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## Settling Down and Settlement Patterns<sup>1</sup> Case study: Polish Migrants from the 1980s in Melbourne

The sky here compensates for solitude. Blue-clouded. Cloudy-blue. Intensely-blue. It's not the promised land. Maybe in the distant future it'll be the last one on earth—the basis here for the much vaunted lucky country—but for the moment it's neither the realizations of one's dreams nor the land of milk and honey.

Rosa Cappiello (1984), *Oh Lucky Country*

*Abstract:* The history of Australia and the cultural origins of its population are closely linked to the story of the migration of peoples from other continents. This paper includes an examination of opportunity and psychological costs of Polish migration to Melbourne (Australia) during the 1980s. Included are positive and negative experiences during the settlement process, as well as the outcomes and consequences of migration. Generally migrants have had a difficult time building a life for themselves in Australia due to a variety of reasons which will be discussed in this paper. The article also outlines Polish migrants opinions of multiculturalism in Australia.

*Keywords:* settlement, costs of migration, experiences of migrants, multiculturalism.

### Introduction

Australia appeared to be a very attractive country for Polish migrants. Those opinions were seldom based on their personal experiences, but rather on their imagination of Australia. However, the reality was often different from their expectations.

According to the 2001 census, there were 150,900 people of Polish ancestry in Australia, 58,110 Polish people by birthplace and 59,056 Polish people by language spoken at home in Australia, where the greatest number of Poles lived in Victoria (48,464) (ABS, 2003). Most Poles arrived in Australia during two migration waves: the first wave from post-WWII through to the early 1950s and a second migration wave during the 1980s. The second group has been the focus for this study. The most relevant push factors for Polish migration to Australia in the 1980s were economic. This included the deterioration of economic conditions in Poland during the late 1970s resulting in poor wages and worsening standards of living as well as a decline in employment

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options, especially for the younger generations. Economic factors were strengthened by political factors, such as strikes by workers against food price increases in 1970 and 1976. The subsequent unrest led to wider strikes and the establishment of the “Solidarity” movement in August 1980 and the political persecution of “Solidarity” supporters with the ultimate declaration of martial law in December 1981. Personal factors were also important for those who left Poland after 1983.

The most important pull factor for Poles migrating in the 1980s to Australia was the political factor, including the acceptance of migrants by Australian society and the ‘family reunion’ migration policy implemented by the Fraser government and strengthened by the Hawke government. Those people, who came to Australia during the 1980s, generally benefited from better conditions than those who arrived immediately after WWII. Public services were improved; initial accommodation, information and interpreter services were all better, and there was a good social climate because of the multicultural policy (Jamrozik 2001: 627–628). What is more, during preceding decades a series of Polish organisations were established to help support migrants. Before the multicultural policy was introduced in 1973, the assimilation and integration policies (1947–1965; 1965–1972) were in place, when immigrants and their offspring generally encountered a lack of support in learning English, both from government and employers. No special English classes were provided for offspring, who in their early school years spoke only Polish. Most government documents such as social service forms, health benefits forms and taxation forms were available only in English. There were neither interpreters nor translators available to assist (Broome 1984, 208).

The initial settlement pattern of Polish migrants in Melbourne in the 1980s showed a number of common features in regard to their life experiences. It has shown that, on the whole, the new migration wave of Polish immigrants settled well in Melbourne. Their experiences were dependent on their qualifications, occupation, and level of English knowledge. In general, Poles who could speak English and whose occupation was in demand in Australia fared best. However, there were only a few who could speak reasonably good English. It was common for Polish migrants to experience homesickness for their homeland and their families in Poland. Many respondents stated that it took five-seven years to accept their new country, significantly longer than the three years referred to by Jamrozik (1983). After this period, a migrant should be able to speak English and seek employment, in line with their qualifications (Jamrozik 1983: 61). Later on, life for Polish migrants tended to become similar to that of Anglo-Australians. However, after 15–24 years spent in the new country, many still did not have a sense of belonging to Australia and a greater sense of participation in local and national affairs. Migrants always have the disadvantage of being foreigners and generally they have to learn to live with this problem in order to survive (Personal communication with Polish migrants of the 1980s in Melbourne via a series of questionnaires and interviews; 2004–2005).

The interaction of Poles with Australian-born citizens has traditionally been positive and is still good at present. Generally, the respondents never felt discriminated against, or did not wish to acknowledge such experiences in their responses. Some

stated that it is most important to speak positively about your home country: "If you have a positive picture about yourself, then you will be accepted and respected in the new country."

Many are proud to be Poles and this was emphasised frequently in interviews with Polish migrants, although interviewees had both positive and negative experiences in Australia. The positive experiences were mainly apparent in the early phase of migration, especially regarding the services provided by the Australian government, such as the free of charge 'migrant hostels', English classes for migrants and orientation sessions conducted in Polish, providing information to assist in finding employment in Melbourne. In terms of negative experiences, especially in the initial phase of their stay in Melbourne, emotional problems such as homesickness were experienced and were the result of the vast geographical distance to Poland. This was followed by occupational problems connected with an absence of English language skills, a lack of recognition of their qualifications, social isolation and to a lesser extent, financial problems. One problem, however, which most respondents still experience is nostalgia for their home country and its culture, and it is still very difficult for them to feel 'at home' in Australia. This was most strongly expressed by people who married within their ethnic group, i.e. endogamous marriages. The people, for instance, may miss the Polish white Christmas, customs and celebrations surrounding this part of the year coupled with the closeness of family ties and gatherings. Furthermore, many Poles find Australian colloquialism and slang foreign and difficult to understand.

The findings for this paper were developed from my qualitative research (15 interviews) conducted in 2004 and 2005 in Melbourne with first generation Polish migrants to Australia in the 1980s.

### **Costs of Migration**

Migration to any country has its consequences. Especially, the first years of arrival in a new country are the most difficult. Many people do not think about the costs of migration, particularly the psychological ones. Some may even state that the costs are nil because they did not have to purchase the ticket to migrate to Australia. This was the case with Polish refugees from the late 1940s and those who came under the "Special Humanitarian Program" at the beginning of the 1980s when the Australian government paid for their journey. However, for many, especially in the immediate post-WWII years, it was like a one-way ticket to an unknown future. Even now, migration to a country such as Australia may entail more significant costs for an individual than to other countries such as other European countries or even Canada which are much closer. There are inherent travel costs, not only for the first move to Australia, but also for return trips to one's mother country.

More specifically, there are two major costs associated with migration and which can be applied to the situation of Poles in Australia: opportunity costs and psychological costs. Opportunity costs consist of the earnings foregone while travelling as well as the time and effort while searching for new employment. Addi-

tionally, time and effort foregone while qualifications are recognised or being forced to obtain new skills because those from the home country were not accepted, are further opportunity costs. This was particularly the case with post-WWII migrants in Australia whose qualifications, except for those originating from the UK, were not recognised. Psychological costs are connected with tremendous emotional losses such as leaving familiar surroundings; leaving behind family and friends; adapting to the new social and cultural environment and language problems (Sjaastad 1962: 84–85; Grinberg & Grinberg 1989: 26). The change from an old, well-known environment in the country of origin to a new and unpredictable one in a country of destination is a very long and difficult process: “Clearly the immigrant must give up part of his individuality, at least temporarily, in order to become integrated in the new environment. The greater the difference between the new community and the one to which he once belonged, the more he will have to give up” (Grinberg & Grinberg 1989: 90). In the host country, migrants have to adapt to the new environment, which for some can be very complicated and stressful.

### **Experiences of Polish Migrants in Melbourne**

The psychological and opportunity costs borne by Polish migrants also had an impact on their experiences in their new country and city.

It is true that the experiences of migrants depend to a large extent on personal factors and vary from one individual to another. Factors such as age and gender have a great influence upon the experiences of migrants, as does the character of the individual concerned. In general, single mothers trying to balance work or study and family life in an unfamiliar country, had the toughest experiences. It was a very difficult period for them because they did not have any support from close family members left behind in Poland who would otherwise have contributed to child care and offer moral support (female, profession-graphic designer).

Teenagers are another group for whom it was very difficult to settle permanently with their parents because they left their surroundings in their adolescence. They suffered from living between two cultures as they were hardly ever ‘immigrants’ in the direct sense of the word: “Parents may be voluntary or involuntary emigrants, but children are always ‘exiled’: they are not the ones who decide to leave and they cannot decide to return at will” (Grinberg & Grinberg 1989: 125). Polish teenagers, who were on average 15–17 years of age when leaving Poland and were in 2004 students in Melbourne, expressed their opinion that it was still very difficult for them to live in Australia because they left behind their grandparents, relatives and closest friends. It is worth mentioning that compatriots in Melbourne to a certain degree replace the family that one has left behind in Poland. This is especially the case with children, for whom their parents’ friends in many cases become substitute aunts and uncles and their children become cousins.

Older people may experience difficulties of settling down in a foreign country, especially when they come to stay with their children:

An old person in general does not wish to move: it is painful to leave things that give him security; his past is much greater than his future; he always loses more than he gains. If he moves or emigrates because of adverse circumstances or to follow his children so as not to remain alone, he is very unhappy: he feels regressively dependent, like a child, but without a child's expectations and growth potential to reach new achievements (Grinberg & Grinberg 1989: 128).

The above statements are examples of experiences of certain migrant groups according to their age and gender. The next section examines particular experiences of Polish migrants, not teenagers or elderly persons but those adults, who initiated migration to Australia in the 1980s. They had both positive and negative experiences in their new country.

### **Positive experiences**

All immigrants from the 1980s, especially those arriving at the beginning of the 1980s, had positive experiences in Australia, particularly in regard to assistance obtained from the Australian government as non-English-speaking background (NESB) persons. The opinions clearly reflect the major aspects considering immigration of the government in power at that time, the Fraser government.

Some important points were mentioned by Polish migrants: "We were very happy, thrilled, astonished and surprised by the extent of help we received from the government in Victoria, as Australia was the most generous of any immigration countries."

Polish immigrants obtained accommodation in hostels, mostly in the western suburbs of Melbourne, which were poorer than the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. These included: 'Midway' in Maribyrnong or 'Wiltona' in Altona. Each hostel offered initial settlement services: housing and employment, medical and nursing staff, welfare and religious personnel. Also available was the "On-Arrival Education Program", which offered adult English classes and an orientation program, provided by bilingual information officers, that included information topics about Australia. One immigrant stated:

The conditions were modest at the beginning of our stay but we did not have to care about anything. Everything was provided: beds, fridges, food, kindergarten and nurses for the children, English classes for immigrants and also some orientation about daily life in Australia (once a week for half a day) such as seeking employment, using a phone book or purchasing tickets, which was conducted in the immigrants' language. When I needed a doctor for my children, I got him/her straightaway and also a Polish interpreter was provided.

The care for new migrants was commenced from the moment they arrived in Australia. They also received social welfare benefits for two years and the children were sent to school. The families could stay in the hostel for one year and then the government would provide a flat for a transitional period for another six months: "The flat was furnished, with a fridge, crockery and cutlery in the kitchen, towels and bed sheets. The only thing we lacked was a vacuum cleaner and a television." Usually, after this period, most of the migrants went to housing commission flats and then rented or bought houses or apartments.

Another positive factor for migrants in Australia was that the society was in a formative process:

You could observe the openness for immigrants. Shops assistants were very friendly, patient and helpful. They often suggested a word, which you should use when you had any language difficulties. It was wonderful to meet so many people from different countries and to get to know their cultures and their life styles. I would need to travel for years to experience such amazing things. My life was definitely enriched.

Many Polish people were financially very successful in Australia; they made great career progress immediately. Others had to wait for a long time to achieve what they dreamt of. There were those who were also fortunate to obtain work that appealed to them. For instance, a teacher of the Polish language found part-time work in a primary and secondary school. At the beginning of the 1980s, there were a high number of Polish migrants in Melbourne and classes of pupils could be started. A minimum of eight people were required to establish a class in a mainstream school. It was not an easy task because of the age difference among pupils in a primary school, which runs for six years in Australia. Some pupils were aged seven when they attended Polish language classes while others were eleven years old.

#### Negative experiences

Immigration to a new country is always a risk because, often, the migrant is unhappy and is neither satisfied with life at home nor in the host country. Migrants can live their lives between two countries and a great number of experiences were negative for some Polish migrants. These were connected with the difficulties of speaking and understanding English, with finding employment, with the lack of recognition of their occupational qualifications, with absence of family and friends, with cultural differences and social isolation.

My interviewees were generally very scared at the beginning of their stay in Australia because they could not speak the language. They expressed the following opinions:

- If you don't speak the language, you cannot do anything in the country: no job, no communication, nothing. I wanted to watch television, everything was in English; I wanted to listen to radio, everything was in English. I did not dare to go out by myself, even to do shopping because I was scared to get lost, as I did not understand the language. So, I took my bicycle and rode to places I knew while singing Polish songs. It made me feel at home...
- We learned English at school in Poland, nonetheless, we could not use it in our real life in Australia. The knowledge of the language was poor, I would say, none. However, we were very lucky to meet people who we could work for and who became our clients. If I go back to this time, I really don't know how it was possible without knowing their language.
- The politeness in Australia made me feel strange. For instance, a sales assistant approached me asking if she could help. I did not understand anything and was very suspicious. We started to learn English in the hostels and at the beginning it was extremely difficult. The course was meant to be for adults but it was very chaotic. Being a teacher you expect a regular learning of a language with explanations of its rules. However, the English teachers could not provide it; they taught us to buy tickets and other necessary things from the start. Besides, the Anglo-Saxon language is very difficult for Slavic people.
- I began to study anthropology and art history at Monash University first. I could not understand a word. The worst were tutorials where you should actively participate. I discussed with the tutor not being involved in the questioning process during the first year of study. However, after the first term I gave up. It was too difficult for me as we were supposed to read all the time and write essays. My inability of understanding English made it impossible. I thought about something else, which I could study without using English a lot. After meeting another Polish female migrant, I decided to apply for

studies in graphic design and interior design at RMIT University in Melbourne. My application and the interview were successful, and I finished my studies. At the moment I am self-employed.

- It is impossible to get to know a person and to find out what she/he thinks without knowing the language she/he speaks. The English classes I attended and the work as a boat mechanic forced me to communicate in English all the time and enabled me to understand my co-workers, to speak the language and to think in English, as we know that thinking and speaking another language are two different things.

For many Polish migrants, it was very difficult to obtain their first work in Australia in their established professions. Three factors influenced this: a general inability to speak English as indicated in examples above, the lack of recognition of qualifications and the very high unemployment rate in Australia at the beginning of the 1980s. Before that period there were notices in front of the factories such as 'Vacancies' or employees of the factories received a bonus if they brought a friend as a potential employee. Employers came to the hostels to look for skilled workers. Many Polish migrants, although educated, sometimes started with such underqualified work such as cleaning, gardening, painting houses or factory work. One woman said:

I had to do physical work although I have never worked physically before; I was a laboratory person in Poland. My inability of speaking English forced me to produce plastic boxes for the make-up and it was very hot there, about 50 degrees Celsius. I had injuries on my fingers because I was inexperienced in such kind of work.

Some migrants had to change profession (29.6%) because of language difficulties or the failure of Australia to recognise Polish qualifications. For instance, one Polish woman finished her studies in medicine and worked as an optometrist in Poland. Unfortunately, in Australia, she was not recognised as an optometrist and was asked to do the last two years of her studies in Australia again. It is worth stressing that doctors had the most difficulty with the recognition of their degrees in Australia, unless they had obtained them in the UK or the USA. They had to repeat the last two years of their studies because of medical terminology, which is universally Latin based, but in Australia is converted to English. The teachers, however, had to do pedagogical and methodological courses in order to have their professions recognised. On the other hand, qualifications of some Polish universities such as the Warsaw University of Technology were immediately recognised.

The status of women was quite unusual at the beginning of the 1980s in Australia. For instance, a Polish woman, an engineer by profession, with better qualifications than her husband, had to sit with her children in an Australian embassy in Vienna waiting for her husband to answer questions asked by an Australian immigration officer. The interview was practically conducted only with him, while in Poland she was considered an independent woman. She illustrated:

In Poland, the flat, car and the bills were issued to my name. In Melbourne, whenever I tried to deal with some formalities, I was always asked for my husband, where is he and if he agrees to sign them. Once I applied for an unemployment benefit, which was very unusual for a woman at that time. I have also been looking for work in my profession for a few years. At the beginning I only received some kind of work for long-term unemployed people, based on a government program. I worked there for six months and obtained references. After this period I received work as an engineer and was the second woman in my profession in Australia.

The absence of family and friends was another negative experience for Polish migrants (49.6%) in Australia because of the distance between Australia and Poland. Although people who left close family in Poland (e.g. their parents) and had established their life in Australia, they missed their family very much. They often experienced guilt about having left family members in Poland, especially in such moments when they became seriously ill. In due course they would fly to Poland to comfort ill relations and spend time with the extended family. Homesickness may be connected with the fact that family values have always played a crucial role for Polish people. According to a survey conducted by the Centre of Public Opinion Research in Poland in July 2005 ("Values and norms in life of Polish people"), 90% of respondents stated that family is a priority value and for 99% it is an important value in Polish society (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, <http://www.cbos.pl>). One Polish migrant expressed her view regarding the absence of friends in Australia:

In Poland, there was a certain group of people one grew up with and a community of neighbours, starting in kindergarten through school and university. They were people who one could rely on and who could help out at certain difficult stages of life. Arriving in a new country, an immigrant may not know anyone. She/he may have to deal with difficult situations alone which often makes life frustrating.

Cultural differences and social isolation were other difficulties mentioned by Polish migrants (29.5%). The communication between people is different, the traditions are not the same and one has to get used to new customs. One Polish immigrant voiced her opinion:

Immigrants have to start an absolutely new life in a new often different environment than the home country. They have to learn to live with people from various cultures, which may be very difficult, especially for adults who lived in their home countries for a long period of time before migration. I still have the feeling of not belonging socially or culturally to mainstream Australian culture.

It may be true that it is necessary to leave one's own country in order to realise how much one appreciates and belongs to it:

The trees are different, the hills are different, there are places that are dear to the heart, where you lived, where you fought with friends. You might think that colour of the sky would be the same... You feel that part of you still belongs there... (Markus & Sims 1993: 194).

In sum, my respondents experienced problems connected with migration such as emotional problems, e.g. homesickness, longing for family (49.6%), followed by occupational problems, e.g. the need to change profession because of language difficulties or the failure of Australia to recognise Polish qualifications (29.6%), social isolation (29.5%) and financial problems (6.1%). Social isolation especially was most prevalent in endogamous marriages. In order to alleviate these problems, migrants frequently contacted family and friends in Poland through letters and phone calls (49.6%), visited Poland (36.5%), contacted other Polish people in Australia (33.0%) and kept in touch with Poland through reading newspapers, watching Polish television or participating in Polish events in Australia (32.2%). Only a few sought help from a social worker (3.5%) or engaged in social work for the Polish community in Melbourne (2.6%).

### The Outcomes of Migration

There were differences observed in the attitude toward the decision of migration and the degree of nostalgia. People who came to Australia because of personal, political or economic reasons, as well as people in endogamous marriages (within the ethnic group) and exogamous marriages (outside the ethnic group) considered these matters differently.

The majority of respondents (66.7%) would never have made the decision to migrate again, especially those representing endogamous marriages and those whose migration motives were personal, because they found it hard to shed their Polish characteristics. One woman stated her frustration: "It is too difficult, it is too difficult, it is too difficult." They missed their daily contact with Polish people and felt isolated, as they had to rely on a specific sort of people in Melbourne whereas in Poland they had a greater choice and there was a bigger group of Polish persons they could be comfortable with. It always took a great deal of time and effort to make friends in a new country and sometimes it was impossible to meet the kind of people one would like to meet.

Separation from the Polish culture was very difficult. Although there were some Polish bookshops in Melbourne, they mostly offered literature of lower quality. The same scenario could be observed with Polish cultural events here:

Polish theatre, which came to Melbourne, did not represent the high level we knew from Poland. There was always an image of post-WWII Polish immigrants, who greeted all the arriving Polish actors with tears in their eyes and respect, regardless of level they represented. "Polonia" in general from the 1980s were expecting plays that were more sophisticated than those presented. Nowadays, it only occurs very seldom that Australia plays host to some famous Polish politicians or artists. It is really unpleasant for us not to be up-to-date with the Polish culture.

In contrast, people who migrated because of political or economic reasons stated that they would have left Poland if the conditions were the same as at the time of their migration, i.e. in the "Solidarity" period (1980s). In this case the choice would be Australia again. However, given the current situation in Poland and under the existing conditions there, most respondents said that they would not have left their mother country: "We love Poland too much and we are great patriots. Although Australia is a multicultural country, this multiculturalism does not always work in practice. Anglo-Australians still have the priority." By knowing now what migration really means, they would not have taken this step again because it is an extremely difficult task. There are more losses than gains.

In regard to nostalgia, most migrants (70%) from the new migration wave (1980–1989) still missed Poland because they migrated to Australia when they were already adults. If they had been younger at the time of migration they would not have had this sort of feeling:

If you are two or ten years old, everything is easier, you take many things unconsciously. You are breaking the best period of your life when you are moving permanently in your 20s to another country. The situation is like with a tree which you transplant and which not always continues to grow and in general, it doesn't.

The majority of people missed their family in Poland, especially elderly parents and siblings: “Poland for me is my mother and I will always miss her.” If they did not have family there any more, then homesickness was on a smaller scale. At the time they longed for close friends and places and will have the feeling as long as they live: “If you are a Polish person and you love your country, you will always miss it. You just have to learn how to cope with that.”

According to Polish psychologist Zbigniew Nęcki, Poles are ‘sentimental Slavs’ who may experience problems with adaptation on a larger scale than other nations. He argues that they migrate but very often they remain emotionally connected with their homeland (Fakty, [<http://fakty.interia.pl>]).

One person reported: “It is a very difficult situation to describe what you would need every day and what you do not have. The older you are, the more differently you consider the matter of homesickness.” Many of the Polish migrants could not imagine retirement in the new country, in this case Australia. The reasons given for this were that they did not have family or many friends here and the interaction with others was often superficial because of language barrier, e.g. contacts with English-speaking parents of their children’s friends.

In contrast, one man stated that he does not long for Poland:

I do not look back. I have to create a future. Once the decision had been made to leave Poland permanently, I had to change my life and my way of thinking. It took me one and half years from making the decision about migration to depart. I had enough time to prepare for that. I never had the typical migrant’s dream when I go to Poland and cannot get out of the country.

The general opinion about longing for Poland applied only to endogamous marriages. In exogamous marriages, i.e. marriages outside the ethnic group the situation could be different because at least one part of the couples’ family was in close vicinity and there were existing social networks, which made life easier in the new country. That is why these people had more contacts with Australians of other backgrounds that in turn allowed them to hear and use English and be in touch with the Australian culture on a daily basis. An example of this is a statement expressed by a Polish woman who was in an exogamous marriage:

The problem of longing for Poland was particularly present in the first years of living in Australia. Frequent visits in Poland helped me not to idealise Poland and everything I left behind. They helped me to appreciate, respect and love my new life and my new homeland. Only the fact that my parents live in Poland makes me visit Poland often. I suspect that my daughter at present has more pride of her Polish roots than I have.

### **Polish Migrants’ Opinions of Multiculturalism in Australia**

The vast majority of migrants (86.4%) I conducted interviews with expressed very positive views about multiculturalism in practice. They regarded it as an advantage, enrichment for Australia and a positive experience for them to live in such a multicultural country. Their positive responses are outlined in the following points:

- a. The opportunity to live in such a multicultural country as Australia was considered a privilege. One of the Polish immigrants voiced her opinion:

Persons from over 200 countries live together under one roof and it is a high achievement. I feel a part of the melting pot in Australia. When I looked for work, I mostly met migrants from other countries who understood my situation and were willing to help me.

- b. Interpretation and translation services were available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This was especially important in courts or hospitals.
- c. Various pamphlets, notices and other informative material were published in community languages.
- d. Comparison with other countries put Australia in a very good position. The respondents often had family or friends living in other countries, such as the USA, Canada or France, and in comparing views of their respective host countries, they stated that Australian conditions for immigrants were the most favourable for starting a new life.

Only a few persons of those interviewed (13.4%) considered multiculturalism as practiced in Australia, to be a controversial issue. One stated these opinions:

Those migrants representing ethnic groups create enclaves in Australia and do not participate on a large scale in the life of Australian society. The handling of this issue is really important. If you give people one finger, then they want to have the whole hand. The more you work for your own culture the less you do for the Australian culture. The identity with Australia should be stronger than the identity with your country of origin. If you are a guest in someone's house, you accept the principles of that house. The same situation should be observed with migration. If you come to a foreign country you should accept its rules and not form enclaves. I do accept the idea of multiculturalism as a whole but people should mingle more. I did not migrate to Australia to live the same way I used to live in Poland. If Melbourne hosts a theatre from Poland, I attend the plays. I sometimes buy continental food but we should not exaggerate our cultural heritage. In Australia you feel at home because the doors are open to everyone.

Another person voiced his opinion:

I think it is too much confusion with too many signs in other languages. If someone has chosen to migrate, then the Australian law and customs should be accepted. There was the case of some kindergartens in Melbourne/Victoria removing Christmas trees and Santa Claus because Muslims did not like them. Maybe this was multiculturalism gone too far?

The above examples showed an opinion of multiculturalism which contrasts to the dominant view, of being satisfied with multiculturalism, where the policy was seen as being too lenient towards migrants. These respondents believed that the Australian establishment and way of life was accommodating enough towards migrants without the need for extra concessions or a multicultural policy. The Polish migrants who were my interviewees also gave "positive views about the policy of multiculturalism and its influence on Polish language maintenance." Examples were:

- a. The media enabled migrants to feel more at home, e.g. Polish radio programs on SBS (Special Broadcasting Service).
- b. Ethnic schools and Polish language classes at the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) helped language retention among the second generation. The policy of multiculturalism enabled them to choose Polish as a subject for the Matriculation exams and qualifies them for university entrance scores.
- c. The existence and development of Polish organisations, e.g. the "Australian-Polish Community Services Inc." (APCS), the "Polish Community Council of Victoria

Inc.” (PCCV), vocal-dancing ensembles, sporting clubs, professional organisations and others, together with the cultural initiatives they provide, helped the Polish people to maintain their culture and support each other.

These organisations with ethnic initiatives have evolved with the government’s support, which is important, but often only symbolic to their needs and expenses.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, we can draw several points about Polish migration to Melbourne:

- a) On the whole it is a difficult process, especially for people living in endogamous marriages.
- b) The situation of many migrants has somewhat improved due to changes in Australian government policy, especially since beginning of multiculturalism in 1973.
- c) The character of Polish culture, that Poles cherish, is vastly different from the English speaking norms and customs of daily life in Australia. This exacerbates the problems connected with migration.

Perhaps the best way to sum up the migration experience in the 1980s to Melbourne was provided in a statement by a Polish immigrant:

Immigrants, in general, do make the decision alone. It does not matter if they are Polish, Italian or Chinese. Migration is a challenge and a very complex process. You are nobody in the new country where you have to start your new life. If you are young, you have psychological strength, which makes it easier to adapt in the host country and accept the differences you observe. However, it makes the process more difficult when you are older and other aspects of life become of great importance for you. Unfortunately, not all people are aware of these factors and consequences connected with settling in the new homeland. Many persons are returning to their home country because they cannot cope with the difficulties in the host country. It is hard work for the first generation of migrants who create a foundation for a better life for the second generation. There are quite a lot of young people who would like to leave Poland permanently to live in another country. It is an enormous responsibility and no one can really give a good advice on this matter. Every person should make the decision alone.

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