

# *Coping with stress among Polish immigrants*

## BACKGROUND

Opening the Western labour markets for Poles, a result of Poland's accession to the European Union, led to mass economic emigration of thousands of Poles. Immigrants chose mostly the following English-speaking countries: Ireland, England and Scotland. Moving house and changing job is a challenge that needs to be dealt with.

## PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

This study involved 239 people who emigrated to England, Scotland and Ireland. It was aimed at answering the following question: Do Polish immigrants in various countries experience varied stress levels and use varied strategies to cope with stress?

## RESULTS

The conducted study showed differences in stress levels, depending on immigrants' target country. There were also significant differences between strategies used to handle stress. Additionally, the study identified factors influ-

encing stress levels. Immigrants' high stress levels were accompanied by stress management strategies focused on stressor avoidance, blaming as well as sense of one's ineffectuality.

## CONCLUSIONS

European English-speaking countries presents various challenges to immigrants. Observed dissimilarities in stress levels might stem from difference in size of cultural gap between the target and home country. Seeing that, cultural factors may significantly influence stress level perceived by immigrants, thus a question for further studies arises: what are specific cultural features significant in experiencing stress among immigrants? Answering to that question will give an unprecedented insights to demands of emigration and may lay a basis for future community support programs.

## KEY WORDS

coping; emigrants; stress

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## BACKGROUND

Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 and opening of the Western labour markets led to intensified economic emigration of Poles. Emigration is not a new phenomenon for Poles. In the last two hundred years there have been a couple of emigration waves, usually following uprisings or wars. However, never have we observed such intense emigration as that witnessed after Poland's accession to the European Union (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). Central Statistical Office in Poland estimated that in 2007 there were 1,860,000 Poles living in other countries of the EU, with the strongest presence – 690,000 – in the UK and approx. 200,000 in Ireland (Central Statistical Office, 2012). These data indicate two significant facts: 1) emigration has become a common phenomenon for the Poles and 2) new destinations appeared on the economic emigration map, i.e. European English-speaking countries.

Studies conducted amongst immigrants indicated that expats tend to have three main reasons to choose the UK or Ireland. Firstly, they hoped for a better paid job (63%). Secondly, they wanted to continue their studies and improve their language skills (46%); and thirdly, they felt that the political and economic situation in Poland was not satisfactory and they did not want to live in such conditions (46%) (Milewski & Ruszczak-Żbikowska, 2008). Despite the fact that emigration to another country presents a chance to better immigrants' standard of living and acquire new competencies and knowledge, it brings a handful of threats. These are mostly related to social isolation which results from inability to fit into the new culture and social environment, as well as problems with keeping in touch with family members who stayed in the home country.

Psychologically, emigration can be viewed in terms of psychological stress. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress transaction is a process which encompasses a handful of consecutive phases. These are: the appearance of a difficult situation, appraising the situation, coping, appearance of results and appraisal of the results. Stress transactions can be modified by various internal and external factors, called 'resources' and 'deficits'.

The first stage of stress transaction is the appearance of the stressor. It is believed that emigration is a permanent stressor. Sources of stress felt by immigrants can be divided into two categories: pre-emigration stressors – connected with preparing to go abroad, leave the country and family behind; and post-emigration stressors – related mostly to adapting to the environment of the target country. This means that immigrants experience high stress levels even before they leave the country, which significantly lengthens the stress period, especially if difficulties connected with their leave lead to depleting

their stress-coping resources, which can be particularly acute in case of political exile and economic emigration (Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008).

However, it is post-emigration stressors that remain the main interest of the researchers. These stressors are directly connected with well-being and functioning of an immigrant. Relocation itself is a major stress source, but among all stressors faced by an immigrant, adaptation to the new environment is perceived as the most acute, especially stress connected with acculturation (Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008).

The main adaptation challenges for immigrants are connected with two basic areas: firstly, completing grief over multi-aspect loss related to leaving the home country. It mostly pertains to loss of touch with the loved ones and the feeling of insecurity and unpredictability of life. The other area is coping with challenges brought upon by living in another country: e.g. fitting into the new environment, struggling with the language barrier, finding oneself in new labour realities, etc. Successful coping with challenges from these two areas results in full adaptation and effectiveness of the acculturation process. The process of coping with challenges and the experienced difficulties are the main stress sources (Aroian, 1990; Aroian, Norris, Tran & Schappler-Morris, 1998).

When analysing stress amongst immigrants, fundamental questions arise. Firstly, do the target countries differ in terms of stress levels experienced by immigrants? Secondly, what factors can influence these levels in various countries? Finding a clear answer to such questions is not an easy task. Conclusions of research completed thus far give some indication as to the processes experienced by immigrants. Canadian research suggests that immigrants experience different levels of stress, depending on their region of origin. Immigrants from North America and Europe were less likely to view everyday situations as 'very' or 'extremely stressful' than expats from Asia and the Pacific (Robert & Canada, 2013). Therefore, it can be assumed that stress levels amongst immigrants can be related to the extent of cultural differences between their home country and the target country. It also seems plausible to assume that immigrants from one country of origin who go to various, culturally diverse countries with varied adaptation challenges, will experience different stress levels. Given the above, it can be assumed that Poles emigrating to a particular English-speaking country will experience rather moderate stress levels because – despite certain cultural differences – we do belong to the same civilization range.

Research indicates that Poles who emigrate to the UK experience many stressful situations during their adaptation to the foreign environment. The most intense stressors are connected with communication barriers, i.e. problems with using a foreign language, as well as stressors related to lack of knowledge

about local cultural requirements. It can be assumed that these two main areas serve as foundations for other stressors, which are listed by immigrants, i.e. stress connected with professional life or stress experienced in social situations (Weishaar, 2008). These reports are convergent with research conducted amongst immigrant groups, which clearly indicates that emigration is burdened with numerous stressors which can impact on both mental and physical well-being of an immigrant. Research conducted among ex-Soviet Union immigrants who lived in the USA found that levels of stress experienced abroad were dependent on factors such as communication skills and stressors related to the feeling of novelty of the culture and environment they found themselves in. Among major stress level factors, one can list discrimination, sense of loss and not feeling at home. Moreover, it has been observed that certain demographic variables (e.g. sex, age and education) may impact stress levels experienced by immigrants (Aroian, Norris, Patsdaughter & Tran, 1998). These observations prove that it is worth considering a constellation of factors which impact immigrants' stress levels because – despite general similarity – they can differ depending on an immigrant's target country.

Apart from stressor characteristics and their appraisal in the transactional concept of stress, it is emphasized that the course of stress transaction is dictated by – broadly speaking – an individual's activity understood as 'coping'. In the classic definition of coping proposed by its authors, it is understood as 'constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person' (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141).

Given the characteristics of an event such as emigration, it is advisable to consider two forms of coping. According to Schwarzer (2001), coping strategies can be classified in terms of the time criterion of an event. Thus, he distinguishes strategies focused on coping with past events (reactive coping) and strategies directed at coping with future events. Based on the likelihood of an event, he distinguishes three forms of coping with future events: proactive, anticipative and preventive coping. Emigration is undoubtedly an event which requires from immigrants usage of strategies for coping with past events related to leaving the home country and future events connected with acclimatizing to the new culture.

Researchers' conclusions suggest that immigrants use varied methods of coping with stress, depending on the country and culture of origin. In a study conducted among a group of students in the USA from Asian countries such as China, Korea and Japan, it was found that immigrants often used slightly varied ways of coping with stress, depending on their country of origin (Yeh & Inose, 2002). Therefore, it can be assumed that people from one country who leave for

other countries will differ in terms of strategies implemented to cope with immigration stress because every country – due to its culture specification – will pose various requirements.

It is very challenging to define which actions can be seen as effective strategies for coping with immigration stress. One reason is that there is an observable tendency to employ qualitative methods to measure ways of coping with stress, especially interviews (Taloyan, Johansson, Saleh-Stattin & Al-Windi, 2011; Weishaar, 2008). However, some researchers have successfully used quantitative tools (Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Yakhnich, 2008). Using quantitative measures, it has been observed that a confrontational style of coping with stress is effective in the case of emigration stressors, which may suggest that it is justified to treat emigration stress as a type of distress (Ryan & Twibell, 2000). This assumption implies that strategies which are considered to be effective methods of coping with stress should be equally effective when coping with emigration stress. Proactive stress coping methods employed by immigrants can be viewed as an effective method of coping with stress. An immigrant who takes up preventive measures to minimize or avoid potential future stressors is going to cope significantly better in stressful situations than a person who does not take up any such actions. Thus, preventive preparation to confront stressors by taking preventive measures in advance can be seen as a way of coping with stress, which is bound to keep the individual in good health.

Research among immigrants indicates a prevailing focus on coping with stress related to past events. One can find effective quantitative tools which classify stress coping methods into operational strategies. Research conducted amongst British immigrants living in Singapore successfully employed the COPE Inventory (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989). This tool was used to measure strategies of coping with stress and the adaptation level amongst immigrants. The results showed that depression was predicted by a high score in the 'self-distraction' scale and low scores in the 'humour' and 'active coping' scales (Ward & Kennedy, 2001).

Studies focused on stress related to a future event used questionnaires such as the Proactive Coping Inventory (Greenglass, Schwarzer & Taubert, 1999). Research conducted amongst Turkish immigrants living in Canada assumed that proactive coping with stress and optimism may be significant factors influencing mental well-being of the subjects. This assumption was then confirmed by the results of the study. It was, however, observed that proactive stress coping methods were more important in a model where mental well-being was measured by the level of depression than in other tested models, where mental well-being was measured by the level of life satisfaction (Uskul & Greenglass, 2005).

When analysing issues related to the course of stress transaction, one must consider the role of resources, which are believed to be one of the main factors influencing the course of the whole stressful situation in the transaction model. The result of a stress transaction depends *inter alia* on the amount and availability of resources. The authors emphasize that resources may lead to transforming tension into chronic stress, as well as – which seems of utmost importance in this study – that they may support the effective course of adaptation processes (Pasikowski & Sęk, 2004). In emigration research, it is the adaptation process that seems to play the key role in coping with stress and dealing with challenges related to acculturation (Aroian, 1990).

There are premises, confirmed by a study with a group of Pakistani immigrants living in Canada, to believe that high sense of coherence, understood as social support, and using strategies focused on problem solving, are greatly related to high level of functioning amongst immigrants. There are also premises to believe that education level is related to the effectiveness of coping with emigration stress. The authors suggest that better-educated people are more successful at solving everyday problems which appear abroad. The general education level can also be related to language skills, which are extremely important in order to communicate in a foreign country (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010).

An individual needs a sense of self-efficacy in order to successfully face challenges and cope with them. The power of this variable may decide whether an individual is persistent in their actions despite obstacles (Bandura, 2007). The results of research conducted amongst student immigrants indicate that sense of self-efficacy can explain academic successes better than the level of experienced stress (Zajacova, Lynch & Espenshade, 2005). Some researchers believe that the sense of self-efficacy helps immigrants keep their mental well-being despite numerous stress factors (Bańska, 2006). The abovementioned premises are convincing enough to argue that the sense of self-efficacy is a resource which may greatly affect the stress coping process.

Style of risk perception may be another resource which plays a vital role in coping with emigration challenges, as various aspects of being an immigrant can be perceived as risky or threatening. Załeśkiewicz (2005) distinguishes two styles of risk perception: instrumental and stimulative. Using this classification to analyse immigrants, one can assume that immigrants with an instrumental style of risk perception are likely to be motivated to go abroad in order to complete a concrete goal, such as improving their economic situation, and will react more strongly to challenges that appear abroad. On the other hand, immigrants with a stimulative style of risk perception are likely to go abroad to experience certain

stimuli, e.g. to have an adventure, and therefore will be more successful at coping with challenges (Załeśkiewicz, 2005).

The above psychological analysis of immigrants leads us to ask the following questions:

Do people emigrating to various English-speaking countries differ in terms of a) appraisal of stress levels, b) choice of strategies to deal with stress and c) available resources?

What constellation of internal and external factors will lead to more intense stress levels?

## PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The study involved 239 people aged 28-78, 61.7% female and 38.3% male. The comparative analysis included people who emigrated to England (26.8%,  $n = 64$ ), Scotland (20.9%,  $n = 50$ ) and Ireland (50.6%,  $n = 121$ ). 83.1% of subjects stayed abroad for over a year, and only 16.9% of them at the time of the study had stayed away from their home country for a period shorter than 12 months. Almost half of the subjects – 49.6% – were university-educated. 20.8% were students and 29.7% completed either secondary or vocational school. The average age in the group was 30.9 ( $SD = 8.55$ ). Difference significance tests indicated that people living in various countries did not differ much in terms of demographic variables – groups were homogeneous.

The data for the study were collected in two ways: by completing a set of paper questionnaires 32.2% ( $n = 77$ ) and completing a digital version of the survey on a computer screen 67.8% ( $n = 162$ ). Subjects were asked to complete sets of questionnaires which included: the 'Brief COPE' Inventory (Carver, 1997; Juczyński & Ogińska-Bulik, 2009), 'Brief Stress Test' (Reschke & Shröder, 2000); 'Reactions to Daily Events Questionnaire' (Greenglass, Schwarzer & Taubert, 1999; Sęk & Pasikowski, 2002); 'Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale' (Schwarzer, Jerusalem & Juczyński, 2001), and the 'SIRI' questionnaire (Załeśkiewicz, 2001).

The 'Brief Stress Test' (Reschke & Shröder, 2000) is used to measure stress levels. This tool encompasses 23 statements which describe various stressful situations. The subject must indicate two features of each stressor: its frequency and the stress level it causes. Subjects used a 4-grade scale (0 – lowest frequency/stress; 3 – highest frequency/stress). For example, statements were related to traffic jams. In our study, this tool yielded satisfactory psychometric parameters. The reliability coefficient for the whole test was  $\alpha = 0.95$ , while for the stress level scale it was  $\alpha = 0.91$  and for the frequency scale it was  $\alpha = 0.89$ .

To measure strategies used to cope with stress, we used the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997; Juczyński & Ogińska-Bulik, 2009). With this tool, one can define strategies employed by a subject in order

to deal with stress. It includes 28 statements which represent 14 groups of stress coping strategies. These statements are grouped into 14 separate subscales of the questionnaire, and each one relates to a particular coping strategy (e.g. I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.). This tool yielded satisfactory psychometric parameters. The correlation coefficient between statements in a given subscale fell between 0.36 and 0.89. Results collected in this scale were treated as a symptom of reactive coping with the fact of leaving Poland.

The tendency to proactively cope with stress was measured by the 'Reactions to Daily Events Questionnaire' (Greenglass, Schwarzer & Taubert, 1999; adapted by Sęk & Pasikowski, 2002). This questionnaire included 55 statements which were grouped into 7 subscales representing coping strategies: proactive stress coping, reflexive stress coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, emotional supports seeking, and avoidance (e.g. I tackle a problem by thinking about realistic alternatives.). Subjects answered using a 4-grade scale, choosing the most suitable option: never, rarely, often, always. Each answer was given a number of points (0 for never, 3 for always). The sum of points in a given scale indicated its role in the behavioural repertoire of a given individual. This tool proved to be reliable; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was between 0.71 and 0.86. Results collected with this questionnaire were viewed as a symptom of coping with events which are going to happen while staying abroad.

Self-efficacy level was measured by the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, Jerusalem & Juczyński, 2001). Subjects were asked to grade 10 statements related to their beliefs about their ability to cope with various challenging situations (e.g. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.). Subjects answered using a 4-grade scale (0 – no; 3 – yes) to indicate to what extent they agreed with a given statement. The total score, which indicated the level of sense of one's own effectiveness, was measured by summing points for all answers. In our study, this tool yielded satisfactory psychometric parameters ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ).

Style of risk perception was measured by the SIRI Questionnaire (Zaleśkiewicz, 2001). This tool included 17 statements and the score was grouped into two scales: instrumental style of risk perception and stimulative style of risk perception. Subjects answered using a 5-grade scale: definitely not, probably not, I don't know, probably yes, definitely yes. Statements in the questionnaire were related to behaviour in risky situations. An example of a statement: I take risk only when it is necessary to achieve my goal. The reliability coefficient in the stimulative risk scale was  $\alpha = 0.73$ , and for instrumental risk  $\alpha = 0.64$ .

Subjects were also asked to complete a personal data questionnaire prepared by the authors, where

they were asked to provide their demographic data as well as circumstances and length of their stay abroad. The questionnaire included questions about their English skills and the number of people who accompanied them abroad. It was believed that these two variables can be considered as resources which can significantly influence the course of immigration stress transaction, which is convergent with other research focused on this issue (Aroian, 2010; Ayers *et al.*, 2009).

## RESULTS

The first stage of our analysis evaluated whether subjects who emigrated to various countries were different in terms of stress levels and perception of available resources. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results indicated that subjects – depending on the country – were greatly different in terms of stress levels ( $F = 29.768$ ;  $df = 2.232$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The observed divergence was significant ( $\eta^2 = 0.20$ ). It was found that the stress level is noticeably higher in Scotland, compared to Ireland and England.

Next, we assessed whether subjects were dissimilar in terms of styles of risk perceptions. It was found that subjects differed in terms of stimulative style of risk perception ( $F = 14.801$ ;  $df = 2.232$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.11$ ). Immigrants living in Ireland were more likely to use this style of risk perception, compared to Poles living in Scotland and England. There were also differences discovered in terms of instrumental style of risk analysis ( $F = 13.748$ ;  $df = 2.232$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.10$ ). Poles living in Ireland employed instrumental risk perception significantly less frequently, compared to immigrants living in Scotland and England.

As for the level of self-efficacy and social support, it remained similar amongst the compared groups. Analysis of self-efficacy resulted in  $F = 2.342$ ;  $df = 2.232$ ,  $p = 0.098$ ; and for social support  $F = 2.432$ ;  $df = 2.232$ ,  $p = 0.090$  (Table 1).

It was also verified whether immigrants living in various countries use different strategies for coping with stress related to past and future events. One significant difference was observed among reactive coping strategies – using instrumental support ( $F = 3.430$ ;  $df = 2.232$ ,  $p = 0.034$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.029$ ). Polish immigrants living in Scotland employed this method more often than immigrants living in England. Remaining reactive coping strategies were employed with similar intensity (Table 2).

Comparison of proactive coping intensity proved that Poles living in Ireland were more likely to use this strategy than immigrants in Scotland ( $F = 4.037$ ;  $df = 2.232$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.03$ ) (Table 3).

In order to identify factors which intensify stress levels among immigrants, linear regression analysis

Table 1

*Dissimilarities in stress levels and availability of resources (one-way ANOVA – F-test) (n = 235; df intergroup = 2; df intragroup = 232)*

	England n = 64	Scotland n = 50	Ireland n = 121	Inter-group effect analysis	Test F statistics		Effect size $\eta^2$
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		F	p	
Experienced stress level							
Stress levels	104.01 (43.26)	163.24 (74.47)	97.78 (43.91)	E < S; I < S	29.768	0.001	0.20
Resources							
Self-efficacy	30.36 (4.66)	28.88 (5.91)	30.62 (4.44)	–	2.342	0.098	–
Social support	2.61 (1.46)	3.20 (1.44)	2.88 (1.38)	–	2.432	0.090	–
Risk perception							
Stimulative style of risk perception	19.47 (6.45)	18.36 (4.19)	23.21 (6.45)	I > S; I > E	14.801	0.001	0.11
Instrumental style of risk perception	29.55 (5.99)	31.68 (4.32)	26.89 (6.04)	E > I; S > I	13.748	0.001	0.10

Note. E – England; S – Scotland; I – Ireland

Table 2

*Dissimilarities in stress coping strategies (one-way ANOVA – F-test) (n = 235; df intergroup = 2; df intragroup = 232)*

Stress coping strategy	England n = 64	Scotland n = 50	Ireland n = 121	Inter-group effect analysis	Test F statistics		Effect size $\eta^2$
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		F	p	
Active coping	4.67 (1.35)	4.72 (1.20)	4.50 (1.32)		0.638	0.529	
Planning	4.62 (1.36)	4.50 (1.15)	4.39 (1.38)		0.627	0.512	
Positive reframing	3.51 (1.58)	3.32 (1.60)	3.43 (1.45)		0.233	0.792	
Acceptance	3.84 (1.53)	3.96 (1.47)	3.83 (1.46)		0.148	0.862	
Humour	1.84 (1.45)	1.70 (1.09)	2.09 (1.48)		1.506	0.224	
Religion	1.20 (1.56)	1.36 (1.82)	1.52 (1.87)		0.683	0.506	
Use of emotional support	3.31 (1.77)	3.66 (1.67)	3.69 (1.70)		1.100	0.334	
Use of instrumental support	2.97 (1.82)	3.80 (1.56)	3.42 (1.69)	S > E	3.430	0.034	0.029
Self-distraction	3.09 (1.54)	2.86 (1.38)	3.25 (1.51)		1.270	0.283	
Denial	1.14 (1.60)	0.84 (1.23)	1.37 (1.52)		2.316	0.101	
Venting	2.92 (1.37)	2.70 (1.34)	2.92 (1.43)		0.507	0.603	
Use of substance	1.23 (1.70)	0.74 (1.24)	1.11 (1.66)		1.450	0.237	
Behavioural disengagement	1.19 (1.38)	1.30 (1.30)	1.24 (1.26)		0.105	0.901	
Self-blame	2.44 (1.85)	2.76 (1.77)	2.51 (1.85)		0.472	0.624	

Note. E – England; S – Scotland; I – Ireland

Table 3

*Dissimilarities in proactive stress coping (one-way ANOVA – F-test) (n = 235; df intergroup = 2; df intragroup = 232)*

Preventive strategy	England n = 64	Scotland n = 50	Ireland n = 121	Intergroup effect analysis	Test F statistics		Effect size $\eta^2$
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		F	p	
Proactive stress coping	37.98 (6.58)	35.98 (5.17)	38.75 (5.61)	I > S	4.037	0.19	0.03

Note. E – England; S – Scotland; I – Ireland

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was used. Regression equation results showed that stress levels amongst immigrants living in England are best explained by the following variables: stress coping strategy: 'self-distraction' ( $\beta = 0.346$ ;  $t = 3.225$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ), 'self-efficacy' ( $\beta = -0.329$ ;  $t = -3.059$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ), 'social support' ( $\beta = -0.265$ ;  $t = -2.740$ ;  $p = 0.008$ ). These three variables explained 28% of stress levels variance. This result indicates that the more often a subject uses the stress coping strategy 'self-distraction' and the lower the social support and self-efficacy, the higher are the stress levels observed among those who emigrated to England.

For Poles living in Ireland, stress level can be predicted as follows: intensity of 'self-distraction' strategy ( $\beta = 0.312$ ;  $t = 3.664$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), self-efficacy ( $\beta = -0.254$ ;  $t = -2.873$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ), self-blame ( $\beta = 0.211$ ;  $t = 2.408$ ;  $p = 0.018$ ). These variables explain stress levels at 20%. These results show that the more often a Polish immigrant in Ireland uses a stress coping strategy (self-distraction, self-blame) and the lower the self-efficacy they have, the higher their stress level is.

Stress levels for Poles living in Scotland were explained by the following strategies of coping with stress: self-blame ( $\beta = 0.417$ ;  $t = 3.482$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) and turning to religion ( $\beta = 0.416$ ;  $t = 3.472$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). These variables explain stress levels at 34%. These results show that more frequent usage of 'self-blame'

and 'turning to religion' strategies is related to higher stress levels.

The analysis revealed that the common variables present in both England and Ireland model were 'self-distraction' and 'self-efficacy'. Social support explained stress levels only in England. It is also apparent that Poles in Scotland and Ireland have a common strategy which explains changeability of stress levels, i.e. self-blame. A unique strategy of Polish immigrants in Scotland is turning to religion – this strategy was not present in any other model.

The presented data indicate that stress levels amongst immigrants living in England and Ireland can be explained by similar factors. As far as Scotland is concerned, the set of variables which explain stress levels is more similar to variables that constructed the model for immigrants in Ireland. The presented observations suggest that conditions of living in England and Scotland may be different (Table 4).

## DISCUSSION

Despite certain similarities, European English-speaking countries, which became the main emigration target after Poland's accession to the EU, differ in terms of specific conditions, cultural norms, labour market

Table 4  
*Predictors of stress levels amongst immigrants. Linear regression analysis*

England				Ireland				Scotland			
Variable	$\beta$	t	p	Variable	$\beta$	t	p	Variable	$\beta$	t	p
Stress levels											
Self-distraction	0.35	3.225	0.002	Self-distraction	0.31	3.664	< 0.001	Self-blame	0.42	3.482	0.001
Self-efficacy	-0.33	-3.059	0.003	Self-efficacy	-0.25	-2.873	0.005	Turning to religion	0.42	3.472	0.001
Social support	0.27	-2.740	0.008	Self-blame	0.21	2.408	0.018				
$R^2 = 0.28$ ; $F = 9.101^{**}$				$R^2 = 0.20$ ; $F = 11.262^{**}$				$R^2 = 0.34$ ; $F = 11.892^{**}$			

requirements and health care systems, which all influence quality of life of the citizens. Due to these dissimilarities, each country presents different challenges. This belief was confirmed by the results we collected. Immigrants in Scotland felt significantly higher stress levels than those who chose to live in England and Ireland. Further proof of differences in the experienced stress levels was provided by factor analysis which explained stress levels. Stress levels in England and Ireland are explained by similar factors. As far as Scotland is concerned, the set of variables that explain stress levels is different, more similar to variables that constructed the model for immigrants in Ireland. Based on the psychological adaptation to emigration and resettling model by Aroian (2010), it can be assumed that dissimilarities in stress levels can stem from more significant cultural differences between the target and home countries, which translates into more stressors, i.e. challenges that must be faced by an immigrant during the adaptation phase. An important factor that generates emigration stress can also be the level of openness of locals towards foreigners and level of difficulty of adapting to the cultural code in a given locality. However, in order to determine precise factors which make adaptation in Scotland more difficult for Poles than in other countries, it would require additional research in order to include factors related to reactions of local citizens to immigrants.

The countries which were analysed in this study are also dissimilar in terms of social services and support, which may be particularly important in challenging situations that are common for immigrants. Higher expenditure in Scotland on social services, including support for immigrants, may explain why Poles in Scotland chose to use instrumental supports as a strategy for stress coping more often than Poles living in England (BBC News – Scottish independence: Welfare forms 'possible but potentially costly', 2013). Perhaps it is the availability of social services that leads to less frequent preventive measures taken by immigrants, such as proactive stress coping, which is significantly lower for Poles in Scotland than for Poles in Ireland. However, in order to confirm these speculations, further research is needed.

Despite slight dissimilarities in use of coping strategies by Polish immigrants in various countries (there were only differences in terms of using emotional support), one can assume that immigrants deal with stress levels using similar coping strategies. It makes no difference whether coping is directed towards stress related to leaving Poland (reactive coping) or focused on future events (proactive coping). This observation suggests that the choice of coping methods employed by an individual depends more likely on their personal preferences, previous experiences and cultural context in which they had operated thus far than on external circumstances found in the target country.

The results of the analysis indicate certain tendencies in immigrants' risk perceptions. It was found that amongst people who left for Ireland, a stimulative style of risk perception was dominant; its level was significantly higher compared to Poles in Scotland and England, where an instrumental style of risk perception was prevalent. The nature of these dissimilarities remains unclear.

The conducted study has one significant limitation. It is related to sample selection. Data for the analyses were gathered in two ways: through paper questionnaires and electronic surveys. Using the Internet as a method of reaching subjects may have distorted the sample – the study may have included a disproportionately large group of individuals who are active and familiar with the requirements of modern life. Such people tend to use new technologies with greater ease.

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