SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST GENERATION POLISH IMMIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA

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Submitted in the Department of Psychology
University of Sydney, for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Sydney, August 2000
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and support of several people without whom this work would not be accomplished, and especially to: Prof. Helen Beh, Prof. Nick Tarrier, Dr Brian Crabbe, my supervisors Prof. David Kavanagh and Dr Margaret Charles, and the Respondents.
I would like to also thank my little twin sons for their energy, patience and still wordless encouragement.

Abstract

The primary aim of this research was to find predictors of psycho-social adjustment of Polish immigrants to Sydney, Australia. There were two sets of independent variables considered: i) personal characteristics, including: intelligence, extraversion, neuroticism, style of attribution and self-acceptance and ii) demographic information, consisted of: age, gender, length of residence, marital status, number of children, educational level, yearly income, immigration status (dependent vs. independent immigration) and residential status.

The dependent variables were social (adaptation and assimilation) and psychological adjustment. The hypotheses tested in the study were that each of these personal and demographic characteristics would be associated with adaptation and/or assimilation, and psychological well-being.

The two samples (both studies) were composed of more than 200 first generation Polish immigrants who arrived in Australia after 1980. No significant gender differences were found. The internal consistency and principal components structure of Adaptation and Assimilation were examined, and the measures were refined. There were employed standard measurements (i.e. GHQ, BDI, BAI, EPI, ASQ, Raven Matrices and WAIS-Vocabulary) and newly developed measures (i.e. the Social Adjustment Scale and the Self-Acceptance Questionnaire).

The general results suggested that psycho-social adjustment was best predicted by three pre-arrival characteristics (extraversion, education and self-acceptance), and post-arrival employment status and length of residence. There were, however, some differences in regard to the particular aspects of psycho-social adjustment. Better adaptation was meaningfully related to employment (income) and education in Study 1, and self-acceptance, employment and extraversion in Study 2; better assimilation seemed to be significantly predicted by education, age of arrival and length of residence (Study 1), and self-acceptance, extraversion, education and age of arrival (Study 2). Psychological [mal]adjustment was best indicated by globality and stability in attributing negative events (Study 1), lower self-acceptance and lack of employment status (Study 2).
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