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Counselling in the life of Polish emigrants

The author uses the immersionist concept of counselling research to interpret the narratives of contemporary Polish emigrants and authentic documents (emigrants' letters from *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki) and to identify the pre-emigration and migrant experiences which contribute to emigrants adopting (in the past and now) the role of a counselee and of a counsellor in the new environment. She also presents the processes of constructing self-induced and incidental counselling, as well as the ways, types and settings of organising formal counselling in Polish immigrant communities. The author discusses the risks inherent in such activities and their time-bound differences and similarities.

Keywords: Polish emigrants in the UK, the US and Germany, formal counselling, self-induced counselling

To capture the distinctiveness of emigrant counselling, which can be quite thoroughly, albeit indirectly, studied based on *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918, 1919, 1920), I examined *Life-Record of an Immigrant* (Władek's autobiography), which takes up the third of five volumes of the monumental monograph, and scrutinised letters written by Polish emigrants[1] in the US to their families in Poland (volumes 1 and 2 of *The Polish Peasant*). The migration experiences of Władek and other Polish emigrants (including the contemporary ones) fall within my research field, which focuses on counselling as initiated and provided in (primarily Polish) emigrant communities[2].

With my main question concerning the shape that counselling takes in *The Polish Peasant*, the factors that make it resemble and differ from today's counselling in communities, groups and circles of Poles abroad, I also examined the narratives

[1] I use the term 'emigrant' because I also explore people's migration paths from the perspective of the country they or their loved ones have left. Many of the authors I cite interchangeably use terms such as emigrant, immigrant, migrant, immigration, emigration and migration.

[2] I have spent one year helping refugees and migrants at a facility in the UK, and I have worked six months as a volunteer in several organisations and associations committed to counselling aid mainly for refugees in Germany.

of Poles who are now immigrants in Germany and the UK[3]. I was predominantly interested in those of their pre-emigration and migrant experiences which I regarded as relevant to their adoption of the roles of guidance-seeking counselees and of counsellors in their new environments. I inquired into what motives people had in performing these roles and how the process of becoming a counsellor or a counselee unfolded. I also investigated the kinds of organised intercultural counselling interventions identifiable in former and current migrant communities and looked into the assessment of the past and present practice of such counselling.[4] I adopted Elżbieta Siarkiewicz's (2010, pp. 31–35) framework of immersionist research in order to comprehensively explore the counselling "social worlds" (*Lebenswelten/Life-worlds*) and to immerse into counselling practice, availing myself of available methods and techniques. In writing this paper, I relied on document analysis (therein authentic letters included in *The Polish Peasant*) and narrative interviews,[5] which can be regarded as both a method and a technique (cf. Kaźmierska, 1997).

Why emigration

Among the factors crucial to re-establishing oneself as an immigrant (and, I would add, to the formation of the counsellor-counselee relationship in such conditions), John Berry (1997) lists the following ones: 1) associated with the country of origin (cultural distance between the native and the host countries); 2) related to the

[3] My research so far has been funded from multiple grants. In 2016, I carried out a three-month study project funded by the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), and in 2017 I spent six months doing research at the Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University (Germany), supported by the KAAD (Katholischer Akademischer Ausländer-Dienst). In 2014, I conducted a two-month study among the Polish community in Newcastle upon Tyne as part of the internal faculty grant scheme of the University of Lower Silesia. Prior to that, in 2006/2007, I had spent six months as a visiting scholar doing research internship at Newcastle University in Newcastle upon Tyne.

[4] These research foci were supposed to help me grasp counselling-related factors and processes in the past and present worlds of emigration. This temporal comparative perspective was pivotal to my research because, as Alicja Kargulowa explains, 'seeking counselling and guidance from various people, "agencies," and institutions, as well as seeking various forms of help, hits the eye now, but since it does not always have to be openly registered, its irresistible visibility and availability for research may be a temporary matter only. It may easily change as the time goes by' (Kargulowa, 2013, p. 259). The juxtaposition of the 'historical' and contemporary migrant counselling worlds may help identify characteristic features of formal, non-formal and informal counselling in Polish emigrant communities. This paper is another stage and iteration of my research, which seeks to locate and explore, in particular, informal areas of counselling.

[5] When doing research in 2016, I conducted six narrative interviews with Polish female emigrants working in Germany after 2011, and in 2017 I collected ten narrative interviews with adult Poles who emigrated to West Germany in the 1970s and 80s and were recognised as refugees. In 2014, I ran workshops with Poles who had come to Newcastle upon Tyne after 2004. I asked them to draw networks in which they lived and to tell me about them during individual meetings (for more information, see Słowik, 2016). In 2006/2007, I conducted twenty-six narrative interviews with Poles settled in North-East of England (for more details, see Słowik, 2013).

target countries of migration (migration and integration policies, historical conditions of migration, etc.); 3) linked to support and aid available to migrants in these countries; 4) concerning one's migrant community in the host country (the structure and resources of migrant communities, the development of formal and non-formal institutions, societies[6] and ethnic associations, etc.); and 5) stemming from emigrants' individual features (e.g. age, migration experiences, time spent abroad, education, character and personality).

These factors may affect the decision to emigrate and also to choose professional or incidental counselling, the latter possibly replacing formal and non-formal counselling, especially in emigrant-counselees' daily experiences, which are ambiguous, new, yet unnamed and thus "reckless". The same factors contribute to the adoption of the counsellor-role by emigrants (randomly, by chance, as a consequence of a coincidence).

In my analysis and interpretation[7] of the narrative interviews I collected and the letters of Polish emigrants published in *The Polish Peasant*, I noticed that adopting the role of a counsellor and/or a counselee abroad was above all connected with the very fact of emigration, that is, of leaving one's country in order to improve one's difficult living conditions. Several emigrants would likely have not taken these roles had they remained in their home country, or at least they would have performed them differently. Emigration was often viewed as the only way out of an impasse, trouble and problems and resulted from a difficult decision which was only sealed and implemented when other solutions had failed. The narratives of all emigrants – both those cited in *The Polish Peasant* and those elicited from my respondents in Germany and the UK – contain a critical point, a breakthrough moment which made people embark on the migration path and, in many cases, adopt the role of a counselee or, later, take the role of an informal counsellor embedded in everyday realities (cf. Siarkiewicz, 2010, p. 32).

Contemporary emigrants mainly explained their decision to leave Poland by referring to their experience of challenging economic and social conditions, which had made emigration the only viable alternative:

[6] Znaniecki and Thomas explain the role of societies as follows: 'But the "society" founded in a new colony is much more than a mutual insurance institution. Not only does it bring the scattered members of the colony periodically together, thus actively encouraging social intercourse, but it becomes the social organ of the community, the source of all initiative and the instrument for the realization of all plans initiated' (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, pp. 39–40).

[7] My interpretation of the narrative interviews helpfully relied on the terminology used in counselling studies, on which I will not elaborate here. To identify counselling practices and interventions, the counsellor and the counselee I drew on definitions available in studies by Polish counselling researchers: A. Kargulowa (2004), B. Wojtasik (1997), E. Siarkiewicz (2010) and M. Piorunek (2015).

> *We were really fed up with struggling along, my husband lost his job, and I went bankrupt* (F/40);[8] *I hit the wall and hurt myself badly* (F/53); *I ran into debt – a loan for my second wedding, the child support money, a car repair – and I couldn't see where I could earn more, I worked extra hours but couldn't make ends meet anyway* (F/56).

For his part, Władek, the protagonist of volume three of *The Polish Peasant* chose the emigration path out of refusal to be a "loser", a "whoreson" and an "unnatural child" who always failed, was no good at anything and constantly got in trouble, an image his mother projected for him. Inscribed in his biography, this "script" led Władek to the brink, and having fallen to the very bottom of helplessness and poverty, he became a good candidate for migrant life[9]. The succinct summary of his life as reported in his biographical life-record reads:

> [T]he third [son], Władysław, the one whom his mother called a degenerate, because he would not learn, completed a general school in Lubotyn. To make sure he would have an occupation, his mother put him into apprenticeship with a baker. He became a journeyman and took to drinking. He was a hard drinker. For this reason, he wandered from town to town in search of work, and when he found a job at a bakery, he got drunk, the bread got burned in the oven because he was asleep, and he had to look for a job anew – from village to village, from town to town. His mother called him a vagabond. He was a disgrace to the family. (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1976, p. 316)

Such and other circumstances linked to poverty, hardship and hope for a better life "across the great water" saw Polish emigrants (both those of old and today's ones) find themselves outside the Polish borders and adopt the role of a counselee and/or a counsellor, which can be deemed a result of chance or luck, rather than a deliberate choice.

Stepping into the role of a counsellor and a counselee

Under the circumstances of emigration, various (formal and informal) counsellors receive signals implying people's expectations of support. How they respond to these signals may depend not only on their knowledge of difficulties and problems that haunt emigrants (whatever their nationality) but also on counselees'

[8] I use italics to mark passages from the narrative interviews I compiled. They are quoted verbatim from originally Polish transcriptions without any interventions on my part. The gender and age of the respondents are given as M (for males) and F (for females), followed by numbers representing their ages, e.g. (M/27) and (F/40).

[9] Michał Bilewicz explains the reason for migration. In his view, people with weak identification will do anything to prepare themselves for leaving their group and facilitate future migration or even escape (Bilewicz, 2008, p. 10).

expectations and preferences as to the provision of help. People affected by migration – the relatives at home and abroad – tend to alternate the roles of a counsellor and a counselee. Who becomes a counsellor or a counselee and when it happens hinges on the nexus of individual pre-emigration and emigration experiences. Both need each other, and counselling requests and the interventions launched in response are known to strongly bind both strangers and relatives, though they may also trigger quarrels, conflicts and splits in families.

Shortly before leaving for the US, Władek Wiśniewski from *The Polish Peasant* used counselling support provided by his family. He recalls in his diary:

> During the dinner I asked each of my brothers to write down for me some advice for my future behavior. So Aleksy took his card and wrote the following words: 'Work makes rich, drinking ruins.' Paweł wrote: 'Who is not married at thirty and rich at forty is a complete fool.' Lucus wrote: 'Civilize yourself.' I would not accept any advice from Roman, for he was too young to give advice to elders. I have kept this card up to the present and will leave it to my son. (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1919, p. 381)

Władek carried the maxims, guidelines and counselling slogans around, memorised them, used them when need occurred and adjusted his personal decisions and choices to them. As a migrant counselee, Władek relied on the traditional form of letters, which he used when counselling "nuggets of wisdom" failed to work. It took him months to receive informal guidance in this way. The waiting time could promote reflection and attempts to find a solution on his own. After the time-lapse, the advice delivered in a letter could possibly be outdated. Nevertheless, Władek apparently did not seek counselling help outside the Polish community despite all these obstacles and the establishment of new contacts.

Another individual in *The Polish Peasant*, a woman who owns a farm in Poland, also uses letters to address her children across the ocean, asking them for advice on how to go about managing her estate (forest, land). She appoints her son as an informal counsellor and casts herself in the role of a counselee. She appeals to her offspring to organise her trip to the US:

> "My dear children, consult one another and write me, how I shall do. But it would be best, my dear Antoś, if it were your head, for you are my guardian. Arrange it so that we may sell it and that you may take me and Franek to America, for I don't wish to farm here" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, p. 11).

The same mother expresses her resentment at having her plea for counselling help unanswered, when her loved one does not respond, stops writing to her and does not step into the counsellor's role (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, p. 11).

This is not the only case in *The Polish Peasant* when families in Poland request counselling interventions in both everyday and non-standard issues. In this way, Poles abroad tend to be forced to make decisions for others, to give clues, to offer

suggestions and to advise on matters which are no longer relevant to emigrants. Faced with multiple unknowns, informal counsellors from America not so much prove reluctant to help as rather are often in need of counselling support themselves. Augustyn Bańka reports that emigrants fashion hybrid, multi-scalar identities and forge multiple, variable group affiliations because their group memberships are in a constant and unconstrained flow (Bańka, 2017, pp. 168–170). These processes, in which they participate for various reasons, sometimes exceed the agentive capacities of emigrants who do not possess counselling resources, feel confused and incompetent, do not understand what is going on with them, seek random support for themselves and consequently avoid contacts with family. They keep up the impression of prospering abroad, which proves detrimental to them when their passivity and withdrawal from counselling activities become incomprehensible and are construed as selfishness. For example:

> Dear Son Antoni! Answer me how I shall manage, for my son-in-law Baranowski sent me a letter saying that he is sending me a ship-ticket for myself and for my son, and wishes to take us to America. And you, dear son, come to an understanding yourself with the others, whether all of you know about it or not, for I am not just as I stand, but I have land and forest, and I don't know how to manage […] answer me, how I shall have it there […]. For, my dear son, there is a marriage opportunity for me, with Józef Plata, who is a very good man. So answer me, my son, as soon as possible, whether I may live in our country, for I don't need to wander about the world in my old years, only my [youngest] son wants us to go. (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, pp. 15–16)

How differentiated the process of becoming a counsellor may be is well exemplified in a letter in which a son (Wacek Łazowski) asks his father in the US to tell him what education path he should choose. In this, the boy conforms with tradition because fathers are traditionally advisors and authority figures, which is particularly important if the other parent is identified as helpless: "Dear Father, what shall mother do with me, for I shall go to the school only till vacation, and mother does not know where to give me [in apprenticeship]" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, p. 314).

At the same time, reverse situations can be found, in which emigrants approach their loved ones with very prosaic requests, calling upon family members to be counsellors. The two parties involved (compatriots at home and abroad) can be said to "exploit" each other by demanding that the other party act as counsellors, without recognising any limits in asking for help, behaving intuitively and spontaneously, and appealing to their sense of duty vis-à-vis their relatives. It may be that homesickness, despair, loneliness, financial difficulties and the lack of support make them authoritatively demand not only instrumental advice but also material aid. For example, a daughter asks her mother to send her feathers to America. Her mother responds:

> And now, dear daughter, you mention these feathers, asking me to send them to you. You see, it is so, dear daughter. These feathers which I had bought began to be eaten by mites, so I sold a part of them, but if somebody happens to go to America, I will buy some and send them to you. But if nobody goes, then nothing can be done, and don't be angry with me, dear daughter and son-in-law. (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, p. 22)

Similar behaviour is exhibited by contemporary Polish emigrants who settled in the UK after 2004. In their narrative interviews, they mention that they have been asking their loved ones in Poland to send them a range of items, such as very particular varieties of fudge candies, chocolate-coated marshmallows and pretzel sticks because *they don't have them here* (F/26); pictures with images of saints, a blanket to put on the bed and bed linen *made from that Polish cotton* (F/30); certain creams, ointments and medicines *because they don't have such ones here, and what they have allergises or doesn't work* […] *this reminds me of Poland* (F/47); photos, sausage and spices. Some of the respondents pressed their loved ones to take care of official matters for them, which was often highly troublesome: *but I keep thinking, how should I go about this, how is it to be done, where should I go. I didn't sleep night after night, all in sweat, and I must say it cost a lot, these papers, and to send them over later, but you know, the things you do for your children* – a determined mother confesses in her interview, talking about her daughter's request to take care of overdue formalities for her (F/70).

Thomas and Znaniecki's study features yet another aspect of the counsellor's role performed by Polish emigrants who, versed as they are in the realities of migrant life and having emigration experiences, warn others against emigrating, whereby they shatter the idealistic image of prosperity in America. Adopting the role of informal counsellors, they want to caution, protect and encourage others to think matters over, which their countrymen sometimes perceive as unkindness, selfishness and unwillingness to help. For instance, Jan Kukiełka curbs excessive enthusiasm by showing what biographical work must be done by emigrants and how radically they must restructure their lives to successfully settle in a new world. Advising – or rather discouraging – he writes to his sister about his niece's plans to go to the US:

> Here in America it is not the same as in our country. What if she does come to me? She cannot remain with me, but must go into service, and in the service it is necessary to learn the English language, and even to learn washing and cooking. Then there will be misery and weeping, because somebody speaks and you can only look at him. If you want it exceedingly I will send [the ticket], but then don't blame me. (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, p. 306)

I have observed similar counselling interventions on a variety of occasions in contemporary migrant contexts. I have also identified them in the narratives of

Poles in the UK (Słowik, 2016) and in Germany (Słowik, 2017). However, this kind of cautionary counselling practice which is underpinned by people's own migration experiences may fail to work. Some individuals see only one solution, namely emigrating at any cost as later things are bound to be better. They forget or reject David Hume's warning that *post hoc non est propter hoc*[10]. Counselees who are recipients of admonitory messages do not comprehend their content as counselling support, refuse to accept it and often believe that it is exaggerated as coming from a person who "failed" and is thus bound to be jealous of other people's success. They want to face up to the emigration experience themselves and have their lives "ploughed through" by the experience of living abroad. Later, having gained this experience, many of them recommend thoughtfulness and prudence, dispensing very similar advice to that they themselves received and dismissed before.

Consequently, in emigration contexts, various losers, derelicts, wretches, individuals with wrecked lives, pariahs and random people build on their pre-emigration and emigration experiences to become "helping experts". Whether they accept or decline the role of a counsellor is determined by the emigration context, problems, dilemmas arising when they or their relatives emigrate, the helplessness of their loved ones who struggle with loneliness, and expectations towards them as emigration pioneers, irrespective of obstacles, entanglements and issues they face on foreign soil. Counsellors who are abroad are supposed to provide help, be accessible and offer support because they, by definition, should be better off. Counselees as a rule do not stop to think, to explore and to consider various kinds of information and images of emigration. At the same time, emigrants, who are confronted with challenging and difficult living conditions in their new settings, are also to an extent at the mercy of their relatives as counsellors in the home country. Despite their difficult situation, they activate bottom-up counselling interventions, and draw on their own experiences to initiate and co-organise self-induced counselling.

Self-induced counselling in emigrant communities

What I identify in the milieu of contemporary Polish emigrants is a kind of intercultural – mainly spontaneous and incidental – counselling which I refer to as self-induced counselling. It takes place casually, amidst standard, conventional, everyday pursuits which make the counselling situation less serious, uncomplicated, communicative and non-committal. As such, it is perceived as just one among several common events and activities.

Such bottom-up counselling interventions which are "intrinsic to everyday life" in emigrant communities are constructed in a spontaneous manner. They are

[10] In Latin, 'after this is not because of this' warns against a logical fallacy in which inferences are made about cause-effect relationships on the basis of one event simply following another in time (cf. Hume, 2005).

"sparked" by an idea, a slogan and/or an evocation of values which may be shared, accepted and cultivated, for example, by a small group of enthusiasts; this morphs into publishing a newspaper, founding a magazine, organising a charitable campaign, etc. The counselling idea attracts and unites those who believe that such pursuits are meaningful and are receptive to other people's needs. They are capable of naming and illumining difficulties and problems, especially those which are as a rule either eclipsed by the multiplicity of human experiences or deliberately ignored. The counselling idea itself could remain just this – a circulating, sensitising idea – were it not for individuals who not only kindle this idea but also spread and disseminate it, sometimes to places where there are no counsellors. The brave and valiant of counselling (who are possibly lone wolves) may act in intuitive ways and out of kindness, but they relish making helping ideas a reality and turning them into practice. They have a sense of agency and subscribe to the do-it-yourself principle in offering individual help in everyday situations, where they are reassured that their actions are effective. Initially, they may not assemble into any organisations, associations or foundations, but extend help in their local communities by arranging situations in which to talk together about problems and opportunities (this is how an informal group of Poles in the UK act by publishing the Polish paper *2B* and holding informal entertaining events to celebrate, for example, Grandmother's and Grandfather's Days).

I refer to this kind of counselling interventions which arise spontaneously out of an instinctive idea and impromptu designs as "unalloyed" counselling. It is not limited to identifying, exploring and cataloguing people's problems but also insists on processes, practices and interventions that respond to the needs of forgotten and/or excluded groups and individuals. I believe that this self-generating, voluntary and spontaneously triggered intercultural counselling practice may spurn that which is economically motivated, market-bound and financially estimable. In my view, the "surge" of informal counselling practices in emigrant communities may express a repudiation of the commercialisation, hermeticism and ineffectiveness of institutional counselling interventions. It also "punctures the balloon" of indolent formal and non-formal actors and shows that things can be done differently so that people feel *chez soi* (at home). Sharing the migrant fate, an informal counsellor who acts spontaneously and intuitively may respond to the needs of bruised people, who should not be left unaided. Such a counsellor may launch interventions which are not necessarily profitable, consistent with political correctness or aligned with the local, international and EU directives in place. I view such interventions as a refusal to accept situations pervaded by floating responsibility or the responsibility of nobody (Arendt, 2006), also regarding the quality of formal and non-formal counselling practices. The fact that counselling practices are accessible in the lives of emigrants and their companions may amount to the meeting of basic human needs (with the human conceived as *homo consultans*), that is, helping others and obtaining help in difficult situations. As a rule, there will be those who identify and

initiate what needs to be done for others, implementing interventions in their small communities.

There are various sites where counselling of this type is practised. Maria Lucinda Fonesca and Jorge Malheiros (2005) explain that spaces which involve mutual contacts and physical closeness are particularly relevant in the lives of emigrants. Wherever Poles settle down, they open shops, bakeries, beauty parlours, hairdresser's shops, pharmacies, temp agencies, pubs, discos and clubs. Admittedly, they are not typical counselling facilities, but I identified multiple forms of informal counselling help provision at such venues. Backrooms, basements and attics of pubs and restaurants serve as meeting places where Polish associations discuss projects and plans of counselling interventions (establishing Polish migrant organisations, designing training programmes, job boards, educational courses, etc.). They also host meetings with experts (e.g. police officers or nurses) who seek to establish a rapport with Poles, have a counselling offer for them and want to help them (for example, I took part in meetings with the EURES staff). These venues see the germination of new ideas about Polish elementary and music schools, film festivals, etc. I myself ran three series of workshops entitled „Jak pomagać polskim emigrantom i co o nich warto wiedzieć?" ["On helping Polish emigrants and on what one should know about them"] in a pub's attic room. Their target audience included social-service workers (police officers, firefighters, nurses, etc.) whose clients included emigrants from Poland and who realised that their work was thwarted by communication issues. Additionally, some of the participants did not know anything about Polish culture and searched for any useful information. They often asked *Who are these folks that came here?*

Talks, meetings with interesting guests and events within Polish Culture Days also take place in restaurants, pubs, cafes and wherever rooms can be rented at a small fee or none at all. At such locations, intercultural counselling interventions are initiated, organised and provided (cf. Słowik, 2013, pp. 148–152). One of my female respondents emphasised the relevance of such places:

> *it's a good thing that something is going on, that something is organised for Poles; I know how things are with Poles, there are always some dissatisfied folks who only complain, but will not do any work* (…) *people meet up wherever they can just to be together* (…) *I think that we can organise things anywhere, a mere room with a table and chairs will do* (…) *we just feel like doing something for others at weird, dirty places, but what else can you do if you must pay to rent a room, and these owners charge us the least?* (M/33).

Władek also mentioned so-called saloons, i.e. venues where Polish workers met after work to have a beer, discuss the day's affairs, exchange information, share their observations, talk about available jobs and vacant flats and celebrate Polish national holidays. Sometimes the scene of assaults and violently settled conflicts, the saloons were equally frequently sites where informal and incidental intercultural

counselling became well entrenched, garnering popularity and renown. It was produced in the rush of migrant life. At the places of social meetings, one could drop the buoy, dock in, moor at the port, vent off the tensions of the day, find out about one's family, for an acquaintance might have just received a letter from his home village, and cling to an effective counsellor as needs or the situation dictated (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1919, pp. 391–397; cf. also Pacyga, 1991, p. 5).

Another important area where emigrant counsellors offer their intercultural informal counselling help was and still is the publication of magazines, which is often an amateur, cottage industry involving makeshift arrangements and primitive equipment. In her discussion of the first Polish migrant magazine *Rolnik* [*Farmer*] founded in 1881, Małgorzata Szejnert reports that although it was not a typical self-help publication, it

> "offered advice to Polish exiles who settled in and around Stevens Point in the second half of the 19th century. They worked at factories and paper mills, tilled the land and built farms. The magazine was in demand, as attested by the fact that towards the end of its first year it had more than three hundred subscribers, a considerable number at that time" (Szejnert, 1972, p. 171).

The importance of spontaneously founded journals and dailies, which were popular with Poles, was also dwelled on by Adam Bartosz, the long-standing Editor-in-Chief of the weekly Gwiazda Polarna (Polar Star), one of the most popular Polish migrant daily newspapers published in the US since 1908. The paper owed its success to

> chatty columns on things going on in the city, among the Polish migrants. They were written in the Polish-American argot spoken by most Poles who felt at home here. This form endeared the paper to the readers, who after all craved a familiar chat and neighbourly bonds. I wrote about their affairs, about what I heard at Polish homes, at gatherings of Polish organisations, in parishes. These columns 'hooked them in' – they caught on. (Szejnert, 1972, p. 173).

In newspapers, people could freely express themselves, put down their insights, present their lives and describe their observations. The very opportunity of publicly sharing ideas usually triggered the counselling process. The editor would obtain texts for publication from several emigrants, and newspapers also served as sites of polemics and disputes. Readers responded to requests for help and thus adopted the role of counsellors. As already mentioned, one of such informal magazines was *2B*, published by a group of emigrant volunteers in North-East England, who used their private funding and personal computers to typeset the magazine at home in their free time, serving as its editorial board as well.

At the same time, the "surge" of some spontaneous counselling practices and venues where they take place engenders a "jungle" of counselling interventions, especially when counselling slogans (such as those collected by Władek) no longer

work. In such cases, activities surface which have nothing in common with counselling practice but are nevertheless – unfortunately – labelled as "counselling help". This label attracts attention, halts one in the course of one's life and seems to be the last resort. Sundry "counsellors" swarm around; they will tell one where and what advice is easiest to obtain, but they will first of all advertise their own helping offer. They will pat one on the shoulder, reassert in one's behaviour, manipulate and make one dependent on help. The jungle of informal, impetuous counselling practices is (ostensibly) colourful, fecund and thriving, but in fact it is above all chaotic and confused. The law of the jungle with survival of the fittest rules, while those weaker perish, accept the conditions that keep them alive or fall back on whatever resources are available. Such practices can be viewed as a result of dehumanisation, which leads to the "depersonalisation" of the oppressed, those divested of rights and pushed to the margin, people with so-called "wasted lives" (Bauman, 2003; Bilewicz, 2008), with all this being governed by the rule of *per fas et nefas* (by any means, right or wrong). This happens because the areas of informal incidental emigrant counselling are not subject to audit, elude control and rarely attract the attention of researchers. The (past and present) ambiguities of emigrant life on the one hand compel people to develop individual ways of coping (including the search for and organisation of counselling help), and on the other are replete with the risk of dangerous activities undertaken by informal counsellors. Those who feel an inner need to help others are guided by altruistic goals in organising it. Those who view it in terms of financial profit and easy gains, take advantage of the vulnerability of emigrants who stumble upon difficulties in integrating with their new community. According to the narrators from the UK and Germany, when good counsellors work outside their native culture, they are not prejudiced by cultural differences, have developed cultural competencies (Sundar, 2009, p. 99) and help people whatever their nationality. Kwame Anthony Appiah highlights the key relevance of all conversations in encounters with such people. Conversation should seek to foster an understanding, especially between "people from different ways of life" (Appiah, 2006, p. xxi).

I have observed that some informal past and present intercultural counselling practices are so creative and unconventional that, instead of buttressing them, complete (and sometimes even partial) formalisation may rather considerably constrain them and strip them of dynamism, vitality, vigour, insightfulness, innovation, unconventionality, freshness and boldness. The informal quality of counselling practices and their *bona fide* (honesty) should perhaps be sustained and protected against institutionalisation despite risks, for informal counsellors, unrestrained by regulations and directives as they are, come up with more conceptual approaches and ideas and work in more inventive and avant-garde ways when they are unfettered than when they obtain ready-made instructions to follow or do as they are told to with a view to securing financial funding. It would be best for informal counsellors to be able to decide for and by themselves how much the interventions

they initiate should be formalised. Exploring emigrant life, I believe that (given their embedding in the sphere of human privacy and everyday life) informal intercultural counselling practices have always defied being enclosed within fixed patterns of counselling activities and will continue to do so. They represent a unique dimension of human engagement which pulsates with a rhythm of its own. I believe it is essential to reduce the official "oversight" in counselling to a minimum, to control less and to offer (also formally) more options, support and reinforcement in order to prevent the "quenching" of eagerness and the inflow of ideas about how to offer bottom-up help.

Past and present of organised counselling help

The narratives produced by my respondents in the UK and Germany and cited in *The Polish Peasant* feature various kinds not only of spontaneous and incidental counselling help but also of organised (mainly formal) interventions launched by appointed emigrant counsellors. Their activities are legally sanctioned and authorised, complete with a pre-set range of interventions, a programme, the employed staff with their defined mission and pre-determined, though sometimes re-considered, goals.

Early Polish emigrants have a special respect for the missionary pursuits of the Roman Catholic Church. They accept the support it makes available, unproblematically receive it and pass it on. They assess it as effective, easily accessible, friendly, trustworthy and reliable, one reason for this being that it comes in Polish (e.g., in the churches of St. Stanisław Kostka and St. Adalbert in Chicago), (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, pp. 43–44). Clergymen (priests) are perceived by many Polish emigrants in the US as counsellors in all matters and in all problems of emigration. Priests give clues, point to solutions, evaluate good and bad choices made abroad, introduce the details of living in a foreign country and solve dilemmas for people. Clergymen described in *The Polish Peasant* adopt the role of experts, believe that they know what is best for emigrants, arrange material aid, help people find jobs and organise leisure time of their countrymen (offer activities mainly in parish halls and churches). The counselling role of priests is captured, for example, in the following passage of a memoir:

> "For it is a well-known and certain thing that […] wherever there is a priest, a church, wherever a parish is being created, there Polish life grows vigorously, there our number multiplies, for from all sides people come willingly, feeling better among their own and with their own, feeling safer under the protective wings of the parish and with their own shepherd, who here in a foreign land is not only a representative of his brothers before the altar of the Lord but leads and represents them in all worldly affairs […] is in the whole sense of this word, a social and national worker" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 68).

Some traditions, e.g. the blessing of foods on Easter and the sharing of a holy wafer at Christmas Eve supper, have become such an ingrained element of Chicago life that they are also practised by other national communities (Pacyga, 1991, pp. 1–12; Parot, 1981). Similar behaviour is described by Sylvie Aprile, Hélène Bertheleu and Pierre Billion (2013, pp. 71–74), who have studied Polish (chiefly female) migrants in Touraine (central France) in 1930–1935. They have interpreted several dozen letters written by Poles and, in case of illiterate women, by their friends and social workers. The farm and rural workers report how after their days of toil they walked several miles to take part in religious services conducted in Polish. This is how they spent the leisure time they had at their disposal once a week (mainly on Sunday after doing the necessary chores on livestock farms).

Contemporary Polish emigrants in Germany and the UK also talk about counselling help organised by clergymen. Their evaluation of it is positive. One of the narrators said that the church *is a place where you can feel Poland* (F/33), and another one mentioned that:

> *Priests are more liberal abroad, especially the young ones, and that's why they draw in those who didn't have much in common with the Church back in Poland. My partner from Nigeria left me, but the priest christened my child without making any fuss about it. In Poland, it would've been impossible. This may seem unimportant, but it had an effect on me, I'd thought I would be evaluated, judged, moralised about it* (F/35).

Emphatically, the tendency to organise counselling help in America in the early 20th century "grew out" of the "pre-industrial" community of Polish emigrants, who had experience in opposing the feudal system since *usus magister est optimus*[11]. Consequently, Poles carried revolutionary traditions and the urge of self-determination to America. For this reason, side by side with the Church in the role of a counselling facility, a counselling "offer" was constructed by mushrooming associations and societies. Michał Bukowczyk reports that Poles who joined these organisations realised that the new conditions and the American industrial revolution had their potential and afforded various opportunities; they were also capable of capitalising on the circumstances, mobilising their skills and eschewing what did not match the American work environments and industrial changes (Bukowczyk, 1996, pp. 25–30). Other authors, such as Dominic Pacyga (1991) and Joseph Bigott (2001), also show that, against the widespread stereotype, Polish peasants found effective ways of integrating with the developing American industry. This process did not involve transplanting and re-embedding Polish traditions and customs; instead, it was underpinned by informed and sound decisions and by the belief that flexibility and open-mindedness promoted better lives. These emigrants were quickly identified by Americans as a community of Polish workers rather than of peasants.

[11] Latin: Experience is the best teacher (Cicero).

This transformation process unfolded in three stages, specifically from the disorganisation to the organisation and, finally, to the re-organisation of Polish emigrant circles. As an important stage in this sequence, so-called *inward-looking communities* were formed which were responsible for sustaining the group stability, cohesion and coherence. The following development involved what is known as *extracommunalism,* i.e. the emergence of smaller groups external to but still associated with the native community. This stability combined with openness to novelty fostered the formation and separation of ethnic employee groups (therein the Polish one) and much later of *reformers* from the middle class of Poles. The latter worked in administration agencies, offices and political parties, making decisions about local and regional changes. All these transformations demanded negotiating and agreeing on outlooks, support, coping and advice-giving.

Pacyga (1997), Donald Pienkos (1991), Edward Kantowicz (1984) and Stefan Kieniewicz (1985) report that choices made by Poles – the re-modelling of their rural lifestyle into a more industrial, working-class one – had an impact on the dynamic of life in several emigrant communities of other nationalities, which followed in their footsteps. Poles were recognised for their capacity to come to terms with migrant insecurity, for their innovative mindset, flexibility, agency, industry and rich revolutionary and insurgent experiences. A considerable proportion of Polish emigrants knew their rights, demanded that they be respected and mobilised active resistance if abused. Their pursuits may be viewed as a struggle against being treated as an underclass. Such attitudes are discussed by Chris Barker, who shows that ethnic minorities and migrant communities may be perceived in this way, which transpires in designing and implementing migration policies. Emigrants are pervasively represented as inferior, irrelevant, uneducated, not deserving attention and temporary (Barker, 2005, pp. 282–291).

In this context, trade unions were another important actor in organising varied counselling help and opposing such deprecating classifications. Poles insisted on having them founded. In trade unions, they "forged" the foundation of intercultural counselling support and developed modes of interventions for counsellors stemming from Polish emigrant circles. As recorded by Richard Oestreicher (1986), Kantowicz (1984) and Victor Greene (1975), initially their work was only known to a handful of Poles, but those who "tested" it quickly realised what resources it had. Trade unions were legal entities which could act in defence of employee rights in factories. Trade unionists advised other Poles that it was exigent to sign labour contracts and, before signing, to read them carefully despite the language barrier. I believe that the collaboration of trade unionists, including the provision of counselling support, was made possible by their readiness to respect differences, which was exhibited and enacted by the union boards, an attitude that, as shown by Kathleen Valtonen, is a direct opposite of the ethnocentric approach, which solely underscores, highlights and recognises the importance of the norms of one's own country and endorses them as the most valuable ones (Valtonen, 2008, pp. 32–33).

The role of trade unions in organising counselling help was also spotlighted by third-wave Polish emigrants in the UK (Słowik, 2013) and Germany (Słowik, 2017). They emphasised the importance of the support obtained from the unions in navigating the labyrinth of procedures and legal regulations. The board members on duty as counsellors (e.g. emigrant pioneers) offered information on employee rights as well, which was all the more important since some Poles who arrived in the UK after 2004 were victims of human trafficking. The signing of labour contracts with them was sometimes delayed, they were offered illegal work or jobs paid below the minimum wage, they did not receive protective clothing, and they were not paid on time. Michel Agier refers to immigrants who find themselves in such a position as the world's forgotten and ignored "remnants" (Agier, 2011, p. 4). Discussing the operations of trade unions, the narrators in England stated that

> *it makes sense to join these unions, even though you've got to pay membership fees, but they help when something is not right at work, you've got somebody to go in case of "e[mergency]", they will represent you at court, give you a lawyer* (F/33).

In *The Polish Peasant*, Znaniecki and Thomas included documents which demonstrate a varied array of formal intercultural counselling help provided for Polish emigrants by multiple societies and their counsellors – Polish emigrants as well. The Legal Aid Society in Chicago is among the organisations that frequently recur in volume five of *The Polish Peasant*. The scope of counselling interventions it offered is inferable from multiple records that confirm the requests the Society handled:

> "Mrs. Morawski complained to the Legal Aid Society that her husband was a hard drinker and had always abused her. He often dragged her out of bed and threatened to kill her" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 225).

The account goes on: "Lena Ziejewski complained to the Legal Aid Society that her husband beat her repeatedly with unusual cruelty, particularly when he was drunk" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 226). Among the clients of the Society was also Martha Gutowska: "Two months later she applied to the Legal Aid Society to know whether she should be remarried to him [her physically abusive husband]" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 227).

The records of the Society contain a document reporting counselling interventions associated with social and family counselling and marshalled in divorce cases, for example concerning legal costs to be covered by a wife-battering husband: "The Society advised her to agree to this plan, as she was alone and friendless here and moreover had incipient Bright's Disease. She was "confused and unintelligible and evidently fated"" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 238). Members of the Society also helped in writing child support applications: "Mrs Michalski appealed to the

Legal Aid Society to assist her to get more money from her husband" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 233).

Emigrant counsellors established the "cornerstone" of institutional counselling help at the Society of Young Men of St. Kazimierz and the Society of Ladies of Queen Jadwiga, both of which defined themselves as mutual help societies. In these organisations, counsellors ran workshops on domestic economy and the management of financial resources. The Loan and Savings Association of St. Joseph No 3, the Building Loan and Savings Association of Pułaski and the Building Loan and Savings Association of St. Francis trained their clients to avoid incurring financial obligations as a result of failing to carefully peruse the related paperwork (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, pp. 83–84). Counsellors read documents, contracts and agreements involving Polish emigrants before they were signed. In this way, they could warn their compatriots against exploitation and expose the actors who plied their "trade" of fraud.

Poles who worked for societies and associations and, as such, served as counsellors also organised and arranged leisure time of their countrymen as a preventive measure against their alienation. For example, the Brotherhood of Young Men of St. Joseph founded a sports club in Chicago. The Brotherhood owned a library of about five thousand volumes of books, additionally housing billiard tables, a player-piano and standards (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 79). For its part, the Citizens' Club of Thaddeus Kosciusko (founded in 1907) almost every year held annual banquets, picnics and open bazaars, and organised a "smoker" for its members and associates (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920 p. 80). The Theater and the Dramatic Circle in collaboration with the patriotic organisation invited Poles to attend celebrations of various national holidays. For example, in 1891, a three-day event was held to commemorate the centenary of the Constitution of 3rd May 1791. On the occasion, a performance based on the story of the defence of the Jasna Góra shrine in Częstochowa narrated by Sienkiewicz in his *Deluge* was staged. In 1892, Helena Modrzejewska performed together with the actors of the Theater and the Dramatic Circle, which was recognised as a great distinction for the local Polish emigrant organisation. Distinguished experts, members of other organisations and patrons were invited to cooperate. One of them was Szczęsny Zahajkiewicz, who "was the first theatrical manager […] trained the actors, wrote popular and biblical plays especially appreciable by the local public, and thus aroused interest in the stage" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, pp. 80–81). Karol Wachtel, another member of the Circle, committed himself to establishing a permanent Polish theatre in Chicago (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, pp. 81–82).

Contemporary organisations, associations and their staff including emigrant counsellors provide similar aid. They find out for what benefits various groups of their clients, such as families with children, without children, with children with disabilities and with unemployed parents, are eligible. They explain in what circumstances and to what extent health care is free of charge, where Polish-speaking

physicians are to be found, and where free lessons of English are taught. This counselling practice can be identified on webpages set up by Poles in the UK, e.g. http://www.polnews.co.uk and https://icos.a2hosted.com.

As another important field of their operations, Polish emigrant societies organise the provision of career counselling. Many contemporary emigrants perceive further education, training and skill upgrading as instrumental for improving their emigrant lives. Some of them are not knowledgeable about education opportunities at hand, are indecisive, insecure and confused and/or believe that they have been ascribed to a certain vocational path once and for all[12]. How important it is to acquire more occupational experience, to consciously construct one's career, to consult a counsellor and to engage in introspection is emphasised by an emigrant in the UK:

> *you must know what things look like here, schools are different here, but I thought that it was like in Poland, one closest to home, but it's not like that; I found out later that when you enrol your child at a school, you determine his career, because that's what matters later, what school, what neighbourhood, I found out later that Catholic schools were better, that there are no more options further on if you go to some schools, a guy from the Citizens' Advice Bureau helped me with that* (F/35).

The significance of further education was also underscored by Poles in *The Polish Peasant*. Formal counsellors offered help in this field as well: "Stanley has been working in a photograph gallery at $6 a week and going to Lane School at night. He wants to be a cartoonist. Dr Tarkowski had advised him to quit his present work as he thinks it is harmful" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920, p. 181).

According to former and contemporary counselees and counsellors, the organisation of formal intercultural counselling help as such is replete with risks even though it seems simple and easy. In fact, it mostly involves adapting counselling interventions to the ready-made projects, assessments and evaluations, because the same idea and its implementation may already have been propounded by another actor. The organisation's intent often comes "wrapped up with a meaning tag on it" – ready for implementation and counselling interpretation. One respondent said:

> *I was managing a helping organisation, and everything was fine, but later, in order to receive funding from the municipality, the scope of operations had to be*

[12] Free courses of English have repeatedly been organised by the ICOS, a non-profit organisation founded by Poles (see https://icos.a2hosted.com). Educational and career counselling is also provided at the School of Polish Language and Culture in Newcastle upon Tyne (see http://www.polnews.co.uk/index.php/co-gdzie-kiedy/3139-szkola-newcastle.html). Besides, the North East Polish Community Organisation CIC (Nepco CIC) organised a fair of Polish companies in Newcastle in 2014. In issue 62 of the quarterly 2B (2013), Polish children and parents were invited to the Barnardo's Carlisle Rural Sure Start Children's Centre, where, among other things, information was offered on how to prepare for a job interview with the help of an interpreter. For more data on activities within educational, vocational and career counselling, see other issues of 2B, available on-line at https://issuu.com/magazyn2b.

extended onto other ethnic groups, in this way the chance of obtaining resources increased […] *I didn't know how to talk with women from Pakistan or Albania. This was only helping on paper* (F/43).

Among Polish emigrants there are individuals who attempt to adapt to the requirements in place if they can deconstruct them somewhat. If this is not the case, they protest and refuse to perform the imposed tasks. But there are also people who humbly and servilely do as they are told to by their superiors, pundits, politicians, founders and sponsors. Admittedly, though the ways of the latter are not fully accepted by their clients, they also offer counselling support to people in difficult situations. Poles use such interventions as well and appreciate them. As can be seen, in performing tasks imposed on them, trade unions, associations, societies, citizens' aid bureaus and counselling offices also often initiate the establishment of non-formal institutions, whose autonomy and agency can only be taken away by the "oversight" of some agencies or pundits.

Intercultural institutional counselling tends to be formalised to various degrees, which may have ambivalent effects. On the one hand, institutionalisation may work as protection and safeguard, but on the other, as emigrants point out, it may be a barrier that enhances the reluctance to use it. However, the proliferation of such complexities in the emigrant counselling world may actually be an asset. Counselees seek the niches of counselling practices that suit them best, depending on their personalities, past experiences and individual preferences. There are individuals who appreciate support obtained from non-governmental actors and are averse to things formal. Other people value formal rules and regulations and have more trust in institutions which abide by them. They are suspicious about things indeterminate and changeable, while associating institutions with security, stability, unambiguousness and clarity.

Deliberate efforts to formalise intercultural counselling interventions both in the past and today may have various implications. Firstly, decision-makers obtain ready-made assessments of the needs and problems of emigrant communities. They are introduced to the issues of a certain emigrant community and receive information about it, which they can pass on, use to adjust interventions or ignore. Secondly, the necessity of legal frameworks is explained as a matter of legality or illegality of counselling interventions. My observations suggest that nearly all emigrant communities have a "Guardian Angel" assigned to them who is a counsellor supporting the conversion of the informal element of counselling into the formal and, first and foremost, non-governmental. This breeds serious reservations about the completed disinterestedness of thus-framed goals. Following Zygmunt Bauman, such mechanisms can be called a slogan protection against the subsidiarisation of counselling practices, which means transferring, if not simply dumping, responsibility for solving problems caused by existential insecurity on individuals, who lack adequate resources (Bauman, 2016, p. 65). Erving Goffman relies on an even more emphatic

rhetoric in his critique of making capital on stigmatising mechanisms (including in the helping sector) (Goffman, 2005, p. 10).

Bringing together all these insights into the organisation of various kinds of past and present intercultural counselling help, we can conclude that it is characterised by a focalised orientation in pursuing a particular goal and following a particular course of action. The fixed counselling offer, the repeated pattern of interventions and the formal anchoring are supposed to make it clear to people in need of advice where to seek it and what aid can be obtained. Based on my own counselling experiences in the UK, I believe that while some emigrants are insistent and enforce such help, there are also individuals who are ashamed to accept it. I have also noticed that several institutions cannot handle the pressure from the needy ones because there are so many of them that any help provision is in fact reduced to distributing the same "patches" for various migrant "scratches". Because extraordinarily dynamic and unique situations, events and difficulties experienced by emigrants have made formal counselling actors unable to quickly respond to their needs, which are complex, tangled and call for reflection, problem situations are in practice solved on an ad-hoc basis, primarily through offering financial or material help or referring clients to other actors. Long-term intervention plans are lacking. Counsellors activate short-term help and fulfil requests, but are unable to construct a more general and transparent system, one reason for that being that they are not trained to provide support in dynamic situations.

Societies and associations work in different ways because their staff predominantly consists of volunteers who have no professional training and build on their own emigrant experiences. Their compatriots' problems are often new, surprising and unconventional to them, so that emigrant counsellors are in need of specialised knowledge, experience and refined diagnostic skills, which can only be developed in training, workshops and in-depth reflection. As Nancy Arthur insists, contemporary professional counsellors, who have knowledge and skills, are afraid to work with inhabitants of slums and avoid challenging localities, such as neighbourhoods populated by refugees and migrants, strangers from other cultures. On coming to big cities, the latter tend to settle in marginalised areas. They are needed because their unregulated status and slave labour fuel the revenues of entrepreneurs who prey on their exclusion. This is one reason why intercultural counselling help is organised for them by volunteer counsellors rather than by governmental or specialist agencies (Arthur, 2018, pp. 20–28).

At the same time, formal counselling practices organised by non-governmental institutions are remarkably diversified. Small as they are, these actors fulfil an important helping role for their disoriented compatriots. Without interventions delivered by emigrant counsellors who offer their support within non-governmental institutions and also often extend informal and incidental counselling help, many emigrants would be entrapped in confusion and perplexity, with their backs to the wall. The work performed by these volunteer counsellors should be appreciated and

recognised as a pioneering, free-willed intercultural counselling activity practised on the occasion of cultural and entertaining communal gatherings. For them, an emigrant is "simply a subject in need of help" (Kępiński, 1972, p. 92).

Conclusion

Outlining the shape of counselling in *The Polish Peasant* and in contemporary migrant worlds, I believe that counselling practices (both past and present) are "interwoven" with emigrants' course of life and not infrequently arise from their difficult pre-emigration and emigration biographical experiences. These experiences may be the reason why emigrants seek help, use help and also organise various kinds of formal support. Emigrants' relatives who remain in their country of origin also find themselves in a (materially and mentally) complex and challenging position. The counselling requests, resources and activities – of emigrants and their families – sometimes serve to tighten their bonds but also to verify, dismantle and reconstruct them by excluding or including new and/or forgotten subjects. In this way, constantly mutating counselling networks come into being which bring together, albeit sometimes merely temporarily, the life-paths of people directly or indirectly entangled in emigration. An important function is served by the process of regulating or curbing incidental counselling practices, of controlling them and determining the degree of both counselees' and counsellors' engagement in them. My observations imply that in this respect the (past and present) contribution of actors organising intercultural counselling practice is highly diversified. Among the involved ones are closer and more distant relatives, acquaintances with migrant experiences, pseudo-experts in migrant stints, professional counsellors, researchers, etc. The spheres of emigrants' lives where counselling practice is to be found are similarly diversified, including family, occupational, neighbourly, pre-migration and migrant life. Counselling interventions link people in a variety of ways, both randomly and incidentally as well as deliberately informally and formally.

What I believe to be noteworthy is that assessments of emigration as such tend to be similar in past and contemporary emigrant communities. Emigration is sometimes viewed as a way to solve problems which could not be remedied in their homeland. When staying among Polish emigrants, I observed that they had taken several of their difficulties with them abroad, where these problems had mingled with new challenges only to impact migrants' lives with a doubled force. In such situations, people often "blindly" grope for help, fall into the snares of frauds, trust informal counsellors or try to manage on their own with lesser or greater success.

My analysis of Poles' narratives in *The Polish Peasants* and my contemporary interviews indicates that people experiencing difficulties and confusion, looking for support and organising it as emigrant counsellors were and are entangled in it in similar ways. While the time of emigration, the language used by emigrants and

the technology on which they rely may differ, the ways in which they are called on to be counsellors and counselees are nonetheless similar. Relatives, other emigrants, circumstances, coincidences and willingness to act cause (sometimes force) emigrants, who often have complicated and complex biographical experiences, to adopt the role of a counsellor. In emigration settings, this role is taken up by people who are confused, beset by fate and circumstances and/or swayed by seductive helping slogans. There are multiple counselees among emigrants as the change of the cultural situation is so much of a novelty and challenge that a considerable proportion of migrants are in need of help. As was the case in the past, Poles barely prepare for emigration, falling back on the "cavalier panache", which makes them believe that "things will pan out all right one way or another". With such notions, they are very likely to be in dire need of support when abroad.

I believe that the (past and present) emigrant worlds portrayed here confirm the power of (formal and incidental) counselling practice, its spontaneous emergence and its rise wherever there are people and wherever they arrange their lives in the new conditions of migration. As these practices form an important area of social backup which Poles need, they should be researched in-depth.

In my view, it is worthwhile to identify and assess the complexity and ambiguities of cultural counselling worlds, to identify the mechanisms that underpin the emergence and presence of counselling practices, to expose what are not counselling interventions or their distortions, to explore the transformation of the informal elements of counselling into non-formal and formal ones and to "trace" how people become counsellors and counselees. To engage in such efforts would help prevent the adiaphorisation of the problems of migration and migrants, that is, as Bauman writes, exempting migrants and what happens to them from moral evaluation, as migrants are consigned outside the boundaries of moral responsibility and, above all, outside the realm of compassion and the impulse to care (Bauman, 2016, p. 43).

Following Axel Honneth, I view the espousal of counselling practices by past and present communities of Polish emigrants as the struggle for recognition, which is also a subject-constituting process. Honneth explains that the sense of "self-respect" (*Selbstachtung*) is an important anchorage for individuals, and institutions should use their practices and order to create conditions that foster intersubjective recognition (Honneth, 2012, p. XLV). Such a mission and quality of intercultural counselling in emigrant circles certainly deserves promoting. Multiple formal, non-formal and informal actors have a considerable role to play in this venture.

To conclude, as one reviewer aptly noticed, this paper addresses a range of issues that invite further studies, including:

1) Both peasants leaving Poland in the early 20th century and Polish emigrants one century later had reached a critical point in their homeland and then adopted the roles of counselees and subsequently of counsellors.
2) Sustaining the ideas of alleged prosperity "in the West" is harmful to prospective emigrants.

3) Emigrants and their families back in Poland know no bounds in asking for help.
4) There is a variety of spontaneous intercultural counselling which I identified and called self-induced. It involves practices that insist on help that relevantly responds to the needs of excluded individuals and groups. It may express opposition against commercialised, institutional counselling interventions.
5) Informal counselling practices are marred by chaos, the law of the jungle and human trafficking, with the vulnerable accepting the conditions that warrant their survival.
6) Areas of informal counselling elude control, and researchers who study them are few and far between.
7) The official "oversight" over informal counselling should be reduced to a minimum, at the same time offering more support to people in the roles of self-induced counsellors.
8) In the early 20th century, Polish emigrants had at their disposal experiences of fighting the feudal order, traditions of national uprisings and aspirations of self-determination. Against the prevalent stereotypes, they skilfully adjusted to the American community. Poles were recognised for their capacity to come to terms with migrant insecurity, innovation, flexibility, agency and industriousness. They knew their rights and demanded that they be respected.
9) Poles campaigned for the establishment of trade unions and underscored their help, especially when human trafficking was involved.
10) Almost all emigration communities have a "Guardian Angel" assigned to them with a view to formalising self-induced counselling.

Translated by Patrycja Poniatowska

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