

Aneta Słowik

University of Lower Silesia

Problems in transnational environment of second-generation Polish emigrants in Germany

The article is an attempt to shed light on the problems identified by the researcher in the transnational environment of the second-generation Polish emigrants in Germany. The author begins by explaining the notion of a 'problem' in psychology and counselling studies, and the characteristics of the second generation of Polish emigrants in Germany. Interpreting the biographical narratives of emigrants, she shows the problems with which they struggled in the transnational space and the areas in which they needed counselling support. The author also refers to institutions offering counselling support. In conclusion, the article highlights growing demand for this type of support in various generations, communities and migrant communities.

Keywords: migration, transnationality, counselling, problems, second-generation Polish emigrants

Emigrant environment is very diverse in ethnic and cultural sense, which can bring about personal problems affecting interpersonal relations, and can result in conflicts. Such situations, clearly visible and understandable in the first-generation of emigrants, are subject to change, or disappear completely, in the next generations. Finding out appropriate solutions to these problems is important both from practical and academic standpoint. The questions regarding organized or spontaneous counselling practices in transnational immigrant environment emerge as important. In this article I will analyse problems experienced by second-generation Polish emigrants in transnational space, the spheres in which they need counselling interventions, and who can offer or has offered them such support.

I will begin with a short review of how the problem has so far been defined within relevant literature and what kinds of problems can be distinguished. Next, I will present a review of studies using biographical method conducted among second-generation Polish emigrants in Germany. I will also refer to important publications related to Polish emigration in Germany. I will then turn to the specific

aspects of the problems¹ that emerged in the narratives of second-generation Polish emigrants², and then proceed with the presentation of my own biographical research among such emigrants. In the conclusion, I will indicate possible solutions to problems that emerge among second-generation Polish emigrants.

Psychological and counselling reflection on the ‘problem’

I found various descriptions of the term *problem* in publications regarding difficult experiences and situations. I can distinguish two distinctive approaches: psychological and counselling. I will start the former – from the psychological standpoint, Maria Straś-Romanowska differentiates between instrumental and existential problems. Instrumental problems are objective, and existential problems are seen as being subjective. Objective problems can be seen outside and are determined by the environment. They concern human behavior and activities, and often are of rational and practical nature. These problems can be solved through participation in trainings, workshops, and compensatory exercises. In turn, existential problems concern everything which is personal, individual. They are related to the internal world of human beings – emotions, feelings, experiences – which are “constructed” through meanings. Existential problems are expressed with questions such as: “What do I live for?”, “Why?”, “For what purpose?”, “What is the meaning of my life?” The author shows that instrumental problems could be “hidden” behind the existential ones, but also that the former can be “subjectivised instrumental problems” (Straś-Romanowska, 1996, pp. 20–25). Therefore, according to Straś-Romanowska, problems can be related to behaviour, activities, and the internal world of human beings.

The psychologist Józef Koziellecki offers a slightly different view. According to him, problems exist in the context of a given situation. He distinguishes three types of situations based on the difficulties that are identified with them: difficult, new, and uncertain situations. The first type (obstacles, barriers) are of theoretical and/

¹ The problems which will be discussed here are difficulties, worries, doubts that can be solved with the help of counsellors. Among these problems, we find those that are existential in nature (related to basic existential questions such as: who am I? Who do I want to be? How do I live my life?) and questions that focus on changes in one’s identity, in line with the deconstruction and construction of meanings of biographical experiences, interpretations of conflicts, dilemmas, difficult situations identified in one’s lifespan. Such problems are also issues for professional counsellors who ask the question: How can I help people and their families from emigrant, refugee, repatriate communities, and particularly, the ones experiencing existential difficulties?

² I use the term „second-generation Polish emigrants” because there is such a term in use in academic publications, although I am not completely convinced of its adequacy. Some of the narrators defined themselves as Polish-German emigrants, but also as Polish-German Europeans, or as German citizens. They opposed the use of the phrase “second-generation Polish emigrants”. I also employ the term “emigrant”, for I look on them from the perspective of the country that they and their relatives left in the past. Many researchers referred to in this article employ terms like: emigrant, immigrant, migrant, immigration, emigration, migration.

or practical nature; the second type are situations which depend on the persons' perception of something as difficult; the third type situations are related to a risky or uncertain position of the subject (Kozielecki, 1992, pp. 14–15).

In counselling studies, the notion of the problem is comprehended in a similar way for instance by Marcin Szumigraj and Alicja Czerkawska. They discuss 'problem' as existing in a given context, but more importantly, they associate it with counselling interactions: they particularize it, specify it and define it. Szumigraj asserts that problems can be seen as difficult situations or tasks. He writes that "it is something problematic or irritating for a given person. A problem can be any situation that is potentially frustrating, which results in discomfort of emotional and psychological nature" (Szumigraj, 2009, pp. 174–175). A difficult situation includes many conditions in which someone finds her/himself, or when something appears as an "obstacle, discomfort, or nuisance" (Szumigraj, 2009, p. 174). Problems understood as tasks represent an issue that needs solving. It can take the form of a question. The question indicates the purpose of one's actions. In order to accomplish the task, one is required to gain and gather material or intellectual means. The involvement of a counsellor can help in this respect.

In turn, Alicja Czerkawska writes about problems solved in counselling situations. She distinguishes between material problems (oriented towards possessing) and problems related to one's awareness of the meaning of one's existence ("What should I live for?") and construction of one's identity ("Who do I want to be?", "Who am I?", "Who have I been by now?"). The author demonstrates that within counselling interactions, and through finding answers to such questions, one can elaborate their own philosophy of life, principles, guidelines that one chooses as "one's own", and which in turn guide one's actions, and conduct during different stages in life. To this the author adds the ways to behave in ambiguous situations, for instance when one encounters boundary situations, development crises or life problems (Czerkawska, 2009, pp. 132–133). The author does not discuss the notion of the 'problem' at length, but she shows how, where, and in what way one can solve one's problems.

Writing about problems of second-generation Polish emigrants, I will take into account their complicated and multidimensional nature, due to the specific cultural situation of living in a country different from the country of origin of one's parents. First, however, I will turn to the concept of transnationality as a main category which characterizes the environment of second-generation emigrants. I will discuss it both as a problem and as a source of problems.

Transnationality as a problem and as a source of problems

Transnationality has recently become a hot topic in research, due to the diversity of migration processes and the qualitatively new (more global, more dynamic,

multidirectional) actions of migrants. Researchers focusing on migration (Vertovec, 2012; Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004; Pries, 2001; Faist, Özveren 2004, Ryan 2011; King, Christou, 2010) who use the concept of transnationality are engaged in determining the causes and effects of the quickly changing transnational practices of migrants, which in turn lead to the transformation of social, political and economic structures in the migrants' host country and their country of origin.

An excellent definition of the term 'transnationality' can be found in the work of a renowned migration scholar – Steven Vertoveca. He defines it as “complex relations and ties connecting people and institutions across the international borders” (Vertovec, 1999, p. 447). More precisely, transnationality can be defined as follows:

a) social morphology, b) a type of consciousness, c) a mode of cultural reproduction, d) an avenue of capital, e) a site of political engagement, f) (re)construction of a „place” or locality (Vertovec, 2012, p. 4).

The first point refers to transnational systems or structures of ties constructed in space (transnational) by various social groups. The second point concerns the simultaneous immersion in several cultures and places, which leads to the question about the need and the scope of migrants' belonging and identification with a certain group or local community. The mediation or constitution of a complex identity can become a conscious process for some, but it can also happen through the acceptance of a given consciousness (author's note: it can also be forced upon them by someone) (Vertovec, 2012, pp. 6–7). Such consciousness can involve, for instance, being “here and there” at the same time, being both near and far from home. The third point should be interpreted as a form of cultural reproduction, whose features are “fluidity of the reproduced styles, social institutions and daily practices. These are often described in terms of syncretism, creolization, bricolage, cultural translation and hybridity” (Vertovec, 2012, p. 7).

The following two points formulated by Vertovec concern the transnational flow of capital. Its elements move smoothly from one place to another, particularly in the form of money transfers by the emigrants to their home country. Capital also “includes” civic engagement; it is connected with political and social actions in support of the country of origin, which can or could be (depending on the distance) realized mainly in the transnational space (Vertovec, 2012, pp. 8–10).

These observations regarding the essence of transnationality allowed me to understand better the actions undertaken by the second-generation Polish emigrants in Germany³. In my opinion, not only the first, but also the second generation of Polish emigrants is affected by transnational processes referred to by Vertovec. Today, we are witnessing the accession of new member-states to the European Union (to the Schengen zone) and the opening of the labour market for Polish emigrants (in Germany this took place in 2011). The current generation of emigrants experience

³ I consider the individuals whose parents (individually, as a couple with children or without children) arrived in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s as second-generation Polish emigrants in Germany. Many of them applied for asylum and received refugee status.

(although sometimes only symbolically) the emigration “effects” of transnational mobility, such as being involved in public discussions and debates regarding the problem of identity, construction of a migration biography, migration policy, support for refugees, or the “state” of the German and the European culture. I noticed that some people from this generation are “summoned” not only to present their view concerning these problems, but are also forced to adhere to their “obligation” to turn back to their individual experiences and self-identification. I suppose that the specifics of these events in the daily life of second-generation Polish emigrants result in existential problems in their life trajectory. These problems should be solved with the support of counsellors or therapists. Their emergence may mobilize both researchers and social institutions to analyse the meaning of counselling interventions made or not made by certain organizations or individuals, as well as to motivate them to understand to what extent this affects the characteristics of the non-formal transnational networks constructed by emigrants (Słowik, 2012; Słowik, 2013; Słowik 2016).

During my research stay with the Polish emigrant associations and communities in the German province of North Rhine-Westphalia, and after the interviews and conversations with members of these communities, I came to the conclusion that some of the problems they mentioned can be described as either recurring or recurring in a cyclic way. For example, they referred to the arrival of more emigrants from Poland, especially after 2011, which provoked memories connected with the country left in the distant past, as well as other experiences of tension, dilemmas, conflicts, and doubts. One of the interviewees said: “Those new Polish emigrants are so strange... they only care about money. They do not know any limits, thinking that if someone has Polish roots, one is necessarily a Polish person, and they can speak with her/him as if they were in Poland”. During our meetings, my interlocutors mentioned institutions and persons that supported Polish emigrants and helped them solve difficult situations related to migration, and also the ones that made these situations even more difficult.

Second-generation emigrants in Germany in the work of German and Polish migration scholars

In Germany, research on second-generation emigrants based on the biographical method began in the 1990s. The most significant of these studies are those of Ursula Apitzsch (1990) and Helma Lutz (1991). Referring to these studies, Claudia Martini (2001) observes that academic publications (in German) prior to the 1990s concerned mostly the so-called pioneer migrants (from Yugoslavia, Italy, Turkey, and Greece). The second generation migrants were not discussed there, and even if they were, it was only to present them as being not significant, as following in the

footsteps and reproducing the way of living of their parents in the host country. They were also described as another generation of *Gastarbeiter*.

Recently, Irini Siouti (2003), Faith Nibbs and Caroline Brettell (2016) have suggested that the researchers should look at the life of the second-generation emigrants as at a „commuting phenomenon”. “Commuting” here refers to the ambition to realize the dreams and expectations of the family environment in the form of achievements, positions and states. “Commuting” can also be interpreted as reaching a social level that allows people to use the capital available in the host country on an equal footing with the groups recognized as “better” (by the family environment and by the hosting community). This type of expectations target emigrants of the second generation. Such people, however, are seen mostly as possessing small cultural and intellectual capital, as being backward, not integrated, in need of continuous financial support from the State (e.g. in education: the government pays for language courses). They are seen as not worthy of any investment – either because they are only capable of performing physical labour or because they will “shortly” go back to their country of origin (Siouti, 2003; Nibbs, Brettell, 2016). Similar conclusions have been formulated by the researchers Frank Bean, Susan Brown, James Bachmeier, Tineke Fokkema and Laurence Lessard-Philips (2012) as well as by Cornelia Kristen, David Reimer and Irena Kogan (2008), Georg Auernheimer (2006), Richard Alba (2005), and Wassilios Baros (2001). In addition, the scholars noted that second-generation emigrants in Germany are characterized by poor achievements in education, dropping out of education institutions provided by the formal system of education, as capable of doing mainly physical labour.

However, Roswitha Breckner (2005) and Irini Siouti (2013) demonstrate (based on biographical research) that these stereotypical views do not include all ethnicities in the same way. They do not include, for instance, Italians and Greek people in Germany. Cornelia Kristen and Nadia Granato (2007) reached the same conclusion regarding the Spanish and Greek people. According to them, these emigrants of second generation are more successful in school than their German peers, and that the former also manage better with constructing their life careers. Karin Schittenhelm (2009, 2011) points out that the following factors can be discerned here: housing conditions of the emigrant family, parents’ education, place of residence of the family, school environment and the presence of important persons (parents, relatives, friends, teachers, experts, counsellors) in the life trajectory of an individual. Another important factor is the migration policy of the host country (for instance, the establishment of “harmful” obligatory preparatory classes for every age group of emigrants – children and teenagers, meant as a ‘waiting room’ for students until their families anticipated and forced return to their country of origin) (Sirkeci, Şeker, Çağlar, 2015). Unfortunately, I was not able to locate any biographical research related to second-generation Polish emigrants living in Germany.

During the literature review I have come across several monographies in the field of history and sociology focusing on Polish emigrants in Germany, but the

majority of them were normative, descriptive, and literary. Academic publications usually presented characteristics of a specific groups of Polish emigrants (permanent workers, seasonal workers, temporary emigrants, illegal emigrants, forced migrants and displaced persons). They discussed activities in which presented groups engaged, and additionally, reflected on the life in Germany in general, for example through the narratives written by displaced persons and submitted to literary competitions, collected by Wiesława Piątkowską-Stepaniak (2007) in the book *My, emigranci. Wspomnienia współczesnych Polaków z życia na obczyźnie* (*We, the Emigrants: Contemporary Poles' Memories of Life Abroad*). The book is a literary biographical retrospection presenting individual experiences of emigrants. It consists of memories written by adult Polish emigrants, who presented important problems they experienced in their daily life, e.g. rejection due to their origin, difficulties in making contacts with local people, accumulation of negative emotions, acculturative stress which decreased their self-confidence and their sense of safety, lack of satisfaction, and deterioration of their general well-being.

Another interesting source of knowledge concerning migration problems are biographical narratives by the teenagers Monika Moj (2009), Carolina Wollny (2005) and Karolina Pietrzik (2010), published in the journal *Zarys* (*Outline*). The authors emigrated to Germany together with their parents, and as teenagers they began writing down their experiences (mainly in the form of diaries). They present the difficulties and surprising situations experienced by them as second-generation Polish emigrants. They clearly state that they did not choose to emigrate, but that this decision had been taken by other people, “behind their back” and on their behalf. According to them not enough attention is being paid to the life of such persons, and especially the experiences of the children emigrants, who experience “departure” from the world that is safe, the broken friendships and relations in their country of origin, shocking confrontations with the reality of living in Germany (inadequate and idealistic visions of a blissful life in Germany), uncertainty about the future of the family, also caused by rumours about the separation of Polish families, enrolment in “integration” classes for emigrants with the aim to learn German, even though the majority of children were Polish and spoke Polish outside and during classes (despite attempts at banning expression in the mother tongue).

The book *Śladami współczesnego migranta w Niemczech* (*Following the Contemporary Emigrant in Germany*), written by Wojciech Necela, Stefan Ochalski, and Bronisław Gembala, focuses on the Polish priesthood in Germany. The authors state that dialogue formed the basic principle of the ministry by the priests working with emigrants, with the aim to go in the direction of interculturality, with the “participation” of the integration processes. In another book, Maria Kalczyńska (2004) presents the publishing activity of Polish emigrants in Germany. She introduces the term “book culture” among Polish emigrants. This category, used in book-related research, showcased the presence and significance of books in the Polish emigration culture. The author conducted a detailed and pioneering analysis of the institutions

and subjects involved in the process of creating, publishing, distributing, and disseminating Polish literature from Poland and abroad. Another interesting work presenting the status and the development of the book culture among Polish emigrants in Germany was written by Stanisław Strumph-Wojtkiewicz (1963), demonstrating the significance of Polish language publishing in cultural expression-related activities of Polish emigrant milieus.

A significant part of research into the Polish diaspora in Germany consists in historical studies documenting the significance of events which affected life of Polish emigrants in various periods, and which favoured their integration abroad and helped them keep their national traditions. Stefan Liman (1987) presented the history of Poles deported (the so-called “DP”s) to Germany. He describes their actions aiming to establish the Polish People Union in Germany between 1922 and 1982. Such structures served to make and maintain contact between Polish people living abroad; as a platform for elaboration of action plans of various associations and support organizations for Poles; it was here, as well where Poles elected their representatives. Another researcher, Józef Aleksik (2002) discussed the activities by the Polish Catholic Mission in Germany, describing it as an important place for creating Polish diasporic culture. Churches and parish offices, hosted many state and religious celebrations, so that the emigrants were able to maintain their ties with the country of origin. Bolesław Budzyń (1990), on the other hand, focused on the significant role of the Polish Technical College in Esslingen. The college gathered together important activists from among the Polish diaspora. We cannot overlook the unique work of Stanisław Marian Brzozowski (1989), who described the problems of Poles engaged in studying agriculture in German universities in the 19th and 20th centuries (e.g. their difficult economic situation, disorientation, the sense of parochialism). An interesting work was published by Anna Wolff-Powęska and Eberhard Schulz (2000). Their book was written right before Polish accession to the EU and discussed the problem of the extent to which the relations between Poles and Germans had been affected by the interactions, actions, the way of living, and the views of Polish emigrants in Germany. The authors ask questions regarding the political and social situation in Germany after 1989, and especially what changes were caused by the transformation among the Polish diaspora. When the formal “barrier” (in the political sense) disappeared, and Poland and East Germany were subject to fast process of transformation, Polish emigrants in Germany expressed their enthusiasm and plans to go back to Poland after so many years. The first “visits” in the motherland were a source of disappointment, and later visits were no more successful. The book describes the gradual process of their “giving up” on Poland and the decision, less and less emotional and more and more rational, to remain in Germany.

Another researcher analysing structural changes in the Polish emigrant environment and the significance of the fall of the Berlin wall was Wiesław Hładkiewicz (2006). He observed that it was a period during which many Polish emigrants asked

the question: Who am I? Am I a Pole, or am I a member of the Polish minority in Germany? Or maybe I am a German? The answer to these questions determined people's future, including the field of problems they experienced. Many Poles decided to go back to Poland; others waited for their children to grow up; another group of emigrants are still living "here and there", moving between both countries (6 months in Germany and 6 months in Poland, or they spend their summer holidays in Poland).

These are just a few studies that I managed to locate during my literature review. None of the scholars attempted to establish a more general classification of problems experienced by emigrants; nor did I find information about counselling organized in a way that could be called transnational. This also contributed towards my research focus on discovering problems experienced by second-generation emigrants in need of a counsellor's support.

Organization of a field study among the Polish diaspora in Germany

I carried out research on the environment of second-generation Polish emigrants in Germany (from March to August 2017) in the province of North Rhine-Westphalia⁴. It focused on persons whose parents (or one of them) arrived in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. The interviewees were between 25 to 45. All of them were inhabitants of the province of North Rhine-Westphalia. Some of them were born in Germany, and others arrived in Germany as children, including as babies, pre-schoolers, or when they were in elementary school.

During my research stay in North Rhine-Westphalia I took part in several meetings of the Polish emigrant associations and communities⁵. I quickly noticed the absence of second-generation Polish emigrants in these structures. To start a conversation with them, I had to meet their parents, grandparents, and other relatives. This method was not successful in encouraging second-generation emigrants to speak with me, and some of them refused to do so. Only two people accepted my invitation to an interview. However, surprisingly for me, several persons belonging to the second-generation emigrants in Germany decided to contact me themselves. During my stay in Germany, I was perceived by Polish emigrants (in various public places, including institutions) as a Pole (due to my accent or my surname). This resulted in several interesting conversations (e.g., what was the reason of my visit in Germany) which ended in an invitation to a personal conversation later. During our second or third face-to-face meeting I usually invited my interlocutors to

⁴ My research was made possible due to a scholarship granted by KAAD, during which I was affiliated as a visiting scholar at the University of Bielefeld (more precisely, at COMCAD, Center on Migration, Citizenship and Development) for 6 months under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Thomas Faist.

⁵ In order to ensure the anonymity agreed with my informants, I will not mention their surnames and the names of their organizations, associations, or centers.

take part in my research. I talked about my research interests, described my research method (narrative biographical interview), explained the interview process, and assured them that, if they wished, our conversation will be kept confidential and anonymous. People who were interested in my research were asked to tell their life story. Only one person (out of 14) refused to be interviewed, explaining it with their “reluctance to be recorded”.

The biographical interviews were conducted in Polish or English. Sometimes the interviewees used some German expressions. In three of these interviews, the interviewee changed the language during the interview, in order to tell their story more freely. In four cases, the interview took four hours (but it was conducted on two or three occasions), and in the other eight cases – about two hours. I listened to the recorded interviews, wrote them down and sent them to the interviewees for approval. Next, I transcribed the recording and defined those parts that interested me the most- those which allowed me to identify counselling actions, problems, situations, subjects, and networks.

The collected research material is so rich that I will analyse it gradually. The present article is the first presentation of the counselling solutions concerning second-generation Polish emigrants.

Problems of the second-generation Polish emigrants in Germany

During my research and the analysis of conversations with the interviewees, I was interested in the problems they experienced in the transnational space, as well as in the spheres in which they needed counselling support, and who offered it.

My first discovery was the observation that second-generation emigrants still experienced the same ‘problems’ as experienced by their parents, and that they still required counselling support. These processes are still present in the life of emigrants and there are many causes of their occurrence, as I will show by referring to the biographical narratives.

The first interview I conducted was with Maria. Her parents came to Germany in 1981 when she was one and a half years old. They applied for an asylum and lived in a refugee centre in the first stage of their stay in Germany:

It was a difficult time – as my parents say, because we were a family with small children, and there were all kinds of people in that centre...not so good company. (...) I also have an older sister, she was then seven years old. (...) When I ask myself who I am, I find the answer by comparing myself with my sister. For her, Poland was and still is the most important place in the world. All the time she says what Poland was like back then, how Poles behaved, how different this place is, and that in Poland... in Poland everything is better. She often goes to Poland, she needs it... but I do not. She has memories, I do not have any... nothing connects me with that country.

Maria is an example of an emigrant from the second generation who claims that she does not ask who she is, and that she does not need to ask it. She intentionally does not search for her roots, because she thinks that she has none: “When I go to Poland, if I go at all, I do not go to my country, but to the country of my parents and grandparents- rather as a tourist”. However, in our conversation Maria mentioned an important stage in her life:

At a certain moment I had to answer the question who I am, and I did it long ago. There is no point in going back to that moment. (...) For you I am a Pole because I have a Polish surname, but for me I am not. For many people I am a Pole, mainly for other Poles... but I am German. I see myself in this way.

She further mentioned some problems caused by her personal identity as declared by her. She claimed that all the time she felt pressure coming from other people demanding self-identification. However, she did not need such an answer, it was more necessary for other people to have it, she said. She felt that she was forced to explore the Polishness in herself, to behave in a way which, according to many, was “typically Polish”. She said:

I am most irritated by questions like: what do you think about Poland? What do you think about the relations between Poland and Germany? How do you feel as a Pole living in Germany? What is it like to live in the country of the invader? And so on, and so forth. Now I am being asked what is my opinion about the conservative Polish government, do I have a sense of guilt, and so on... But I do not live there, I do not care about what is going on there... No one has the right to ask such questions if she or he has not have the same experience as me... I am being “made” into a Pole forcefully, but I am not a Pole (...) It is not true that this does not disturb me; on the contrary, I am fed up with it, and such conversations always make me irritated. I look at the person and say to them in my mind: There is something wrong with you.

Maria described many situations and experiences when Polish identity had been imposed on her. Her “problems” mainly involved tension related to maintaining a solidly constructed biography which was sometimes “knocked out” by frequent pressure exercised by others regarding her expected “typically Polish” behaviour and views⁶. The choices she had made and her declarations were underestimated. She also mentioned that she was forced to ‘face’ her origins which led to unnecessary experiences (according to her) forcing her to answer existential questions: Who am I? Who was I? Who can I be? (Czerkawska, 2009, 2013; Straś-Romanowska, 1996).

⁶ I call this type of migration situations “boundary experiences” (Straś-Romanowska, 2009) in which one is confronted with existential problems (Czerkawska, 2006) “imposed” by the social-cultural context of one’s biography. Both existential counselling (Czerkawska, 2013) and formal/informal counselling (Siarkewicz, 2010), which explores the fears of the cultural “unsafety”, “threat” and diagnosing their causes, can help in this process.

To all these provocations the interviewee had a ready answer and „defended” what was close to her and what was certain and completely defined. She saw the solutions and reflections on the problem of one’s identity and one’s constructed biography as useless. The real problem for her were constant confrontations with people “searching for” what was “typically Polish” in her life, according to their image of the “typical Pole abroad”. She perceived such situations and meetings as embarrassing, or as inappropriate. She did not consider these problems as tasks to be solved, because she possessed clear answers to the question regarding her identity. According to her, these problems and unnecessary situations tended to be provoked by other people, who probably were not certain about their own identity.

Similar experiences were described by three other female emigrants of the second generation. Such problems took place in their past (at school, in relations with their neighbours, in the emigrant communities). The interviewees mentioned people who have helped them to manage with this sort of problems. They mentioned several tasks which should be performed to solve these problems. One of them referred to primary school teachers who created space for cultural self-identification. In her opinion, there is a lack of practice which allows one “to be someone I want to be”. She saw such “deficit” mostly in adult compatriots living in Poland, even though they have returned recently:

In school we could be ourselves; although teachers knew where we came from, they did not impose any identifications on us. They allowed us to be whatever we wanted to be. Perhaps this was so because we had representatives of all nations in our class. (...) I should admit that it is the worst with Poles, those coming from Poland to stay permanently. For them, you should not be German, you cannot have even a small piece of German identity.

Other interviewees told me that they did not receive any support and were not given freedom to construct their own biography by their family (parents), despite their expectations. Parents kept on maintaining the “Polishness” of their family, and did so in an exaggerated way. According to the interviewees, their parents took such decisions because of their fear of others’ opinion and potential accusations (mainly coming from Poles living in Germany, but also from those in Poland) that they have “lost” their “Polishness”. This could lead to exclusion from the local Polish emigrant community:

I remember that my parents told me at the beginning that we must know where we came from, that we must speak Polish, even if this did not make any sense according to me. One time I already knew that this did not make any sense, because we would never go back to live in Poland. They realized it later. (...) My Polish language skills will never be good enough for me to find a job in Poland, and I will also not be able to adapt myself to difficult living conditions there. I had conflicts with my parents, we argued often, and this was the biggest

obstacle as to who I wanted to be. (...) At present, they do not behave like this anymore, because they realized that I am very attached to this place. Although we still make the mandatory – as I call them – trips to my grandparents' in Poland, I want to spend my holidays somewhere else.

I found other sort of problems with Kasia. She arrived in Germany with her parents when she was six. In her narrative, she told me about Poland, about her kindergarten, about school, about the time spent in the playground with her peers, meetings with her relatives, family events, vacations, etc. She said:

I remember a lot (...) These memories are warm, joyful, maybe because I do not perceive any problems connected with them. (...) My sister who was born here does not have such memories. She says that I would die for Poland. She says that this "attachment" to Poland is funny.

Kasia claims that these positive images of Poland stood in contrast with her parents' narratives about difficult life they had led in Poland. The fact that her experiences differed a lot from those of her parents, motivated her to explore the causes of her attachment to Poland. As a teenager, she started to search for her roots and to construct her own biography. According to her, precisely, the liberal, and actually "anti-Polish" behaviour of her parents motivated her to start this process:

Unlike my friends, I was not forced to be a Pole, to attend Polish events, for instance the religious ceremonies held only in Polish; I was not forced to speak only Polish at home, to go to Poland every year. This did not happen in my family; my parents spoke German at home and thought that we would stay here for life, so we should become like the people around us. We had to learn German as fast as possible in order to be doing well at school; because of this, we did not have any Polish friends, acquaintances, we tried to avoid meeting them (...) As the eldest child and as a teenager, I had some freedom to make contacts with everything which was Polish, a little bit against the will of my parents. As you know, I carried out half of my university studies in Poland, I learned Polish language from the very beginning, and I want to live in Poland. (...) I often travel to Poland.

In Kasia's narrative I noticed how important were her parents, whose attempts at assimilation were rejected, negated and ignored by Kasia. She perceived them as unnecessary, as opposed to her individual choice, needs and conception of her own biography and identity. I observed, in my conversation with Kasia, as well as in other interviews, that the confrontation with expectations, images, decisions of other people (parents, compatriots) forced an individual to pause and reflect, to choose tasks needed to independently construct one's own biography or to maintain one's identity. These tasks include: learning the parent's native language, the choice of a potential living place and a job, getting to know one's roots and one's relatives.

The interviewed women observed that many problems which were identified and expressed by the second-generation emigrants (at present or in the past) could be solved with the support of professional counsellors. Such people were present only occasionally, however, and when present they often acted in a bric-a-brac way, informally, intuitively, sometimes effectively, but often not very skilfully, doing harm rather than helping. Only some Polish emigrants of second generation have sought, and are still seeking (and, it should be noted, appreciating it) the counselling of liberal type (Wojtasik, 1997) in a transnational space.

Daniela provided another example of a biographical 'marriage' with Poland. In our conversation, she declared missing Poland and wishing to know everything about Poland, and about Polish things, because as a child she did not have the opportunity to have such experiences. Her father (a Pole) left the family when she was three. He came to Germany in the early 1980s. Daniela contacted him in 2010 and was at the time maintaining the contact regularly. Her father was living in Poland at the time of the interview. Her mother (German) never spoke about Poland and never referred to anything Polish. Daniela said,

I have a Polish surname, half of me has Polish roots; I feel it, I want to know my second half. (...) I feel shame that I do not speak Polish, and I ask myself sometimes, how is this possible? I confess, I took part in a Polish language course in order to speak with my father's family, but Polish is difficult and I did not find the motivation to continue with the course. There was no one around to tell me to "go on", and I just stopped. But when someone says that I am from Poland, I admit it and say that my father is a Pole and that he lives there, that I go there regularly. I want to know more about my family there – what they think, how they live – but I do not speak Polish, and this prevents me from communicating with them. I am convinced that it is only through language that I can become familiar with them and with all that make up Polish things, which are also part of me. (...) There are no such places, meetings, where people like me could meet each other, to speak about their feelings, about what they do regarding this. It seems that everyone lives only here and now, but this becomes clear when we meet like this (our accidental encounter).

In our conversation, Daniela stated that she needed regular meetings with the community of second-generation Polish emigrants having similar biographical experiences, during which she could have the possibility to share her problems and learn from each other about how to solve them, to exchange good strategies for coping (Trębińska-Szumigraj, 2010; Kłodkowska, 2014) in constructing their life in transnational space. She suggested (although not directly) that setting up support groups organized by a professional counsellor could meet the needs mentioned by some people. Knowing Daniela better and talking to her several times, I noticed that besides the problems she formulated (also situations, conflicts, dilemmas) she searched and elaborated solutions which she interpreted as tasks, which she later

implemented. Daniela asked herself: who she was, who did she want to be? She completed and supplemented her dual identity by “implementing” specific tasks and choices in the course of her life.

There is another sort of problems experienced by second-generation emigrants. Iwona presented herself as having an “alternative lifestyle”, as being a “free bird” who belonged to the whole world:

I do not want to know who I am, I do not need to speak about it. I am what I am, I do not define myself in terms of nationality, because it will not make any difference whether I am a Pole or a German. I am rather anti-global, alternative, not in the mainstream. (...) I am totally against materialism, wealth accumulation, and rat race.

Iwona spoke a little about her family. Her parents did not admit they had Polish roots. They did not keep in touch with their Polish relatives. They only spoke German at home. The interviewee did not identify any problem related to her own identity. She did not mention any situations, and did not present them as difficult or uncomfortable; she perhaps underestimated them. During our conversations, she quickly turned to other issues. She did not want to reflect on her identity, but rather to maintain the identity in which she felt reassured. She saw this as a task that she needed to do in many situations, including in our conversation. In my opinion, she focused more on problems which were essentially important for her (having a good profession, a partner); the problems related to her identity were ignored. Only discomfort and difficulties forced her to declare her identity and ethnicity.

Summarizing these selected parts of narratives, I would like to emphasize that the emigrants of second generation experienced problems similar to the ones encountered by first-generation emigrants, and which were not addressed by a counsellor. This was true regardless of whether the family of a given emigrant maintained Polish traditions or had sentiments for Poland, or did not maintain such traditions and gave up Polish language, aspiring for complete integration into the German society. These problems concern the origins, nationality, the migratory trajectory, situations identified as a part of the latter, processes of construction and deconstruction of one’s identity, making sense of certain biographical experiences, etc.

Some people of the second generation only pointed out these problems as difficult situations, and then stopped or “froze” at the stage of identification (e.g. Iwona), but in other cases they are turned into specific tasks oriented towards elaborating a satisfying identity (e.g. Daniela, Kasia).

The dynamics and development of these problems is also interesting. They can appear “unexpectedly”, even when one’s identity is declared as solid and stable. Sometimes they can “knock” one out of balance, sometimes they are seen as having a potential, power, richness. Problems are induced by external factors in the form of events and social processes, e.g. migration activities, debates, meetings where subjects explore the Otherness, and reflect on what is “interesting”, “different”, or where

they search for answers and show their dissatisfaction when they receive an answer which they did not expect.

Solving problems in transnational environment

Some of the narrators proposed other solutions to the problems. They indicated that school space was very important in this respect. For instance, during meetings with parents, some problems related to the children could be discussed, e.g. the kinds and ways to provide support for children, teenagers, and families experiencing situation of cultural changes. Their parents did not have a chance to receive such support. As parents, some of the narrators agreed that there was no such support in the schools attended by their children:

My parents did not know how to understand these cultural issues. They had to manage by themselves – they “heard about” something and they did the same. (...) As a mother, I wonder what to do – should I maintain the Polishness and the Polish language? But why should I do it? Even if I want to, there is no one to advise me. There is no such person at school, because I and my child are perceived as Germans.

Other (“as of today”) possible solutions are: discussions and meetings held for a certain age group organized by counsellor experts in collaboration with adult emigrants, debates between different generations (with parents, grandparents), interethnic debates (with other people of the same age belonging to other ethnic groups), during which there are the necessary conditions and an agreement to have an open discussion regarding essential issues, such as: how to maintain autonomy in constructing one’s biography, or freedom in negotiating the sense and the meaning of biographical experiences; how to cope with the declarations and expectations imposed from outside; how to manage personal choices and decisions, etc. The interviewees pointed out the lack of places where one could freely express one’s reflections, ask questions, discuss problems, vent about some unpleasant meetings, and ignore the already negotiated biographical meaning which was “given” to them as “a testament”, as “genetic”, or in a form of an expectation expressed by the relatives, e.g. expecting behaviour which was “typically Polish.” They also added that they needed a place with access to counsellor support that would allow them to work out their own identity “again”, to “reconstruct” their convictions, to give some up, but also to have the possibility to retrieve them.

My interlocutors did not find in their environment any subjects who could support them and help them deal with the problems mentioned above. The actions of such subjects could be directed at respecting cultural resources of the individual, seeing their potential for development, and identifying sources related to the construction one’s life course, exploring and modifying the meanings of biographical

experiences, providing support in personal search for individual identity balance that would lead to finding a place in a transnational environment that could “grant” the ontological security. The counsellor working with second-generation emigrants searching for their roots (like Kasia or Daniela) could accompany them in the process of finding what is important – for them or their relatives – at present, or potentially. She or he could also help them identify what should be “thrown away” or “taken back”. The counsellor can help people “penetrate” into their lives, but also motivate them to work on their biography, to support one in case when “cracks” are found, or in case of a sudden biographical turn. The counsellor can also help informal counsellors who want to help, but do not know how.

Based on my research among the Polish emigrants in England and Germany (Słowik, 2012; Słowik, 2013; Słowik, 2016) I assume that a counsellor working with parents of second-generation emigrants will use slightly different methods. As part of the counselling practice, she/he can support parents in accompanying their children’s development in culturally diverse environment, for example through elaborating various ways of communication between the child and the caregivers, in taking decisions as to the acculturation strategy and its implementation, or by indicating various ways for developing the children’s language competences. An important area can be helping parents solve problems related to their identity, coping with the recurring cultural shock and the violence they experience as people of Polish origin. In this group I also identified difficulties and tensions associated with providing care for senior parents living in Poland. In the period of late maturity, parents may return to the question of the place where they wish to spend the rest of their life. They calculate potential losses and gains of migration, and they consider the possibility of becoming pensioners in their country of origin. Help offered by counsellors can support parents in taking such a decision and in overcoming their dilemmas.

In my opinion, counsellors working with emigrants may choose one of three approaches (therapeutic, humanistic, critical) offered by Alicja Kargulowa (2015, p. 18), because the counsellor should “help the individual to become oneself through increasing her/his self-confidence and encouraging her/him to accept her/himself (...) or/and increasing the level of communicative and creative competence of the counselee, which will allow her/him to understand better the meaning of the information obtained, to gain more life satisfaction based on her/his job and possibility for self-realization (...) and also the aspiration (together with the counselee) to explore socially constructed meanings of other organizations’ and persons’ actions (Kargulowa, 2015, p. 18).

In conclusion, I would say that there is an increasing need of such counselling support – in various emigrant generations, waves, and communities⁷. This

⁷ Counsellors can reach such people through parent-teacher meetings, during language or integration courses for emigrants, during Polish celebrations, as employees in regional and local Labour Office and local authorities, through NGOs, or by answering the calls or requests of the counselees themselves. I will present here a letter written by a parent whose son attends a primary school in

process is visible not only to Polish teachers working in culturally more and more diverse classes⁸, but also parents, and grandparents who ask the question: how to answer the need of the child, the teenager, the grandchild to construct her/his life in a transnational space. Because families of the second generation of emigrants directly experience “profits” and “losses” resulting from their immersion in a culturally diverse space, they also identify problems related to their separation from relatives, reduction of direct contact, difficulties in their search for areas allowing them to communicate and maintain their ties.

I think that counselling seen in this way (which I call transnational counselling)⁹ calls for further study, specification, and an institutional approach, for example through establishing specialization in the field of transnational counselling, elaborating study programs which will prepare counsellors for work with different generations, ethnic groups, refugee communities, migrants, forced migrants and repatriates.

In my opinion, current events (conflicts, cultural tensions) in many countries (including Poland) indicate that the solution should not be postponed, and the effects of ignoring the counselling process that is so necessary are already visible, also among the environment of second-generation Polish emigrants.

Translated from Polish by Katarzyna Byłów-Antkowiak

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Wrocław. I received several similar letters (from September to December 2017) asking for help: “In the morning I met the schoolmaster, who asked me whether we have any form of training/course in the field of working with “non-Polish” pupils (it is mainly about Ukrainians). The teachers do not know how to work with them, they act only intuitively, which is often problematic. The problem is not only the methodology of working with pupils during a Polish language course, but also issues such as cultural sensitivity, ability for reflective approach to pupils and their families. Is this your area of work?”

- ⁸ Students enrolled in the MA program in Early and Pre-School Education at the University of Lower Silesia (Wrocław) noted the need to introduce this type of counselling into formal institutions of education.
- ⁹ In my earlier publications I use the phrase „intercultural counselling” (Słowik, 2012) and I consider it as most appropriate. Still, the phrase “transnational counselling” is more adequate as it corresponds to the contemporary counselling processes which are frequently happening in a transnational space (taking place at different levels and over long distances, and at the same time close to each other, connected, dynamic, energetic, changing rapidly, and susceptible to sudden transformations in many directions).

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