): I know how this is going to sound, but... I mean, it is quite obvious that they're white, right? They're Christian, they're European, so they are, more or less, like us. They just don't stand out as much as, say, some of the other migrants that have been coming here for a longer period of time... so I don't see why they wouldn't integrate well.

Moreover, alcohol consumption as a way to socialise was also emphasised as a habit that made East European migrants appear to be more belonging to English culture than other cultures and thus to ease social inclusion in the perception of English respondents:

MICHAEL (MC, Manchester): They go out, and you know, I see young Polish people getting drunk and being silly and I think that's a bit like young English people getting drunk and being silly. You meet other ... immigrants... and they're not, it's very different. [...] I'm not saying that alcohol is the only thing that binds us together – but, you know, it will be the people who go out in the evening and have a good time will be the Polish, the Lithuanians, the



Brits, that would usually be what it is. Yeah, so they like to have a good time.

TOM (WC, Norwich): It's not all just drinking, I think it's not as simple as that, but yeah, socialising, I think yeah. And you do see that definitely when you go around and see lots of cultures. Some cultures naturally are less likely to come forward and speak and, as I say, you go into a hostel, who's going to speak to people straight away? It is the English, the East Europeans, maybe the Germans as well.

JESSICA (WC, Norwich): I guess they enjoy a drink every now and again like the odd English person, so, you know... they don't have some religious problem with that or something. So that definitely makes them very much like us and it's probably why... I mean with all the other things we talked about, that's probably why English people are a bit more open towards them than to other immigrants.

In literature on majority perceptions of migrant groups, cultural proximity features as a determining factor in allocating these groups on an 'ethnic hierarchy', at the top of which the dominant host society inevitably features (Alba 1985, Bogardus 1925, Sides and Citrin 2007). These quantitative studies show that immigrants from more culturally different backgrounds are confronted with a greater degree of hostility from the mainstream society because they are perceived as a threat to cultural unity; in turn, migrants from more culturally similar regions are viewed more favourably. This analysis seems to be confirmed by the narratives of English respondents who constructed sameness with East European migrants with reference to their closeness to English culture when compared to other 'visible' migrant groups in England.

East Europeans' white phenotype, much-praised work ethic, European cultural background and Christian religion, which mirrored the type of the 'valuable' Eastern European in the British press, permitted them to be included in the category 'white' and, therefore, as one of 'us', a category which is much less accessible to people of colour. However, English respondents also made references to a presumed 'East European' culture and behaviour in a way that can be interpreted as pushing them to the margins of 'whiteness': East European 'qualities' were perceived to be linked to

criminality, rude behaviour, an intimidating presence in the public space and questionable professional qualifications. My analysis will also demonstrate not infrequent recourse to colonialist and anti-Muslim discourses of femininity and masculinity made by many English respondents in order to highlight the ‘Otherness’ of East European men and women. Moreover, three respondents even questioned whether the phenotype of East European migrants can be labelled ‘white’.

#### **4.2.5. Placing East European migrants at the margins of ‘whiteness’**

English respondents cited criminality, excessive alcohol consumption and rude, threatening behaviour as cultural and behavioural markers inherent to East European migrants which turned them into cultural ‘outsiders’ and thus undesirable in eyes of the native population (compare to the type of the ‘villainous’ Eastern European). These accounts provide further insights into how English respondents understand integration, revealing what they believe migrants should and should not do in order not to avoid standing out as ‘different’. In a pattern familiar from the narratives above, middle-class respondents shared their opinions in more abstract terms, while working-class respondents’ accounts were presented as first-hand experiences.

HOLLY (MC, Manchester): Well, you do hear a lot about East Europeans engaging in drink driving and burglaries and such, I believe this is just what you naturally get when people come from poorer countries. It is probably also a matter of the laws... in that they just don’t know about the rules that we have here in England... I would also guess that the justice system in their countries is probably more lax than here, and yeah... then we end up having problems with crime and so on.

TOM (WC, Norwich): There’ve been East Europeans there they’ve been like always drinking and always want to start a fight with someone or being loud

and acting all this and that and stuff, yeah. Sometimes you walk past and then some of them just... attack.

PETER (WC, Norwich): They [East European migrants] used to live down the road a bit and just round the corner and they were alright to a certain extent but then they were just bell-ends I suppose. They'd always kick off at people for no reason because they'd been drinking and stuff like that and doing what other stuff they shouldn't have been – obviously I'm not going to say what, but yeah. Stuff they shouldn't be. [...] They didn't use to pick on us, but they used to try and scare us or whatever and just try and cause trouble.

As Sibley (1995) notes, racialisation processes can also be identified in the ways in which members of dominant societies perceive particular spaces and changes that have occurred to them as a result of immigration. In the context of East European migrants, several English respondents referred to the threatening presence of East Europeans in the public space, as they were perceived to operate in gangs and transform particular localities in negative ways:

CHARLIE (WC, Norwich): There was a lot of people who was causing trouble. There was gangs starting to form. There was like East European gangs and basically there was parts of Norwich which was no-go areas after dark.

LAURA (MC, Norwich): Have you ever been to Thetford? Thetford will be the worst point of integration of Eastern European—

INTERVIEWER: Bedford?

LAURA: Thetford. I'm sorry to say it, but Eastern European migrants have pretty much destroyed Thetford and made it one of the worst places for education, for crime, for everything else. It's the truth. Knife crime has risen, people are afraid to go out at night. It's become very unsafe there.

ELLIE (WC, Manchester): I know they are sort of... when you're in the town they do sort of walk around in big groups and they are quite intimidating sometimes, you know, if they see people walking the other way, they won't move out of the way, they'll bump into people. They'll start saying stuff in their own language that, you know, because you don't understand the language you don't know what they're saying. It could be something offensive, but you don't know. There's been times where I've almost been knocked to the ground because I haven't seen them and they've just like walked into me then started saying something in their own language...

‘Speaking in their own language’ was perceived by several English respondents as a sign of bad manners on the part of East Europeans, and emerged repeatedly in respondents’ accounts about East European migrants’ ignorance towards established English norms and behaviours:

KIERAN (MC, Winchester): I don’t know, but I think people integrating well is more about... it’s about attitude, isn’t it? I think you could move to a place and you can have a good attitude about that and you can make an effort and integrate and get to know your neighbours. [...] I’m going on here, like in our culture, there are people who are really friendly and great neighbours to have next to you and there are some awful people that you wouldn’t want to be your neighbour. [...] I don’t have any experience of my own, but I know some people who have East Europeans for neighbours and they do complain a lot that they can be very noisy and a bit rude sometimes.

TOM (WC, Norwich): I mean, we’ve got a load of Polish people living bang opposite, and everybody else on the road says hello and they don’t really. They go like that. I mean, the least they can do is learn that we say hello in this country, right?

SOPHIE (WC, Norwich): The ones I work with, they just have a really bad attitude. No hello, no thank you, all you get is rude replies and then they start talking in their own language right in front of you. I find this quite upsetting, really, and it certainly doesn’t help them to make friends and fit in.

These experienced differences in terms of putative norms were also observed by several female English respondents in regards to East European men, who were racialised in terms of displaying overly sexual and imposing behaviour, threatening their ‘white’ femininity in social situations:

SOPHIE (WC, Norwich): [East European men] don’t understand boundaries really, for a start. Physical contact. But it’s not only Eastern Europeans men, you find it difficult with particularly Jamaican men, Nigerian. But that’s a cultural difference really, ultimately.

MEGAN (WC, Manchester): The guys, they can be quite in your face, if you know what I mean. They just don’t take no for an answer, and I find this quite scary sometimes, particularly when I am on my own.

East European women, on the other hand, were constructed ambivalently in the narratives of English middle and working class respondents. On the one hand, one can identify recourses to popular perceptions of Muslim women as passive, subordinated to men and subjugated by a traditional family model (Franks 2000). On the other hand, perceptions of East European women were also informed by colonial imaginations of the exotic, oriental ‘Other’ (Gilman 1990 [1985], Said 1994 [1978]), characterised in this case by unlimited availability and, potentially, the use of their sexual appeal for ulterior motives.

HANNAH (WC, Manchester): [East European] Women are submissive.

JOSEPH (MC, Manchester): I’d think that East Europeans are still very traditional when it comes to the way they view family and gender roles, so yeah... I’d imagine that women are quite a lot under the control of men, a bit passive, really.

PETER (WC, Norwich): They are really good-looking, you know, fit and stuff. And they come off as really easy... approachable, you know. [...] But I worry sometimes when an attractive woman with an East European accent asks me to go home with her, that she’ll rob me or something, or has her mates waiting outside to beat me up or something.

JOHN (MC, Winchester): You do read those media reports on sex trafficking and women coming over here for prostitution, so that’s definitely a problem, I mean, it is the only thing I can think of now about East European women. I’m afraid I can’t say anything else, really.

These constructions of East European genders were also reflected in the way several English respondents described East Europeans in terms of looks, when responding to the question ‘Do you think you could identify an East European in the streets?’ East European men in this context were described as possessing a domineering physique and a ‘chavvy’ fashion style, while East European women were perceived to emphasise their sexuality through clothing.

ANTHONY (MC, Winchester): I think the men tend to be slightly more thickset than English people, the features are, I think are more of what you think Eastern Europeans look like. I think there's a spectrum, isn't there, as you go East in Europe. And I think, yes, I think... you can actually pick up sort of physical characteristics of the Eastern Europeans... I also think they're really into bodybuilding, aren't they, so you wouldn't want to get on the bad side of that lot (laughs). And sportswear, definitely a lot of sportswear.

EMILY (WC, Norwich): Obviously you can't really tell by the looks of them, it's when they speak to you. Obviously some you can because Polish men they always wear trackies and trainers, you know they're Polish or chavs or something.

OWEN (WC, Manchester): I sometimes think I can recognise them, yes, particularly the girls. [...] You know, bleach-blond hair, lots of make-up, skimpy clothes... if I may say so.

As discussed in the literature review, appearance in terms of body shape and dress can be used as a sign of moral evaluation. Websites and Facebook groups, such as [chavometer.com](http://chavometer.com) or 'How to Spot a Chav', engage in the racialisation of the 'undeserving' white working class by emphasising the visible comportment of this segment of society. In 2013, the website [slavsquat.com](http://slavsquat.com) was created with the similar purpose making East Europeans 'identifiable' to broader audiences and providing advice on 'How to look like a real motherfucking Slav'. Sportswear is considered to be essential, with 'Slavs' being described as 'masters of the art of wearing tracksuits' and in the habit of squatting in the public space, whilst smoking or consuming alcohol. While East European women feature significantly less in the pictures on the website, the ones that do are indeed reflections of Owen's perception, in short skirts, high heels and fishnet tights:



slavsquat.com



Equating East European migrants with the ‘underclass’ in terms of looks also had broader consequences in terms of how their class position in England was perceived overall. It should be noted that while middle-class respondents in particular emphasised the high levels of education common among East Europeans in the lower-skilled job sector,<sup>23</sup> only one English respondent referred to such over-qualification with regret, as she found that their potential was being ignored and therefore denying a possible contribution to a broader societal good:

SUSAN (MC, Winchester): We have some [East Europeans] who work here, and in my experience they’re very hardworking. And I feel that often they’re doing jobs that they’re very over-qualified for. You know, I mean, in the past we’ve had people that, you know, they’ve got degrees in things and they’re doing cleaning jobs which is a bit heart-breaking really. [...] I’d like to think that they had an opportunity at getting a job that’s more suited. I mean, I don’t know if it’s because the jobs are not available, or they’re not sure how to apply for them, or whether they’re not confident, or not. I just think it’s such a waste... for everybody, not just for them, because what benefit is it to anybody to have people with degrees working in this kind of jobs?

Other respondents, however, pointed out that while they were aware of the fact that many degree-educated East European migrants held low-skilled jobs, they

<sup>23</sup> Several studies have analysed the ‘downgrading’ that East European migrants experience upon entering the UK labour market, as they tend to be employed in the lower-skilled sector and earn least of any migrant group, despite high levels of education (see for example Clark and Drinkwater 2008, Sumption and Somerville 2009).

did not necessarily perceive East European degrees to be of the same standard as English degrees, and explained their allocation in low-skilled employment with reference to East European ‘backwardness’ and the perception of worse levels of education in their home countries.

OLIVIA (MC, Winchester): We have this... I think he’s a Polish chap working at [department store] and ... he’s absolutely brilliant, always very polite and very very keen. He told me that he has a degree in marketing or something. [...] I think it must be hard to get their degrees recognised in this country, considering that the standard of universities must be quite different, at least that’s what I am thinking.

ELLIE (WC, Manchester): I don’t think their education is recognised as the same as having an English degree.... You know, in terms of what they learn at college and so on, like I don’t really see how they could recognise these degrees here...

INTERVIEWER: So you think their degrees are of a lower standard than in England?

ELLIE: Yeah, just different, but yeah, they must be lower, otherwise... you know, they wouldn’t have any problem with this.

As Susan’s account stood out as unique in the entire sample of English respondents, it prompted me to investigate further where English respondents viewed East Europeans to be allocated in the hierarchy of class in England. This led again to ambivalent reflections: middle-class respondents in particular were apprehensive about positioning East Europeans in a class hierarchy at all, with several respondents asserting that East European migrants were not ‘established enough’ as a minority to be considered members of a particular class, and thus featured in their opinion more as an ‘ethnic community’ outside of the class system. Several working-class respondents, on the other hand, were adamant about placing East Europeans at the very bottom of the class hierarchy in England, based on the fact that they were vulnerable to being ‘exploited’ as workers because of their limited mastery of English the language or being unaware of their rights.



WILLIAM (MC, Norwich): I think they're a little bit outside. I think it's... I think you tend to think in terms of communities rather than class. You know, that is a community of Polish people. [...] I think you see those people not as a particular class – even though British people do like to classify people into classes, because we're a class-ridden society – but I think you tend to see them as communities in the UK, rather than in class terms. [...] I just don't think they are integrated into British society enough – so in a sense they are outside the class system.

AMBER (WC, Winchester): And like you just said, would they fit into society here? Work in progress in working class and lower class, but certainly not in the middle class or upper class. Right now I think they're somewhere below the lower class, at least the ones who don't speak the language properly.

DAVID (WC, Manchester): [...] I think from a class perspective, you know, current Polish and Lithuanian migrants will be viewed as working class. But almost like a sub-working class, the lowest of the low.

INTERVIEWER: Lowest of the low?

DAVID: It is just that... if you think about the traditional working-class, you think about people who know their rights, who are always involved in unions and such. I don't think Polish migrants know much about workers' rights in this country, they probably don't have them in their country either, so naturally they'll be exploited more. But that's the only reason why I think they might be considered to be at the bottom of the class system.

The association of East Europeans with the 'lower class' in England was thus more frequently cited than references to visual parallels, with their disproportionately common employment in the low-skilled sector being explained with reference to questionable professional qualifications. At the same time, however, East Europeans were regarded by some respondents as insufficiently integrated to occupy a particular space in the class hierarchy; other respondents collectively associated them with the lower class or even 'below' this, due to their ignorance of workers' rights and insufficient language skills. It appears that having a particular 'class position' in England is perceived to be one of the 'privileges' of full belonging to the nation — something that East Europeans are not thought to have achieved yet. These accounts thus show the intersectional dimensions of the racialisation process of East Europeans in England, incorporating discussions of class, gender and ethnicity – even though

ethnicity in most accounts is understood in terms of the fixed and overarching category of 'Eastern European'.

Finally, three English respondents even questioned whether East European migrants can even be labelled 'white' in terms of phenotype, even if they were not willing to elaborate on this notion further.

TOM (WC, Norwich): Well, they're not white like you and me, are they? I mean they are kind of pale, and some are a bit darker.

CAROLINE (WC, Winchester): Are East Europeans white? I mean, I know they are from Europe so they are not black, but can you really call them white?

CHRISTOPHER (WC, Manchester): I wouldn't call them white, really. I mean, some of them are very pale, so I guess I'd call them pale, not white.

Perceptions of criminality, rude behaviour, differences in gender roles and the visual component of 'chavvy' fashion featured in English respondents' accounts as markers that positioned East European migrants at the margins of 'whiteness'. 'Whiteness' was thus implicitly narrated as a norm that has not been quite achieved yet by East European migrants, who were consequently excluded from the English national imaginary. Instead, they feature in these accounts as the 'Other' against which English respondents maintain their own 'white' identity, while drawing on stereotypes that allowed English respondents to mark themselves as 'whiter' than East Europeans - in isolated cases even explicitly in terms of phenotype. The racialisation of East European migrants also served as a way to rationalise their prevalence in the low-skilled job sector, with reference to 'lower' education levels that were perceived to be provided in Eastern Europe. This shows how the actual benefits of 'whiteness'

are stratified even for those who have the benefit of being coded 'white' in terms of their physical appearance.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

The conflicting discourses presented above, which position East Europeans within and at the margins of 'whiteness' through processes of racialisation in the individual narratives of English respondents as well as in the British media (the 'villainous' Eastern European) point to ambivalent and partial incorporation of these migrants into the English nation by the mainstream society. English respondents from the middle as well as working class both employed racialising discourses, even if the proximity of their experience differed, with middle-class respondents phrasing them in more abstract ways through employing an 'outsider' perspective, while working-class respondents frequently shared first-hand experiences. Even if respondents were residing in areas with a relatively low number of migrants, their choice of themes when verbalise anxieties about immigration did not distinguish them from respondents in high migration areas, most possibly due to their knowledge of cultural stereotypes about Eastern Europeans taken from the British press. What became apparent were the perceived problems of integration and the strain placed by migrants on public services, with East European migrants not only undermining an English identity that was already assumed to be 'weak', not only by posing an 'economic threat', but also by, in conjunction with other ethnic minority groups, eroding *Englishness* as a culture. Their white phenotype, Christianity, common European heritage as well as certain aspects of socialisation (such as alcohol consumption) made East European migrants appear in English respondents' eyes as 'white like us'

in contrast to 'black' or visible minorities. However, references to perceived cultural and behavioural differences pushed East European migrants to the margins of this 'whiteness' in the English imaginary they seem to be seen as 'white', but not quite.

## **Chapter 5. Navigating the Boundaries of Whiteness: Negotiations of Sameness, Difference and Belonging Among East European Migrants in England**

In this part of my thesis, I analyse the ways in which East European respondents' navigated the symbolic boundary of 'whiteness' as it is presented in their narratives. This chapter is divided into six sub-sections: after an introduction into the politics of in/visibility in Britain (5.1.), I move on to discuss East European interviewees' individual migration stories (5.2.) in order to provide the background for the empirical analysis of their constructions of sameness to the English mainstream (5.3.), reflections on encounters of being 'Othered' by the host society (5.4.) and the strategies they employed in order to avert or resist experiences of racialisation (5.5.). Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the ways in which East European respondents reflected on their general understandings of integration and belonging into English society (5.6.).

### **5.1. Introduction: The Politics of In/Visibility in Britain**

The politics of integration and immigrant incorporation in Britain can be classified as a 'politics of visibility' – one which has emerged as a product of the British model of 'multiculturalism', and which operates within a framework of race relations and hierarchies of belonging that are determined by visual cues which have become detrimental in discussions about national identity and integration (Fortier 1999, Nagel and Staeheli 2008, Joppke 1999, Yuval-Davies 2006, see also Chapter 2). The term 'visibility politics' entails a spectrum of marked and unmarked identities in which certain traits and embodiments (or lack thereof) are perceived to be inalterable (to an extent) racial and cultural differences and, consequently, are believed to signify a migrant's willingness and ability to integrate and 'become part of British society'

(Nagel and Staeheli 2008: 84). As discussed in Chapter 2, in Britain, the ‘invisibility’ of migrants is mainly dependent on their ability to perform ‘whitely scripts’ (Bailey 1998), which go beyond the physical markers of whiteness and include performances of certain behaviour and manners of conduct that are ‘implicitly coded as white’ and are understood to imply an ability and desire of migrants to accept the identity and values of the host society (Fraser 1999: 122; see also Ahmed 1997, 2012). Failure to perform these scripts satisfactorily can thus limit migrants’ claims to privilege and membership in the mainstream and sentence them to suspicious glances and the status of an ‘undesirable’ in their country of settlement. However, as emphasised before, one must not discount the fact that for phenotypically white migrants the potential to inhabit whiteness always remains an available option, albeit one in which they might find themselves located across ‘multiple locations of privilege and subordination’ (Gallagher 1994: 213).

Constructions and categorisations of sameness and difference vis-à-vis the ‘white’ mainstream have, therefore, an important impact on the everyday experiences of migrants and the ways in which they can negotiate their membership and belonging and determine the degree of their social exclusion and inclusion into English society (Nagel 2002). Particularly in times when in integration policy significant emphasis is put on concerns around community and social cohesion, an understanding of the ways in which migrants negotiate sameness and difference seems to be crucial in order to understand the dynamics and challenges of integration (Nagel and Staeheli 2008 Yuval-Davies 2006). While studies of Critical Race Theory have recorded the intersubjective negotiations of belonging of phenotypically ‘visible’ migrants and ethnic minorities, studies of experiences of the incorporation of less visible migrants, or of migrants for whom the spectrum of marked and unmarked identities is more

complex and/or problematic for notions of the ‘invisibility’ (and implicit sameness) of ‘white’ migration, have revealed how attributes such as accents, dress codes, humour, manners etc. can act as ‘permanent embodiments of difference’, exposing migrants as strangers who are ‘out of place’ in a particular society or locality (Ahmed 2000: 45, see also Favell 1998, Noble 2009). These attributes can thus act as impenetrable barriers for migrants who are in the process of acquiring ‘substantive citizenship’, meaning the possession of civil, political and social rights, with far-ranging social consequences (Baubock 1994, quoted in O’Connor 2010: 158). Researching the experiences of Irish migrants in Australia, O’Connor (2010), for example, shows how accent can be an obstacle that leads migrants to be perceived as permanent cultural outsiders in the Australian host society. It can be argued, however, that accents amongst native-speakers might be less prohibitive factors for integration than differences in mother tongue, which function as primary signifiers of foreign status – an issue addressed by Colic-Peisker (2002) in her analysis of the incorporation experiences of Bosnians in Australia. These migrants’ inability to speak sufficient English leads them to be excluded from the privileges offered by public services and hinders their ability to find an adequate position on the job market and therefore achieve their pre-migration social status and lifestyle.<sup>24</sup> In addition to social consequences, other studies have also emphasised the psychological dimensions that as ‘cultural outsiders’ can have on migrants, despite being perceived as ‘racial insiders’, such as experiences of ‘double consciousness’ (du Bois 1994: 2) that lead to alterations in socialisation behaviour and influence the way migrants approach their new society (see for example Bailey 2008, Gray 2002).

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<sup>24</sup> The interdependence between (non-native) accents, stigma and ethnocentrism has been analysed in social-psychological research, see for example Gluszek and Dovidio 2010, Neuliep et al. 2013.

Other studies on embodied experiences of in/visibility in identity politics, in, for instance, the fields of gender and disability studies, bring to the fore the various strategies that people employ in order to conceal or disclose their identities, to ‘pass’ or ‘come out’ as a particular identity, and the risks involved with these processes (Bowker and Tuffin 2002, Creswell 1996, Walker 2001).<sup>25</sup> Studies on autism, for example, show how the strategy of ‘coming out’ is often employed as a way to resist and counteract stereotypes (Davidson and Henderson 2010: 162-3), or to inform the environment in order to get necessary concessions and accommodations (Sibley 2004). In other social contexts, strategies of disclosure serve the purpose of politicising a given identity in order to organise as a group and create a group identity, and in doing so potentially ‘deconstruct foundational categories of identity such as race, gender and desire’ (Walker 2001: 10). However, this literature also shows how the strategy of ‘coming out’ does not just present a challenge in regards to an out-group, but can also give rise to complex issues within particular communities when certain identities are perceived as being insufficiently marked and therefore viewed with suspicion as potentially fraudulent by the in-group or being misread as signifiers of the out-group, potentially leading to a member being excluded from a community he or she might proudly belong to (Samuels 2003: 245).

‘Passing’, on the other hand, while acknowledged as a strategy for resisting experiences of oppression and discrimination and as a way of ‘destabilising identities predicated on the visible to reveal how they are constructed’ (Walker 2001: 9), has

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<sup>25</sup> A more in-depth discussion on dealing with ethnic stigma can be found in Chapter 5.5., where I discuss the strategies that East European respondents utilised in order to resist experiences of racialisation. Here, for the purpose of an introduction, I review literature on strategies that have been identified as being employed by groups where the in/visibility spectrum is even more complex, such as members of the LGBT community and people suffering from disabilities, as these studies are usually undertaken within one racial or ethnic group. However, as shall be seen in Chapter 5.5., conceptualizing strategies of dealing with stigma as ‘passing’ and ‘coming out’ represents a useful tool in the study of ethnic albeit unmarked minorities.



been condemned by others as a strategy that is ‘conservative in intent’ (ibid.), effectively representing the ‘selling out’ and ‘self-betrayal’ of the minority in order to secure the privileges of the majority (Samuels 2003: 240), with tangible effects on different relations to power. Sara Ahmed puts emphasis on this dynamic in her reflections on race: ‘Passing for white as a black subject has a very different relation to power than passing for black as a white subject’ (Ahmed 1999: 349). These analyses of the relationship between passing and visibility thus reveal the complexities faced by people on the in/visibility spectrum, revolving around issues such as pride, resistance and subversion that are detrimental when it comes to strategies of concealment or disclosure.

The following sub-chapters make use of Nagel and Stacheli’s (2008) approach to integration in Britain not just as a ‘politics of visibility’, but equally as a ‘politics of invisibility’ that is one determined by certain ways of constructing sameness and seeing and categorising difference. By taking this approach, we can discuss the everyday incorporation experiences of East European migrants in England: the ways in which respondents negotiated their membership in English society through constructing sameness to the mainstream by engaging in the ‘whiteness’ discourse; the ways in which they reflect on encounters of being ‘Othered’ (encounters which revealed the limitations of their unmarked status); and the strategies and repertoires that they employed in order to avoid or counteract experiences of racialisation. The analysis emphasises in particular understandings of ‘whitely scripts’ and the role of socio-cultural in/visibility played in East European respondents’ accounts about navigating the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’.

However, first it is important briefly to investigate East Europeans’ individual migration stories, examining their reasons for migration and the expectations that they

had with coming to England. These are important factors that conditioned and constrained their desire and/or need to adapt to English mores, which is to say to perform as ‘English’ and therefore as ‘white’.

## **5.2. Individual Migration Stories: of Tourists and Vagabonds**

Academic discussions about migration from Central and Eastern Europe to Britain have identified economic reasons, such as higher wages and escaping unemployment, as the primary push and pull factors behind the decision-making of migrants who choose to move (see Chapter 1). ‘Work’ was also reported as the primary motivation for migration in the accounts in my sample, in which a significant amount of interviewees had come to the UK in order to improve their living standards after becoming disillusioned at the state of the contemporary labour market and economy in their respective home countries.

FILIPS (Latvian, Manchester): I left a long time ago [6 years], I don’t think I’m going to go back there. My country generally failed in providing me decent conditions to live, so I just don’t know, I’ll try my chances somewhere else. I’m not going back there.

BEATA (Polish, Norwich): Well, the first time I came over just for two months, I came over because my brother was here already, and I just came over really for a job, to be honest. To get a job. And then I went back to Poland, to finish school and then as soon as I finished school I just so wanted to come back here because the prospective for the future were so much better in the UK. That was my reason, anyway.

In several cases, such as, for instance, that of Beata, economic reasons were combined with other pull factors, namely ‘chain migration’ (Price 1963, quoted in Castles and Miller 2003), a phenomenon in which migrants’ decision-making processes are influenced by a spouse, a partner, other family-members or friends and acquaintances, with the benefit of being able to tap into already existing social

networks in the country of settlement. Such processes are a key element in any analysis of the integration experiences of migrants (Massey et al. 2002, Sumption 2009). In my sample 'chain migration' usually involved following a partner, such as in the migration stories of Ania, who followed her boyfriend to Manchester and has been living there for the past eight years; Maria, who moved with her family to Norwich; or Karol who left Poland not just to find a well-paid job, but also in order to save his relationship.

ANIA (Polish, Manchester): I came on vacation and I came because... it wasn't my decision, I mean, it was my decision, but I went because my boyfriend came and I went for vacation and then I decided to stay. But it wasn't like my... because I planned it. It wasn't my plan. I came because he came, and then I decided to stay.

MARIA (Polish, Norwich): I came following my husband, really. So I just followed because we have two boys, so we took the children and just moved.

KAROL (Polish, Winchester): I just came over as a tourist for three months, you know, to work and investigate some work, and do some earning. Because my missus came over first because of problem with relationship and she just come to UK, and after some time now I've just popped down, you know, to rescue our life together. So that's how I came here.

Migrants with children, although they also cited the chance to improve their economic opportunities as their motivation for migration, focussed in particular on bettering the future prospects of the children (see Ryan et al. 2009a). Their position was mainly based on the assumption that an 'international' or 'Western' education will function as a guarantor of more stability and predictability for the future of the migrants themselves and their offspring, as exemplified in the following account:

MORTA (Lithuanian, Norwich): At the moment I don't see my children's future in Lithuania, sorry to say that. Here because you can be a student and when you finish you don't find a job or something like that in Lithuania. So I think for them, here will be better for universities, for education, so I think we'll stay ten years, minimum.

These ‘economic’ narratives, however, were complemented by another series of dominant ideas introduced by the respondents that could be described as ‘post-materialist’. These narratives reflect the specificity of my sample, in which a significant number of the interviewees work in middle- to higher-skilled jobs in the UK and possesses excellent English language skills, and thus can be seen as representing more ‘middle-class’, ‘cosmopolitan’ values. These narratives of migration were centred on notions of ‘cultural’ self-improvement; migration was viewed as a route to personal self-development through the experience of travelling and living in a foreign country. This also meant that, for this group of interviewees, the UK did not necessarily represent a final destination, but was rather seen as a gateway or stepping-stone into a more cosmopolitan lifestyle (see chapter 5.6. for a further analysis of ‘nomadic narratives’).

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): Well, I’m free to travel the world.

DAGNIJA (Latvian, Winchester): I’m from Latvia and my husband is Italian. So when we met we decided where to go, so he wanted first to travel around Europe a little bit, so we travelled round Europe and then we decided to settle down in Switzerland. It just didn’t work for us. And so we decided, ok, we both speak English, so let’s go to England. And then we had a look around for what would be a good town, good city for the family. And then we found out that Winchester is very good, very calm and nice and so we decide, ok, let’s go to Winchester.

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): Well, it’s not actually immigration because, well, coming from Poland it’s immigration, but for me it’s more like looking for somewhere else to live because it’s more like... I knew I would not want to stay in Poland (...) I said I wanted to move to a different country, but I wanted to do this legally. When Poland became part of the European Union, England was one of the countries where Poles could move without applying for any special visa. I can just go straight away as I like. So that was the only country I could. (...) I don’t know if I want to stay, maybe I will go to Australia. I was there last year and I really like it.

Another recurrent motivation in this context, frequently cited by East European participants, was the ‘cosmopolitan’ nature of Britain, in which England

was identified as the ‘centre of the world’ and as uniting many cultures. The interviewees said that they too wanted to be part of this feeling. This is most explicitly verbalised by Andras, who, despite living in Norwich, which is a low-migration area, still feels that he is benefitting from a multicultural environment:

ANDRAS (Hungarian, Norwich): Here you’ve got people from around the world, and that’s what I like about this country and why I came here; you just feel like you’re in the centre, somewhere in the centre of the world, let’s say. And you have a chance to see other cultures, experience all the cultures through food, through talking to people, yeah. I think that’s the main reason [for migrating to England].

Other ‘post-materialist’ accounts cited as the primary motivation for migration a ‘childhood dream’ to come to England, in order to experience English culture and live in an English-speaking country.

BERNADETT (Hungarian, Norwich): I wanted to come out to England... I wanted to come to England since I was fourteen. When I was in high school and there was a programme for students... basically a student swap programme. And I really wanted to come, but my family didn’t have enough money. And I did know that we didn’t have enough money to pay for it, so I didn’t apply. This was basically the basic... this is why I am here.

ESTHER (Hungarian, Norwich): My situation is a bit different [from labour migration], because I really love England, I love the language of course. And I’ve been here before, spent two summers, two and three years ago. I visited my friends because they have been here for three years now, yeah, two of my best friends. (...) fell in love with the whole country, people. And I am also fond of the British accent, I love it, I love it, I really love it.

JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): It was my old dream, actually. I always wanted to live in England. So I was working really hard at home and my parents also gave me so much and I’m really thankful for them because now I’m here in England and I can live here.

Dora, who explains her migration in terms of retracing English literature and stories found in Jane Austen novels, provides another example for this type of

motivation: she came to England in order to experience romanticism and find ‘true love’ in Winchester, as she discloses later in her interview:

DORA (Hungarian, Winchester): Do you know Jane Austen?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

DORA: She is a romantic writer and I really love her. And in my whole life I want to know England and then I came here I started to go to visit the cities. I went to the countryside as well, so I like this. I like the country. That’s why I wanted to come here. (...) I want to stay. Maybe two years, maybe twenty years. I want to find man, maybe English man, find real love, have family. Just be happy.

Overall, East European respondents rationalised their migration and settlement decisions in two ways: on the one hand, in terms of educational and social mobility for themselves and their offspring, and, on the other hand, in terms of ‘broadening horizons’ and ‘having more international experiences’. One set of narratives, therefore, emerges out of a *need* to migrate in order to improve living conditions and future prospects, while the other can be viewed as representing more ‘post-materialist’ discourses in which migration is conceptualised as a *choice* to travel, for personal self-development and to adopt a more cosmopolitan life-style. Bauman (1998) examines these notions of need and choice in regards to global migration and identifies two counterposed cohorts of migrants: tourists and vagabonds. The former are *free* to move between places in order to pursue more exciting, more challenging opportunities, even if it comes at the cost of *restlessness* due to being ‘constantly on the move’. Vagabonds, in contrast, are pushed out of their localities in aspiration to recreate a ‘tourist’ life-style for themselves in terms of consumerism. Migrants on the spectrum between tourists and vagabonds find that their position is dependent not only their ability to cross borders (in terms of security laws), but also on their reception and on their social and economic integration into their country of settlement. As Bauman observes, while tourists migrate for enjoyment or profit and

are socially and economically *rewarded* for doing so, vagabonds travel for survival and end up being – in the discourses of their host societies overall – *condemned* for doing so. As such they share different incorporation experiences from their ‘tourist’ counterparts (Bauman 2004, cited in Jacobsen and Poder 2008: 145). Similar consequences of positioning on the tourist/vagabond spectrum can be observed in my sample; they will be discussed in more depth in the next chapters, which look at how migrants’ motivations for migration, as well as migration’s perceived present and future benefits, influenced the ways in which East Europeans continued to make sense of their new situation in England and how they approached and interpreted the integration process and their own efforts to adapt to their new cultural and social environment.

The accounts above also reflect established discourses about constructions of the ‘West’ and the ‘East’, or ‘Europeanness’ and ‘Eastness’, to employ Kuus’s (2007) conceptualisation. Within these discourses, notions are invoked which reflect core conceptions, connotations and values that are associated with both entities: developed, cosmopolitan and modern in the case of the ‘West’, and backward, traditional and poor in relation to the ‘East’ (see for example Delanty and Rumford 2005, Ostergren and Rice 2004, Passerini 2003). In light of discussions about the ‘return to Europe’ of A8 countries at the time of EU accession - which implied adopting ‘Western’ attributes and developing in a ‘Western’ way after being separated from the West during Communism (Light and Young 2009) - East European migrants’ decisions to migrate to the ‘West’ can be also understood as a personal attempt to return to ‘Europe’ and to enjoy the social, educational and economic opportunities it is perceived to offer. Their migration to Britain can thus be seen as an aspiration to

become part of this cosmopolitan modernity, and negotiating sameness can be seen as negotiating membership in this modernity.

### **5.3. Whiteness as Invisibility, Invisibility as Sameness**

As Nagel (2002: 260) emphasises in her study of the integration of British Arabs in London, ‘Politics of sameness are as relevant to the study of immigration and “race” in Britain as the politics of difference’ - both shape immigrant experiences. Hence, in order to further an understanding of immigrant-host society relationships involving East European migrants in England, this section focuses on the everyday embodied experiences of these migrants in their localities, and particularly on those factors that participants cited as crucial for facilitating their social inclusion into English society because they provide them with a degree of ‘invisibility’ in the places where they reside. As stated before, in the English context constructing sameness with the mainstream can largely be understood to be equivalent to inscribing an identity into ‘whitely scripts’, which are considered to be the normative ‘way of being’ of the host society. In the accounts of East European respondents, constructions of sameness with the mainstream were predominantly voiced in the context of their preference for settling in England, which went beyond simple explanations of EU legislation and the UK’s agreement to accept A10 immigrants. They were also articulated when migrants sought to enumerate the ‘valuable’ assets they offered English society vis-à-vis other, ‘visible’ minority groups. These factors are related to their perceived degree of integration, which is to say the degree to which they felt that they conformed to commonly accepted mainstream values and dominant norms (Juul 2011, Nagel 2002, Nagel and Staeheli 2008). East European respondents put particular emphasis on the common cultural understanding that they believed that they shared with the English



mainstream, based on a unified European heritage and Christian culture, familiarity with English behavioural norms, socialisation patterns; respondents also invoked the moral boundary of work ethic. This mirrored to a certain extent the thoughts of English respondents in the previous chapter in regard to what made East European migrants 'valuable', and thus 'white', in their eyes.

In my sample these 'narratives of sameness' were reported consistently in all three locations, irrespective of migrants' nationality, age or gender. What also became apparent is that, in these constructions of sameness, any (potential) experiences of discrimination and prejudice faced by East European migrants originating in the host society were discussed ambivalently, as respondents voiced confusion about the appropriate labelling of these experiences because of their embodied 'whiteness': was it 'racism', 'xenophobia', 'classism', or none of these?

My focus on 'sameness' in this chapter does not preclude an engagement with the constructions of difference that participants also made use of to construct themselves in opposition to the English mainstream, which will be analysed in chapter 5.3.1. In fact, most migrants constructed sameness and difference simultaneously and with different emphases when discussing their integration experiences. This distinction, therefore, is just for analytical purposes.

### ***5.3.1. 'We don't stand out...'***

Most East European respondents were rather hesitant when prompted to discuss similarities between their respective home countries and England, as well as between their respective cultures and English culture. Most respondents followed the explanation provided by Marita (Latvian, Norwich) for their hesitation: 'There is just too much... like it is difficult to just say one thing this or one thing this, there is too

much similar, so I don't know what to say now.' However, while reflecting on their preference for settling in England rather than in other countries, particularly those outside of Europe, and on reasons for feeling 'welcome' in their localities, participants frequently employed a politics of sameness in order to highlight certain factors that made them 'the same as' their English neighbours and therefore 'valuable' migrants that easily 'blend into' their localities. For some respondents this perceived sameness also produced comfort in their new country of settlement because it allowed them to present a certain continuity with their home country.

Janusz, for example, summarised several factors that, in his opinion, facilitated a 'peaceful' coexistence between Polish migrants and the host society:

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): England is a part of Europe so generally culture is much the same with the small details, the same as in Poland or other Eastern European countries (...) Same, you know, religion, the shops, the clothes, the food, saying hello with hand-shaking. (...) We work hard, we don't make trouble. Maybe some people do, but you can find stupid people everywhere, most people are OK. So I think you can't find so much...um... conflict between people from Poland and English people.

Janusz invokes the notion of a shared European heritage that, he believes, unites East Europeans and the English mainstream through a 'European culture' -- a set of shared values (such as work ethic), manners, dress-codes and (Christian) traditions. What this particular account, in common with other narratives of sameness that I will go on to discuss in this section, implies by extension is that there is no need for special accommodations to be made for East European migrants in England, because their norms and values do not deviate from existing acceptable English cultural norms and Christian customs. This similarity in terms of manners and 'culture', broadly understood, was also believed to create initial closeness and therefore to facilitate initial contact between East Europeans and the English, which

several respondents emphasised as one of the key factors which made them feel more welcome and more part of their new environment:

PETRAS (Lithuanian, Manchester): There are a lot [of differences], but I would not say they are very big and... I think this makes everything more easy... You know, you don't need special lesson about speaking to English people. (...) They smile more, you know, in the streets they smile, and they are very polite, but when I meet English people ... it is just same like people in Lithuania... normal like we now. (...) I don't worry about mistakes or I am not polite because I forget about eyes or no smile or ... you know what I mean?

KRYSTIAN (Polish, Norwich): I don't know [about similarities]... I really don't know, I have to think.... Sometimes I think we are very similar... you can say the details like 'hello', 'goodbye', the knife and the fork... you have same opinions about what you must do and must not do when you are guest or you see someone for the first time (...) In other countries, like in Asia... in China, in India, for example... you have details that are very different... um... standard details are very different. But I think English people and Polish people are very similar, maybe this is also why there is more sympathy from English people to Polish people than to people from the other countries.

These accounts echo empirical studies on cross-cultural adaptation and social learning theories in which it has been found that perceptions of 'cultural fit' facilitate cross-cultural transitions; in contrast, perceptions of distance from host culture norms have been seen to hinder the ways in which migrants adjust to their new environments, not only socio-culturally, but also psychologically (phenomena such as mood disturbance and distress), particularly in the initial stages of the integration process (see Berry et al. 1987; Kim 1998, 2001; Ward and Seale 1991).

Much like with the English respondents, 'sameness' in this context was also constructed in discussions where respondents compared socialisation patterns in England and their countries of origin as well as in their experience as migrants in their localities.

MIETEK (Polish, Manchester): Drinking... definitely. Polish people like to drink, English people like to drink. But we don't drink vodka all the time, not like they think... we have beer also. I think mostly beer.

HENRIKS (Latvian, Manchester): You know, we (British and Latvians) can party together. Friday go to the pub or night-club... music, drinks, a little bit dancing. (...) England is good place for party. Sometimes you can see crazy people, very drunk people, but also Latvian people are crazy too... sometimes.

Karolina, on the other hand, focussed on the literal 'invisibility' of East European migrants when reflecting on the factors that she believed made it 'easier' for Polish migrants to 'not stand out' in England. At the same time, she mentioned another factor that appeared in most narratives -- the shared timing and experience of Christian holidays, which was perceived as providing a common cultural understanding between East Europeans and the English:

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): You don't notice Polish people... unless you hear them speaking. I mean, I don't have Polish written on my forehead or something like that. So that's one thing. But there is a lot of other things: culture and how people are with each other... When you think about the Christians, so we have the same... you know... Christmas and Easter, same holidays... or no, I mean, we don't have holidays on Mondays in Poland, but the big holidays are just like in Poland.

NELU (Romanian, Manchester): I like that we have Christmas party at work, it is very fun, because every day it is stress and now everybody is relaxed... And we have the same celebration so no problem to go and visit with family when it is Christmas or family to come here and I am free from work so I have time.

For several interviewees the institution of the church represented a particular element of continuity with their home country. A notable case here is that of Dora, for whom the church gave the chance to recreate a similar social environment to what she had known in Hungary and to meet British people with whom she could share similar values. These factors combined to make experience of migration a positive one. In other narratives, however, it was secularism that was believed to create commonality

between England and East European countries and was constructed as a similarity in contrast to Muslims and Muslim countries.

DORA (Hungarian, Winchester): After the first week I felt very well here. I went to the church, the Christian church, no no no, Christ of England or something similar. And there I found some people, English people, they started to talk to me and they wanted to help even though I did not speak English good in the beginning. It was really good for me. And I feel well because it is like in Hungary, going to church, every Sunday usually.

INTERVIEWER: What about the English people you met at church? How would you describe your contact with them?

DORA: I met one man and two woman and they are now friends. I go to their home and they come to me (...) We don't go to the party, we don't smoke, don't drink, we are like this, you know.

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): I mentioned already about Pakistan [as a country he would not feel 'comfortable' living in], because the countries where religion dominates in every aspect of life. This is not the case in Poland or England.

RUTA (Lithuanian, Norwich): I don't really care about religion, I don't go to church, never in England and never in Lithuania. But you can see that there is the culture which is based on religious ideas, like... um... values, and I think this is important when you think where you want to go. I would not like to be in a country where I am treated bad because I am a woman, for example, or where I have to follow special rules, because that is the religion in that country.

Sameness with the English mainstream was thus created on the basis of Christian religion and European culture, and behavioural norms and traditions the sharing of which was perceived to facilitate East European migrants becoming part of English society and developing a feeling of familiarity with England. The accounts above highlight how sameness is constructed in contrast to norms that are believed to be dominant in non-European countries; where East European respondents could not see themselves settling in as easily in such countries. Most explicitly, this argument featured in the narratives of Janusz and Saulius, who elaborated on the limited opportunities they had to migrate to different countries, not just based on immigration

laws, but more generally also in terms of culture and religion and the inability to recreate 'home' in non-Western, non-European countries:

SAULIUS (Lithuanian, Norwich): When we made decision to leave Lithuania, it was clear it is to England, like, you know, there was not many options not to be illegal migrant somewhere. And then you think, there are not this many countries people can go to also so that they can feel normal there. Like yes, in Europe, and in America and Australia but there it is difficulty with visa, but nobody wants to go to rest of the world or take family there, go to Asia or Africa, too much is different, even when country is rich, like Japan, just culture is too different. My friend went to Dubai and he said it is nice, but so different from home, like it can never be home for him. But we don't have same problem in England like my friend, because so much is same.

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): I thought about going to Singapore, I worked there for a few months before, I think three years ago, with my company. But to be honest – I don't want to go back to Poland, but I want to live in a country where I can see spending my life in, like in England, because... I mean... Singapore was like– it was just so completely the opposite, like, just because the culture and everything has nothing to do with me.

However, this juxtaposing of European and non-European cultures was also undertaken in the specific context of East Europeans' experiences of settling in England, with respondents frequently constructing their 'sameness' with the English mainstream in opposition to other 'visible' minorities in order to highlight the reasons why they are particularly 'valuable' by drawing the moral boundary of work-ethic between themselves and visible 'Others', and implicitly emphasising their adherence to 'whitely scripts' by showing how they subscribe to normative behaviours in the public space, in contrast to other minorities.

### 5.3.2. '*... unlike Others*'

Narratives of sameness between East Europeans and English people were repeatedly reinforced by contrasting a shared 'European culture' with that of Muslim and Black minorities, positioning the latter as the 'real' and 'visible' 'Other' with

reference to looks, dress-code and divergent behaviour. This was done most explicitly in the account of Daniels, who contrasted the presence of East Europeans to Muslim minorities in the public space in Manchester:

DANIELS (Latvian, Manchester): And you see the women everywhere, I call them ninjas... you know black clothes everywhere, only eyes. And three, four, five kids, sitting in the park, talking ta-ta-ta-ta in their language, very loud. (...) We are more quiet people, my friends and me, we can go in park and we don't make problems.

INTERVIEWER: Problems for whom?

DANIELS: Everybody... I am thinking English because it is their country. And we don't make problems, we work, we learn English, we don't want them to give us everything, we just come to have normal life.

The fear and unease that migrants feel about 'speaking loudly' in the presence of a public that is perceived to be 'quiet' has been discussed by Gruenberg (2005), with reference to constructions of sameness and difference among Bosnian refugees in Denmark. In the accounts of her interviewees it was reported that being perceived as 'loud' in front of Danish people embarrassed them, as it was considered to be behaviour that not only stood out from the norm, but that also bore connotations of being uncivilised. On this basis Bosnians reported actively speaking quietly and distancing themselves from other 'louder speaking' migrants in order to avoid 'the gaze of the Danish other' in the public space.

As already exemplified in the case of Janusz above, and implied in Daniels' narrative, in most accounts work ethic was cited as another factor shared with the English mainstream. Here too the migrants' narratives were reinforced again by contrasting themselves to a perceived postcolonial 'Other'. Wiktor initially formulated this view in terms of why he believes it is easier for him to integrate in England as opposed to a Muslim country, and then went on to discuss migrants and minorities in the UK specifically, differentiating between East Europeans who

migrated to work and postcolonial migrants whom he perceived to have migrated in order to abuse the English benefit system:

WIKTOR (Polish, Manchester): I would struggle if I would go to some Asian country probably, go to any country where Islam is, like to live in Pakistan or in India would be much more difficult for me than it is to live in England (...) Just the culture, the way people grew up is different in Europe than in Asia. So when you can go abroad and work and have a better life, a different life or something, you go and you work hard to get it. So people from Poland do it a slightly different way than from the Caribbean, Asia or Africa, who come and they don't think about the way they work because they are entitled to benefits because British colonised their country before.

BEATA (Polish, Norwich): (...) if you work hard, you can gain many, many things in many levels and your life is much easier here. And people know that, Polish people, Czech people, this is reason why they come here. But I am not so sure about others.

INTERVIEWER: Other migrants?

BEATA: I mean migrations from Asian countries, from African countries (...) You just see many, many during the day in the centre, you know, everybody is working and what do they do at 2pm in the shopping centre? Not work.

This perception of postcolonial migrants as beneficiaries of 'unconditional' social rights as opposed to 'hard working' Eastern Europeans mirrors findings by Osipovic (2010: 169-170), whose research shows how Polish respondents, when considering their own engagement with the British welfare state, voiced critiques about the extent of the entitlements they believed to be guaranteed to postcolonial migrants in Britain. What remained absent, however, from the narratives of my East European respondents was any discussion of the white English working class. In contrast to English respondents' accounts analysed in the previous chapter, who perceived East Europeans to be 'valuable' contributors to society in opposition to work-shy 'chavs', work ethic was invoked specifically by East European respondents in order to draw a moral boundary between themselves and 'visible' migrants, and thus discursively inscribe themselves into a category of 'whiteness' that was believed to be shared with the English mainstream.



East European respondents, by aligning themselves with the English host society by constructing ‘sameness’ in opposition to a visible ‘Other’, however, created confusion for themselves when they attempted to label direct and indirect experiences of discrimination and prejudice that they or their fellow East European friends encountered from the English mainstream: some respondents questioned whether ‘racism’ could be used as the appropriate term, while others were unsatisfied with terms like ‘xenophobia’, preferring, for instance, ‘classism’.

### ***5.3.3. Labelling Discrimination***

The consistent pattern of constructing sameness discussed above complicated East European respondents’ approach to labelling experiences of discrimination against their particular ethnic groups. While most respondents did not report having experienced overt discrimination, as shall be analysed below, several participants engaged in reflections about the appropriate labelling of discrimination and prejudice, as they were aware that prejudice against East Europeans existed.

The term ‘racism’ was debated most heavily, with several respondents insisting that it did not apply to them because of their ‘whiteness’; instead it was reserved for ‘native’ ethnic minorities who had the experience of colonisation and racial subjugation.

WIKTOR (Polish, Manchester): You can’t call it racism, can you? I mean... racism... race, it’s about colour of skin, no? You can’t be a racist against white people, no?

INTERVIEWER: So what would you call it then?

WIKTOR: I don’t know, because I do say sometimes that English people are racist against Polish people, but I don’t know what else to say... maybe because it is different than discrimination against German people, because they are not poor and they don’t come here to work like us. Yeah, maybe it is racism. But not same racism like colony-racism or you know...

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): There is definitely prejudice in Britain against East Europeans, that we come over here, that we take jobs and stuff, but I don't think I would call it racism. Xenophobia, this is probably better word. But racism is for black people.

INTERVIEWER: What makes xenophobia a better word?

JANUSZ: It is fear of stranger, and we are strangers, so xenophobia. I don't know... I think racism is just a higher level...

RALUCA (Romanian, Norwich): I think the problem is that we are coming from a poor country into a rich country, and they see that many people work in factories. So maybe it is problem of class... Is there... how you call it... classism? Maybe this is what it is. Racism is not for us, I don't think.

ANDRAS (Hungarian, Norwich): It's hate against other person. When you think bad about someone because they are from different country, it is just stupid. No racist or xeno - ... just stupid.

'Racism' as a label for experiences of discrimination was thus perceived to be reserved for visible 'Others'. Ruggiero and Taylor (1997) argue that minorities might minimise their perception of discrimination in order to protect their self-esteem. In this study, one might conclude that the difficulties East Europeans found in labelling prejudice and discrimination against them might be a further indicator of their perceived degree of 'sameness' with the English mainstream. In particular, Andras in the account quoted above, demonstrates this by rejecting any notions of 'racism' or 'xenophobia' and instead suggesting that discrimination against East Europeans should be interpreted simply in terms of inter-personal 'hate'. However, one could argue further, following Ruggiero and Taylor (1997), that abstaining from calling discrimination against East Europeans 'racism' might also be an expression of the respondents' desire to allocate themselves into the category of 'whiteness' and a way for them not to perceive themselves as belonging to a disadvantaged minority group.

However, one respondent highlighted the dangers of not having a clear label to describe discrimination against East European migrants in England, as it could lead to trivialising these experiences with reference to a shared 'whiteness':

MARYLA (Polish, Norwich): You get a lot of racist people here, really racist people who will tell me to fuck off back to Poland or something, because they think we come here to steal jobs and steal benefits... it makes no sense. [...] You have to say it is racism, I think... because police, they don't react when you don't say it is racism. We don't have same protection like black people, because they say you are white, so it is not racism, you are from Europe, what do you want, just deal yourself with situation.

#### *5.3.4. Summary*

The narratives of sameness which East European respondents employed in their reflections on their decision to settle in England, as well as their integration experiences in the fieldwork locations and in England in general, were, we can conclude, based on several interdependent factors which were cited as a source of a sense of commonality between their societies of origin and societies of settlement: a sense of a shared 'European heritage' and 'European culture', which was perceived to be inherently linked to a certain similarity in manners, values and behaviour; a certain phenotypical 'invisibility', in combination with an approach to work which was perceived to accord with the expectations of the majority population; a familiarity with socialisation patterns from their own countries that are understood to be similar to those of the host population; a sense of shared cultural experiences based on common 'Christian' dates, holidays and traditions. By employing these narratives, interviewees engaged (inadvertently, to a certain extent) in discourses of 'whiteness', reproducing notions of 'normality' that were orientated around values and attributes which, as explored by the theoreticians of Critical Whiteness Studies, have been found to be 'inherently coded white' and which thus can be considered to provide them with a dominant status: skin-colour, Christianity, "civilised" behaviour and "respectability" (see Chapter 2). As these factors were discussed in the context of cohabitation and contact with English neighbours, one could argue that migrants also

took into consideration what they believed to be the majority population's perceptions of difference and deviation from 'whitely scripts', and by contrasting themselves to this they reproduced articulations of prejudice present among the majority population. The reference to a strong work ethic, for example, can also be understood in relation to Valentine's (2010) study of the justification and explanation of prejudice towards minorities among the British majority, which reveals how they evoke 'British values' and notions of 'fairness' and 'justice' in order to deflect accusations of prejudice. In the context of 'narratives of material injustices', these notions are evoked in order to denounce the treatment of minorities by the government, which is perceived to be preferential in comparison to their treatment of the 'hard-working' majority.

In several instances, adherence to 'whitely scripts' was reinforced by contrasting 'European' cultures to those of Asian Muslims, and consequently constructing Muslims as the 'real' and 'visible' Other. In this sense, a shared 'Christian' cultural background can be understood in relation to discourses about the alleged 'Islamisation' of (Western) Europe, in which Islam has been constructed as the 'ultimate' religious 'Other' on the basis of threat of religious extremism (Modood 2005). Nevertheless, the specific references made to divergences in dress-codes and perceived discrepancies in behaviour reflect, once again, the prejudice present amongst the majority in terms of the perception of a 'cultural threat' - a danger the potency of which is exacerbated by the visibility of migrants in the public space (Valentine 2010: 531). In this sense, by following the dominant visual regime and staying 'invisible' and 'quiet' in the public space, East Europeans present themselves not only as being 'the same', but also as vectors of an 'acceptable' diversity within the English mainstream as they perceive it.

### **5.4.2 The Limits of Whiteness Encountered**

As already discussed in previous chapters, in which I examined media discourses and English respondents' perceptions of East European migrants, phenotypical whiteness does not protect East Europeans from racialisation and from being perceived as 'cultural outsiders' in Britain. Having looked in the previous subsection at the ways in which East European respondents consider themselves to adhere to 'whitely scripts' in order to construct sameness with the mainstream and thus legitimate their position in England as 'desirable' migrants who integrate easily, I now move on to explore the ways in which everyday experiences of racialisation and discrimination feature in the narratives of East European respondents. Which 'embodied markers of difference' do they understand to be detrimental in making them objects of the *Othering gaze*? What forms do such racialisation and discrimination take? How is socio-cultural invisibility and visibility interpreted in terms of contributing to or averting experiences of racialisation? How do they explain the potential absence of encounters with stereotyping or stigmatisation? And finally, what agentic strategies do they use in order to resist, subvert or challenge these experiences?

#### **5.4.1. Accents**

Datta (2009b) argues that East European migrants construct themselves in opposition to other migrants and minorities in Britain on the basis of two contradictory factors: the marginalization that arises from their lack of English, which prevents/limits access to cultural capital, and the sense of empowerment that their status as legal migrants affords them. All my interviews were conducted in English, thus a sufficient command of the language was a prerequisite for participation;

consequently a ‘lack’ of English was not much discussed by my interviewees as a potential aspect of marginalization. In fact, most of the interviewees spoke very good English and their narratives revealed that they had rather extensive access to cultural capital in their localities, through friendships with English colleagues and neighbours, trips to the cinema and theatre, reading English newspapers and so on. Instead, it was ‘East European’ or ‘foreign’ accents that were considered to be the most significant marker of difference, the most likely ‘instigator’ of experiences of discrimination and the main obstacle for the respondents’ social integration into English society. O’Connor (2010) focuses on accents in her analysis of racialisation experiences of Irish migrants to Australia: her work reveals the ways in which these migrants ‘tone down’ their native accents when interacting with mainstream Australian society in order to protect themselves from prejudice and stereotyping. However, while Irish migrants can guarantee passing by minimising their native accents in O’Connor’s research, a significant number of East European respondents believed it to be impossible that they would become fully accepted into the English mainstream because of their foreign accents functioning as permanent embodiments of difference that represent a significant limitation to their (nominal) ‘whiteness’ and advantages derived from it:

MARYLA (Polish, Norwich): You know, in terms of races, we don’t look like we’re not English, although sometimes we speak, all the possible advantage is gone and, you know, there’s nothing.

NELU (Romanian, Manchester): We don’t stand out in the way we look. But I don’t see this as a benefit.

INTERVIEWER: No?

NELU: Not really. Because when we open our mouth, everything is clear. Everybody knows that we are foreigner. “You are from East of Europe? You are from Romania? You are shit.”

RUTA (Lithuanian, Norwich): To be honest, I find myself more and more frustrated by this. I am beginning to think that it does not matter how hard I

try... how much I try to improve my language skill, how I try to advance in my job, all the extra courses I make to do it. I still have to deal with nonsense sometimes for being Lithuanian, because my accent is so strong. And I will never be able to change that. Not in this lifetime. So I think I am not even going to try.

Janusz (Polish, Manchester) even interpreted accents to be the main distinguishing factor for East Europeans in the immigration landscape in England: 'For them [English people], people who is speaking with a weird accent is all "Oh, you are East European."'

Unlike in Colic-Preisker's (2002) research, in which Bosnian refugees to Australia ranked their skin colour to be of greater importance in terms of potential advantages than their accents (as indicated in the title of her paper, 'At least you are of the right colour...'), my respondents saw their accents as problematic because – in their perception -- they positioned them at the bottom of the 'minorities hierarchy' in England. Julia, a Hungarian nurse living in Norwich, for example, described the 'racial' and immigrant hierarchy at her work place as follows:

JULIA: They have list, the first — the English. Doesn't matter the position, the education, doesn't matter: white English exactly. This is only just my experience. Second one: a girl, black English, and white Europe. Third one: Indian, Pakistan.

INTERVIEWER: So what do you think does this list depend on?

JULIA: To be born here. It gives you language. That is most important. Not look, not education, just English, good English. If you not speaking perfect, you end of the list. Automatic.

INTERVIEWER: You said that the third one are people from India and Pakistan...

JULIA: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What makes them at the bottom of the list do you think?

JULIA: Um... I don't know... they have problems. Yeah, my boss told me 'I'm going to send you home to East Europe.' And I told him, "It's OK, just go, send me home." I don't care, I will do German exam for three, four months and I can go to Germany. Better salary, it's closer to Hungary, so it's not a problem because I am nurse. It's OK, just send home, I don't care. (...) Indian and Pakistan is not easy, not Europe Union, not options. And my boss knows and they have more problems.

A similar perception of a hierarchy of minorities and immigrants operating in England was echoed in the accounts of Jurgita and Wiktor, who both discussed audible difference to be of more hindrance to integration and acceptance by the mainstream than visible difference:

JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): Here [in England] you can really, really see, really, really, for example, if you're black or Asian but born in here, in England, it's completely normal, you won't have any problem, anything. But if you came from like somewhere else, especially majorities like Eastern European, they [English people] always thinking like "Oh, Eastern Europeans, cheap workers" and so on, and they will have any single job to work and so on, and there are many problems. Many problems actually with the police, because they can **hear** when they are Eastern European, and they think that these people are running from something, and they are criminals, and so on.

WIKTOR (Polish, Manchester): You think that to be white gives you advantage. But I learn that this is wrong. Being born here, this is real advantage. No matter – white, yellow, black, green... I can live here 50 years and I will never be 'British' or 'British-Polish'.

INTERVIEWER: You don't think so?

WIKTOR: No, no, no. I am sure. The accent.... it will not go away.

It was a noticeable feature of the narratives of the respondents from Norwich that a significant number of them used the phrase 'born and bred' to make sense of who can be included in the mainstream and who cannot. Raluca (Romanian), Ruta (Lithuanian), Karolina (Polish), Andras (Hungarian), Bernadett (Hungarian) all emphasised that 'being born and bred here... that is the only way to people not treat you like a foreigner' (Raluca); 'I always hear it – born and bred in Norfolk. Well I am not born and bred here, so I think I will always be a bit of an outsider' (Karolina); 'Born and bred in Norwich, it doesn't matter who you are, to be really English... you have to be born and bred in Norwich (laughs)' (Andras).

Accents were also viewed by some respondents as the main reason for an imbalance of power at work places and in mixed relationships, as well as the main instigator for open hostility and experiences of discrimination from the mainstream.



Ania (Polish, Manchester), for example, discusses encounters with a manager who openly mocks her accent when a conflict arises at work:

ANIA: And then if I feel as someone is talking to me and puts me down in a conversation, or like treats me like wrong, then I would talk to them. Because in the place where I work occasionally, the manager there, sometimes she copies my accent when she is angry and like sometimes I'm saying: 'Why are you copying? Is it funny? and then she said 'No, no no, sorry. I won't do this again.'" So I always say if you have a problem then it's... my accent I can never change. Like, I can't change it. It's just because I spent twenty-one years in my country, this is my second language, I would never change. I will have an accent, sorry. If you have a problem with that, then don't talk to me.

Petras (Lithuanian, Manchester) acquired the nickname 'Borat' by his English co-workers on the basis of his accent, which he feels that they use in order to emphasise that he is in a lower social position than they are:

PETRAS: I did not know in the beginning that it was about me. "Borat, Borat, come here", I was like what? I am not from Kazakhstan, I am from Lithuania. And they say I speak like Borat so I am Borat now.

INTERVIEWER: So they are joking like this or... or do they call you that on an everyday basis?

PETRAS: For them it is jokes, but I don't think it is fun... it is too much, sometimes, just to show me 'You are Eastern Europe, you are here (points down)'. It is a bit of racism, I think. Because I am not Borat, I am Petras. Maybe we speak the same, I don't know, but why they call me that. Fun for them, maybe they feel better when they call me that. Not so much fun for me.

Karolina (Polish, Norwich), on the other hand, reflected on the role her accent played in her relationship with her English husband, where she felt that overcoming her insecurities about her accent built her character and made her stronger, even if she felt 'bullied' by her husband at times:

KAROLINA: [Husband], he almost broke me and he made me strong and he knows it. It's like he was, in some ways, he was bullying me so much in a way like copying my accent, "Oh, I'm Polish, this and that", that was it, the sense of humour, and in a way actually he built in me.

In other instances, having a foreign accent was held to be the main reason behind and starting point for overt discrimination. As will be discussed below, only a

few respondents reported experiences of hostility on the part of the English mainstream; however, those who did recall particular situations and instances of discrimination did so by emphasising the fact that speaking with an East European accent turned altercations or misunderstandings between themselves and English people into openly hostile and racist confrontations:

Esther (Hungarian, Norwich), for example, described a situation which occurred at the beginning of her employment in the catering industry:

ESTHER: And there was this customer and he asked if we had any desserts left and I said "No, that's all we have, it's all gone." And then he kind of, cheeky way, "Oh, there's something in the fridge maybe, you can have a look." And I thought he'd ordered some, I understood he ordered a piece of cake for afters, and I went to the fridge to check it and I didn't hear, other people queuing behind me told me he said something like, "Oh, Polish girl, isn't she? What's she doing here? She shouldn't work here at all." And that was anger, you know. Because I think he could hear that I am from East Europe when I answered to him so he thought he could start with such comments. And I spoke with my manager about it when I heard and he actually took it to the upstairs, to the office, and yeah, I think he was reprimanded, I think.

MARYLA (Polish, Norwich): I was standing in the queue to the club, it was just disco something, pop music and there was a lot of people like this there and they keep pushing in the queue, kept inviting other people to the queue. So I was waiting there for half an hour and didn't move a step, even a step to the front, didn't get closer. And I knew I should keep my mouth shut, but I started to argue with a girl, I said "The end of the queue is there." And she was really shocking and really aggressive towards me and the first things she said, "You are not even English, You fucking foreign cunt." She just shouted this in front of everybody.

INTERVIEWER: And did people react?

MARYLA: I went to talk to people at the security office part of this club, they wash their hands of it, they're not responsible for what's going on outside. So I went to the police guys that were standing on the other side of the road and saw everything and overheard it, I'm sure, and I ... they said I can only do... officially report it to the police as a racism incident. That was their answer. Not very helpful, is it?

Accents were thus interpreted by East European respondents as permanent markers of exclusion, which, according to some, made social inclusion into the English mainstream an impossibility, and constituted the overriding hindrance to their

claims to 'whiteness' and belonging. Some even believed that it lowered their position on the immigrant ladder even further than somatic difference would, thus putting them, in their opinion, at a power disadvantage in relation to other minority groups in England. Audible difference was thus discussed as the most detrimental factor in causing migrants' identities to be 'misconstrued', misidentifying them as being in lower skilled jobs, less educated and thus making them feel 'undesirable' in English society and vulnerable to experiences of discrimination.

At the same time, a number of respondents with children hypothesised that through growing up in England and attending English schools their children would lose (or already have lost) their accents and would thus inevitably become full members of English society:

INTERVIEWER: And would you say you feel part of English society?

DANUTA (Polish, Winchester): It's really difficult to say, I don't know. No. I try to, I really do my best, but I will be always Polish. Maybe my children will have... they will have more opportunities and it will be much easier for them to be part of... Because they will have English accent, I know that. Not for me, I don't really care about it.

INTERVIEWER: How come?

DANUTA: Because I think it's not important. I want to be happy, I want my family to be happy. If I think about this, I can't do anything about it, that's why.

Krystian (Polish, Norwich), who, after discussing barriers at length, of which he holds language to be the most significant to his social inclusion in England, concludes that:

KRYSTIAN: But for next generation it will be different story.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yeah? What makes you say that?

KRYSTIAN: I can already see with my boys, they come from school with slang, they speak English very fluent now.... I think they will be English if we stay, I don't think I can stop it (laughs).

These accounts show the presumed power of phenotype in the sense that, once the language barrier is passed, there will be no obstacle for total social inclusion into

English society. However, further research is required into the experiences of second-generation East European immigrants to see if this really is the case. Research on other invisible second-generation ethnic groups in the UK does not necessarily support this hypothesis (e.g. Ackroyd and Pilkington 1999, Den Besten 2010, Griffiths 2002, Rutter 2006). Respondents in those studies do express an ability to 'pass', but they seem to make passing contingent on particular situations and they do not always want to do so. Through transnational networks they maintain an attachment to their home countries and cultures and use their background and heritage in order to 'strategically pass' when convenient. Nevertheless, they are able to perform 'flexible ethnicity' which gives them the ability to claim membership and identity in more than one 'ethnic group' (Vasquez 2010: 46), or – as Waters (1990) terms it in her research on white ethnics in the United States – 'symbolic' and 'optional' ethnicity – something only available to whites thanks to their skin colour – which can claim a certain (European) heritage should it be of psychological or social benefit for them, and disguise it in situations when that is not the case. It still remains to be seen, however, if this will prove to be the case for the next generations of East European migrants in England.

#### ***5.4.2. Cross Discrimination***

As discussed above, East European respondents regarded their accents as the main triggers for identification as East European and any subsequent confrontation with a range of established stereotypes and prejudice and encounters of discrimination. However, several respondents also referred to a particular form of discrimination that they encountered. If we return to the account of Esther (above – Hungarian misidentified as Polish), we see that it alludes to a specific form of discrimination that occurred once the East European identity was revealed. In this

case – and in a number of other cases - there was evidence of ‘cross discrimination’ (Feagin 1991), a phenomenon in which a minority suffers from discrimination aimed at a different minority group. Such situations usually arose because a respondent was either assigned to the overarching category of ‘East European’ or misidentified as Polish. In several cases this came as a surprise, because respondents had originally believed that their socio-cultural invisibility would protect them from such experiences of discrimination:

BERNADETT (Hungarian, Norwich): Before I came, I knew that a lot of Polish people are in the UK, and a lot of people from my country too, but not that many. And I thought – good, I am coming to Norwich, not many Hungarians in Norwich, so people don’t have ... you know... prejudiced, I will be first they can meet and I will make opinion for Hungarian people. But English people don’t care – everybody is East of Europe. Everybody is Polish. So they say ‘you are hard-worker, that’s good’, but they also think all the things they think about Polish people when they meet me.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of things?

BERNADETT: You know, that they take jobs, that they come for benefits, that they are loud, all this. So many Polish people, good people, I have friends who are Polish. But many people make bad opinion. And this bad opinion now also about Hungarian people, because *everybody* “East of Europe”.

DANIELS (Latvian, Manchester): I thought that to be from Latvia would give me a bit of mysterious, you know a bit special or something (laughs). But no. “Eastern Europe.” “You are Polish?” Nobody asks questions about Latvia, Latvian food, Latvian culture. And sometimes I hear “Why don’t you go back to Poland? Too many Polish people here.”

JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): It’s crazy, like especially Polish, Poland, they know that it’s a big country on its own, they [English people] know a lot about it, because so many people from Poland are here. But small ones, like Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and so on, they think that we’re living in the middle ages or something. One girl even asked me if we had iphones and things like that. And I’m like, “Yeah, we are a proper normal country, we are just a small one” and they are still thinking that living off of all those clichés about Soviet Union and things like that, and that we still don’t have proper food technologies and so on. And some of them don’t really know where Lithuania, for example, is. So I think they think it is like a third world countries, some of them, things like that. That we’re all some kind of Middle Ages people, like we don’t know about anything. And this is because they don’t meet many people from these countries, they don’t go there so much like Poland, so they can’t imagine we are normal.

RALUCA (Romanian, Norwich): I know that there is quite a big Polish community in Norfolk. And I think, I'm not very certain, but I think there's even some shops of Polish-type food. And I think the Polish community is a bit more present in the mind of people than the Romanian community. We, Romanians, I think don't have... Maybe that's my understanding, don't seem to have a constant presence within the UK that we're labelled in a particular way when we're here. We're labelled as a nationality probably generally, but not as a community that live here... or they just label us the same way as they label the Polish or other East Europeans, just because they don't know the difference.

In other studies about socio-cultural invisibility (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, Nagel and Staeheli 2008) it has been found that, while it might protect migrants from stereotyping against their particular ethnic group, socio-cultural invisibility can still translate into experiences of discrimination because immigrants are identified as *generic foreigners* and subsequently interpolated into established discourses of prejudice against other migrant groups. Polish migrants, as the largest group of East Europeans, function in this case as a reference point for which there are established discourses in existence and which therefore is ultimately something that other East European migrant groups are confronted with. What these experiences of cross discrimination also disclose is how being lumped together in the category 'East European' or 'Polish' undermines possibilities for the cultural recognition of less socio-culturally visible minorities from Eastern Europe, as in the case of the Latvian respondent above, or that of Jurgita who feels that English people are ignorant about Lithuania as a country and about other Baltic States. Through her account it can be gathered that this lack of cultural recognition leads to even more pronounced prejudices of 'backwardness', therefore further relegating socio-culturally invisible East European migrants – in this case from the Baltic States – to inferiority from the symbolic 'modern and advanced society' which England represents (see Sibley 1995).

The Romanian respondents in my sample presented a particular case in terms of cross discrimination in the sense that they reported cases of being misidentified as

‘Roma’ and ‘Gypsies’ and confronted with prejudice and stereotypes accordingly. This echoes findings in the study by Morosanu and Fox (2013), who showcases the ways in which Romanians used racialized language to distinguish themselves positively from ‘Gypsies’ and reaffirm their ‘whiteness’ in contrast to Roma when being misidentified as such. In the case of my respondents – possibly due to the fact that I was an ethnic outsider and they were unwilling to voice their opinions too explicitly (see Erel 2010) – responsibility for these instances of cross discrimination was placed predominantly on the English mainstream, without necessarily racialising Roma in the process. Again, socio-cultural invisibility was mentioned as a potential explanation for this occurrence.

OANA (Romanian, Norwich): It happens sometimes that I tell someone that I am from Romania and they go “Ah, so you are Gypsy? Can you read my hand?” This is so stupid. There are Romanians and there are Roma, two different nations.

CEZAR (Romanian, Manchester): Once I went to hotel to ask for work. I met manager and he asked “Where are you from?” So I say “Romania”, and he says “You live in house or caravan?” Because I need permanent address. So he thinks I am Gypsy or what? Lazy man, you know – lazy in head.

LIVIU (Romanian, Manchester): People here don’t meet many Romanians, so I think they read in newspapers about Gypsy coming to England from Romania and they think that Romanians are all Gypsy. I hear it many times, many many. Maybe if there was more of Romanians here they would understand the difference, but I don’t know. Next question.

One notable (and exceptional) case in terms of cross discrimination was the one of Nelu (Romanian, Manchester) who recalled a situation in which he was called “Paki” on the bus.

NELU: So I was sitting there [on the bus] and suddenly a man just said “Paki, go home back to Pakistan”, and I saw that he was looking at me. I just ignored it. I don’t know if it was because he thought I was from Pakistan – in my work they call everybody Paki, all foreigners Paki. But then it was summer and I am very brown in summer (laughs).

Nelu interprets this situation twofold: on the one hand he seems to believe that he had been identified as a 'generic foreigner', assuming that "Paki" is a term used in England to refer to anyone who is from outside the country. On the other hand he also believes that this identification might have been based on a reading of his physical appearance.

Overall, however, only a handful of East European respondents focussed on experiences of racialisation and discrimination. The general attitude evident in most interviews was that these migrants felt welcome and accepted in their new surroundings, and that it was only upon deeper reflection or in contexts not directly related to the topic of prejudice and stereotypes that narratives of discrimination emerged. In particular respondents who can be classified as closer to what Bauman would describe as the 'tourist' position on his spectrum reflected on the absence of experiences of discrimination in their migration experience, explaining this absence by emphasising that their reasons for migration, social position and class environment at work and in their local communities were not 'stereotypically Eastern European'. At the same time, however, these narratives also display an advanced awareness of stereotypes about East European migrants present in the English mainstream. Even in the absence of direct discrimination, this awareness led to the formation of a 'double consciousness' amongst a significant number of respondents, affecting their interaction with the host society. One important conclusion we can draw from this is that the distinction between English middle-class and working-class environments in terms of discrimination is, in reality, not as unambiguous as many respondents first reported it to be and that middle-class environments are not significantly less likely to engage in stereotyping (for discussions on working-class vs. middle-class racism see for example Collins 2005).



### ***5.4.3. Not ‘stereotypically’ Eastern European***

Janusz started his interview by discussing my leaflet in which I outlined potential interview topics – one of them being discrimination. Despite ultimately providing one of the richest narratives, Janusz began by questioning whether he would be a suitable respondent; he suggested that he had not experienced any discrimination because his reasons for migration were no ‘stereotypically Eastern European’:

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): I was born in Poland, so by this fact I am East European, but I do not feel East European in the stereotype way.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean by ‘stereotype way’?

JANUSZ: I moved only because I want to. Maybe from that point of view I’m not typical in England. I’m just kind of nomad who stays some time wherever he likes. Maybe for that reason there is something else in my life, I am not paying attention to this detail that you may be interested in, like not this sort of racism things. I have no experience with that.

Instead, he suggested that I should interview other Polish migrants on that particular topic whom he characterised as follows:

JANUSZ: (...) there are some people from Poland who are not very well educated and they came only because life is easier. When they find life is easier, this is all that they want to achieve in their life. (...) I think this type of people will have more experience with what you are looking for, because English people can see that and react to it.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, I don’t think I understand... see what exactly?

JANUSZ: They see that these people only come for easier life. I think this can be upsetting for the people who are here, because they can see that these people don’t want to participate here, they just come for themselves, they don’t really care about anything else.

Janusz places importance on his reasons for migration in order to explain why he might not have experienced racialisation or discrimination in England. A number of other East European respondents focussed in particular on their social status and their work environment to explain why they had avoided being discriminated against, explaining that the fact they did not work in the lower-skilled sector ‘stereotypical’

for East Europeans and were therefore not surrounded by working-class people, whom they perceived to more discriminatory:

AGNE (Lithuanian, Winchester): My husband has good job, he works in IT company here in Winchester, my children go to good schools (...) I don't clean in houses or work in factory, we live in nice house in Winchester, not ten people in one room, it is our house. I don't think anyone can really make stereotypes of us because we are not stereotype people from Lithuania. (...) I feel very good here, nobody point a finger 'you are that or that' because I am from Lithuania.

MIETEK (Polish, Manchester) (on why he does not experience discrimination at work and in his neighbourhood): ... because I work in an international company. So international companies is a place where generally high educated people are, and because the neighbour are also people who have ambitions in their life. So they know that the reason somebody's from another country is not problematic and from the job-wise, people like from Eastern Europe also qualifies us as everybody else. (...) But I knew some of my friends from Poland – I mean, Polish friends – here, because they work in some sort of factories and general warehouses whether often people with lower skills working are, they found the job and they find the environment quite hectic, and they see some discrimination, I don't know if this is on a racist basis but I think how British people see people from Eastern Europe is slightly related to the what part of society they are. If they are very low educated then they do not work and they live on benefits, they do not show too much welcome to any other society or nations. This does not only apply to Eastern European, they have the same opinion about Eastern European as they have about Asian people.

This distinction between middle-class and working-class environments, with the latter being regarded as more prone to discrimination, was particularly evident in the narratives of respondents who had improved their social status during the time they had spent in England, in most cases after finishing a degree at an English university, and could thus reflect on experiences in both working-class and middle-class environments. (for a discussion on how improvement in social status affects integration experiences, see Parutis 2011):

DOROTA (Polish, Norwich): If I can tell you my experiences, because I came to England first time for eight months in 2008, and this was just before I graduate in Poland, I just came for a gap year, and I worked in different factories. SO I had a totally different life then than now. So I've got two

different points of views. So totally different. Absolutely different. At this time I really felt like not very welcome. I was like a labour person, actually. But now, since I work in the scientific community, it's totally different.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think makes it different?

DOROTA: What made it different? I think the culture of people, because when I work in the factory, that's where the people who they finish their education in the age of sixteen. So they didn't know anything about work, they didn't know anything about other cultures, actually, and they didn't always kind of respect it. And they always thought that if I was here I was here just only for money, so I have to work as many hours as possible and that I don't have any actual rights. And there were cases like this. But now, well as I said, I work with scientists. So actually everyone is equal. So this is the difference.

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): When I first came over, I think the experiences then were very different to my experience now. Back in 2004, I would say, people – especially in this area in Norfolk – I think it all really depends on which area in England you are. If the people are used to foreigners, if the people have ever been travelling. People who are bright, people who have been travelling a lot around the world, they are much more open to foreigners, even to Eastern Europeans. Unfortunately, when I came over here the first time, I was surrounded by people who never, ever left Norfolk in their lives, ever [this was when she was working in a factory] (...) So you can imagine for them, I was really treated as a foreigner, because they said we just come here and we take their jobs. Where, in real life, for employers they loved Polish people, they were always saying, "Polish people are the best workers ever", because we work really hard and we want to work and we do anything we're told to do, and we're happy. (...) So I think back then and also in this sort of community, we were really, really, disliked by English people.

However, the idea that there is less discrimination in a more multicultural area (contact hypothesis), voiced here by Karolina, was not a feature of interviews conducted in Manchester. Here, although a significant number of respondents took a different approach to integration because of the more multicultural environment of the city (an issue I will discuss in more detail in chapter 5.6.), the class environment of the respondents was yet again invoked as one of the main determinants of the amount of discrimination migrants face (see Mietek's narrative above). The only 'tourist' respondent who explicitly challenged the notion of a tolerant middle-class environment was Jurgita, who found that her middle-class English friends, albeit not overtly discriminatory towards her, made her feel unwelcome because of their

‘exaggerated’ concerns about her status as a foreigner, which made her feel out of place in more subtle ways:

JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): I’m hanging out with people, I call like my friends now, and they’re really really amazed about me as I’m from Lithuania. They’re always like paying attention to me like, “Are you OK? How do you like England? Oh you have to try this food, and that, it’s really good, it’s really English.” So sometimes I feel a bit overwhelmed for the fact that I am foreigner because everybody is really interested, how is my home? And how is this and that? It is nice, but it is become a problem for me... you know, the extra attention.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me a bit more how this is a problem?

JURGITA: Um... because, you know, I want to be polite, I smile, I say everything is okay. If they say “You are a foreigner, we don’t want you here, go back to Lithuania” I can have discussion, I can tell them to fuck off. But this is more “You poor poor foreigner, how are you feeling, we care so much about you, we want to teach you” and this is nice, really really nice, really. But they are telling me that I am not from here all the time, they make me feel more foreigner than I am.

But this self-perception as ‘not being stereotypically Eastern European’ was also problematized by the suggestion that it led to some East European respondents being alienated from their various ethnic communities. Dorota (Polish, Norwich), Janusz (Polish, Manchester), Jurgita (Lithuanian, Winchester) and Szilvia (Hungarian, Manchester) all discussed the way in which they were not sufficiently ‘marked’ as Eastern Europeans because of the social position that they had achieved in England and the English language skills that they possessed, which led to them being treated with suspicion by fellow Eastern Europeans and to them ultimately being excluded from their ethnic communities.

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): It is because we don’t have, like... nothing to talk about, I think. They [other Polish migrants] are just about work, work, work. They always ask: How much do you earn? How much do you have in the bank? (...) When I say that I work for international company, it is always ‘Uuuh, Mr Big Man, Mr Important’.

DOROTA (Polish, Norwich): It is just jealousy, because I am researcher, because I get scholarship from university. They say sometimes: ‘You think

you are better, you don't understand Polish problems in this country'. They [Polish migrants] are very jealous people sometimes.

SZILVIA (Hungarian, Manchester): I am not apologising that I don't know about work in factory, that I don't know about work in the day and in the night and only party on weekends and this life. You know, maybe I should apologise that I speak English, no? (laughs) This is not my life, my husband has good job and this is not what we do. And some Hungarian people I meet, they don't like this.

Karolina (Polish, Norwich), moreover, discussed how marrying an English doctor was commented on by several Polish acquaintances as 'inappropriate' and as a conscious attempt on her part to advance up the social ladder in England.

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): They [Polish migrants] see that I drive in a nice car, I live in a nice house, I have my own company, and this just bothers some people... And they like to rub it in my face sometimes that I am English now, that I want to be English and that I am ashamed to be Polish because... well, because I am married to a doctor. (...) the English doctor's wife, I hear it all the time.

To summarise, in a number of accounts respondents argued that it was because they had migrated for 'not stereotypical' reasons and thereafter acquired a 'not stereotypical' social status that allowed them to experience a more middle-class environment in explaining the absence of discrimination experiences by these East European respondents. Moreover, through these narratives they were also implicitly embedding themselves more firmly in the 'white' mainstream by constructing their experiences in opposition to a presumed 'stereotypical' East European 'Other'. In Janusz' account above discrimination was narrated in a way that made a certain type of East Europeans responsible for it; according to him they were not 'stereotyped' by the mainstream but acted 'stereotypically' and thus incited discrimination. While other respondents did not follow this line of argumentation as explicitly as Janusz, their narratives do display an advanced awareness of common prejudices and

stereotypes about East Europeans present among the majority population, such as living separately, isolated within their ethnic community, pursuing an ‘egocentric’, self-seeking lifestyle, living in overcrowded housing, and working in lower-skilled jobs. However, middle-class respondents in my sample generally reported that their status allowed them to feel well integrated and welcome, despite their awareness of common prejudices against their ethnic groups in English society. However, some East European respondents believed that occupying a higher social position in England than the ‘stereotypical’ East European migrant also led to their exclusion from their ethnic communities because they were not sufficiently socially ‘marked’ as Eastern Europeans and thus were not considered to sharing common experiences, such as working in the lower-skilled sector.

At the same time, several middle-class respondents reported having developed what W.E.B Du Bois calls ‘double consciousness’ (Du Bois 1994), which enables them to complement their own self-awareness with an awareness of how they are perceived by others, which modifies their behaviour vis-à-vis the mainstream. Despite not having experienced discrimination or racialisation directly, the awareness of discourses of prejudice and stereotypes against East European migrants has prompted them to feel a certain sense of psychological unease in the way they approach mainstream society. Such a ‘double consciousness’ also contributes to the ambiguity surrounding the proposed distinction in discrimination between middle-class and working-class, as it was predominantly reported by East European respondents in the context of situations when they were confronted with the English middle-class.

#### **5.4.4. *'Double Consciousness'***

In her analysis of the ways in which 'whiteness' frames gendered Irish migrancy and belonging in England, Gray (2002) examines the notion of the 'double consciousness' which is instilled in her female respondents and which leads to a sense of 'cultural (un)belonging'. This sense of unbelonging is produced both through the gaze of the English 'other' and through their direct experiences with the English mainstream (ibid: 262). Gray gives the account of Helen, whose 'double consciousness' means that she feels like she cannot criticise Ireland unless she is with other Irish people, because she believes that any such criticism might invoke and reaffirm colonial discourses that homogenize the Irish and divest them of subtlety and diversity. Moreover, other accounts in Gray's research display how her respondents actively adjust their temperaments and remain conscious of the 'othering gaze' of the English, which leads them to behave differently in front of members of mainstream society.

I will discuss the specific strategies that East European migrants used in order to avert and resist experiences of 'Othering' in a separate section below; at this point, however, it would be beneficial to examine how the experiences of 'double consciousness' reported by my East European respondents can furnish further insights into the ways they encounter the 'limitations' of their 'whiteness', particularly as it relates to their experiences with the English middle-class. Furthermore, these insights challenge the notion that discrimination was usually encountered in a working-class environment.

One of the most explicit narratives in which 'double consciousness' was present was provided by Dorota, a Polish postgraduate researcher from Norwich. Dorota reflected on her Polish friend's marriage to an English doctor and the fact that

she herself had been on a date with another English doctor from the same friendship circle. In this context, Dorota also inadvertently engages in a discussion about social hierarchies in England, where – according to her perception of the situation – West Europeans are considered to be of higher status than East European migrants:

DOROTA (Polish, Norwich): I think you are immediately, you know, you are straight away the lower class; it doesn't matter if you have a degree or not. When you come to England as a foreigner, you are immediately... I mean, there are situations where you're not.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of situations?

DOROTA: Like when you are French or German... I mean this is one of the questions I asked [a Polish friend who has been living in the England for longer and is married to an English doctor], when I met her and I found out she's the wife of a doctor, I was like, "Don't you feel sometimes that you are not good enough?" Because sometimes even though... this is what I was talking to my friend yesterday about... sometimes there is something... I'm well educated, I was travelling all over the places, by myself, so it means I'm brave and I should be confident. But sometimes there are moments when I didn't... when I still felt Polish so being a little bit... Like when I went for a date with [another English doctor] as well, I kind of felt like... not good enough to go out with someone. Maybe because I think it is in his mind, or maybe my mind – or people's minds actually... the Polish and the English doctor.

Dorota had originally located all her experiences of discrimination in the context of her first job as a factory worker in England, and thus as tied to her former working-class environment (see above). But moving to a more privileged social position by becoming a postgraduate researcher and changing her social circle by surrounding herself with middle-class and upper-middle class English people has not prevented her from the feeling of being in a lower social position, even if she has not experienced discrimination in her new social environment directly. Similar instances of a 'double consciousness' were also reported by other middle-class respondents:

ANIA (Polish, Manchester): That's why if I speak with someone and... you know, you speak to someone and you look into his eyes, and you know, they don't have to say anything, and you feel either they accept who you are and where you come from, or they just have this wall, and they wouldn't and they



just look at you as a peasant. You know, I would just avoid them. Like, I had those tutors in university. My English wasn't very good then because I did a foundation course first. So like, I was trying to explain something and most of them, 99% of them were really nice, polite, would listen to me, would try to help me and stuff, but you know, some of them they would just think of me as another foreigner who just comes and takes, you know. They don't say it, but you can see it.

OANA (Romanian, Norwich): I always have a fear that they might label me before knowing me.

INTERVIEWER: In what way?

OANA: As the perception of Romanians in Britain, or Europe. And it's not... on the whole, not very good. I think the good examples seem to not feature that much, whereas the rest of them, all the bad things, surface a lot. And I fear that they might have pre-judgements. But then, as I said, most of the people I meet are here, they're quite open-minded. So I don't... Although that's my fear, I don't think I actually have a lot of reason to feel that way, do you know what I mean?

In the case of Danuta (Polish, Winchester), a deeper reflection on her feelings prompted her to share an experience of direct discrimination, even if at first she stated that she has never had such an experience:

INTERVIEWER: And have you ever experienced any unpleasantness because of being Polish?

DANUTA (Polish, Winchester): No, no. I can just imagine sometimes what they could think, but it could be just my imagination.

INTERVIEWER: And what would that be?

DANUTA: Well, as I said, they have this kind of opinion. Like, I was in a very nice playgroup with my friends, Polish friends, we were sitting – four or five of us – and one lady she came in too, and one of my friends, she's a music teacher, another is an au pair, and another one she's a vet. And she came to our group and she said: "Which one of you can clean my house?" and this is what kind of opinion they have, that we just come here, have this kind of job. That was unpleasant.

#### **5.4.5. Summary**

As a result of their non-native accents and of cross discrimination as generic foreigners or misidentification as members of more socio-culturally visible East European migrant groups, East European respondents encountered the limits of their phenotypical whiteness. These limitations found expression in experiences of both overt and indirect prejudice and discrimination and were interpreted by some

respondents as a factor putting them in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis other 'established' minority groups in the ethnic hierarchy of England. When such experiences were absent, respondents explained this by referring to the fact that they were not 'stereotypically' Eastern European because their reasons for migration differed, they supposed, from most migrants and because they had achieved a higher social status in England, which led to increased contact with members of the host society's middle class, who were considered to be less discriminatory than the working class. At the same time, however, the higher social position of some East European respondents suggested that their social advancement had led to them being excluded from their ethnic communities because they did not share in common identity-forming experiences, or were seen to have abandoned their national identities in favour of Englishness. Moreover, despite considering themselves to be of a higher social position than other, more 'stereotypical' East European migrants and surrounding themselves by English middle-class people - which was thought to protect them against experiences of overt racialization and discrimination - several respondents were seen instead to have developed a 'double consciousness' because they felt that they were considered to be of a lower social class and thus not 'worthy' of participating in the social circles to which they belong in England. This led several of these respondents to employ particular strategies to avert or resist experiences of (real or imagined) discrimination, just like those migrants who reported instances of overt discrimination. It is these strategies which I will now analyse.

### **5.5. Strategising Whiteness**

In this chapter I identify and analyse the tools and strategies that East European respondents employed in order to resist or avert experiences of racialisation and discrimination in their everyday life. These can be summarised as follows: attempts at

‘passing’, which is to say active efforts to ‘blend in’ to English society, to disguise or subdue their East European backgrounds in particular contexts, and to stay ‘invisible’ as a migrant group; ‘coming out’ or ‘taking a stance’ by revealing their particular ethnic identity and making efforts to make particular East European migrant groups ‘visible’ with the purpose of confronting and challenging stereotypes and, furthermore, to promote a more nuanced picture of their particular ethnic backgrounds or of East European migrants in general. Another dimension of the ‘taking a stance’ strategy was the use of rhetoric aimed at asserting ethnic self-worth and affirming distinctiveness in situations in which the respondents felt that their dignity was threatened, most commonly by demarcating themselves positively from the mainstream in regards to values, traditions and knowledge, which were perceived to be lacking or absent in the host society

In my analysis, I draw on a growing body of literature dedicated to analysing social ‘stigma’<sup>26</sup> and the strategic actions and responses chosen by stigmatised groups as a means of gaining recognition when confronted with exclusion, discrimination and/or racism in everyday life (see, for example, Feagin 1991, Lamont, Morning and Mooney 2002, Lamont and Fleming 2005). This research complements previous attempts at studying destigmatisation that were focused on the perspective and actions of elites and social activists (Nagel 2002). By developing a destigmatisation theory aimed at explaining ethnic and racial stigmas, Lamont (2009) shifted the focus onto ordinary people and the ways in which social boundaries are negotiated, transformed and subverted in their everyday interactions, and through references (to available cultural repertoires) and understandings (of national history, for example) at the

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<sup>26</sup> I follow Goffman’s (1963) understanding of ‘stigma’ as an attribute that ‘spoils’ the social identity of the stigmatised individual because it associates that individual with moral inferiority. This can lead to the individual altering his or her behavior and interaction with the dominant group in order to prevent discomfort in others while also preserving their own sense of self-worth.

micro-level. These coping mechanisms can generally take on two forms: concealment (of a stigmatised identity) or confrontation of stigma, in order to challenge stereotypes and prejudice aimed at the stigmatised group; the choice and availability of strategies, however, is determined by the specific cultural, institutional and national contexts (Lamont and Mizrachi 2012: 373). A study by Mizrachi and Zawdu (2012) on Ethiopian Jews in Israel, for example, shows how religious and national discourses (Judaism, Zionism) are used by these migrants to counteract stigmatization associated with their phenotypical blackness and to claim membership in the Jewish and Israeli imaginary.

Ethnicity commonly emerges in this context as an area of refuge that can be utilised by stigmatised migrants in order to re-evaluate and re-define their 'spoiled identities' in a positive sense, by limiting their everyday socialisation to their particular stigmatised group in order to find support and comfort in the familiar and to affirm their distinctiveness by ascribing to themselves positive (and at times superior) characteristics in relation to the perceived mainstream (Goffman 1963: 31-32). Vasquez and Wetzel (2009), for example, analyse the coping mechanism employed by Native Americans in the US to combat stigma, and outline the ways in which they invoke the moral superiority of their family values, respect for elders and for the traditions of their group in order to differentiate themselves from the American mainstream and imbue their racial category, one that has been used by the dominant population to marginalise them, with positive meaning. A similar finding has been reported by Espiritu (2001) in the case of Filipino migrants to the US, where restrained female sexuality and family values are cited in order to assert cultural superiority over the mainstream and to articulate a valuable ethnic identity in opposition to it. As shall be explored below, invoking 'ethnic honour' (Weber 1978)

was a salient strategy employed by my East European respondents with the purpose of not only differentiating themselves positively from the English mainstream, but – so it seemed at times – also to ‘educate’ me as the interviewer / outsider about the positive values my respondents perceived to be inherent in their particular cultures and in Eastern Europe in general as opposed to ‘the West’. Lamont and Bail (2005) refer to this strategy as ‘particularising’,<sup>27</sup> a strategy frequently employed by stigmatized ethnic minorities in Western societies, consisting of an effort on the part of members of a subordinate group to reinterpret their stigmatized category in positive terms.

On the other hand, however, stigma can also lead individuals to distance themselves from the stigmatized group, to confront the ethnic in-group with distrust (Goffman 1963: 51, see also Guarnizo et al. 1999) and to make use of alternative strategies, such as an emphasis on their personal accomplishments and skills in dealing with stigma (Lamont and Fleming 2005). If we recall the main premise of social identity theory, then we remember that membership of a group is an important source of self-esteem, and social identity is constructed in order to create a sense of belonging to the social world (Tajfel 1979, Tajfel and Turner 1979). The process of social categorization, which is to say, dividing the world into in-groups and out-groups, serves to enhance individuals’ self-image by increasing the status of the group to which they belong. One could thus conclude that in its most extreme form, ‘self-distancing’ from a group which is considered to be subordinate or stigmatized, could lead to disidentification with the group (putting the group at a psychological distance), and therefore considerable complication of the individual’s position in the social world (Goffman 1963).

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<sup>27</sup> cp. to Wimmer’s concept of ‘transvaluation’ (2008: 1044), see Chapter 3.

In the specific context of East European migrants in the UK, Ryan (2010: 365-6) identifies ethnic distancing as a strategy that was employed by her Polish respondents in order to avoid being associated with other 'Poles abroad' who were believed to bring a bad image to Polish migrants in general through breaking what are considered acceptable social norms, by swearing loudly in the public space, for example. While in my sample several respondents similarly joined in complaints about certain behaviours of their fellow migrants (such as living isolated from the mainstream, disturbing neighbours through loud behaviour, littering), distancing themselves from other 'East Europeans abroad' did not emerge as an explicit strategy, even if implicitly they did distance themselves from those other East Europeans by adopting a critical stance towards them in the interview situation. Moreover, respondents were ambivalent in their discussion of the benefits of the presence of ethnic community structures in the fieldwork locations and of further migration from Eastern Europe to Britain when it came to the impact they would have on increasing or diminishing prejudice towards East European migrants.

In a recent article, Morosanu and Fox (2013) emphasise, moreover, the role played by ethnicity in the case of coping strategies of Romanian migrants in the UK, who, in response to experiences of misidentification as Roma, blame Roma for Romanians' stigmatised image abroad and thus employ the strategy of 'stigma transfer' by differentiating themselves positively from ethnic Roma. They thus shift the boundaries assumed to demarcate Romanians and the British mainstream towards boundaries between Romanians and Roma, in an attempt to 'negotiate a more favourable position in Britain's ethnicised hierarchies' (2013: 448). While, as Morosanu and Fox note, evoking the Roma in order to explain Romanians' bad reputation abroad is an established strategy (2013: 444), the issue of Roma remained

largely absent in my interviews with Romanian respondents, with the exception of narratives of misidentification, which were explored in the previous chapter. Apart from very few cases in which Romanian interviewees recounted their attempts to ‘educate’ the English mainstream about the difference between Romanians and Roma, it was a topic that seemed to be actively avoided even when probed directly, and if it was discussed – as above – then it was not done so in detail with reference to some presumed cultural and behavioural differences, but simply stated in terms of calling Roma a ‘minority’; if anybody was held to be culpable it was the English for their ignorance for not being able to differentiate between the two (as analysed above).

To date, however, the majority of ‘destigmatisation research’ within the field of migration has concentrated on the coping strategies of ‘visible’ migrants and minorities, whose markers of difference are tied to phenotype, ‘expressive’ cultures (cultures which are considered incompatible with the presumed norm of whiteness and Christianity, such as Muslims) or religious clothing, revealing the everyday negotiations which are involved in boundary work concerning race, ‘visible’ ethnicity, citizenship and belonging (see the Special Issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2012, 35:3 on destigmatisation strategies). Another productive area of research has been the study of destigmatisation strategies among minorities in national contexts in which ethnic boundaries are particularly rigid due to political circumstances (such as in the case of Palestinians in Israel; see Mizrachi and Herzog 2011). In order to analyse the coping mechanisms of East European migrants with stigma, a relatively new migrant group to the UK (at least in such magnitudes), whose whiteness and cultural and religious proximity guarantees them a certain level of ‘invisibility’ within English mainstream society and where some East European migrant groups further enjoy a level of socio-cultural invisibility due to having only a

minimal presence in England, I found it particularly fruitful to draw on literature which analyses experiences with social stigma of people where the in/visibility spectrum is more complex, such as in the fields of gender and disability studies (see Chapter 5.1.). Consequently, I frequently conceptualise my East European respondents' strategies in terms of 'passing' and 'coming out' (or 'taking a stance') as well as analysing the risks and emotional costs involved in these processes, revealing further the limitations inherent in claiming incorporation through adhering to 'whitely scripts'. Specifically, my respondents attempt to 'pass' by making efforts to 'blend in' to English society by learning social conventions and adjusting their behaviours and personal styles accordingly, as well as by staying silent in selected situations in order to disguise accents and as a strategy of 'conflict deflation' (Fleming et al. 2012). 'Passing' is also discussed in terms of 'passing as a group' by remaining socio-culturally invisible in the particular fieldwork locations or not wanting the UK to allow any more East Europeans to settle within its borders. 'Coming out', on the other hand, is not only limited to revealing their ethnic backgrounds, but also by making these backgrounds central in social interactions with the English mainstream, in particular with the aim of educating the English about the particularities of East European history and culture; it is considered that this is better achieved by increasing the 'visibility' of the group rather than limiting it. Furthermore, as stated above, 'ethnic honour' is invoked in narratives of perceived difference to the mainstream, emphasising tradition, family values, a superior work ethic and fiscal prudence vis-à-vis the English.

Respondents were not probed directly by asking them about what they think is the 'best way' to deal with discrimination against them (like in the study of Fleming et al. 2012). Instead, these strategies emerged in narratives which were formulated in



the context of perceived benefits and costs of their migration to England, dealing with particular experiences of discrimination or with a 'double consciousness', as well as in constructions of the English host society in order to 'educate' me as the interviewer / outsider about the differences between English or 'Western' and their particular national or 'East European' cultures. One, initially spontaneous, probing question proved to be particularly valuable, namely 'Do you feel comfortable speaking your mother tongue in public?' which generated insights into the strategic use of silence.

#### **5.5.1. 'Passing' through invisibility**

In an attempt to more fully understand the integration experiences of East European migrants in England I have previously highlighted the ways in which East European respondents employed a 'politics of sameness' (Nagel 2002, 263) where they emphasise commonalities between English mainstream society and their home cultures in order to construct themselves as 'valuable' and 'unproblematic' migrants who possess the necessary cultural repertoires (such as values, manners and behaviour) to follow the 'whitely scripts' which are assumed to constitute the English 'normality' (Goffman 1983: 5). While most respondents were keen to point out how a shared European heritage and Christian religion made them 'the same as' the English host society, it did not preclude them from simultaneously pointing out various practices and personal efforts they engaged in in order to actively pursue sameness and 'blend in' to their new society/country of settlement. These narratives usually revolved around learning social conventions and behaviours that made it easier for them to function in England and not 'stand out' as foreigners. These efforts to adapt and adjust their behaviour were interpreted differently by different participants; in some instances they were seen as very positive and enriching experiences, but in others they were perceived with mixed feelings and a sense of a loss of 'identity'.

These positions, which were not absolute and were sometimes expressed contradictorily, often worked along class lines, with middle-class, professional participants more often interpreting their successful adaptation as a positive outcome of their settlement in England, in contrast to participants from less privileged backgrounds.

Such 'positive' interpretations of adaptation are accordant with the attitudes that Nagel (2002: 272) describes among British Arab 'middle-class negotiators', who 'explicitly attempt to accommodate dominant social mores and to show that they can be both 'Western' and 'Arab' by adhering to middle-class English sensibilities'. In this sense, Nagel's (2002: 273) participants emphasised the need not to be seen as different (i.e. not wearing religious clothing) and to behave as "good guests" in their host society. This is also why Nagel (2002: 279-280) proposes an alternative way of understanding the concept of 'assimilation', namely as a set of 'practices, strategies and politics in the identities, idioms and observable actions of individuals and groups' which should not remain hidden or be considered of secondary importance in scientific preoccupations with constructions of difference.

In the case of some of the middle-class participants in this project, narratives of accommodation to 'dominant social mores' tended to be described in terms of cosmopolitan enrichment, which had allowed them to acquire broader outlooks in life and to learn about other cultures. It was, therefore, not seen as a purely unilateral effort of accommodating to dominant forms, but rather considered to be a process of personal development and a flexible approach to facing life's changing circumstances. For example, Jurgita (Lithuanian, Winchester) and Wiktor (Polish, Manchester) explained how they adopted 'values' and discursive skills that enriched their personal life and allowed them to function more confidently in a multicultural environment

without being afraid of committing a *faux-pas*. What is important to note here is their (and other respondents') emphasis on the effort and emotional investment the newcomers were ready to make in order to 'blend in'.

JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): For me actually, I am really happy that I'm here because I always, although I grew up surrounded by white people also, I always was a multicultural type of person, always. So before I came in here I thought that it would be quite hard for me to adjust with social mash up of all the people around me because I'm so not used to it. And in the beginning it was, but then I learn, I see how people speak to each other. Tolerance is very important in this country, so I decided to learn a lot about how to be political correct. (...) I had a problem with black people, because I didn't know how to say ... I met a guy from Kenya and I was really afraid that I would say something wrong, and I actually came and asked him, "Are you OK if I'm saying 'black people'? Or should I call you African? How should I say about it" and he said "No, no, no, it's ok to say a black person or a person from Africa and so on." He's like "Don't worry, you can say that in here." Because some of the people, for example in the USA, the "black person" might be a bad thing for some, then they say "Afro-American", not like black and so on. But here, like he said, it is completely normal, so I had like issue with that, how to say it, not with anyone else just with how to tell to a black person.

WIKTOR (Polish, Manchester): It's really tolerant here, people are very, very open. When I first come here I was a bit shocked, I have to say, so when somebody start with serious topic I was quiet, because I was afraid: "Will I say something wrong? Will people think I am a racist or ... ?" (...) But I speak to people at work and they teach me and I think I am much more open now. And I also start teaching family at home so they are a bit more tolerant. Because Poland is very... like, we've got only Polish in Poland. Every foreigners... although we talk about English being tolerant or intolerant, Poland is a very intolerant country, say, it would be very difficult for a foreigner to find himself in Poland.

On the other hand, other respondents regretted the fact that the efforts to adapt had high emotional costs and bore the danger that they might lose their sense of self, personal 'style', whether of fashion or expression, and compelled them to push these expressions into the realm of the private in order to 'blend in' and not upset the realm of the public. Karol (Polish, Winchester) stated, for example, that having to 'control' himself in the ways in which he spoke to his English colleagues in their social time

was forcing him to lose a part of his 'straight-talking' personality; he interpreted the English 'way of 'pretending' as a hindrance in really getting to know people.

KAROL (Polish, Winchester): I remember situation when I go home, sit down on skype, talk with friends, and I am so happy. I can say everything like I want and I am not afraid that I shock anybody. My Polish friends say like me what they think how they think it – and I know who they are, and they know who I am. And we can still be friends after we shout at each other or call names. (...) I see at work, English co-workers, they are nice, but I don't know... because all the time when we talk, they are just nice. I don't think they are very honest. Polish people are very honest. If they don't like you they just won't pretend that they do. English people, they don't like you but they'll still smile. (...) But I don't want conflict, so I also start to smile when I am with them.

It also became evident from the interviews that female respondents adjusted their fashion style in response to their new social reality, such as in the narratives of Cosmina (Romanian, Manchester), Esther (Hungarian, Norwich), Karolina (Polish, Norwich), Rosa (Lithuanian, Manchester) and Oana (Romanian, Norwich), where this change was voiced with regret as they found that it also affected the way they felt and viewed themselves in a negative way:

COSMINA (Romanian, Manchester): You know, in Romania we like to dress nice for work, we like to put on make-up. (...) I go to work [in England – JH] and always people ask me 'Why are you dressed so nice? Are you going somewhere? Do you have a party?' and after ten times they ask, and I just go home and tell my boyfriend 'I need new clothes', and he asks 'Why?', and I say 'because they are too nice, and some English women they're always bullying'. And we go to H&M and I get more casual clothes for work. [...] I wear my other clothes at home or when I go to church.

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): And I think that's another thing that I felt not very accepted by English people because I have heard comments from English women saying, "Oh, you're looking very smart today," with sarcasm in the voice. And you just think, "Do I? Oh, thank---you, this is normal for us." Now before I leave the house I think: "Should I change?" and I changed a few times just so I am sure that I don't have to hear these comments. But I don't like this... because... it shouldn't really be like this, shouldn't it?

ESTHER (Hungarian, Norwich): [...] I like to dress a bit different in Hungary. Now I don't really because... I didn't really want to buy too many clothes now

for this short term [the respondent was pregnant at the time of the interview – JH]. But we do really let the, for example, the English fashion change our style, these kind of things. But we also don't... we are not making... like, I'm not going to colour my hair pink just because I don't want to stand out. It wouldn't be a stand out actually because I did see a lot of people with pink hair here, but you know what I mean. So, we don't want to stand out.

In her study on the motivations of Middle Eastern immigrants in Sweden for changing their names into either Swedish or European sounding ones, Bursell (2011) introduces the concept of *pragmatic assimilation* in order to explain the name change as a way for migrants to ease their public interactions with the Swedish majority population and to guarantee equal chances on the labour market. While names are important identity-markers – most likely more important than fashion and behaviour – respondents in my sample did not narrate their adaptation efforts in these terms (as attempts to improve their position on the labour market), toning down behaviour and changing fashion at work can also be interpreted as a *pragmatic* step carried out in order to maintain a friendly work environment or fit in with co-workers in order to avoid causing a disturbance. Moreover, the process of adjusting behavior and fashion style by East European respondents can also be interpreted as ‘performance’ – a conscious act of displaying their belonging to English society through individual practices (Fenster 2005, Fortier 1997, Mee and Wright 2009). The pragmatic and performative motivations of such behaviour become particularly evident when the respondents suggest that they would do something in private but not in public.

### **5.5.2. ‘Passing’ through silence**

As discussed in the previous chapter, accents were perceived by East European respondents as the primary markers of exclusion and foreignness and discussed as the most significant factor in putting them in a lower social position than other minorities in England. Accents were seen to make them vulnerable to being marked as ‘out of

place' and becoming victims of prejudice and stereotyping. In order to negotiate this marker of difference, several respondents reported the strategy of 'passing' by staying silent in situations where they felt uncomfortable or wanted to avoid stigmatisation. In so doing they would take advantage of the phenotypical whiteness that granted them the possibility of not being easily readable, at least to a certain extent.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel comfortable speaking your mother tongue in the street?

ANIA (Polish, Manchester): Yeah, yeah. Sometimes I find on a train I feel like uncomfortable, but I don't know, maybe embarrassed.

INTERVIEWER: Embarrassed?

ANIA: I don't know. I'm saying I'm really honest with you now, as honest as I can be so... you know. That's what stayed with me from the beginning, as I'm saying, the bad experience I had at the beginning because I was lost stayed with me. So sometimes I feel like... I always speak and I answer the phone, but I don't call people and stuff, there is a feeling like, I don't want people to know... you know, there is kind of a fear. But it's got better now because I don't care. Like, I come from where I come from. I am who I am and think whatever you think, its' ... I don't care about if you think I'm worse or better or anything, but there is something like that. I had a friend and she's got even worse than me, like, she wouldn't... now she got better, but she wouldn't even speak Polish with people around.... ever.'

BEATA (Polish, Norwich): My brother always – because my brother has been here even longer – he always felt, and I think this is also to do with when he came over here first time he felt, you know, that you need to be more English than Polish because otherwise he wouldn't be accepted. Because I used to hang out with my brother a lot when I first came, and this is how he taught me, this is how he behaved. And he was always talking in English in a public area. He was ashamed to speak in Polish and he was ashamed to show that he was Polish at the time. (...) I speak Polish to my friends when I am with them, but sometimes I remember what my brother told me in the beginning... yes, sometimes when I feel uncomfortable I don't.

AGNE (Lithuanian, Winchester): One time it was really scary for me because for the first time I saw a skinhead here in Winchester and I was going and I was talking with my mum on the phone and I was talking Lithuanian and he looked at me like such an angry look that I actually was really scared he was looking at me almost like I'd done something really wrong. And I just started talking faster like, "Yeah mum, I'll call you later." But I actually thought it was really strange because I never saw things like that in Winchester, so all the (...) and so on, everything that proper skinhead has to have, the outfit, everything. So it was quite scary because I can't like... I know what they like...

from what they came from.

INTERVIEWER: And do you feel comfortable speaking Lithuanian in public? On the street?

PETRAS (Lithuanian, Manchester): Well, I prefer speaking English... I mean, of course, if I am with my friends, I speak Lithuanian, but no sometimes when I got in the store I don't want to be Lithuanian. I don't want people to know I am Lithuanian.

INTERVIEWER: How come?

PETRAS: Because I don't want people look at me like a foreigner. It is not bad, but still people can see that you're not local and they just think all this...

Silence in these narratives features predominantly as a protection strategy. As Beata and Ania report, their choice of silence is based on bad experiences in the past or bad experiences that were encountered by their friends or family. Together with Agne's and Petras' account, their efforts to pass can be understood as a 'defensive withdrawal' or 'strategy of invisibilisation' (Hopkins and Smith 2008) adopted in order to minimise the risk of racialisation (Beata, Ania), violence (Agne) or protection in the case where a 'double consciousness' (Petras) emerged and the respondent became aware of the *Othering gaze*, potentially scrutinizing them for being a foreigner.

Silence was, however, mentioned not only as a 'passing' strategy but also in a different context unrelated to language, mainly as a way of conflict 'deflation' (Fleming et al. 2011) and 'impression management' (Goffman 1963: 70-72). Krystian (Polish, Norwich) recounts a situation in which he felt embarrassed by the behaviour of his children and felt the urge to remove them from this situation as he anticipated reactions from an 'external audience' (Nazroo and Karlsen 2003: 903):

KRYSTIAN (Polish, Norwich): It's too difficult and too hard to hide my nationality, but usually if it's possible I'll try to leave a place, or a person, or just this place. If it's possible, come later, five or ten minutes later...

INTERVIEWER: I am sorry, I don't think I quite understand what you mean.  
KRYSTIAN: I've had a lot of situation when I went shopping, especially with the children, when we go walking, they want lollipops or lemonade or ice cream or something. And they are still little, you know. So when they start crying or shouting, we just leave and come back when they are quiet and nice. I think it's just better just to come there later when the children are okay. Because it's not good example for the people to think that Polish people are loud and that the children are bad behaviour. You understand?

In a sense, Krystian's reaction to his children's behavior can be understood in terms of 'face-work' (Goffman 1967: 12), which is understood as the self-presentation of individuals in social encounters. These can take on either 'defensive' (of one's own face) or 'protective' (of other's face) forms (ibid: 24-26). In the situation described by Krystian, by removing his children from the shop when they started to misbehave, he employed a 'defensive' strategy that went beyond an isolated social situation, but extended to protecting his ethnic group from stigmatization on the basis of his (and his children's) self-presentation.

While examples in the previous chapter have shown how some East European respondents employed confrontation in order to counteract experiences of discrimination, by reporting these instances to their superior or to the police, several respondents concluded that experiences of discrimination ended with them walking away from the situation when they were being insulted directly, or overheard abusive comments about their ethnic group or East Europeans in general. I had the chance to observe one such situation while on the bus on my way to an interview in Norwich. Two Polish women, one with a pram, tried to enter the bus, and after a lengthy exchange with the bus driver (which I did not hear), he eventually opened the appropriate doors to make it easier for the lady with the pram to enter the bus. Upon sitting down, the second Polish woman asked the first what the exchange was about. 'Ah, he was just saying something about Polish this or that, you know, they are racist sometimes.' 'Why didn't you just say something back or maybe you can report him.'



the first lady asked. 'Too much negative energy, why spoil the day, idiots are everywhere and we are here now, aren't we? Also, I don't want the whole bus to think we're two crazy Polish women,' the first woman responded.

While this example of the Polish woman's disinclination to report an instance in which she felt unjustly treated might point to her distrust in the effectiveness of institutions that are supposed to protect her, her strategy of removing herself from the situation can also be interpreted as 'managing the self', a destigmatisation strategy analysed closely by Fleming et al. (2012: 407-409) in their case study of African Americans. 'Managing the self' is understood as an active avoidance of confirming stereotypes (such as the stereotype of the 'angry Black') by 'containing emotions' (self-control) and thus 'deflating' potential conflict through self-distancing from situations in which they feel treated unjustly. 'Managing the self', however, is also used by their respondents for a different purpose other than destigmatisation – to emphasise a different aspect of identity (such as professional identity) over racial identity in a work environment (ibid. 410, see also Lamont et al. 2011). An example of this aspect of this strategy is provided by Danuta (Polish, Winchester), who reported actively avoiding using her native tongue whilst at work in order to de-emphasise her ethnic identity:<sup>28</sup>

DANUTA (Polish, Winchester): I don't speak Polish at work, not on the phone, not with Polish clients, I always say English, only English.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a particular reason for that?

DANUTA: I want that English is my work language. When I want to speak Polish I meet friends in the pub. But at work this is not important. I don't want everybody to think Danuta, the Polish. No, I am Danuta, the supervisor, this is work, we speak English.

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<sup>28</sup> Danuta's prioritization of her professional identity over her ethnic identity can also be understood in terms of her effort to 'blur' ethnic boundary lines (see Wimmer 2008: 1044).

To recap, East European participants reported the use of ‘silence’ as a ‘strategy of invisibilisation’ with multiple purposes: as a ‘protection strategy’ to avoid stigmatization and restrain their ‘double consciousness’ in social interactions with the English host society; as a destigmatisation strategy by means of ‘impression management’ and ‘face-work’, used to counteract stereotyping and protect the image of the particular ethnic group; and as a strategy of ‘conflict deflation’ and ‘managing the self’ in order to avoid confirming stereotypes by engaging in confrontations with the host society; finally, ‘silence’ can also be interpreted as a way of avoiding the use of one’s native tongue in the public or professional space, in order to de-emphasise one’s ethnic identity and thus simultaneously ‘manage the self’ and ‘blur’ ethnic boundaries.

### **5.5.3. ‘Passing’ through group-invisibility**

Passing through ‘invisibility’ was, however, not only discussed in terms of an individual decision to adopt ‘silence’ as a strategy in particular social situations with the aim of ‘passing’ and using phenotypical ‘whiteness’ to disguise distinct ethnic identities and avoid stigmatisation, but also as a means of staying ‘invisible’ as an ethnic group. In this group context, a number of respondents interpreted invisibility as a way of protecting themselves from being marked as an ethnic minority in the towns in which they lived, where they had a low socio-cultural visibility and, thus, considerable protection from prejudice and discrimination.

DANUTA (Polish, Winchester): If I want to go to Polish shop, I go to Southampton. But I don’t go often.

INTERVIEWER: Would you like there to be Polish shops in Winchester?<sup>29</sup>

DANUTA: No, no, it is not necessary. Winchester is not town with a lot of immigrants so no need for Polish shop. We can just go to Southampton and then our life is also easier here with English people, they don't think we come and put shops everywhere and make invasion of Polish food. I think this is why there is no problems for Polish people in Winchester, because they just see one Polish person, one Polish person, and not big group with own infrastructure.

GITA (Latvian, Norwich): When my friends come from London, they say it is different there with a lot of people from other countries and a lot of people from Eastern Europe and Latvia. Some people don't like this and say to them to go back to Latvia or something. But in Norwich it is a bit different, I think, because there is East European people, but when you say you are from Latvia, people don't know and are interested and friendly, yes, my experience is that they are friendly. But when I am in London, I don't know if people are so friendly like here, because they meet so many people from East Europe and also Latvian people and you have separation with this group and this group.

Cosmina (Romanian, Manchester) even proposed that the British government should reject Romanian migrants and prevent further numbers of them from migrating and settling, in order to protect the image of those Romanians who were already here:

COSMINA (Romanian, Manchester): They should just close the borders. I am sorry, but this is true, I don't understand why they let so many people come here from Romania. The good people, the people who want to work, they are already here. What will come next is people who will bring shame, because they are lazy people who think money here grows on trees or something. (...) So yes, I think they should just close the borders, because it is just going to go bad for us when all these people start coming.

However, not all East European respondents perceived staying 'invisible' as a group and not being marked as an ethnic minority in the particular fieldwork locations as a way of protecting themselves from prejudice and discrimination. Instead, they believed that 'educating' the English host society about their different East European home cultures was a more successful strategy of destigmatisation, for which

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<sup>29</sup> Since the time of the interview one Polish shop has opened in Winchester.

heightened ‘visibility’ and the presence of ethnic community structures were necessary.

#### **5.5.4. ‘Taking a stance’ through ‘visibility’**

The strategy of ‘coming out’ in the case of my East European respondents cannot much be understood as a way of ‘revealing’ their identity, as it was only a matter of time before their accents would lead to direct enquiries about their ethnic background. It can be more readily interpreted as an example of ‘taking a stance’ in order to challenge and combat stereotypes and prejudice by actively ‘educating the ignorant’ (Fleming et al. 2012) host society about their particular national histories and cultures and making their ethnic background the central focus of social interaction with the English. Morosanu and Fox (2013) outline the ways in which Romanians in Bristol and London ‘educate’ the English about differences between Romanians and Roma in order to cope with their stigmatised identity and negotiate a higher position in England’s ethnic landscape. As the authors state, their participants did not limit themselves to ‘correcting’ stereotypes about Romanians and the misidentifications of them as Roma, but engaged in their own stigmatising discourse against the Roma and emphasised the smaller presence of Roma in Romania than was held to be the case by English locals. While, as stated above, Roma remained a topic to be avoided in the narratives of my Romanian respondents and limited to experiences of misidentification, educating the English about the difference between Romanians and Roma remained a concern among my respondents, even if they did not fill their explanations with their own racialising and stigmatising content and kept their accounts rather to the point.

NELU (Romanian, Manchester): I have to say again and again, Romanians... I am Romanian, my wife is Romanian. Roma is minority in Romania, in other countries too, they are Gypsy. My English friends know now, but I had to say it again and again and again.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you explain the difference to your English friends?

NELU: You just say, it is minority, it is like you have here Irish travellers. Not all Irish are travellers... and not all Romanians are Roma.

COSMINA (Romanian, Manchester): I get called 'Gypsy' all the time, but it is more like a joke and I don't care. In the beginning I think people really thought that I was Roma so I had to tell them what is different, but now it is just because it stayed like that.

However, whilst not struggling with misidentification, other East European respondents also reported feelings of frustration about the ignorance of their culture and history of their countries that they found themselves confronted with in interactions with the English mainstream; they felt the need to 'educate' in order to achieve recognition:

JULIA (Hungarian, Norwich): They don't know where is Hungary, they don't know what has happened in Hungary. (...) This is problem for me. So they don't know, it's sad anyway, because Europe, we are living in Europe. So it's OK, they don't know where is Pakistan or... but Europe. So this is sad for me. They don't know my history. I know their history because I learned. So I know, if they mention something, I know because I learned French, German, all because this is the minimum education. But their education is different. I cannot say because it's different education, but sorry, but they are living in Europe, this is the minimum, the Europe of country and the capital, I think. (...) They know tiny. They don't what's happened after the First World War, they don't know anything. And I tell them history of Hungary, I tell them Hungary was very important country in Europe, very big country. And everybody is very surprised "Ah, really?"

HENRIKS (Latvian, Manchester): At work my friend makes jokes "Look at Henriks, not surprising that East of Europe is poor with stupid people like Henriks", and it is joke, I know, but when I say to him about Communism, occupation from Soviet Union, I can see he knows something, maybe, but also many things are new for him. I just tell him "Open one book, man. Read about history of my country."

Also Karolina (Polish, Norwich) recounted a situation in which she felt like

she needed to assert the importance of Polish history vis-à-vis English history:

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): There was a time when I felt very, very bad, and there was a time when actually he [her supervisor – JH] bought me tree of the English kings, he said, “This is for you to learn.” And so I print out the Polish tree of kings, “This is for you to learn.”

Several respondents (Tomas – Lithuanian, Manchester, Ruta – Lithuanian, Norwich, Ania – Polish, Manchester, Karol – Polish, Winchester, Bernadett – Hungarian, Norwich, Cezar – Romanian, Manchester) also reported having taken their English friends on holidays to their respective home countries in order to show to them the ‘beautiful nature’ (Cezar), ‘pretty girls’ (Karol), ‘great parties’ (Tomas) and overall interesting cultural experiences that they had to offer, and reported with satisfaction about their friends’ appreciation for their countries and cultures.

In the context of ‘taking a stance’ and ‘educating’ members of the host society, the ‘making visible’ of their particular migrant groups was also discussed as a strategy to counteract stereotyping, particularly amongst university students and postgraduate researchers. Gita (Latvian, Norwich), Maria (Polish, Norwich), Valdas (Lithuanian, Manchester) and Ileana (Romanian, Winchester), were all involved in or have themselves set up student organisations and structures dedicated to their particular nationality, aimed at promoting their culture. While Gita, Valdas and Ileana reported satisfaction with participation and engagement of their compatriots in those structures as well as with the reception they were receiving from the mainstream, only Maria bemoaned the impossibility of ‘getting Poles together’ to represent their country at her university:

MARIA (Polish, Norwich): There are so many of us here, so so many. And I try all the time, I set up this (...) group (...) Nobody is interested. (...) Every

year there is a festival of cultures, and even smallest nations have concerts, cook food for everybody, and we get to experience new cultures, get to present ourselves to everybody. But Polish people? No. Not in three years there was one Polish group at the festival. And this makes me so angry, because we can do so many things, we have so much to offer like dances, art... show English students and other students Polish culture... but nobody wants to register.

‘Invisibilisation’ was, therefore, not the only strategy that East European respondents employed with the purpose of avoiding stigmatisation or destigmatising their respective ethnic groups. More respondents, in fact, advocated the view that only through ‘taking a stance’ and becoming ‘visible’ in their localities could they actively counteract stereotyping and protect themselves from by ‘educating’ the ignorant mainstream. In this context, another important strategy emerged: ‘particularisation’ (Lamont and Bail 2005) or ‘transvaluation’ (Wimmer 2008), which was employed as a means of increasing the ethnic self-worth of particular East European migrant groups.

#### **5.5.5. ‘Taking a stance’ through particularization and transvaluation**

Vasquez and Wetzel (2009) analyse the ‘authenticity work’ undertaken by Mexican Americans and Native Americans in the US in order to re-inscribe with positive meaning the racialized categories to which they find themselves subsumed, and in so doing re-establish their social position and social worth. Their respondents employ a moral discourse of tradition, emphasising their roots, values and cultural toolkit in order to assert superiority over the white American mainstream and improve their groups’ status and esteem. In a similar vein, my East European respondents frequently asserted their ethnic self-worth by making strategic use of invocations of ‘ethnic honour’ (Weber 1978) in order to represent themselves positively in comparison to the English mainstream and, consequently, to acquire for themselves

dignity and recognition in their host society. In the interview situation, this strategy was specifically related to discussions about perceived differences between East Europeans' home cultures and the host culture. One might conclude that the purpose was to educate me, the 'Westerner', about 'Eastern' traits and values which respondents considered to be absent in England and/or the 'West' more generally. Respondents focused in particular on issues of family and femininity, and on questions of work-ethic and approaches to saving money, as well as the 'enriching' experience of migration itself, in order to underscore what makes them distinct from – and socially valuable to – the English mainstream.

### ***Family Values***

The most prominent difference East European migrants cited was the 'superior' family values of their community -- for instance in the form of tight family bonds between parents and children – in order to differentiate themselves positively from the English mainstream, where these bonds were perceived to be absent.

SAULIUS (Lithuanian, Norwich): Another [difference – JH] would be their approach to family. For example, in Lithuania it's very normal that parents are helping children. It doesn't matter how much they earn, they're doing the best, for example a mother wouldn't go to the hairdresser to have her hair done if she knew that I would need the money. She would leave even the last penny for me.

SZILVIA (Hungarian, Manchester): In Hungary family is very tight. Parents think about your future. They don't have money, but they were still thinking about saving the money to buy you building plot, or to help you to go to university.

DOROTA (Polish, Norwich): So I think this is the biggest difference, and shocking for me. I mean, for example, when I'm going to Poland, someone will ask me, "When you're going to Poland, where are you staying?" What is this question? When I'm going to my home, to my parents, to my room. "So you're staying with your parents?" No... this is my home. Whereas for English it's like... It's not your home anymore, it's your parents' home. How they do it



here is as soon as they retire, they sell their home and they go and live in Spain or somewhere else. They leave the family behind. They sell the homes and they go and think about their own future.

But the perceived differences in terms of family bonds were not only raised in the context of parent-child relations, but also in the context of the extended family. Karolina, for example, remarked on what she believes to be the uncaring attitude of the older generation towards younger relatives:

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): Even the relationships between the grandparents and the children here are pretty awful as well. Not in every family, but in general— much more distant. And the grandparents are still thinking more about themselves really, they're travelling... It's what I was saying to you. We went on a cruise not that long ago, to Norway, and it was full of really old people, and I was saying to [husband – JH], how funny. There were so many, really, really, old grannies, really old grannies, you know, dressed up and looking really posh. And part of me was thinking, 'Hey guys, what are you doing here? You should be back home, looking after your grandchildren.' And the parents should be travelling.

Also in other narratives the extended family was perceived to be less important in the lives of English people than in Eastern Europe. Henriks, for example, made the observation that his English colleagues are often not familiar with who is a member of their extended family; Danuta perceived intra-family contacts to be too casual in England:

HENRIKS (Latvian, Manchester): I have big family in Latvia. Wedding, birthdays, all uncles and cousins, they all come. We are very, very close. (...) When I ask English people about family, they don't know... They don't know is this uncle or is this friend of family.

DANUTA (Polish, Winchester): (...) Everybody who is family or very old family friend my children call aunt or uncle. This is normal for Polish people. (...) I hear often children speak to, for example, grandma or aunt with first name, like they are just somebody they know as friend and not family.

Because of the perception of loose family bonds, Karolina, who is married to an English man, commented that it was her husband's search for a 'proper' family (and wife) that made her an attractive partner in his eyes:

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): I think they probably do quite like the old stereotype of the Polish family. (...) and his family, they are family but they don't... it's not quite the same as, you know, they don't stick together, they don't really look after each other so much, and they don't share the problems so much as we do in Poland. It's like that's why when [her husband – JH] sees how my mum does everything in the house and how much she... I think he quite likes the idea of having a wife like this. That's what he calls a proper wife, someone who'll really look after the husband, someone who will make sure the house is looked after and... I don't know.

Loose family bonds, however, were not the only issue raised in terms of interpersonal relationships, but a perception of 'dishonest' or 'meaningless' friendships was another aspect which featured in East European narratives in which East European values were constructed as superior to English ones. Nelu, for example, emphasised 'English politeness' as an aspect which hinders close friendships in England, while Dora shared the observation that English friendships are much more shallow than friendships in Hungary.

NELU (Romanian, Manchester): Everybody is very polite. I like it. (...) But when you have friends, no need to be polite... I think you know what I say... We are much more honest people, I think, we love, we hate, and you know... With my friends I can be what I am and not feel bad if I have a bad day. I am not polite, because I have bad day, so they understand. Here it is just polite, everywhere, it is not honest when you have real friends.

DORA (Hungarian, Winchester): I don't think to be friends here is the same like in Hungary. If somebody is friend, you tell them everything, secrets, problems. I don't think English understand friends, like to have friendship, in this way... it is more party, going to pub.

Respect for elders was another critical value raised by respondents in the context of differences in terms of family between East Europeans and the English, most clearly exemplified in the narrative of Morta:

MORTA (Lithuania, Norwich): I don't think children here have respect for old people. You see sometimes in the supermarket when they talk, they laugh, you know it is disgusting. In Lithuania we know... old people lived in war. We listen to the stories, we have respect. I tell my children, always respect grandmother and grandfather and all old people, they can teach you. Here you just can't see this.

Respect for elders was particularly important in the discussion provided in Vasquez and Wetzel (2009: 1566) in relation to their Native American respondents, who cherished the family as a 'critical venue' through which they would learn about their cultural heritage and values. Morta alludes to a similar perception of the value of inter-generational family exchanges by emphasising the need to respect elders for their knowledge and experience of living through war, a point which is even more explicit in Jurgita's account: she observes a lack of 'life skills' amongst her fellow English students, which she ascribes to the fact that the older generation is 'spoiling' young people in England, not preparing them for potential hardships of adult life:

JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): I think they [English students – JH] are more... I can't say all of them because it won't be true, but as much as I saw, they're really... their parents give them everything, I mean, most of the time, of course, all parents do that. But some of the people that I know here, including my housemates, they don't really appreciate what they have. For example, with money and so on. Like, I can give you an example: I had here £400 and I was able to live with them two and half months with £400 including all the food, including all the partying and so on. My housemates, yeah, they had for example, one of them had £2,000 and she spend it in a month. So it's like crazy. They're really used to having everything here, all the best technologies, best clothes and so on, and the parents really spoil them because... You can't say anything bad about parents because they just want to give everything the best for the children, but they do, like, nothing because later when they're living on their own, they can't find job, they can't actually cook their dinner and so on. Everybody has really instant technology, the newest phones, newest computers and so on, they're like... It's really crazy

because Lithuanians are like... they really value what they have and they don't really care if it's about the brand, about the best new release like every iPhone 5, things like that. They just don't care, they're really happy with what they have because a lot of history with Soviet Union and so on, people really appreciate what they have and they try to prepare you for the future because you don't know, it might be really worse in the future, you might live in bad conditions and so on, so they like to try to do that. And here, in England, they try to give you everything the best, try to put you in this perfect bubble. Children are in the perfect bubble, with no angry people, with everything perfect, the best food and so on. And after, when the child leaves that bubble, they really don't know what to do and you can actually really see here in university with so many people that they have no idea what to do. They're ringing their mothers, like: "Oh, I don't know what to do, help me with this, with that, I need money," and so on, they're not really trying that hard. They know that after some time, the parents will send them some money, will help them and so on, so.

Family values, in terms of tight family bonds that are expressed through close parent-child relationships as well as through relations with the extended family, respect for elders and the passing-on from one generation to the next of knowledge about how to 'live life' featured prominently in discussions of the perceived differences between East European cultures and their host society. By articulating their approach to family in a positive way, and in opposition to the English, East European respondents thus engaged in a deliberate strategy aimed at boosting their groups' esteem and at contesting the stigmatisation of Eastern Europe and East European migrants as 'backwards' and less socially valuable than the English mainstream. This strategic approach was particularly common and intense in regards to perceived differences in gender behaviour between East European women and English women.

### *Gender values*

In her study of Polish migrants' negotiations of gender and ethnic identity on internet forums, Siara (2009) provides extensive examples of Polish men's critique of

female Polish migrants' sexual behaviour, which they voiced in particular in regards to inter-ethnic relationships between Polish women and men of other cultural backgrounds and races. Gendered boundary strategies play an important role in the demarcation and maintenance of ethnic groups (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993), particularly in the context of migration, where women are expected to perform as keepers of ethnic boundaries through 'acceptable' sexual behaviour, lifestyle choices, and by observing religious customs etc. In her study of Filipina migrants in the US, Espiritu (2001: 415) outlines the ways in which gender can act as a 'vehicle for racialised groups to assert cultural superiority over the dominant group', and as a moral discourse that can be used in order to draw symbolic boundaries within and between groups. First and second-generation Filipina migrant women are constructed in juxtaposition to the white American mainstream in terms of restrained sexuality and 'morally superior' femininity. Espiritu notes, however, that an emphasis on 'Filipina chastity' reinforces notions of patriarchy within the community. In my sample, to a considerable extent male East European respondents abstained from references to East European femininity. However, amongst female East European respondents it emerged as a prominent difference that was perceived to set them apart positively from the English mainstream, and was thus invoked as a means of asserting their ethnic self-worth. The issue of femininity was not raised, however, in terms of (un/restrained) sexuality, but rather with reference to the recurrent theme of family values; mention was also made of the 'strength' of the East European female gender as opposed to the English one, as well to physical appearance.

IEVA (Latvian, Manchester): We are very, very, very different to English girls. We shouldn't really talk about this. We are very, very, different. We... I don't want to be weird (...), but I think we take relationships more seriously, we work harder, we want to build a family and a strong family rather than just... A lot of people think about themselves, a lot rather than family and their

men. And I think we look after our men much more and much better.

DOROTA (Polish, Norwich): I think because we've much more strong characters as well. (...) We do, and I think also our culture, we've been brought up, this is the way we always have been. We have to be quite strong and we have to be that way to get by.

RALUCA (Romanian, Norwich): The women are very tough. (...) In a Romanian family you can say the man is the head, but the woman is the neck. Men can think they are strong, but really it is the women. I think this is a difference when I look at my English girlfriends and their husbands. It is often that here the man has the last word, but in Romania it is the opposite.

Physical appearance in terms of clothing and physical beauty was another important issue raised in this context, also in the few narratives of East European migrant men which referred to femininity. Petras (Lithuanian, Manchester) remarked that 'the girls are prettier' in Eastern Europe; likewise Karol (Polish, Winchester) emphasized that 'English women are less attractive than Polish women', while Andras (Hungarian, Norwich) complained that English women were 'ugly and unfriendly' in comparison to women in Hungary. Female East European respondents, however, elaborated further on these issues:

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): It's Polish culture. We do look after ourselves. It doesn't matter who you are. If you are, you know, a supervisor, or you know, just a worker, you know, women tend to look after themselves.

RUTA (Lithuanian, Norwich): In Lithuania girls always dress very elegant, to work, to party or when they go to church. Here you don't see this much elegant women. I don't think they think about fashion like we do.

DAGNIJA (Latvian, Winchester): When you are fat in Latvia, you try to hide it. You go to gym, you diet. I can see this with other girls from East Europe as well, when they have bad figure, they put on a sack. They don't try to put on jeans and skinny T-Shirt or very small dress like English girls and walk around like this... you know...

ANIA (Polish, Manchester): I think it is the food... in Poland we eat very good food, everything organic, a lot of vegetables. Not fish and chips and McDonalds like here. I think this is why girls in Poland are much more healthy and more slim than English girls.

Discussions of female sexuality in terms of ‘morality’ like in Espiritu’s (2001) study were however absent from the narratives, albeit Gita (Latvian, Norwich) and Dorota (Polish, Norwich) remarked that East European men get ‘upset’ when they find out East European women are in relationships with English men. However, both respondents concluded that this was the case due to East European men’s ‘jealousy’ over their more financially ‘successful’ English counterparts, and not in terms of perceived ‘devious’ sexual behavior of East European women. One could hypothesize that an absence of discussions about East European female sexuality could be related to a lack of experience of ‘hypersexualised’ stereotypes of my respondents, a stigma which Espiritu’s (2001: 426-7) Filipina migrants attempted to challenge by constructing the white American mainstream as sexually ‘immoral’. Moreover, female respondents who were in relationships with English men, such as Karolina (Polish, Norwich) and Ieva (Latvian, Manchester), emphasized in their narratives the attributes which they considered made them valuable partners, namely the ability to create a ‘strong’ family and ‘look after’ their husbands (see above), instead of addressing potential intra-group tensions due to their choice in partners. This could be interpreted as a strategy for boosting self-esteem and ethnic self-worth in the interview situation.

### ***Migration Experience***

Finally, several respondents differentiated themselves positively from the English mainstream in the specific context of their migration experience, thus inverting the negative stigma of the ‘migrant’ by re-articulating it in terms of valuable experience and language as well as life-skills, again constructing East European

migrants as superior to the English mainstream.

COSMINA (Romanian, Manchester): I wasn't growing up this country, so I don't need to know anything. I'm already in advanced situation because I know how to live in a different country.

KRYSTIAN (Polish, Norwich): Yeah. Because I already speak a second language, I manage. I came to this country on my own at 22 without any friends at all. I even wasn't sure if it was this Norwich, if there be two Norwich in a country. I was like, OK. And from the very beginning, I build a network of friends, of house, of security, I started to manage with the second language. So I already felt like this was my advantage because I felt stronger, like I know how to deal with basic problems.

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): I mean, I didn't see that for a long time, but it's a good point. My husband kept pointing it out. He was saying, "But you came to my country." I came without English, I didn't speak English at all, I've learnt English here and he said, "And you managed to do all sorts of courses and pass so many exams and cope in this country and do so, so much. You already speak second language." How many people in England don't even bother to learn a second language, or they never left home, they never travelled anywhere besides their little area in Norfolk. So he's been pointing it out that it is a massive advantage. But I didn't see for a long time. It was him saying, "You have already done something a lot of people would never, ever experience."

Similarly, several respondents raised the issue of a superior 'migrant' work-ethic and a better approach to savings when contrasted with the English mainstream:

AGNE (Lithuanian, Winchester): I heard a lot that employer who's English and they prefer people from East Europe country more to English people. Because they can work hard, and they don't call every morning or Friday, it's pay day, so Saturday it's 100% they are not coming to work, or Monday, because, Friday, Saturday, Monday it's part of the weekend. It's Monday, they are not coming to work. And many times this is it. And somebody needs a worker, they don't need anybody who calls every month few times, couple times sick.

JULIA (Hungarian, Norwich): (...) English are jealous. Because they see, for example, she has a car, she bought this one, this one. How she has money? Because we can save, you know? (...) Three years I can save lots of money, but I think she doesn't have any clue [English friend], you know? And I can buy here, for example, house. Just three, four years I am here, and I can pay by cash for the house. But they don't have because they cannot save, you know? Yeah, so it's strange.



VALDAS (Lithuanian, Manchester): Nobody here can save as good as we can. I don't know, maybe they don't have to, but many people come here to make money to send home, and also me, I have been here many years, maybe I am not going back, never, I don't know, but I have a nice sum in the bank now. And I hear a lot that in England it is a big problem because people only take money from bank, but they don't have savings.

East European respondents in my sample thus invoked family values, gendered attributes and behaviours, as well as migrant experiences, to account for their ethnic groups' social worth. They strategically emphasised these issues in order to construct themselves as superior to the English mainstream and re-inscribe the stigmatised category of 'East Europeans' and 'migrants' with positive meaning. At the same time, highlighting 'East European' values also represented a critique of the aspects which respondents perceived to be absent from the host society. As Lamont (2000) notes, groups which are subordinated because of race, class, or gender can reposition themselves above others by making reference to a moral order, and in so doing reclaim the dignity of their collective identity. Through (highly normative) comparisons that highlighted the differences between themselves and the English mainstream, East European respondents articulated symbolic boundaries in order to boost their groups' esteem and challenge notions of racialisation and stigmatisation.

#### **5.5.6. Summary**

As the empirical material above has shown, East European migrants' social positioning in terms of 'whiteness' is complex. East European respondents moved between ascriptions of sameness and difference, while at the same time actively intermingling with the English host society and challenging the 'whitely scripts' set by the English mainstream in order to increase their ethnic self-worth whenever they encountered limitations to their own 'whiteness' in the form of discrimination and racialization. This complex navigation of the symbolic boundary of 'whiteness' also

raises important questions in regard to East European migrants' understandings of integration and belonging. As will be shown in the analysis that follows, East European respondents' constructions of 'everyday belongings' (Fenster 2005) to the English host society and their approaches to integration replicated, to a certain extent, English respondents' assimilationist demands towards migrants – the insistence that they shed their differences and conform to their formulations of 'whitely scripts' (see Chapter 5), but at the same time also challenged these demands in multiple ways. The issue of socio-cultural in/visibility emerged again as a prominent, if unarticulated, theme in these discussions, albeit now in the context of the evaluation of ethnic community structures in terms as a hindrance to the successful integration of East Europeans and the inculcation of a sense of belonging in the host society.

### **5.6. Negotiating Integration and Belonging**

Despite a vast body of work on assimilationist and integrationist empirical research, a comprehensive definition of integration remains to be found. In general, theorists have conceptualised migrant integration as the outcome of equal access to the cultural, social, economic and political resources shared by the established members of a society, with the assumption that, in order to gain access to these resources, migrants would adopt the social and cultural capital, as well as social and cultural identities, considered necessary and acceptable in the discourses of the dominant society.

In their search for ways to understand the processes by which integration occurs, theorists have formulated different approaches, ranging from traditional models of straight-line assimilation and segmented assimilation, to forms of (post-migration) adaptation, such as transnationalism, and, more recently, cosmopolitanism. Straight-line assimilation models (Park and Burgess 1969) are based on the

assumption that migrants face no hindrances (whether in their personal preferences or in the form of obstacles inherent in the society of settlement at large) preventing them from adapting to a society's norms and identities. Thanks to their access to this limitless opportunity, the migrants will eventually adopt all the social and cultural characteristics of the dominant group with the result that migrants and members of the mainstream would become indistinguishable. A decrease in cultural, social, religious and other differences will eventually lead to equal access to resources. However, this approach was found to stand better chances of succeeding in immigrant societies such as the US, where discontinuity with the past and willingness to trade culture and identity for social mobility are much more significant factors than in societies consisting of indigenous groups, like England. The theorists who developed the segmented assimilation model (Portes and Zhou 1993, Portes and Rumbaut 2001), on the other hand, offer a more nuanced picture of the integration process. They view migrants as hierarchically located on a ladder of social stratification, in which their class, gender, race and other markers of identity determine their access to the social, cultural and political resources in their society of settlement and thus also their level of integration. Finally, theorists engaged in research on transnationalism (Baubock 2003, Portes et al. 2007, Vertovec 1999) highlight the importance of understanding the integration experiences of migrants by not only focussing on the country of settlement ('here'), but also by analysing their ties and affiliations with, and access to, resources in their countries of origins ('there') and the ways in which these spheres intersect, leading migrants to live simultaneous lives (Glick Schiller 2005) that transcend national boundaries in their use of social networks. Nagel and Staeheli (2008) note that while transnationalism problematizes 'traditional' models of migrant incorporation, scholarship has also treated transnationalism and integration in

opposition to each other both as social forces and as theoretical frameworks. Following Morawska (2003), they advocate an understanding of transnationalism that is linked because immigrants' experiences are conceptualised as 'a combination of multiple forms of transnational and "assimilative" practices' (see also Portes et al. 2007). Another challenge to 'traditional' models of migrant incorporation is posed by the cosmopolitan 'citizens of the world' model proposed by Beck (2007), which has found entry into migration literature more recently (see also Calhoun 2008, Delanty 2007). Based on the ideals of universal human rights and global justice, this model advocates equal treatment of migrants on the basis that differences between people enrich the world and are hence deserving of respect and acceptance (Bhabha 1990, Glick Schiller et al. 2011).

In methodological terms, research on integration has primarily made use of statistical indicators including intermarriage, language acquisition, access to labour market and welfare state, spatial distance (interpreted as an indicator for social distance), and educational attainment in order to determine the degree of integration and incorporation of migrants and ethnic minorities in a given society. However, while statistical analyses of this sort can provide valuable insights into the socio-economic situation of migrants, they do not allow for an analysis of the ways in which migrants interpret integration, understand their affiliations and develop a sense of belonging in their new society of settlement (Antonsich 2010). Adopting a migrant-centred perspective in this case is crucial in order to comprehend the complex processes of integration more fully, particularly in the context of on-going public discussions about social cohesion, loyalty and political order (Crowley 1999: 18). This perspective re-conceptualises integration as centred on immigrants' relationships with particular places and on their everyday encounters with and responses to

dominant discourses and structures of belonging (Nagel and Staeheli 2008). A focus on belonging can, furthermore, illuminate how processes of incorporation and transnationalism occur in simultaneous and non-contradictory ways and how it can consist of multi-scaled and territorialised/non-territorialised attachments and affiliations (Joppke and Morawska 2003, Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, Nagel and Staeheli 2008).

Belonging, much like integration, has been a vaguely defined term (Antonsich 2010, Anthias 2006, Mee and Wright 2009). Antonsich (2010), building on Fenster (2005), tries to remedy this shortcoming by identifying two dimensions that can be seen as inherent to the phrase 'I belong here': 'Belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)'. Belonging can thus be conceptualised as the interplay between 'place-belongingness', understood as the subjective emotions, the development of a 'sense of rootedness' to a place (Antonsich 2010: 646), and the 'politics of belonging', which is tied to notions of social definitions of belonging which are formulated by states or in the discourses of the dominant, mainstream society (see also Anthias 2002, Hedetoft and Hjort 2002). In terms of the former, research on migrant incorporation and belonging has focused on analysing the experiences of migrants and ethnic minorities in terms of their home-making practices and the processes by which they develop notions of 'home' in their countries of settlement. Research on the 'politics of belonging', on the other hand, has been centred on the relationship between citizenship and belonging in the case of marginalised groups or the contested terrains of national belonging and the tensions

between majority and minority perspectives (e.g. Anthias 2002, Bond 2006, Ehrkamp 2005, Hamaz and Vasta 2009).

Chapters 5.3. to 5.5. focussed on the micro-politics of belonging as it is negotiated by East European migrants in terms of their constructions of sameness, negotiations of difference, and the strategies used to avert and/or resist experiences of ‘othering’ and racialisation. These strategies were undertaken by East European respondents not only with the intention of boosting their ethnic self-esteem, but also in order to be viewed as valuable assets in society and thus to claim membership in it.

The following sub-chapter will focus on East European respondents’ expressions of ‘everyday belongings’ (Fenster 2005: 243), which is to say the subjective emotions migrants attach to their places of settlement, and also on the ways in which they understand and *do not* understand integration into English society. What sense of belonging, affinity and responsibility do East European migrants feel towards their place of settlement? How do they think about belonging and integration ‘here’ when their identities and lives are linked in multiple ways to their places of origin? And finally, when it comes to negotiating these issues, what significance do they place on their socio-cultural and phenotypical in/visibility?

### **5.6.1. East European Belongings**

In recent years, several studies have come out that analyse the ‘place-belongingness’ of East European migrants with an emphasis on the concept of ‘home’, such as in the PhD thesis of Parutis (2009), who looks at the ‘social practices of constructing home’ amongst Polish and Lithuanian migrants in London to highlight the interplay between constructions of ‘home’ and migrant identities, behaviour and

attitudes towards the host society (see also Parutis 2006). In a similar vein, Rabikowska (2010) has studied the ‘ritualisation’ of food and the material practices involved in attempts to (re)create ‘home’ amongst Polish migrants in London, which is perceived as a locus of ‘normality’ in contrast to the feelings of alienation and challenges that emerge from contact with the host culture. Also of relevance here is the ‘quest for normalcy’ amongst Polish mothers examined in the study by Lopez-Rodriguez (2009): these mothers describe their ‘quest’ to provide their children with a good education and future prospects in England, which can also be interpreted as an observation of adaptation processes of East European migrants and in this case is seen to be facilitated by a belief in meritocratic opportunities in England.

East European respondents in my sample were not questioned directly about the specific material cultures that related to their processes of developing a sense of ‘everyday belonging’ in their host society. Instead, belonging and integration were discussed more generally by juxtaposing feelings of belonging to England and their various home countries; sentiments of connection to the host society were primarily voiced in terms of a sense of gratitude for the feeling of stability which they felt they were guaranteed in England and which led some respondents to prioritize their lives ‘here’ over their lives ‘there’. The key elements in facilitating adaptation to the new milieu were friendships with English people, church and a fulfilling professional life, while opinions were split about the extent to which ethnic community organisations and socio-cultural in/visibility either facilitated or hindered the development of feelings of belonging. Moreover, while respondents in general shared similar conceptions of integration, there was no consensus over who is responsible for integration– the migrants, the host society, neither, or both.

### *Negotiating 'here' and 'there'*

Most East European respondents expressed a strong affiliation to their home countries and national identities, irrespective of the duration of their stay in England. These narratives emerged most explicitly when respondents discussed having acquired or contemplated acquiring UK citizenship; these narratives were frequently accompanied by affirmations of strong ties to their respective nationalities.

MARIA (Polish, Norwich): [...] I'm going to try [to take up British citizenship] and do it next year because even though I've been here like six years now, I haven't actually got my home office, obviously after a year of being here. [...] So next year I'll definitely try and give it a go.

INTERVIEWER: So will you consider yourself British then?

MARIA: No. That's only because I want to go to the States for a holiday and they wouldn't give me a visa as such, so that's the only reason. But I'm definitely not British. I understand the culture, I like it and I will stay here and that, but I'm Polish.

ROSA (Lithuanian, Manchester): Maybe British-Lithuanian when I have passport. But only a little bit British, you know, just for papers, for life here, and the rest I am Lithuanian.

INTERVIEWER: The rest Lithuanian?

ROSA: Yes... I AM Lithuanian (laughs). All my family, everybody is Lithuanian. Lithuania is my country, I have childhood in Lithuania and this I will never have in England, with all friends from childhood, all memories. Maybe my children will one day, but not me.

KRYSTIAN (Polish, Norwich): Yeah. Yeah, I will get English citizenship, just to be sure, it looks like there'll be a referendum, United Kingdom is going to outside... European union. So we just said paper is paper, we never know if we need or not, but paper is paper [...] I live here now, I work here, I have friends, I have house, everything for me is here. [...] I am Polish, always. I was born in Poland, parents and brother are there. [...] I come here when I was 24, so 24 years in Poland and 7 years here.

These discourses were further enforced in narratives about respondents' feelings of belonging when visiting their home countries, where several respondents described



a deep sense of personal affiliation and membership.

FILIPS (Latvian, Manchester): I often go to Latvia, it is always something I wait for to have holidays and to go, visit family, visit friends. It is amazing and I have really good time and everything [...] maybe because of holidays, I don't have to work... and I am more relaxed, I know, but also because I just know my country, I can speak my language with everybody [...] I never want to go back to live, there is nothing for me there and the situation will stay the same.

KAROLINA (Polish, Norwich): I love going back. I just love it. [...] I go back whenever I can, mostly to be with my mummy (laughs), it doesn't get better than that [...] I can show my husband, this is the street where I fell of my bike, this is my first dance club [...] Sometimes I am disappointed that not more has changed in the years that I have been here, but it does give you a lot of comfort to go back to a place that you know in and out.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you will ever go move back to Poland?

KAROLINA: No, we have a business here now, my husband's family is here and I have done many exams now so I can become an administrator. I don't think we will go back. Just on holidays, it is nice, but not permanently.

Some participants thus promoted the notion that they had adapted to their new environments by accepting the fact that their everyday lives were taking place 'here' and that, as a consequence, it was necessary to acquire the correct legal measures — largely in the form of citizenship. As shown in the accounts above, some East European respondents with EU citizenship felt that the UK's future in the EU was uncertain, and therefore emphasized the need to obtain British citizenship to guarantee the freedom to maintain their current lives. This did not entail, however, denying their roots, attachments to their home countries and national identities. The construction of these attachments were made in reference to the fact that the respondents were born, and spent their childhoods and most formative years of their lives, in their countries of origin. Similarly, familial bonds also featured prominently in these accounts. As Fenster (2005: 247) notes, childhood memories play an important role in establishing places of belonging; these places then remain central in individuals' lives. In contrast, the legal aspects of migration, such as acquiring

citizenship or resident permits — what Fenster (2005) calls the ‘formal structure(s) of belonging’ — allow migrants to develop a sense of security, an emotional component that has been found to be essential for the development of a sense of attachment to a new locality (see Ignatiev 1995, Mee and Wright 2009).

At the same time, however, the respondents’ narratives of strong affiliation with their home countries did not preclude admissions that England had, in fact, become a ‘home’, a place to which they feel familiarity, where they have formed meaningful memories and a place the attitudes and values of which they have adopted to such an extent that they had become part of who they are. In contrast to the conscious strategies of adaptation discussed in the previous chapter, which were employed in order to avert or resist experiences of ‘othering’ as part of a ‘politics of belonging’, in this instance it was due to the fact that they live here that these attitudes and values have become central to who they are, more as an unconscious byproduct of their stay here. The respondents internalized these behaviours and, in turn, felt equal if not more attachment to England than to their home countries.

MARYLA (Polish, Norwich): It was hard to accept the way English people are here, they are so nice, so sweet for me. In Poland it’s like, we don’t smile to everyone on the street or in the habit of putting a smile on when you actually see someone passing by that you don’t actually know I felt a bit awkward about it. But yeah, I accepted it because that’s how it is. Or saying, “How are you?” every time when you pass someone. I was struggling this, but now, so far, I just do it by myself. I smile to people when I see them, if I don’t feel like smiling then I don’t and I ask them. “How are you?”, instead of, “Hello.” Yeah, just got to accept the English lifestyle. I have changed for this country. (...) I kind of accept this way here and yeah, what I said about smiling and saying, “Hello, how are you?”, it might change me a little bit, because I’ve never done it before in Poland. Now I do a bit more. But no. I feel alright here, you know?

DANIELS (Latvian, Manchester): You know, in Latvia conversation culture is different – when you speak about political problems, religion... Man! You see people shouting, you see fists, big arguments in the same family. Mother shouting at father, father shouting at brother... big explosions. So I started the same way here – I don’t agree with you, I tell you the same way. But then a friend, English friend, told me that English people don’t like it, that I need to

relax. Control angry voice, speak normal – everybody will listen and understand and not think you are crazy. So I started to speak like this, and I think it is much better for me also – I am not so nervous. (...) We say that the English are very polite, you know, but it is good. (...) Also being more smiling to people, saying hello in the shops, it makes you a more happy person. (...) My friends in Latvia now say “You are so English” when I go visit.

LIVIU (Romanian, Manchester): There are things that I changed, small things like in everyday contact with people. [...] I think different now about many things when I came to England, because I learn new things also about the culture [...] I will miss a lot about England if I go somewhere. When I am on holidays in Romania I often miss how it is in England, friendly people in the shops, for example.

In some cases, East European respondents even went so far as to emphasise the fact that they had at best limited interest in events occurring in their home countries as they did not affect them any more; instead they prioritized political and cultural events in England.

ANDRAS (Hungarian, Norwich): I am not really interested about problems in Hungary. Of course, I speak to family about it, they complain, complain, but I feel now that this is not my problem. I am interested about what is happening in UK, things like that. I work here, have money, security... That is important things in my life now, not government in Hungary.

AGNE (Lithuanian, Winchester): Lithuanian TV and English TV in my house is about 80/20... no sorry, 20/80. A lot is because of language, because I want to improve my English. But I watch more news on BBC than on Lithuanian channels. The quality is much better and also... this is difficult ... I just don't live in Lithuania anymore, simple... I can't have a stable life there. I know about big events [...], but not much anymore.

MARYLA (Polish, Norwich): But even here when I was like looking for a room for a short period of time, I did have a look at... there's like a Polish people in Norwich website as well. And they quite often put [...] ‘Oh, there's Polish TV,’ and I'm like, ‘Who cares?’ I don't need it. I mean, sometimes it is nice to watch something, but this is why I read Polish website and that's enough for me. British TV is much more important for me now.

We see, therefore, that feeling ‘at home’ in England was broadly related to notions of gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities that the respondents have encountered — for being in a country that ‘feeds’ them, ‘gives them a roof over their head’ and provides them with work and stability. Portes et al. (2002) refer to this form

of migrant adaptation as ‘economic adaptation’, and it is understood as the degree to which work is obtained, and the degree to which it perceived as satisfying and effective in the new culture. Thus, the crucial factor here is not so much cultural assimilation as gratitude, gratitude for the chance to live a life which is comfortable, stable and meaningful (hooks 2009).

Of the meaningful spaces and contexts mentioned in my respondents’ narratives of belonging, the most prominent were friendships with English people, the church and the workplace, which all helped them to develop a sense of ‘psychological adaptation’ (Berry 1997), which is to say feelings of well-being and personal satisfaction and an acceptance of oneself within a new cultural environment:

DANUTA (Polish, Manchester): I left my family at home, just me, came by myself. And you know, all was strange. All was new, especially the groups of all the different people and language, different... So I’ve been surprised and it was strange, but I think – this is my personal opinion, no – that I’ve met other people at church, they help me and they give me a lot of help to integrate with them [English people] in this country. So they easily showed me where the nearest post office, where the shop for shopping, and also because I didn’t speak very well my English [...] So they sit down, or they listen me carefully and try to find my answer or my questions or my sentence. [...] So as I said I was very surprised and I met a lot of good peoples who help me. Now I feel strongly integrated with these people.

INTERVIEWER: So, did you encounter any problems when you first arrived?  
JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): I think mostly it was psychology problems because I was all alone with no friends, I didn’t know anyone so it was really hard to adjust at first; new people, new culture, it was really hard the first week. But then I found some friends in here and it became a bit easier. [...] It is more home for me now. I mean, at first when I came I was really scared of the people because they would take me in and so on, if I would be able to have friends in here and so on, but it was really nice. I really was surprised at how warm people are in here.

BERNADETT (Hungarian, Norwich): [about going back to Hungary] I have not thought about it for one minute. I did my degree here, my life started here with finding a job, supporting myself, finding new friends. [...] You can say I started to be a grown-up here. [...] I love my job, I work with amazing people, we have a really friendly atmosphere in the office and we go out together. I don’t want to leave this and just start with everything again in Hungary, this

would be too much stress.

Chow (2007) has found that being strongly embedded in the economy of the host society is a crucial factor in developing a feeling of 'place-belongingness', not just in terms of generating stability and comfort in a material sense, but also in terms of the migrant's ability to develop future prospects in the country of settlement (see also Sporton and Valentine 2007). Nevertheless, the testimonies of Danuta and Jurgita also point to another insight into the process of generating feelings of belonging: namely, that an absence of a sense of place-belongingness does not necessarily generate feelings of exclusion, but rather a 'sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation and displacement' (Antonsich 2010: 649).

In studies on place-belongingness, the ability to generate a feeling of being 'at home' was linked to opportunities to (re)create cultural practices and traditions, with material practices such as food playing a particularly crucial role in this process (Rabikowska 2009, Fenster 2005: 252). Established ethnic community organisations can be viewed as locations which facilitate these processes. However, East European respondents provided conflicting narratives about the role of ethnic community organisations for generating feelings of belonging to the host society. As analysed in the previous chapter, some migrants cited the socio-cultural invisibility caused by the absence or limited presence of such organisations in their localities as a means of guaranteeing that they would not be labelled an 'ethnic community' and thus as protection from experiences of 'othering' and racialisation. Similarly, although several respondents appreciated the presence of established ethnic community structures because they facilitated the recreation of feelings of belonging 'there', by giving migrants the opportunity to speak in their native languages, consume native foods and establishing friendships with people from similar ethnic backgrounds,

others saw such ethnic community structures as a hindrance to generating a true sense of belonging in the English host society.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a Romanian community in Manchester? I mean clubs or any place where Romanians socialise?

COSMINA (Romanian, Manchester): I don't know, I really don't know. Maybe you can ask in the group on Facebook and somebody will tell you. I am not interested [...] I don't understand why people come here and only want to meet with other people from Romania, they should stay in Romania if this is what they want.

INTERVIEWER: Are you involved in any way with the Lithuanian community here in Norwich?

MORTA (Lithuanian, Norwich): Me personally, no. I know there are many Lithuanians here and I think there are groups where people get together. But not me, no.

INTERVIEWER: How come?

MORTA: That I don't meet Lithuanians? [...] I came here to learn English, make career, I don't really see why I should seek out Lithuanians, I don't like this separation. I understand some Lithuanian people think it is easy when they have only Lithuanian friends because it is like back at home, but I don't see how it helps with accepting life here.

ANIA (Polish, Manchester): But the new emigration, like I am, you know, we are more flexible. We are living in another country, we just want to adopt ourselves to the conditions that are here. Like the majority of people I have met, they want to socialise with the British, they want to do anything that is necessary how it is in a British way, but it doesn't mean they don't feel patriot or they don't want to be Polish anymore.

However, as Probyn (1996: 13) notes, 'belonging cannot be an isolated and individual affair'. The logic of this statement is evident in the way several respondents referred in their narratives to the 'politics of belonging' as intersecting with their experiences of belonging to the mainstream. This was alluded to in the previous chapter in reference to the encounters of 'difference' that generated a 'double consciousness' in some respondents. Marita (Latvian, Norwich) makes explicit reference to this intersection between 'place-belongingness' and the 'politics of belonging' when she speaks about the limitations to her feelings of attachment to her locality imposed by the perceptions of the host society.

MARITA (Latvian, Norwich): I feel like I belong here, yes, I think because I see my future in this country. [...] But I don't know what English people think, because often... I think they always look at you a bit like a stranger.

Place-belongingness was generated by feelings of gratitude towards England, the establishment of friendship circles with English people, and in locations such as the church and workplaces. However, at the same time, respondents also emphasised their strong affiliations to their home countries and home cultures. Although some confessed to have adopted attitudes and values that facilitate the development of feelings of attachment to England, cultural assimilation did not feature in the narratives. This notwithstanding, evident here is the complex interactions of belonging of migrants who are engaged in transnational practices, but still feel 'at home' in both locations. Many respondents disputed the role of ethnic community organisations in generating the feeling of being at home in their new environments, with some appreciating the opportunity of being able to re-create feelings of being 'at home' 'here', while others argued that they could be seen as a hindrance to developing a 'proper' sense of belonging to the host society. Moreover, the intersection between 'place-belongingness' and the 'politics of belonging' also became obvious in discussions about the limitations on migrants' development of feelings of attachment. One can conclude, therefore, that neither dimension of belonging can be studied in isolation.

#### **5.6.2. East European migrants on integration**

To a significant extent, East European respondents shared very similar opinions about what it means to be 'integrated' into English society. Several respondents emphasised the importance of learning the language, establishing social networks with English people, getting to know their localities and showing interest in the cultural and political matters of their host society. Their conceptualisations of

integration can be summarised in terms of ‘following rules’, ‘participating’ and ‘contributing’ be it through work and taxation or – as some respondents emphasised – volunteering.

JURGITA (Lithuanian, Winchester): I think you can say that you’re really well integrated when you can go like just go to the street and you feel really comfortable in here. Like, at home you know you won’t have any issues with anything, language, people, making friends and so on [...] And also, I think if you really want to get really well integrated, you still have to know what’s going on in this country, what I’m doing now. Because when people are talking politics, anything, in England, you don’t have what to tell because you have no idea what’s going on and if you find that people would actually talk with you as one of the members of the countries, one of the persons that lives in this country, as part of this country, you have to know what’s going on [...] If you were talking, for example, about politics and you were like, “Yes, I know this and that, I know that and that,” they really are actually surprised, pleasantly surprised and can see like in their eyes you really like become not that alien but like, ‘Oh, she’s living in Britain, she’s some kind of British although she’s from Lithuania.’

KRYSTIAN (Polish, Norwich): My wife, she’s at the moment in hospital because she’s being voluntary, Tuesdays and Thursdays, [...]. So, I can say we prefer, or we like to be voluntary [...] Here, the beginning of all we were two strangers, but we got a lot of help from British person, British people, my first employer especially, I’ve been given a lot of help, just for the one words, ‘thank you’ and also, I think that it’s good time to give other person something with ‘thank you’.

IEVA (Latvian, Manchester): [on integration] I don’t know. to basically have some English friends, to like interact with English people, to embrace their culture, like... even like watching television and watching like English television, you know, there’s always something to talk about and not just keeping yourself in that bubble [...] I just think being well integrated is just like, you know, making that bit of an effort to just, you know, actually... I don’t know. Try and understand British sense of humour, or, yeah, just interact with people like you would in your country, like, when you meet someone new. That’s what I think it is.

At the same time, evident in respondents’ narratives about integration is the influence of public discussions and of the state’s approach to social cohesion. This was particularly prominent in respondents’ criticisms of fellow East European migrants who were perceived to lead isolated lives. In general, respondents considered that these fellow migrants refuse to advance their language skills and are



overly focussed on events in their home countries – this was seen as an attempt to maintain particular national cultures and practices in self-segregation from English mainstream life.

MIETEK (Polish. Manchester): I personally think that all the Polish people who can't speak English is awful, I don't understand it. I can't understand how you can live in a country with a language you can't speak. And also, you have to be also stubborn not to learn, living here, because it's just, you know, you just watch TV and at some point you do understand more and more and more, but no, they just watch Polish TV.

SAULIUS (Lithuanian, Norwich): You know, you can see different behaviours here within the Lithuanian community. so there is a big group of people who you see on the streets, they're just, they can't speak English, they don't participate, they don't really fit in because they don't want to. They don't to learn English, they don't want to accept the rules that are here, but they're here because of the economic situation. And there is this other group which is actually fitting in, which is trying to, you know... well, I consider myself as a member of this part of immigration which is really willing to take part in all of it.

However, in regard to the question of who should be held responsible for the process of integration – the host society or the migrants themselves – opinions were again split. Three distinct groups emerged: one group advocated integration as a two-way relationship which involves the host society and migrants to an equal degree; the second group considered integration primarily to be the responsibility of the migrants themselves; finally, the third group took a very different approach to integration altogether, demonstrating a cosmopolitan attitude towards migrant incorporation. The divergent approaches to integration was also manifest in the attitudes towards involvement in their particular ethnic community structures in England: the first group perceived involvement in their ethnic communities as not a hindrance to their integration, the second group actively avoided it, and the third group did not even engage with this question.

### *Integration as a bilateral relationship*

Most respondents allocated the responsibility for integration to both the host society and the migrants themselves. While these East European respondents emphasised the importance of migrants to getting to know and participate in their localities and in the host culture overall, equal importance was placed on a willingness of the host society to accept and respect their ways of life.

HENRIKS (Latvian, Manchester): I think it [integration] works both ways, so it's not only English people who should want to invite them [East European migrants] to English communities, but also it's them who should want to be invited.

BERNADETT (Hungarian, Norwich): [...] when we have these social things, sometimes – especially when you cook – the different views and things, we cook something cultural. [...] we work closely with them [English people], but also communicate with other members and just sometimes when they ask something about you, it would be first thing, like, when we came to the country, it has been always this positive interest and it makes us... like an equal. [...] And that's probably as well contributed a lot to settling in and to integration.

Migrants who promoted the notion of integration as a bilateral relationship also proved to be partial to asserting their national backgrounds and heritage, positing their equal importance to the history and cultural practices of the English mainstream, as discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Julia's, Henriks' and Dorota's narratives about the way in which they 'educate' the 'ignorant' mainstream about the histories and cultures of their respective home countries as a way of achieving recognition and respect. Another idea that featured saliently in this group was the notion that socio-cultural visibility serves to assert their cultural distinctiveness and to achieve recognition, a factor that was perceived as fostering integration and not hindering it.

INTERVIEWER: And are you engaged with any activities with this community?

ANIA (Polish, Manchester): Yeah. I am, for example, we had this group of people, a few friends of mine, they're doing this Polish art event in Manchester, so for example that. There is like loads of Polish parties, like club nights, but I don't really like that.... Those events are mostly for those people who don't speak English, so they only feel comfortable having parties with other Polish people. [...] This Polish exhibition, for example, it brings loads of British people over as well, so it's like, it's just showing that we're not only those factory workers who don't do anything besides working and being at home.

The need to have their cultural distinctiveness positively evaluated and accepted by the English mainstream was thus not seen as an obstacle for integration, but as a crucial dimension to it. Such a conceptualisation of integration challenges the presumption that continuing to engage in transnational practices and rejecting the idea of cultural sameness represents a threat of 'disloyalty' to the nation state or particular locality. Rather, what becomes evident in these narratives is that migrants are involved in complex relationships with their home cultures and the host society's attitudes and values; they are however, by and large striving to reconcile them and create a 'dialogue', in so doing promoting a vision of integration which is not tied to nationality and the adoption of a different culture, but rather connected to participation and commitment to a place (Kemmis 1990).

While this approach to integration was shared by most respondents, two other perspectives were also evident in my sample: those migrants who emphasised the responsibility of East Europeans to 'integrate themselves' into English society and who to that end abstained from being involved in their ethnic communities; and a category of migrants which I refer to as 'nomads', who approached their integration first and foremost as a way of participating in 'multiculturalism'.

### *Integration as a unilateral relationship*

A small yet significant number of East European respondents suggested that the responsibility for integration should lie above all in the hands of the migrants themselves. Their phenotypical ‘invisibility’ was used as one of the main arguments for why attempts at integrating should be initiated by East Europeans. These respondents also criticised other migrants’ ‘expectations’ of being incorporated into the mainstream without showing significant willingness to do so themselves.

MARYLA (Polish, Norwich): I don’t mean it horrible, but we are all like white and that, so you don’t kind of have like, oh yeah, ‘Polish’ written on your forehead or... So yeah, I think the Polish should come out and say ‘hey, we are here, we want to participate’ and not wait for English, because they will simply not know that this person is a migrant and alone.

IEVA (Latvian, Manchester): (...) you’ve got to make that effort because nobody is going to come to you, you’ve got to be that one to make the first move, you know, say hello, show that you speak English, be open, go out and meet English people. So yeah, that’s my idea of it.

In contrast to those respondents who conceptualised integration as a two-way relationship, participation in ethnic community organisation and socio-cultural visibility in their localities was seen by this segment of respondents as a signifier for segregation and evidence of an unwillingness to get to know English society and become a part of it.

FILIPS (Latvian, Manchester): I don’t have time for that [engagement in ethnic community].. And because I already have contacts like English contacts. I don’t have time for all that. And to be honest... I don’t want to, because if I want to live Latvian life, I would stay in Latvia.

NELU (Romanian, Manchester): Yes. I’ve got English friends. I don’t have many Romanian people because I separate from them because, like I said, the best way is to speak just in English and read everything in English and watch English telly. All the community this is just being separate, so I don’t think they help when you really want to settle.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a lot of... Do you feel like part of a Polish community here?

BEATA (Polish, Norwich): I don't feel like a part of community, they stick together too much and I don't like that, you know, most of my friends are English here in Norwich, so I kind of feel part of English community.

While this group of migrants did not explicitly advocate cultural assimilation, it is to a certain extent implicit as their statements manifest a belief that involvement in ethnic communities signifies self-segregation and an unwillingness to integrate. This group of respondents thus follows more closely the discourses around social cohesion promoted by the state.

### ***'Nomadic' understandings of integration***

Finally, a third group of respondents can be identified in the narratives about East European migrants' approaches to integration, a group which I believe can be best described by the term 'nomads'. These migrants' motivations for migration stood out as distinct from the rest of the sample because they did not, they said, migrate out of economic need or as part of chain migration, but rather regarded their migration process as 'travelling', a way of 'experiencing life in a different country' and part of an overall 'cosmopolitan' enrichment (see chapter 5.2.). Alongside their very different motivations for migration when compared to the rest of the sample, this group's approach to integration also diverged strongly from other respondents'. Instead of conceptualising it in terms of their relationship with the English mainstream, nomads narrated integration in terms of becoming part of British 'multicultural' society.

VALDAS (Lithuanian, Manchester): I feel very integrated here, because I have a lot of friends.

INTERVIEWER: Do you also have a lot of English friends?

VALDAS: I don't think so, not so many. I have friends from Germany, from Italy, one guy is from Kenya. [...] this is what I like about Manchester, it is that you

meet people from so many different cultures and you learn so much.

JANUSZ (Polish, Manchester): I mean, there is integration and integration, if you know what I mean. I prefer to stay with a very international community, but I don't feel the need to integrate only with Polish people, I don't have many Polish friends. My friends are from many different countries, there are some English, but mostly from other countries, but I think I can still say that I am integrated here, just with the international community.

Respondents thus did not understand their integration in terms of actively seeking out contact and friendships with English people. Instead, they emphasised their appreciation for Britain's 'multicultural' society and perceived their process of integration as becoming part of and participating in it. The question of participation in ethnic community structures did not really emerge in these narratives. While respondents generally acknowledged their existence, they did not voice explicit opinions about how useful or disruptive they were to the process of integration. In fact, most respondents in this group did not really articulate any interest in the socio-cultural visibility or invisibility of their particular migrant groups in their locations.

SZILVIA (Hungarian, Manchester): I didn't come here to meet Hungarians. I came here because I wanted to go to England, experience living in a big city, go to a good university, meet new people, not just English people but from all over the world. If I wanted to meet Hungarians I would go to a university in Hungary.'

INTERVIEWER: How would you describe the Lithuanian community in Manchester?

TOMAS (Lithuanian, Manchester): I don't know, I think there are many people from Lithuania here, but I don't really know about the community. I go to African clubs when I go out because I like the music and I have friends who go there.

ROSA (Lithuanian, Manchester): I never go to Polish or Eastern European shops, maybe once to get sausage but I don't feel ... Don't misunderstand me, English food is shit, but there is a lot of international food here, Indian, Japanese, everything, so why only eat East European or English food, or why only meet Lithuanian and English people.

'Nomads' thus exhibit rather cosmopolitan orientations when narrating their integration processes: they prioritise their relationship with and 'consumption' of

other cultures (Vertovec and Cohen 2002) over their own, and emphasise their ‘multicultural’ experiences rather than strictly tying their integration process to contact with members of the host society. In this way, ‘nomads’ reject cultural binaries. Integration is understood to transcend strict discourses of home and host country. This is further reinforced by the conviction of several respondents in this group that they could just as easily adapt and feel at home in a different country – most respondents perceived England as only one stop on their migration journey and were already planning to move somewhere else (Australia, Singapore) at the time of the interviews. However, as Kofman (2005) and Vertovec and Cohen (2002) note, cosmopolitanism as an attitude and practice is predominantly reserved for the elites, a finding that is also reflected in my sample. After all, the migrants who expressed this attitude and engaged in cosmopolitan practices had the necessary financial means, language skills and educational attainments to view their migration as a ‘choice’ – or in Bauman’s terms, to act as ‘tourists’ – as opposed to the rest of the sample, where the decision to migrate was predominantly formulated in terms of economic need.

## **5.7. Conclusion**

This chapter has offered an analysis of the rich interview material provided by my East European respondents, outlining the ways in which they navigated the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’ through negotiating sameness with the English mainstream society, handling encounters of racialisation, and reflecting on their integration and belonging into English society. On the one hand, some respondents, in order to demonstrate the ways they were ‘the same as’ the English mainstream

emphasised their ‘whiteness’ and their adherence to ‘whitely scripts’, which was considered to be based on a shared European culture, as well as phenotypical ‘invisibility’, adherence to dominant social mores (in terms of socialisation patterns and ‘staying quiet and invisible’ in the public space), and work-ethic. As a consequence, they implied, they brought ‘acceptable diversity’ into their country of settlement. This was done by at the same time drawing the symbolic boundary in order to differentiate themselves from ‘visible’ ‘Others’, in particular Muslim and Black minorities in England, who were believed not to possess the same ‘whiteness capital’.

However, the analysis also revealed the limitations to the ‘whiteness’ embodied and enacted by East European migrants, limitations which made them vulnerable to experiences of racialisation and discrimination. Here, non-native accents and experiences of cross discrimination, which was mostly encountered by East European migrants of low socio-cultural visibility, played an important role; some respondents believed that these factors put East European migrants at a disadvantage in terms of the ethnic hierarchy in England, despite their nominal ‘whiteness’. On the other hand, some respondents embraced phenotypical ‘whiteness’ as a strategy in order to counteract or avert these experiences, and thus to ‘pass’ in English society, when used in concert with active efforts to ‘blend in’ through adherence to behavioural norms and dominant fashion styles. A strategy of ‘passing through silence’ was also employed in this context, in order to minimise the risk of racialisation by protecting their particular ethnic group’s image, as a means of conflict de-escalation, and in order to de-emphasise their respective ethnic identities. ‘Whiteness’ was also discussed in regard to integration, with one particular set of respondents, who were proponents of ‘integration as a unilateral relationship’,



advocating the position that the responsibility for integration lay with East European migrants alone, because, owing to the fact that they were phenotypically ‘white’ and therefore ‘invisible’ to the English mainstream, it was their responsibility to make the first move, so to speak.

The issue of socio-cultural visibility or invisibility was also critically discussed in these narratives. On the one hand, some believed that staying socio-culturally invisible could be a strategy allowing them to ‘pass as a group’ and, therefore, to protect themselves from being marked as an ethnic minority in their particular localities. Those migrants who were members of highly socio-culturally visible groups even voiced, retrospectively, a wish that there would be fewer East European migrants of their particular ethnic group into their localities or the UK overall. On the other hand, others stated a belief that socio-cultural visibility was necessary as part of a strategy of ‘taking a stance’, utilised in order to actively challenge or combat prejudice and racialisation and to achieve cultural recognition. Becoming ‘socio-culturally visible’ was in this case understood to entail the promotion of East European cultures and an attempt to ‘educate’ the English host society about the history of migrants’ countries of origin and the particularities of their identities, such as elucidating the difference between Roma and Romanians. These migrants suggested that this approach could be expedited by establishing ethnic community structures.

Finally, the question of socio-cultural visibility and invisibility was also discussed critically in relation to East European migrants’ sense of belonging in English society. Here the analysis revealed two conflicting positions: on the one hand, socio-cultural visibility was considered a welcome opportunity to engage in transnational practices and maintain a feeling of belonging to the country of origin

(this was particularly the case in relation to those East European migrants who understood integration as a bilateral process and who were involved with their respective ethnic communities). On the other hand, some East European respondents advocated the view that the socio-cultural visibility represented by established ethnic community structures was a hindrance to migrants being able to create a true sense of belonging in their particular localities. This was particularly relevant to the case of those East European respondents who understood integration as a unilateral relationship and who believed that socio-cultural visibility was a signal of a desire on the part of migrants to segregate themselves and refuse to become part of English society.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusions: East European Migrants and the Boundaries of Whiteness**

### **6.1. Overview of the research**

This project investigated the ways in which race informs the integration experiences of East European migrants in England, analysing how ‘whiteness’ as a symbolic boundary is constructed and operates in English society, as well as highlighting the multiple ways in which East European migrants ‘performed’ ‘whiteness’ and interpreted processes of ‘becoming white’ by navigating this boundary and filling it with their own meanings and discourses. My findings reveal the heterogeneity of experiences of ‘white’ East European minorities, complicating the notion of race and ‘whiteness’ as determined solely by phenotype and show the impact of current discourses about ‘whiteness’ in England on processes of integration and the understanding of senses of belonging both in the host society and amongst migrants.

An analysis of the extant literature on East European migrants highlighted weaknesses in existing scholarship which my research sought to address, namely the absence of ‘ordinary’ English men and women’s perceptions and opinions of their East European neighbours, and the predominant focus on Polish migrants at the expense of the heterogeneity of experiences of migrant incorporation by East European migrants from different national backgrounds, who display varying levels of socio-cultural visibility in Britain.

My analysis of the theoretical literature on ‘whiteness’ identified the limitations of existing research in the field, demonstrating that it failed to pay due attention to constructions of ‘whiteness’ that occur outside the ‘black’/‘white’ binary

of 'white' majority populations vis-à-vis 'black' or 'visible' minorities and thus include 'white' minorities into the analysis. The main contributions made by my research are, therefore, to branches of scholarship which conceive 'whiteness' as a fragmented identity that displaying many shades and forms. My thesis is thus a contribution to an existing body of work which calls for a closer investigation of the integration experiences of phenotypically 'white' minorities and challenges the notion of whiteness as *'invisibility'* and as a seemingly homogenous racial category.

However, the literature review also identified some of the common problems associated with 'whiteness studies', such as the fact that 'white' people often don't think of themselves in racial—something which poses a challenge when seeking to investigate these issues. In order to circumvent this issue, I made use of Bailey's (1998) concept of 'whitely scripts', focussing on the particular cultural and behavioural norms English and East European respondents referred to when reflecting on their inherent similarities and differences. This made it possible to formulate conclusions about their views on expressions and meanings of 'whiteness' without requiring them to answer direct questions concerning their racial identity; instead their standpoints could be assessed by analysing their responses to a series of non-marked, but related questions.

Moreover, I argued that boundary theory represents an effective methodological approach to 'whiteness studies' because, while minimising the risk of equating experiences of 'visible' and 'invisible' minorities by firmly positioning phenotypically 'white' minorities within the boundary of whiteness, it still allows the researcher to draw attention to the agency and relationality of the 'boundary work' involved in the social processes undertaken by both sets of actors – English and East

European respondents - which can push 'white' minorities to the centre or to the margins of 'whiteness'. Moreover, this approach was also found to mitigate against the frustrations caused by 'intersectional' approaches, allowing for an interrelated analysis of simultaneously occurring and recurring processes of identification and group formation (see Chapter 3). It was these insights which drove the analysis of my empirical data, which took the form of media analysis and in-depth interviews.

The media analysis identified a panoply of cultural stereotypes about East European migrants prevalent in Britain, synthesised into a taxonomy of 'valuable', 'vulnerable' and 'villainous' Eastern Europeans, revealing the complexity of the positions that East European migrants occupied within the symbolic boundary of 'whiteness' in the elite discourse in Britain. These typologies were further reflected and elaborated upon in the individual narratives of English respondents in three locations in England: Manchester, Norwich and Winchester. In their narratives, the respondents often simultaneously placed East Europeans at the centre and at the margins of 'whiteness' with reference to culture, behavioural norms and certain aspects of socialisation, thus pointing to an ambivalent and partial incorporation of these migrants into the English nation by the mainstream society.

The second empirical chapter analysed the ways in which the East European migrants themselves navigated this boundary, how they permeated it and drew and re-drew it in order to construct sameness with the 'white' English mainstream and deal with experiences of racialisation, and also demonstrated the role of socio-cultural in/visibility in these constructions and experiences. It also provided insights into the various strategies that East European migrants employed, either by 'passing' and 'blending into' English society, thus 'performing whiteness', or by 'taking a stance'

in order to become 'visible' as valuable contributors to English society and thus claim membership of it. Finally, the chapter highlighted the ways in which socio-cultural in/visibility informed East European migrants' approaches to integration and creating a sense of belonging into their new country of settlement.

## **6.2. Main findings**

For the first time since the exodus of the Irish who migrated into Great Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from 2004 British citizens were confronted with the large-scale economic migration of people who 'looked the same' as them. However, unlike the Irish, East Europeans have never been subject to colonial superiority discourses. Moreover, they represent an interesting case for investigating the connections between integration and constructions of sameness ('whiteness') and difference, as their position is rather ambivalent considering current ideas about the relations between migrants and the host society in that they are neither considered to be an oppressed 'racial' minority, nor a fully accepted or 'assimilated' part of British society (see Nagel 2002: 269 for British Arabs representing a similar case). In the media discourse and narratives of English respondents, East European migrants feature in many ways just as 'Other Whites': they were valorised for their hard work ethic in difference to a segment of the English working-class, and considered to be 'just like us' in terms of sharing a European cultural background, possessing a 'white' phenotype and thus 'not standing out' visually in the public space, sharing similar socialisation patterns and Christian religion. At the same time, however, East European migrants were also perceived to represent 'White Others', particularly in the type of the 'villainous' Eastern European identified in the media analysis, and in the narratives of English respondents: references to cultural and behavioural markers

that indicated the inability of East Europeans to perform ‘whitely scripts.’ Excessive alcohol consumption, criminality and interpretations of ‘threatening’ East European masculinity and ‘submissive’ East European femininity, and the visual component of fashion, by which East European migrants were equated with the British ‘underclass’, and the uncritical acceptance of highly educated Eastern Europeans being stuck in the lower-skilled job sector, positioned East European migrants at the margins of ‘whiteness’. In a small number of cases this positioning even led English respondents to question the phenotype of East Europeans, trying to find other terms than ‘white’, such as ‘pale’ or ‘not white like you and me’ in order to describe them. What is more, English respondents did not differ in terms of their location – whether a high-migration or low-migration area – nor in terms of their social position. Both, middle-class and working-class respondents employed racialising discourses to a similar extent, even if middle-class interviewees chose to express themselves in more abstract ways, due often to a lack of direct experience with East Europeans (a consequence of their low socio-cultural visibility in middle-class residential areas), while working-class respondents shared their views as based on personal experiences. This finding also challenges notions about the working classes in England displaying more racist attitudes and anxieties over immigration than the presumably ‘liberal’ middle classes (see Clarke and Garner 2009). Moreover, the findings also point towards an anxiety present amongst English respondents, not just in terms of East European migrants posing an ‘economic threat’ through the perceived strain on public services caused by them, but more importantly also posing a ‘cultural threat’ to English identity, further eroding *Englishness*, an identity that was perceived to be ‘weak’ as opposed to the ‘strong’ identity of *Britishness*. One can hypothesise that it is this anxiety that led a majority of English respondents to advocate an assimilationist approach to

integration, highlighted by the frequent use of ‘when in Rome’ arguments (see also Garner 2010 and Clarke and Garner 2009).

The analysis also identified the ways in which East European migrants constructed themselves as ‘Other Whites’ by emphasising sameness with the English mainstream society, navigating the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’ and filling it with their own meanings and interpretations. Similarly to English respondents and the media discourse, East Europeans emphasised their ‘white’ phenotype, and adhering to English mainstream behavioural and cultural norms on the basis of sharing a European background and Christian religion as notions that made them ‘invisible’ in the English public space, that represented a ‘cultural fit’ and therefore facilitated social interactions with English neighbours. At the same time, they engaged in drawing the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’ in order to differentiate themselves from other, ‘visible’ ethnic minorities of non-Western and non-European backgrounds, not only by emphasising the disruption to the public space that was believed to be caused by them in terms of divergent dress-codes and behaviour, but also by invoking the moral boundary of work ethic to highlight their contributions to British economy as migrants, in difference to ‘visible’ minorities, who were perceived to have migrated predominantly to abuse the British welfare state. In many ways, East European migrants therefore constructed themselves as ‘white’ by reproducing notions of ‘normality’ that were oriented around values and attributes which have been found to be ‘inherently coded white’ not only in the theoretical contributions of ‘whiteness studies’, but also in the perceptions of ‘white’ majority populations.

However, the narratives of East European respondents also revealed the limitations to their ‘whiteness’ and highlighted their experiences of being treated as ‘White Others’. Considering their phenotypical ‘whiteness’ and perception of



following ‘whitely scripts’ as established by English mainstream society, this left several respondents uncertain how to label their experiences of discrimination and awareness of negative stereotypes about East Europeans in England, questioning whether the term ‘racism’ can be applied, while at the same time voicing concerns over the practical consequences of leaving these experiences unlabelled.

The main embodiment of difference that was considered to constitute ‘East European’ as a ‘boundary term’ were accents, which were believed to represent a significant limitation to East European migrants’ phenotypical ‘whiteness’ and potential advantages derived from it. The narratives reflected how foreign accents often functioned as the main instigator for open hostility and experiences of discrimination, and how audible difference was discussed by East European respondents as a greater hindrance to integration and acceptance by the English mainstream society than visible difference, thus positioning them – in their perception – towards the bottom of the ‘minorities hierarchy’ in England, below ‘visible’ minorities who were native English speakers.

What is more, the issue of socio-cultural in/visibility became apparent in reflections on experiences of ‘cross discrimination’, with East European migrant groups who displayed a lower degree of socio-cultural visibility (such as Lithuanians, Latvians and Hungarians) suffering from prejudice and stereotypes addressed at Polish migrants, or by being assigned to the overarching category of ‘East Europeans’, thus subsequently undermining their possibilities for cultural recognition. And absence of cultural recognition was considered by many respondents to lead to being considered more ‘backwards’ than culturally recognised East European migrant groups, such as the Polish, and therefore to suffering greater levels of discrimination due to a lack of information about their home countries among their English

neighbours, further problematising socio-cultural in/visibility as a means of navigating the symbolic boundary of 'whiteness'. In this context, Romanian migrants represented a particularly interesting case in terms of 'cross discrimination', by often being confronted with misidentification as Roma and Gypsy, an issue which was also explained by several respondents with reference to their low socio-cultural visibility and general ignorance about their ethnicity amongst the English mainstream. So while socio-cultural invisibility was interpreted by some as a guarantor for positioning them at the centre of the boundary of 'whiteness', others regarded it as an issue which potentially pushed them further to its margins.

As evident in the individual migration stories of the respondents, the characteristics of the East European sample in this thesis diverges from a majority of studies on East European migrants which have been undertaken in recent years, allowing to generate further research findings. The predominant number of East European respondents can be classified as 'confident' or 'capable' migrants, or 'tourists' in Bauman's terminology, who migrated to the UK out of choice, and only a limited number can be regarded as 'vagabonds', who migrated out of need. However, both sets of respondents possessed very good English language skills (a condition to participate in this research), putting them undoubtedly at an advantage in terms of opportunities on the labour market and social interactions with the English mainstream in comparison to 'less capable' East Europeans who did not possess these skills (and who were not part of this research). The analysis revealed how 'capable' East European migrants pushed those who were considered 'less capable' or 'stereotypically Eastern European' to the margins of 'whiteness', in order to defend their position at the centre at the boundary, and – in the process – again reproduced notions of 'normality' prevalent in the mainstream society, thus providing

justifications for experiences of discrimination faced by East European migrants. Being considered a 'confident' migrant, however, bore in the case of several East European respondents the inherent consequences of being alienated from their respective ethnic communities, because of not being 'marked' enough as East European and considered not to be sharing and understanding these experiences. This is not to say that 'confident' East European respondents did not report experiences of discrimination. The empirical chapter provides several examples of overt discrimination against these migrants, and what is more, the development of a 'double consciousness' in the case of a significant number of 'capable' respondents, who were very aware of stereotypes and prejudice about East Europeans in England, an awareness which often guided and affected their social interactions with the English mainstream.

On the basis of experiences of overt discrimination and 'double consciousness', East European respondents reported having adopted various strategies in order to avert or resist being treated or perceived as 'White Others'. One of these strategies was 'passing', an active effort to blend into English mainstream society by disguising or subduing their East European backgrounds, thus making practical use of their phenotypical 'whiteness'. Also in this context, socio-cultural in/visibility was discussed as a way of 'passing as a group', with several migrants reporting dissatisfaction with their high socio-cultural visibility in their locality or England overall, subjecting them to being marked as an 'ethnic community' and therefore 'White Others', while other migrants who were members of socio-culturally less visible groups advocated the opinion that the UK should prevent further migration from their countries of origin in order to allow them to maintain their 'unmarked' status.

However, other migrants reported the strategy of ‘taking a stance’ in order to deal with experiences of stigma attached to being ‘marked’ as ‘White Others’. ‘Taking a stance’ was described as a way of making themselves ‘visible’ in order to educate the English mainstream about their cultures and histories of their home countries, and in doing so counteract stereotyping by actively filling their East European identities with positive meanings. Particularisation and transvaluation were another element of the ‘taking a stance’ strategy, an attempt of East European respondents to redraw the symbolic boundary of ‘whiteness’ by using moral discourses, with reference to ‘superior’ family and gender values, work ethic and the migration experience as a means of developing greater social capital in contrast to the English mainstream, thus making East Europeans appear valuable and equally valid members of English society.

The analysis also revealed the high level of fragmentation within the world of the ‘confident’ East European migrants, particularly in regards to their approaches to integration and their senses of belonging to English society. While most respondents reported a great attachment to their respective home countries and appreciation for the presence of ethnic community structures (socio-cultural visibility), enabling them to engage in transnational practices without seeing it as a hindrance to their integration and belonging, other East European migrants followed English respondents in their approach to integration as a unilateral relationship, emphasising the sole responsibility of integration to lie lying with East Europeans. These respondents also rejected the idea of socio-cultural visibility and abstained from engaging with their fellow co-ethnics. However, a small yet distinct group of East European respondents chose not to conceptualise integration and belonging in terms of binaries between home culture and host society culture. Instead, they perceived themselves to be ‘nomads’,

integrated and belonging to Britain's multicultural society, representing possibly the most 'tourist' expression of migrant incorporation and belonging in the sample.

Conceptualising Eastern Europeans as 'Other Whites' and 'White Others' in this thesis best captures the complexities inherent in 'whiteness discourse' in England, highlighting the fragmentation of 'whiteness' as a social category and revealing the opportunities and limitations to 'nominal' 'whiteness' in terms of social inclusion and exclusion from the English national imaginary. Only future research into experiences of second-generation East European migrants of this most recent A8/A10 migration will truly reveal the 'presumed power of phenotype' and the extent to which socio-cultural in/visibility really affects incorporation experiences of this 'white' minority. One can only hope, however, that this symbolic boundary of 'whiteness' will eventually become so porous and permeable as to lose its significance.

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## **APPENDIX A: Leaflet for English respondents**

### **East European Migrants in England** *A Study of Public and Individual Opinions*

#### **Invitation to take part in a research project**

I am a PhD student from University College London investigating perceptions of East European migrants in England. Data collected in the course of this research will be used in my doctoral thesis.

I am looking for about 50 potential English interviewees who would agree to take part in an in-depth interview. An in-depth interview is a face-to-face conversation which touches upon such issues as personal or indirect experiences with East European migrants, the impact of their arrival on the neighbourhood / country, issues of integration, and various general perceptions about Eastern Europeans.

I am not necessarily looking for experts on these issues, instead I am keen to reach English people who have noticed a presence of East European migrants in their area and want to share their experiences and opinions about it.

All interviews are anonymous and tape recorded and last up to 1 hour. Interviews are conducted at a convenient time and place for the interviewee.

#### **Data anonymity:**

Data gathered during this research is confidential and anonymous and will not be passed to any third parties. Interview excerpts may be used in academic publications but will be used in the way that preserves the anonymity of respondents

*I am very interested to hear about your views and experiences.*

*Please contact me via phone or e-mail.*

**Julia Halej**

tel: +44 (0)7773 535475

e-mail: [j.halej@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:j.halej@ucl.ac.uk)

**Thank you!**

## **APPENDIX B: Leaflet for East European respondents**

### **Your Experiences of Living in England!**

#### **Invitation to take part in a research project**

I am a PhD student from University College London investigating the experiences of Central and East European migrants in England. Data collected in the course of this research will be used in my doctoral thesis.

I am looking for about 50 potential Central and East European interviewees who would agree to take part in an in-depth interview. An in-depth interview is a face-to-face conversation, which touches upon your experiences of life in England. What does it mean to be Polish/Lithuanian/Latvian/Hungarian/Romanian etc. in England? What are your views about life and society in England? Have you ever experienced discrimination on the basis of your nationality?

All interviews are anonymous and tape recorded and last up to 1 hour. Interviews are conducted at a convenient time and place for the interviewee.

#### **Data anonymity:**

Data gathered during this research is confidential and anonymous and will not be passed to any third parties. Interview excerpts may be used in academic publications but will be used in the way that preserves the anonymity of respondents

*I am very interested to hear about your views and experiences. Please contact me via phone or e-mail.*

**Julia Halej**

tel: +44 (0)7773 535475

e-mail: [j.halej@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:j.halej@ucl.ac.uk)

**Thank you!**

## APPENDIX C: English Respondents' Characteristics

**Table 1: Respondents' Location, Age and Social Position**

| Pseudonym          | Location   | Age | Social Position |
|--------------------|------------|-----|-----------------|
| <b>Joseph</b>      | Manchester | 38  | MC              |
| <b>Michael</b>     | Manchester | 22  | MC              |
| <b>Claire</b>      | Manchester | 27  | MC              |
| <b>Steven</b>      | Manchester | 42  | MC              |
| <b>Sarah</b>       | Manchester | 26  | MC              |
| <b>Amanda</b>      | Manchester | 40  | MC              |
| <b>Holly</b>       | Manchester | 52  | MC              |
| <b>Christopher</b> | Manchester | 27  | WC              |
| <b>Hannah</b>      | Manchester | 55  | WC              |
| <b>Ellie</b>       | Manchester | 29  | WC              |
| <b>Owen</b>        | Manchester | 39  | WC              |
| <b>David</b>       | Manchester | 27  | WC              |
| <b>Charlotte</b>   | Norwich    | 32  | MC              |
| <b>Laura</b>       | Norwich    | 20  | MC              |
| <b>Mary</b>        | Norwich    | 41  | MC              |
| <b>William</b>     | Norwich    | 34  | MC              |
| <b>Adam</b>        | Norwich    | 56  | MC              |
| <b>Sophie</b>      | Norwich    | 24  | WC              |
| <b>Charlie</b>     | Norwich    | 43  | WC              |
| <b>Meghan</b>      | Norwich    | 23  | WC              |
| <b>Jessica</b>     | Norwich    | 37  | WC              |
| <b>Emily</b>       | Norwich    | 22  | WC              |
| <b>Tom</b>         | Norwich    | 36  | WC              |
| <b>Peter</b>       | Norwich    | 30  | WC              |
| <b>Fiona</b>       | Winchester | 52  | MC              |
| <b>Kate</b>        | Winchester | 37  | MC              |
| <b>Luke</b>        | Winchester | 43  | MC              |
| <b>Anthony</b>     | Winchester | 50  | MC              |
| <b>Michael</b>     | Winchester | 35  | MC              |
| <b>Kieran</b>      | Winchester | 52  | MC              |
| <b>Susan</b>       | Winchester | 43  | MC              |
| <b>Olivia</b>      | Winchester | 36  | MC              |
| <b>John</b>        | Winchester | 62  | MC              |
| <b>David</b>       | Winchester | 39  | WC              |
| <b>Lily</b>        | Winchester | 45  | WC              |
| <b>Amber</b>       | Winchester | 66  | WC              |
| <b>Caroline</b>    | Winchester | 22  | WC              |
| <b>Sean</b>        | Winchester | 40  | WC              |

**Table 2: English Respondents by Gender and Class**

|             | Middle-Class | Working-Class |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Male</b> | 10           | 8             |

|               |    |    |
|---------------|----|----|
| <b>Female</b> | 11 | 9  |
| <b>Total</b>  | 21 | 17 |

## APPENDIX D: East European Respondents' Characteristics

**Table 1: Respondents' Nationality, Location and Age**

| Pseudonym        | Nationality | Location   | Age |
|------------------|-------------|------------|-----|
| <b>Filips</b>    | Latvian     | Manchester | 33  |
| <b>Henriks</b>   | Latvian     | Manchester | 26  |
| <b>Daniels</b>   | Latvian     | Manchester | 30  |
| <b>Ieva</b>      | Latvian     | Manchester | 62  |
| <b>Petras</b>    | Lithuanian  | Manchester | 35  |
| <b>Rosa</b>      | Lithuanian  | Manchester | 27  |
| <b>Tomas</b>     | Lithuanian  | Manchester | 29  |
| <b>Valdas</b>    | Lithuanian  | Manchester | 32  |
| <b>Ania</b>      | Polish      | Manchester | 30  |
| <b>Janusz</b>    | Polish      | Manchester | 37  |
| <b>Mietek</b>    | Polish      | Manchester | 34  |
| <b>Wiktor</b>    | Polish      | Manchester | 35  |
| <b>Nelu</b>      | Romanian    | Manchester | 27  |
| <b>Cezar</b>     | Romanian    | Manchester | 23  |
| <b>Liviu</b>     | Romanian    | Manchester | 29  |
| <b>Cosmina</b>   | Romanian    | Manchester | 23  |
| <b>Szilvia</b>   | Hungarian   | Manchester | 34  |
| <b>Dagnija</b>   | Latvian     | Winchester | 42  |
| <b>Jurgita</b>   | Lithuanian  | Winchester | 21  |
| <b>Agne</b>      | Lithuanian  | Winchester | 32  |
| <b>Karol</b>     | Polish      | Winchester | 35  |
| <b>Danuta</b>    | Polish      | Winchester | 34  |
| <b>Ileana</b>    | Romanian    | Winchester | 27  |
| <b>Dora</b>      | Hungarian   | Winchester | 24  |
| <b>Marita</b>    | Latvian     | Norwich    | 43  |
| <b>Gita</b>      | Latvian     | Norwich    | 29  |
| <b>Morta</b>     | Lithuanian  | Norwich    | 36  |
| <b>Ruta</b>      | Lithuanian  | Norwich    | 46  |
| <b>Saulius</b>   | Lithuanian  | Norwich    | 37  |
| <b>Beata</b>     | Polish      | Norwich    | 41  |
| <b>Maria</b>     | Polish      | Norwich    | 28  |
| <b>Karolina</b>  | Polish      | Norwich    | 30  |
| <b>Krystian</b>  | Polish      | Norwich    | 34  |
| <b>Maryla</b>    | Polish      | Norwich    | 30  |
| <b>Dorota</b>    | Polish      | Norwich    | 29  |
| <b>Raluca</b>    | Romanian    | Norwich    | 34  |
| <b>Oana</b>      | Romanian    | Norwich    | 27  |
| <b>Andras</b>    | Hungarian   | Norwich    | 25  |
| <b>Bernadett</b> | Hungarian   | Norwich    | 28  |
| <b>Esther</b>    | Hungarian   | Norwich    | 25  |
| <b>Julia</b>     | Hungarian   | Norwich    | 36  |



**Table 2: Respondents' Education, Year of Arrival, Marital status, Occupation and Employment**

| Pseudonym       | Education | Year of Arrival | Marital Status    | Occupation          | Employment        |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Filips</b>   | secondary | 2006            | married           | Factory worker      | full-time         |
| <b>Henriks</b>  | secondary | 2005            | partner           | Waiter              | full-time         |
| <b>Daniels</b>  | secondary | 2005            | n/a               | Factory worker      | full-time         |
| <b>Ieva</b>     | secondary | 2005            | partner (English) | Service sector      | part-time         |
| <b>Petras</b>   | secondary | 2006            | n/a               | Construction worker | full-time         |
| <b>Rosa</b>     | secondary | 2005            | n/a               | Office worker       | full-time         |
| <b>Tomas</b>    | secondary | 2009            | n/a               | n/a                 | full-time         |
| <b>Valdas</b>   | tertiary  | 2004            | single            | Researcher          | postgraduate      |
| <b>Ania</b>     | secondary | 2004            | n/a               | Teaching Assistant  | part-time         |
| <b>Janusz</b>   | tertiary  | 2005            | married           | Project manager     | full-time         |
| <b>Mietek</b>   | secondary | 2005            | n/a               | Office worker       | full-time         |
| <b>Wiktor</b>   | tertiary  | 2004            | married           | Works in IT         | full-time         |
| <b>Nelu</b>     | secondary | 2010            | n/a               | Waiter              | full-time         |
| <b>Cezar</b>    | secondary | 2011            | single            | n/a                 | unemployed        |
| <b>Liviu</b>    | tertiary  | 2010            | single            | IT consultant       | full-time         |
| <b>Cosmina</b>  | secondary | 2009            | n/a               | Language teacher    | full-time         |
| <b>Szilvia</b>  | tertiary  | 2005            | married           | Housewife           | n/a               |
| <b>Dagnija</b>  | tertiary  | 2004            | married (foreign) | Housewife           | n/a               |
| <b>Jurgita</b>  | secondary | 2010            | partner (English) | Student             | part-time/student |
| <b>Agne</b>     | tertiary  | 2005            | married           | n/a                 | unemployed        |
| <b>Karol</b>    | secondary | 2004            | married           | Janitor             | full-time         |
| <b>Danuta</b>   | tertiary  | 2006            | married           | Housewife           | n/a               |
| <b>Ileana</b>   | tertiary  | 2008            | single            | Researcher          | postgraduate      |
| <b>Dora</b>     | secondary | 2009            | single            | Nanny               | full-time         |
| <b>Marita</b>   | secondary | 2007            | partner           | Office worker       | full-time         |
| <b>Gita</b>     | tertiary  | 2005            | married           | Researcher          | postgraduate      |
| <b>Morta</b>    | tertiary  | 2006            | married           | Administrator       | full-time         |
| <b>Ruta</b>     | tertiary  | 2008            | married           | Consultant          | full-time         |
| <b>Saulius</b>  | secondary | 2005            | n/a               | Computer repairman  | full-time         |
| <b>Beata</b>    | tertiary  | 2005            | married           | Housewife           | n/a               |
| <b>Maria</b>    | tertiary  | 2006            | partner           | Researcher          | postgraduate      |
| <b>Karolina</b> | secondary | 2005            | married (English) | Business owner      | full-time         |

|                  |           |      |                      |                   |              |
|------------------|-----------|------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| <b>Krystian</b>  | secondary | 2004 | n/a                  | Builder           | part-time    |
| <b>Maryla</b>    | tertiary  | 2007 | n/a                  | Waitress          | part-time    |
| <b>Dorota</b>    | tertiary  | 2004 | partner<br>(English) | Researcher        | postgraduate |
| <b>Raluca</b>    | tertiary  | 2006 | married<br>(English) | Lecturer          | full-time    |
| <b>Oana</b>      | tertiary  | 2010 | partner              | Translator        | part-time    |
| <b>Andras</b>    | secondary | 2007 | n/a                  | Factory<br>worker | full-time    |
| <b>Bernadett</b> | tertiary  | 2005 | n/a                  | Librarian         | full-time    |
| <b>Esther</b>    | secondary | 2005 | partner              | Waitress          | part-time    |
| <b>Julia</b>     | tertiary  | 2004 | n/a                  | Nurse             | full-time    |

**Table 3: Interview participants by state origin and gender in all three localities**

|               | <b>Polish</b> | <b>Lithuanian</b> | <b>Latvian</b> | <b>Hungarian</b> | <b>Romanian</b> |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Male</b>   | 5             | 4                 | 3              | 1                | 3               |
| <b>Female</b> | 7             | 5                 | 4              | 5                | 4               |
| <b>Total</b>  | 12            | 9                 | 7              | 6                | 7               |

## **APPENDIX E: Interview Schedule English Respondents**

### **Informed Consent**

1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself, your background? Have you always lived in this location?
2. Have you noticed any changes in the way things are in your location in recent years?
3. What would you say – which are the biggest problems that English society/your location is facing right now?
4. Have you noticed the arrival of Eastern Europeans in your location? In what way? / Why do you think they haven't settled here?
5. Have you come into contact with Eastern Europeans / their culture? Under what circumstances / why do you think you haven't? What are your impressions?
6. Do you believe that Eastern Europeans fit in well? What makes them fit in well/not fit in that well? Do you find them 'compatible' with English people, so to speak?
7. What do you think does it mean to fit in well into English society?
8. Do you think you could recognise an Eastern European in the streets just by looking at him or her?

## **APPENDIX F: Interview schedule East European Respondents**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **Narrative part:**

*Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself and how you came to Manchester / Winchester / Norwich? Why the UK? How was the migration process and what happened when you arrived here? Did you face any problems? The story of what has happened until the present moment.*

1. What do you like about England? / your city?
2. What do you dislike about England? / your city?
3. Do you miss anything about your home country?
4. Contact with English people? English friends/workplace/neighbours? How do you find this contact? / how come you haven't had much contact?
5. Any common first reactions of English people when you tell them that you are Eastern European?
6. Have you had ideas about England/English culture before coming? Has your opinion changed? What do you think about English culture? Is it similar or different to Eastern European culture?
7. Some people say they experienced unpleasantness because of being Eastern European, have you also experienced that?
8. Do you feel comfortable speaking your mother tongue in public?
9. Do you feel part of English society? What does it mean to be part of it in your opinion?
10. Could you describe the EE population in the city where you are living at the present? Would you describe it as a 'community'? Are you engaged in activities with other EE?
12. Do you plan on staying in England?
13. Contact with people of other ethnic backgrounds? Where? Experiences?