

Structural Conflict in the Polish Migrant Community in the UK

Jarosław Kozak 

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

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Abstract: The article presents the results of the author's research concerning the place and characteristics of structural conflict in the functioning of the Polish migrant community in the UK. The backdrop for the analyzed phenomenon was post-accession migrations. Giving rise to phenomena and processes significant to the development of social structure, they constitute one of the critical factors in social change. The study used qualitative analysis to identify which of the analyzed social areas generated structural conflicts in the investigated environment. Structural conflict, in its many dimensions, was present not only between migrants and the host society, but also between migrants from different countries and between migrants from the same diaspora. This called into question the previously prevalent belief about the cohesion of the migrant community. The present study may serve as a point of departure for further explorations concerning issues such as structural barriers in a multinational society.

Jarosław Kozak

Ph.D. in sociology and is an assistant professor at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. His scientific interests revolve around quantitative and qualitative research methodologies within the issues of migration studies, the sociology of religion, and morality (attitude dynamics). Last major publications (2023) include: *The New Parochialism? Polish Migrant Catholic Parishes on the Path of Change*, "Review of Religious Research", vol. 65(1); *Polish Return Migration after Brexit: A Sociological Forecast*, London–New York.

e-mail: jaroslaw.kozak@kul.pl



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Introduction

Migrations are a significant element of social life today. The Polish migrant community in the United Kingdom is an important research field, if only because it ranks among the largest and most active migrant communities in Europe (Dunin-Wąsowicz, 2022). The dynamic increase in economic migration to that country after Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 led to the emergence of a relatively large community of Polish people, built around their own sociocultural system and considerably significant to the functioning of the British society (Isański et al., 2023: 3).

To fully understand Polish migration to the UK, it is crucial to distinguish between two significant migration waves: post-war migration following World War II and post-accession migration after the year 2004. Though united by migrants' nationality, these two periods differ in many respects. Post-war migrants, often escaping from conflicts and persecutions, had different experiences and aspirations than post-accession migrants, who arrived in the UK mainly in search of better economic opportunities (Wodawski, Fel, Kozak, 2023). The present article aims to explore these differences, analyzing the education, professional skills, and integration of both groups. Through this comparison, I intend to show how complex and diverse the experience of Polish migrants in the UK can be.

What has been highlighted in the literature so far is the importance of migrant community cohesion (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2013; Nowak, Nowosielski, 2016; Djundeva, Ellwardt, 2020). This approach is typical of the multicultural corporatism model (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2021), in which ethnic minorities are treated as totalities with one voice.

Some criticism has been leveled against this assumption. Among other issues, it concerns the under-exploration of conflicts in immigrant organizations or the non-exploration of conflict between individuals living in a social space outside their place of origin (Garapich, 2008). Against this background, it seems interesting from a research point of view to explore the phenomenon of conflicts existing in the Polish migrants' place of settlement in the context of the processes involved in their "entry" into the majority community. Elise Féron distinguished several types of conflicts in the migrant diaspora, such as transferred, autonomizing, symbolic, discursive, social, and physical conflicts. The types particularly important here are Social and Autonomizing Conflicts, which can be regarded as structural. These conflicts are deeply rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural structures. Social conflicts are directly related to social structures, such as spatial segregation and a lack of social contacts, whereas autonomizing conflicts are reflected in and contribute to structural inequalities and tensions in the host country. Féron's article shows how these conflicts are transferred, maintained, and transformed by diasporas, underscoring the complexity and multidimensionality of problems associated with migration and integration. Transferred conflicts can "autonomize," adapting to new sociocultural and political contexts (Féron, 2017). The present study on the community of Polish migrants in the UK shows an example of such dynamics.

The aim of this article is to present the results of the author's research concerning the place and characteristics of structural conflict in the functioning of migrant communities as exemplified by the Polish diaspora in the UK.

The sociological perspective on conflict

Conflict is a universal phenomenon, inevitably associated with social life. The concept of conflict can be considered from different angles, e.g., as a process in which an individual or group strives to achieve their goals by eliminating, gaining control over, or even destroying an individual or group pursuing similar or identical goals (Jehn, 1997). A conflict of interest may result in a struggle or clash between opposing forces. Theories of conflict present social systems as full of tensions and conflicts existing between their constituent parts (Morgan, 1981). Different types of social structures have different tolerance of conflict. Rigid ones favor the accumulation and violent explosion of tensions. In more flexible structures, there are mechanisms allowing for conflicts to surface and for the sources of discontent to be eliminated (Jeong, 2008).

In the sociological perspective, the theory of conflict is focused on pinpointing the social forces that generate conflicts of interests, values, and needs, and on identifying social inequalities or problems with the distribution of power and resources. Conflict-generating factors include a high degree of interdependency within a political class or hierarchy, a high degree of inequality in the distribution of resources, and low upward social mobility, also referred to as social advancement (Andreoni, Chang, 2019).

The literature also discusses the sources of conflict situations. Christopher Moore divided conflicts into five categories: data conflicts – stemming from poor information transfer or wrong conclusions; interest conflicts – when the pursuit of one interest renders the pursuit of another impossible; **structural conflicts – stemming from the working structure of an organization or, more broadly, a social structure**; relationship conflicts – when a conflict moves from the level of interests to the personal level; and value conflicts – stemming from different beliefs, principles, religions, or world-views (Moore, 2014).

In the case of a migrant community, conflicts may involve both individual and collective entities. To analyze selected types of conflict situations, the study used one of the main typologies of conflict, distinguishing its structural, interactionist, and psychological aspects. In the present article, the focus is placed exclusively on the first of these. It is assumed that, even in the rapidly changing contemporary world in which a conflict can lead to social change, social phenomena exhibit a certain degree of order and structure (Frankfort-Nachmias, Leon-Guerrero, Davis, 2019). Although the current text concerns only one dimension of conflict, the qualitative empirical analysis was meant to yield a relatively rich characterization of the investigated phenomenon from the structural perspective.

The structural perspective on conflict

The **structural perspective on conflict** is the case when, in a given social system and at a particular time, conflicts of interest (Mucha, 2014) or structural incompatibilities (Rahim, 2023) are observed that objectively exist, which means they can be detected using methods considered to be scientific, but are not necessarily realized by the social actors. A conflict of interest may consist in the incompatibility of values or goals (Kok, de Bakker, Groenewegen, 2019). The limited amount of desired goods makes it impossible to fully satisfy all the interests and aspirations of the groups functioning in a given system (Hofstede, 1980). Structural incompatibility is the case, for instance, when one social group is privileged at the expense of another one. In the context of population movements, certain groups of migrants, particularly those with irregular legal status or from disadvantaged backgrounds, often face greater challenges in accessing education and employment opportunities in their host countries. They may also experience higher instances of discrimination. Many studies show that migrants often get jobs in low-paid sectors, where they work in difficult conditions, without proper social benefits. In such cases, they may fall victim to ill treatment and worker exploitation, which also leads to social inequalities (Harris, Gawlewicz, Valentine, 2022). Another key factor in structural conflict is the lack of access to public services (Shankley, 2024). However, it is important to note that this varies by context. For instance, prior to Brexit, Polish migrants had full access to public services such as the NHS, though the situation has become more complex in the post-Brexit era. A lack of support from the host country may result in migrants feeling abandoned or ignored by the society of that country. This, in turn, may lead to disrespect, mutual prejudice, and tensions between migrants and native inhabitants, or even between groups of migrants from different diasporas (Rzepnikowska, 2023)

The state of research

In their research on conflict in diasporas, various authors have contributed to a nuanced understanding of their roles and dynamics in their countries of origin and settlement. Terrence Lyons (2007) and Maria Koinova (2011) delved into the impact of these diasporas on conflict escalation and de-escalation. In migration studies, Karsten Paerregaard (2010), Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson (2020) as well as Steven Vertovec (2009) explored their integration and transnational connections. The concept of diaspora was further refined by William Safran (1991) and Martin Sökefeld (2006), who focused on aspects such as dispersion, collective memory, and commitment to the homeland. Yossi Shain (2007) discussed the internal diversity within these groups. Fiona Adamson (2005) and Pnina Werbner (2002) addressed the complex and often unpredictable nature of migrant communities. Elise Féron (2013) introduced the idea of “autonomization,” analyzing how diasporas adapted and transformed conflicts from their countries of origin in new settings. This body of literature collectively offers a comprehensive view of the intricate identities, loyalties, and roles of diasporas, bridging the fields of migration studies and peace and conflict studies.

In the literature exploring conflict within Polish migrant diasporas, the primary focus is on analyzing conflicts within organizations established by these migrants. This includes both formally established migrant NGOs and other organized groups often referred to as “migrant communities.” It has been observed that what distinguished Polish migrants during and after World War II from other diasporas in the UK was the fact that in the Polish community migrant organizations began to emerge almost immediately. Simultaneously, conflicts began to arise both within and between these organizations. One of the issues that became symbolic of the social conflict in the Polish *émigré* community in the UK was the diarchy of the government in exile (Habielski, 2004) known as the “Berg affair,” sparked off by the revealed collaboration of Polish political representatives active in the UK with American intelligence (Friszke, 1999). The essence of that conflict was the use of funds obtained from the American intelligence by Polish migrant communities, which was interpreted in terms of espionage. These situations hindered the unification of the *émigré* community for many years (Ziętara, 1993). An internal structural conflict in the Polish diaspora was also present in the Catholic Church and concerned jurisdiction over Polish Catholics in the UK after the end of World War II (Wesoły, 1994). Scholars have also described conflicts of the Polish diaspora, including the Polish government in exile, with the UK’s government and with the government in Poland. The conflicts concerned issues such as inadequate systemic regulations concerning, for instance, educational solutions for the children of Polish migrants in the UK (Radzik, 1991) or the Polish University Abroad, recognized by neither Polish nor British authorities (Siomkajło, 2003). A good illustration of the internal conflicts among Polish people in the UK is the conflict of the authorities of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) in Britain, with the Polish migrants involved in this organization. The authorities issued an order that prohibited scouting instructors from visiting Poland, even to see their families. Scholars investigating the phenomenon even wrote about “spreading hatred of Poland” in the Polish diaspora at that time, resulting in an internal conflict in the form of refusal to accept the situation in which migrants’ children would be cut off from their homeland in the name of the policy pursued by migrant organizations in the UK, among other reasons (Sword, 1996). Another scholar, Roch Dunin-Wąsowicz, draws attention to a broader systemic conflict in the activities of Polish communities, manifesting itself in a discord between the organizations of “old” and “new” migrants in the UK and concerning a clash of the existing forms of their activity with the currently proposed new forms (Dunin-Wąsowicz, 2022).

An important event that significantly influenced the form and functioning of the Polish diaspora in the UK was the accession of Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries (the A8 group) to the European Union in 2004. It meant wide access to the UK labor market for migrants. Polish people quickly became the dominant group among all migrants in the UK. The new phenomenon of “economic migration” soon generated new types of conflicts. One of the factors contributing to structural conflict – characterized by incompatible values, goals, or interests – is the perceived challenge of maintaining the Polish culture and customs within the community of Polish people in migration contexts. This situation can lead to cross-cultural conflicts, including disputes over the religious upbringing of children in migration conditions, which has been discussed in some research studies (Fel, Kozak, Wódka, 2022). A systemic conflict has also been found over issues such as Polish people’s diminished opportunities regarding access to healthcare (Troccoli et al., 2022), access to education for

Polish migrants' children (Sadura, 2022), and the devaluation of social and cultural capital visible, for instance, in the migrant diaspora in the UK becoming effectively established in the low-qualification and low-income segment (Kaprāns, 2023). Discrimination-based conflicts between migrant groups of different nationalities have been reported as well (Narkowicz, 2023).

Other authors describe the phenomenon of structural conflict stemming from the stigmatization and marginalization of migrants in the host community. The phenomenon of “pathological integration” has been observed, manifesting itself in Polish migrants engaging in certain forms of racism toward other migrant groups by “conforming” to the existing hierarchy of races in the British society (Sime et al., 2022). Another symptom of the structural conflict concerning Polish migrants in the UK is the phenomenon of “conditional citizens” – individuals who are conditionally accepted by the British society, with the acceptance often being contingent upon their adherence to certain societal norms or expectations. This concept, as explored in Magda Mogilnicka’s research (2022), resonates with the findings from the project on welfare conditionality led by Peter Dwyer and others (2019), which sheds light on how such conditionalities impact the integration and acceptance of migrants in the host society. Still other researchers investigating this phenomenon discuss a systemic conflict materializing in migrant labor exploitation (Scott, Craig, Geddes, 2012), concerning not only individuals working in the secondary labor market sector (Shankley, 2023), but also those working in professions that require considerably higher qualifications (Gawlewicz, Narkowicz, Wright, 2023).

Method

The main aim of the project was to conduct field research focused on selected Polish migrants in the UK. The techniques used included individual in-depth interview with migrants living in the UK and elements of non-participant observation in the seats of Polish community organizations in that area.

Parallel to field research in the Polish migrant community, a study was conducted among experts who, due to their professional role or social function, had particularly extensive knowledge about the functioning of Polish migrants in the UK. The experts included a Polish community journalist, umbrella organization activists, and Polish Saturday school staff members. The technique employed for the study was individual in-depth interview. The transcribed content of the interviews underwent thematic analysis using the Atlas.ti software, whose aim was to systematically organize and code the data. This method facilitated identifying and exploring recurrent themes and patterns present in the interview responses (Ngalande, Mkwinda, 2014).

The study included 59 Polish migrants living in the UK. The youngest respondent was 16 years old and the oldest one was 63. The sample was relatively balanced in terms of gender, with 33 women and 26 men. The length of the respondents’ residence in the UK ranged from 3 to 28 years. The oldest participant in the study was born in the UK. These and other socio-demographic variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Category	M	SD	Additional information
Age	39.5	11.4	Range of birth years: 1959–2006
Year of immigration	2010	4.7	Range of years: 2005–2019
Declaration of faith	4.6	1.9	Scale: 1–7
Engagement in religious practices	2.5	2.3	Scale: 1–7
Perceived financial situation	5.2	1.0	Scale: 1–7
Command of English	5.3	1.3	Scale: 1–7
Citizenship			11.1% dual nationality
Occupation type			49.0% intellectual; 27.7% physical; 16.6% mixed; 6.7% retired
Education			55.4% higher; 16.8% M.A. degree; 11.1% vocational; 5.6% secondary; 11.1% not specified

Source: Author's own research.

To sum up, the sample included in the present study reliably reflects the complex and multidimensional picture of the Polish community in the UK, confirmed in other studies as well: the respondents' diverse age, the constant influx of migrants in recent decades (Byrne et al., 2020), the diversity of approaches to religion and religious practices (Duda-Mikulin, 2013), the generally positive perceived financial situation (Kilkey, Ryan, 2020), good command of English, the dominance of Polish citizenship versus a minority having dual nationality, the prevalence of white-collar workers, and the high percentage of individuals with higher education (Kozak, 2023).

The language used during the interviews was Polish. Translation was carried out by professional translators, whose task was to retain as much of the original content and as many of the original meanings expressed by the respondents as possible. It should be noted that translators make their mark on research results and may even play the role of analysts and cultural brokers, which may influence the interpretation of the collected data (Temple, Young, 2004). In the case of the interviews with Polish respondents, the translation procedure was carried out very carefully. The translators were qualified and experienced professionals, and the entire procedure was monitored and discussed with them in such a way that the translation process did not negatively impact the quality of the collected data. During the procedure, we tried to take account of the translation-related cultural and linguistic issues in order to ensure the reliability and accuracy of interpretations.

Results

As mentioned before, this article aims to present the results of analyses concerning the subset of responses that help capture the specificity of the structural conflict in the Polish migrant community in the UK. The collected material makes it possible to categorize the migrants' experience in this regard. The analysis of research results will, therefore, be focused on the following analytical categories associated with the structural perspective on conflict: unrealized structural conflicts, the incompatibility of values, the incompatibility of interests or goals, discrimination, racism, migrant exploitation, and the insularity of the migrant diaspora.

Unrealized conflicts

An area that can lead to conflicts of interest is diverse cultural background. Although cultural diversity is a valuable source of community enrichment, it can also lead to structural conflicts, and migrants themselves are not fully aware of the potential for conflict involved in the situation they have found themselves in. One of the female respondents describes a conflict situation faced by her ethnically-mixed family. The conflict concerned the upbringing of children:

Sometimes the father unknowingly agrees for the child to be brought up in the Polish tradition, and then it turns out he is annoyed by the fact that they speak Polish, which causes a conflict in the family. This often happens in mixed marriages (Karol/M32; 21)¹.

Another respondent directly comments on the unrealized conflict that can occur in the sphere of mental incomprehension by the host country's society:

The mentality here is completely different, and so is the culture. In this respect, they [British people] lack a little of the understanding of our culture that we have (Beata/W15; 41).

A different interviewee underlines that Polish migrants were not fully aware of the fact that, when deciding to come to the UK, they were entering a multicultural society. What becomes a cause of frustration is the feeling of disproportion, a sense of concern for their identity, and a lacking sense of community in the face of the society's cultural mosaic:

We often hold multiculturalism against the British, it often doesn't sit well with the Polish people" (Magdalena/W40; 36);

1 Respondent identifications: M – man; W – woman; numbering: the first number is the respondent's ordinal number; the second number is the respondent's age; experts are additionally indicated with "exp."

[...] there are certain things that you may find surprising and then annoying as a Pole because you were brought up in a different culture, things you may feel uncomfortable about or even outraged at – and this is where conflicts arise (Michał/M50; 34).

The unawareness of a structural conflict can also manifest itself in the domain of children's integration and assimilation into the community they are in:

There certainly are situations where, let's say, a family is bringing up children only in Polish and paying completely no attention to the things going on in England, and because of this the child may also be slightly more rejected by the community (Barbara/W12; 37);

[...] the children are English rather than Polish already. The Polish upbringing is lost on them (Łukasz/M37; 33).

Contact with the new community may lead to an unrealized loosening of emotional ties in migrants' families:

There are many women here who started having children very early and each child is from a different father, for example, so there is no stability to speak of or [family] values transmitted from Poland (Kamila/W31; 43).

Another key factor behind unrealized structural conflict is a discrepancy in the level of access to public services, such as healthcare. The respondents complained about the low standard of healthcare in the UK:

Doctors are often unable to make a correct diagnosis; they try to fix most problems in the early phase of treatment with painkilling pills. Many of my Polish friends prefer to go to Poland to see a doctor or have a medical procedure (Joanna/W28; 54);

[...] the health service in Poland is of much higher quality than in the UK (Małgorzata/W45; 37);

[...] those jokes about Paracetamol being good for everything are not really jokes – they are the truth, because this is how things are. Paracetamol is good for everything (Barbara/W12; 37).

One of the respondents remarked that she did not realize that access to psychological and therapeutic support in the UK was difficult:

Assistance is horrendously expensive, because a good therapist here starts from 55–60 pounds per hour. If you live on a minimum wage and earn 10 pounds per hour – then there is a problem (Anna/W9; 42).

A different respondent pointed out the unawareness of limited access to the satisfaction of spiritual needs:

What is visible here is a shortage of groups in which you could deepen your faith (Tomasz/M55; 32).

Migrants also expressed surprise about the structural formal and legal limitations regarding education in the UK:

What shocked me was the fact that, for example, a Catholic school had to set aside places for children of other religions, which means if a Muslim child wants to attend a Catholic school he or she has the right to attend it [...]; my friend's daughter was not admitted to a school because they had to set 5 places aside for such children (Kamila/W31; 43).

It should be noted that the causes behind this state of affairs include the support of community cohesion through educational policy, which requires managing broader forms of diversity and acknowledging the inequalities between ethnic and religious groups in the pursuit of their civil rights (Flint, 2007).

The incompatibility of values

The incongruence inherent in the structural perspective on conflict can consist in the incompatibility of values, goals, or interests (Kok, de Bakker, Groenewegen, 2019). This is reflected in many of the respondents' words:

Some people also experience a conflict because they [Polish people] would like to preserve as much Polish tradition as possible, while many young Polish people, especially Polish women, become secularized and "convert" to English values, so they are far more individualistic than you would expect someone from a Polish family to be (Anna/W9; 42);

Children socialize in different circles and have different values, too (Barbara/W12; 37).

One of the interviewees observed, however, that with the passage of time the processes of adaptation to the new setting take place in individuals' consciousness. He also indicated the direction and stages of this process – from negation, through tolerance, to acceptance:

The Polish people who have been migrants in the country for some time begin to tolerate different values and a different culture, but those who are recent migrants try to fight those values because they don't want to get to know and understand them (Grzegorz/M20; 57).

A conflict of values can be seen not only in the relations between the host and migrant communities but also within the diaspora, between what can be called the old (post-war) and the new (economic) migrants. An internal cross-generational conflict is observable:

When it comes to the conflict between older and younger Polish people, it is certainly visible. This may stem, above all, from the age difference and from different world views, the difference of opinions, values [...]. It is often the case that older people believe their opinion matters the most,

because they are older and have lived longer, so they totally ignore younger people's opinions, and this can lead to some friction (Paweł/M52; 30);

The "old émigré community" does not like the new expatriates. They contemptuously call us "drifters from Poland." They believe they have a monopoly on Poland in the UK. This surely [amounts to] a conflict of values. For them, after the war, the most important place was the church, and for us it is the pub. They still think of themselves as disadvantaged: by the British, by communism, and now reportedly it is we who put them at a disadvantage by being here (Wojciech/M57, 44).

The incompatibility of interests or goals

The structural perspective on conflict among migrants may refer to situations in which interests or goals clash. A conflict situation can also happen between migrants of the same nationality. An example of a structural conflict among migrants can be an economic conflict. The migrants who arrive in a new country in search of a better life may compete with one another for access to financial resources:

There are those [migrants] who do not necessarily seek to live in harmony with others. They simply want everything for themselves, they are very egoistic, very greedy, and very jealous (Barbara/W12; 37).

The conflict may be dynamic not only in the sphere of values but also in the sphere of goals and means (Styk, 1987). Another interviewee pointed out that a structural conflict could take the form of a clash over social status:

Most of them are immigrants who came here to earn money or to escape justice, a small percentage of the Polish people are those who emigrated because they had no job, but in Britain they have ambitions greater than sitting in front of the TV, so they start to compete with one another, sometimes in unhealthy ways (Ewa/W18exp; 45).

Discrimination

Discrimination can also be a form of structural conflict that stems from inequalities in society. Colloquially referred to as "unfair treatment," it is usually found in sociology in the theory of racial and ethnic relations (Switat, 2018), and denotes a cultural phenomenon of confusing attitudes against foreigners – in other words, ethnocentrism. Discrimination consists in disadvantaging a certain group of people, depriving them of equal rights, or persecuting them based on their origin, race, ethnicity, or class (Pietrzak, 2021). It gives rise to a minority group – a group whose members are discriminated against by the majority of the population in a given society. Among minority group

members, a strong sense of being discriminated against stems partly from the insularity of the diaspora in relation to the wider environment, which, in turn, intensifies the collective sense of exclusion (Koos, Seibel, 2019).

Discrimination can take various forms. The respondents observed that “discrimination [was] most often verbal in form” (Magdalena/W42; 51) and usually based on ethnicity:

I work for the guard, and a report from London came in recently, stating that there was very strong discrimination there against other social minorities (Beata/W15; 41),

or on a different accent:

If you speak with an accent, you are to some extent automatically discriminated against; others do not directly offend you, but they move away from you (Magdalena/W39; 23).

This issue was presented similarly by a different respondent:

A Polish accent, passport, and surname make your life difficult and make it hard for you to get a job. As for the job – sometimes your background determines how high you can get in your post (Magdalena/W39; 23).

Interviewees observed that discrimination due to a foreign accent or ignorance of the language was quite frequent in British schools toward migrants’ children:

My friend’s sons felt strongly discriminated against in Wales because they had been born in Poland and had an accent (W16; 40);

[...] it sometimes happens that the British forbid the Polish people to speak Polish at work. Children in English schools sometimes face discrimination due to their nationality or accent, because they go to church, or simply because of where they come from (Ewa/W18; 45).

The respondents indicate generational differences in the manifestations of discrimination and attempt to diagnose its causes. As they observe, one of these causes lies in the fact that “British children shout out loud what their parents say quietly” (W18; 45), or “the reason is children’s ignorance about what discrimination and racism consist in” (M24; 28). Another interviewee remarked:

I feel that negative behavior, maybe even racism, originates with this younger generation. People born in the 1980s and older British generations have a better attitude to the Polish people [than the younger generation of the British] (Agnieszka/W3; 37).

Apart from discriminatory behaviors triggered by their language accent, migrants often hear comments that they are not welcome in the UK and should return to their country, because migration results in competition in the labor and services market:

I have heard from a few British people that Polish people come here to take their jobs (Katarzyna/W33; 40);

[...] there are English people who hate emigrants because they are losing in their own lives and because they believe they are entitled to everything; but it is the same in Poland – Polish people say that [other migrants] take their jobs from them and that flats are more expensive because of them (Anna/W9; 42).

A different respondent observed that this was a fairly common charge against migrants, found not only in the British society:

It is like in every other country – whether you go to Italy or anywhere else, there is always someone complaining about jobs being taken from them, but this is not true (Monika/W51; 50).

One of the respondents remarked that xenophobic behavior toward migrants had intensified immediately after the Brexit referendum:

Racist [slogans] happened, written on toilet or bathroom walls especially in 2016, when Britain made the decision to leave the European Union, and these were places where people of tens of different nationalities worked; you entered a toilet and read: “Get the f... out of my country” (Jacek/M22; 46);

[...] it happened to me the day after the Brexit referendum that I went to work, received an e-mail, and read: “Are you packing your bags?” – this was an e-mail from my boss (Marcin/M48exp; 49).

Another interviewee noted that the frequency of discrimination depended on the type of place of residence:

This discrimination is much more visible in the British countryside because the countryside is inhabited exclusively by the English, so a foreigner moving in causes great confusion (Magdalena/W39; 23).

This is caused, among other factors, by the higher homogeneity of native inhabitants in rural areas:

In the countryside there are many more English people than in cities, which makes them a more closed community (Malwina/W44; 17).

Racism

The phenomenon of racism functions in various ways, depending on the specificity of the context. This is because racism can be a moral, scientific, political, or popular problem, and in each of these domains it requires a separate analysis. Even so, this phenomenon is undoubtedly part of the structure and functioning of society (Pak, 2021). Originally, in sociology, racism was interpreted in the spirit of the evolutionist thought and took a racial anthropological direction. Some scholars were adherents of the theory postulating the division of humanity into competing races – they were known as social Darwinists. Thus, they maintained the tradition in the theory of conflict dating back to Ibn Khaldun (Johnson, 2022). Today, debates concern “new racism,” also referred to as “neo-racism,” which stresses cultural rather than racial or anthropological differences between groups of people. Dividing individuals into “our folk” (or “natives”) and “others” (or “strangers”), as opposed to classic racism, neo-racism recognizes culture, language, and religion as the basic criteria differentiating groups. The idea of neo-racism is that superiority and inferiority hierarchies are constructed based on the values attributed to the majority culture, with the results that the groups which are not part of the majority are marginalized (Squire, Yao, Zenner, 2023).

Somewhat surprisingly, the respondents in the study expressed the belief that Polish migrants themselves frequently adopted racist attitudes toward other migrants:

Some Polish people will complain about racism, but many of those do turn into racists themselves when they go to Poland, because they complain about Ukrainians, for example; but this does not change the fact that there are many English people who are racists. There is a great deal of this kind of quiet racism in England, [which manifests itself in the belief] that you are worse and that they are a little better (Anna/W9; 42).

Another interviewee pointed to a difference between the manifestations of xenophobia in Polish and British societies:

In Poland, racism is of the outright variety, while in England it is there but they won't tell you that to your face (Anna/W9; 42).

Although racism in the UK takes a covert form, it may also take an overt and organized one. This awareness was shown by a young respondent who mentioned the English Defence League, an extreme right-wing movement with an Islamophobic tinge, founded in 2009:

There is an organization in Britain, a strongly racist one – it is called EDL, and their supporters want the deportation of immigrants [...]. They protest against our presence in their country, but this is life. It is a typical nationalistic organization (Jan/M25; 16).

One of the interviewees observed that the spread of British people's negative behaviors toward migrant communities in the UK might be rooted in a fear of those arriving:

Racism is when you feel threatened, so the English feel threatened, because there are cities such as Southampton, where 25.0% are Polish people (Anna/W9; 42).

Cultural diversity, not always comprehensible for a British person, does not necessarily carry only negative connotations. One of the interviewees believes that the different treatment that Polish people receive stems from the characteristic traits of Polish society:

There can be a positive kind of racism, because most Polish people have a reputation for being good and hard-working employees, and this shocks some of the British (Anna/W9; 42).

As noted before, the classic dichotomy of "our folk" vs. "others" is also present in migrant communities of different nationalities in the UK. For someone to be perceived as "other" (a "stranger") there must be social interaction and a disagreement (conflict) over the meaning of the same values. According to Georg Simmel, the stranger status is synonymous with the strangeness of origin, which means that strangers are not specific individuals but a certain category of people (Simmel, 1950). The above is confirmed by the words of one of the interviewees:

This works the other way too; many Polish people have a negative attitude to people from India or Pakistan. The Polish people often call them Pakis – this is a racist term used by the Polish people; nobody speaks about it, but you can observe it often. Even Polish people are called such names by other Polish people if they are not recognized as Polish at first glance (Jakub/M24; 28).

Other interviewees reach interesting conclusions, pointing out that, while accusing the British of xenophobia, Polish people observe similar attitudes in the Polish diaspora not only toward other migrants, but also toward individuals declaring sexual otherness. This, in turn, leads to the lack of understanding and the lack of acceptance of such behavior in the British society:

[in the UK] especially Polish people are usually racists, they are not exactly fans of lesbians, gays, and the like (Magdalena/W40; 36);

[...] we often even argue with the English over this, and they always defend whatever we attack (Małgorzata/W45; 37).

The lack of acceptance for cultural otherness may manifest itself in migrants' families in the context of the personal relationships that migrants' children enter into:

[...] parents may discriminate against their child's partner and disagree with their decisions (Magdalena/W39; 23).

Exploitation

The phenomenon of discrimination can be divided not only according to grounds of discrimination (racial origin, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality), but also according to forms of discrimination. In the case of the Polish diaspora in the UK, it is possible to observe a certain model of workplace discrimination materializing in the phenomenon of human capital exploitation. The respondents observe that Polish migrants have a reputation for being hard-working and that this is a reason why they receive unequal treatment:

Polish people have a reputation for being industrious and capable of doing many things on their own, so instead of calling in a specialist, for example to change a light bulb, employers make the Polish people do the necessary work (Michał/M50; 34).

Some situations lead to a structural conflict in the form of competition:

Polish people are, by nature, a more industrious nation than the British, thanks to which they begin to get promoted and climb up the career ladder; they are seen as the bad guys because they work in a foreign country and earn more than the British do (Marcin/M47; 43).

The effect of human capital exploitation is visible in the community of migrants themselves:

At the beginning, when I arrived in England, many people said: "Don't associate with the Polish people." I feel sorry about it because I always try to help everyone, but many people become very greedy; they want it all for themselves, they become more selfish, and then it is easier for them to take advantage of others; this is exactly why you have to be careful whom you associate with, but it is like that everywhere (Kamila/W31; 43);

[...] some friends of mine lost their jobs precisely because of other Polish people; they thought they could trust one another and confided a secret to them, but the others used this against them (Magdalena/W39; 23);

[...] the crabs in a bucket mentality – if someone is doing a little better, you have to pull them down; hence the unhealthy jealousy and envy (Anna/W9; 42).

The respondents observed that the ignorance of the English language could lead to the exploitation of migrants by those who wanted to take advantage of the situation for their own purposes. One of the interviewees is aware of this:

I realize that I am in a totally privileged position – I speak good English, I know my rights, so the English cannot take advantage of that (Anna/W9; 42).

Inadequate command of English prevents individuals from properly functioning in the society, to a large extent in many life domains, and this, in turn, has effects that include labor exploitation.

Cultural insularity

Ethnocentrism is often accompanied by the insularity of migrants' diaspora. The Polish diaspora in the UK is regarded as closed and insular by the respondents themselves: "There are people who behave as if they were to live in a ghetto" (Anna/W9exp; 42). The isolation of a group from external influences can lead to the emergence of structural conflicts. A community shut away in its culture limits the opportunities of access to desirable goods, which, in turn, prevents the full realization of the interests or goals of the groups functioning within a given system (Hofstede, 1980). A strong majority of respondents stressed that labor exploitation was not the only consequence of the ignorance of English. Access to basic products and services being limited for those who do not know the language of their country of settlement can lead to individuals' self-isolation in the host society. Individuals being enclosed within the culture of their native language results in a structural conflict:

Polish people are educated and intelligent people, but sometimes they lack the courage to speak (Magdalena/W41; 41);

[...] for me, the greatest difficulty was the lack of an English accent, which sometimes made it hard for me to communicate with friends (Malwina/W44; 17);

[...] the most frequent difficulty preventing a Pole from getting promoted is language problems (Mateusz/M49; 29);

[...] others often take advantage of poor English at work, which puts a "mute" in a worse position (Marcin/M47; 43).

As indicated by the presented analysis of qualitative research results, in the case of the migrant community, a systemic conflict exists not only between the migrant diaspora and the host country, but also among the migrants – those from the same country of origin and those of different nationalities. When trying to find new places to live in an entirely different environment, individuals are faced with tensions and conflicts, including systemic ones (Tomczak, 2014). Therefore, the policy of respect for differences in a multicultural society requires integrative effort not only from the majority society, but also from migrants themselves.

Analyzing the socio-demographic variables, it is possible to observe how certain characteristics influence the experiences and perceptions of conflicts among Polish migrants in the UK.

It turned out that differences in the amount of time spent in the UK had an effect on attitudes toward conflicts. For example, Barbara (W12; 37), who had emigrated in 2009, shared her experience associated with the assimilation and the preservation of the Polish identity. Her experiences differed from those reported by Łukasz (M37; 33), who had left Poland slightly earlier and described his observations concerning integration in the British society.

Gender differences also played a significant role in the way the respondents experienced conflicts. Women, such as Magdalena (W40; 36), frequently expressed doubts connected with preserving family and cultural values. In contrast, men, like Jan (M25; 16), often focused on the economic and social aspects of conflicts.

The respondents' age had an impact on their perception of conflicts, too. Younger respondents, like Malwina (W44; 17), were more focused on cultural identity and integration, while older ones, such as Grzegorz (M20; 57), experienced conflicts associated with long-term changes in the community and their effect on traditional values.

Data concerning religiosity, engagement in Polish community organizations, financial situation, and education shows how important it is to consider diverse socio-demographic factors when analyzing the experiences and perceptions of conflicts among Polish migrants in the UK. For instance, Karol (M32; 21), who reported strong religious commitment (rating 6) and frequent engagement in religious practices (in scouting and scouts' meetings), may have different experience in the context of cultural conflicts and social integration than Michał (M50; 34), who did not report faith or religious practices (rating 0). Karol may be more focused on maintaining Polish traditions, while Michał may have a different perspective on assimilation and social interactions.

Similarly, Marcin (M47; 43), who rated his engagement in the Polish community organizations 5 and has a good command of English (rating 7), may have different experience connected with social and professional integration than Mateusz (M49; 29), who rated his engagement 3 and is also good at English (rating 7). Marcin, with higher engagement in the Polish community, may be more focused on maintaining the Polish identity, while Mateusz, lower in engagement, may experience other forms of social interaction.

With regard to financial situation, Anna (W9; 42), who rated her situation 7, may have different prospects concerning competition in the job market and different integration opportunities than Joanna (W28; 54), whose financial situation was rated 3. Being in a better financial situation, Anna may experience fewer economic and social barriers, while Joanna may be faced with greater challenges in these domains.

Education influences migrants' experiences as well. For example, Kamila (W31; 43), who has higher education (Master of Engineering), may have different professional and social experience than Grzegorz (M20; 57), who has basic vocational experience. Having higher education, Kamila may have access to different professional and social opportunities than Grzegorz.

In other words, the analysis of socio-demographic variables reveals how different aspects of life impact the experiences and perceptions of conflicts among Polish migrants in the UK. The clear differences between the respondents in the amount of time spent in the host country, gender, and age show the complexity of their experience. Longer residence in the UK, as in Barbara's case (W12; 37), favors adaptation and integration, whereas more recent migrants, such as Łukasz (M37; 33), may experience greater difficulties. Gender differences reveal that women more often focus on maintaining family and cultural values, while men tend to focus on economic aspects. Age impacts the way younger and older migrants perceive changes in the community and traditional values.

Data concerning religiosity, engagement in Polish community organizations, financial situation, education, and command of English additionally highlight the diversity of their experience. Karol's (M32; 21) strong religious commitment influences his perception of cultural conflicts, just like Marcin's (M47; 43) engagement in Polish community organizations has an effect on his experiences of integration. As in the case of Anna (W9; 42) versus Joanna (W28; 54), and Kamila (W31; 43) versus Grzegorz (M20; 57), financial situation and education show how different life conditions shape work-related and integration-related experience.

To sum up, understanding the socio-demographic variables provides a deeper insight into the dynamics of the community of Polish migrants. Taking account of the duration of residence, gender, age, religiosity, social engagement, financial situation, education, and command of English allows for a more complete understanding of the complex and multidimensional experience of Polish migrants in the UK. This analysis underscores how important it is to include these factors in further research in order to better understand and resolve conflicts among migrants.

Discussion

The typology mentioned earlier in this article is based on distinguishing three perspectives on the phenomenon of conflict: structural, interactionist, and psychological. The article aimed to present the results of the author's research concerning the place and characteristics of structural conflict in the functioning of migrant communities as exemplified by the Polish diaspora in the UK. The decision to limit the explorations to the structural aspect of conflict stems from several important reasons. Firstly (and most importantly), structural phenomena exert the strongest influence on the emergence of conflicts in society and, as a result, significantly determine their characteristics, types, consequences, and management methods. Secondly, according to some researchers, these phenomena are relatively the least explored and analyzed (Kozina, Pieczonka, 2018).

The use of the structural perspective as an interpretative framework for the analysis of the results of field research conducted among Polish migrants in the UK confirmed its high potential for systematizing the identified conflict phenomena. The analyses of interviewees' responses made it possible to distinguish the following subtypes of these phenomena: unrealized conflicts, the incompatibility of values, the incompatibility of interests or goals, discrimination, racism, migrant exploitation (mainly in the labor domain), and cultural insularity.

Unrealized conflicts

Unrealized structural conflicts occur in situations of contrary duties, motives, tendencies, plans, and actions of individuals or social groups, classes, or nations, when the acting subjects are not aware of the possibility of a conflict arising and of the course of that conflict (Ossowska, 1985). This definition points to a pattern in which anyone can be involved in a structural conflict with anyone without being aware of the fact at the time of making decisions or engaging in actions. What fits into the profile of unrealized structural conflict is the respondents' experiences associated with their unawareness of the consequences of "entry" into a multicultural society. These experiences concern social practices within specific communities, the situation of the individual, and his/her abilities to function in a multicultural space. Other qualitative research, conducted among Polish people in Poland (2019), in the context of the currently emerging migration-related multiculturalism in this country, confirms the rising awareness of the emerging pluralistic society and the consequences this brings (Łodziński, Nowicka, 2021). It can, therefore, be said that the Polish people living in Poland today seem to be more aware of the development of a multicultural environment and the consequences of this fact than the Polish people migrating to the UK in the past, who seemed surprised at that time with the way a multicultural society functioned.

Unrealized structural conflicts constitute an area unexplored in previous studies on migrant conflicts. Among other issues, the present study reveals an interesting phenomenon of migrants' identities clashing within the same diaspora – between different generations – within the social structure of the host country. The respondents themselves drew attention to this special type of structural conflict. Challenges correlating with the structural issue of integration and assimilation may be related to different types of national identity represented by migrants in the country of settlement, which differ depending on the migrant's attachment to the country of origin, openness to the country of settlement, uncertainty about the current life situation, and preference for what has been acquired in the process of socialization in the country of origin or settlement (Kozak, Fel, Wódka, 2021). The context of unrealized structural conflict in the migrant community is undoubtedly an interesting field for further explorations, because it can lead to a disruption of social integrity or to the loss of social bonds. Unrealized structural conflicts can dynamize social tensions and deepen the divisions, which can lead to the structural social disintegration of individuals.

Values

The incompatibility of values is also partly related to a systemic conflict concerning adaptation, associated with the adjustment of individuals, groups, or organizations in the process of cooperation. Part of the conflict of values is a conflict of attitudes, stemming from the incompatibility and discrepancy between judgements regarding specific attitudes, behaviors, or moral evaluations (Nowak, Plucińska-Nowak, 2022). More precisely, in the structural perspective, a conflict of values is generated based on distinct systems of values and ethical principles that individuals are guided by in their everyday life and work. It is assumed that this kind of conflict is one of the most difficult ones to resolve, because it stems from the prior internalization of beliefs, morality, religious principles, and worldviews (Coombs, 1987). The interviewees' responses reveal a conflict of values in areas such as the normative systems of religiosity or morals. The respondents also mentioned a conflict of values within the diaspora, between the old and new generations. This may be due to the fact that the value system of the first post-war Polish migrants was different – less liberal. Consequently, older migrants entrenched themselves in cultural fundamentalism, currently showing a lack of openness to new generations of migrants and at the same time strengthening the stereotypical division into the “old” *émigré* community symbolized by the heroic veteran and the “new” migration captured by the slightly derisive metaphor of the Polish plumber (Meardi, 2009). In his qualitative research among Polish migrants, Michał Garapich openly writes about “generational and ideological conflicts”. Whereas the activities of the old Polish community were focused on maintaining national identity, post-accession migrants are often critical of this kind of martyrological narrative that attempts to dogmatize the values of the post-war generation and establish them as the only right ones for the Polish diaspora (Garapich, 2019). Some authors explain this state of affairs with the fact that post-war migration was often interpreted as a form of exile from the country of origin. At that time, a conflict manifested itself in the choice between “ghettoized existence amid fellow exiles, or escape and possible immersion in a sea of foreigners” (Williams, 1970). The older generation of *émigrés* stopped in their world of values, refusing to admit that the new generation of migrants might have different aspirations, motives, and goals, and that they might be guided by different values in their lives. This led to a structural conflict in the form of refusal to accept the new wave of migrants from Poland in the structure of the emigration network.

The incompatibility of interests or goals and exploitation

The analysis of the research material also allowed the identification of conflicts of interests, goals, and labor exploitation. In the interviewees' responses, this conflict was present in various constellations of social relations: Polish migrant vs. the British society; Polish migrant vs. other migrant diasporas; Polish migrant vs. Polish migrant. The predominant problem discussed was the systemic conflict manifesting itself in worker exploitation. The respondents accused the British of taking advantage of them and exploiting them in their workplaces. They often stressed the dislike of Polish people in the British society through the lens of competition in the labor market or even jobs being taken away from the British. While the dislike of Polish people manifested in the

British society – often viewed through the lens of labor market competition and perceived job displacement – aligns with findings from previous studies, it is noteworthy that this pattern extends to perceptions of other nationalities as well. The interviewees indicated that the structural conflict manifests itself not only in competition in the labor market, but also in divergent attitudes toward professional duties. For instance, the respondents noted a distinct “work culture” associated with other nations that was not well received (“They have a different ‘work culture,’ and we don’t like it as a nation” (Wojciech/M57; 44). This extension of the conflict to broader cultural aspects of work and professional attitudes reflects a more complex picture of intergroup dynamics in the context of migration. In research on social conflicts, the feeling of dislike toward others has been related, among other things, to individuals’ perceived incompetence in many domains of life, including professional life (Ufkes et al., 2012).

The third pattern of conflict of interest is found among Polish people themselves. It stems partly from an emotional mentality marked by envy and mistrust. One of the interviewees accurately called this phenomenon the “crabs in a bucket” syndrome (W9; 42). This corresponds with qualitative research on the self-portrait of a Pole. In 2015, responding to the question: “What do you think a typical Pole is like? What characteristics do you associate him/her with?” what respondents mentioned in the first place was jealousy and envy caused by an individual conflict of interest understood in a narrow sense (Omyła-Rudzka, 2015). Sociologists describe this state of affairs using the category of social trust. Trust gives a sense of predictability of the partners’ behavior. Mistrust, by contrast, consists in estimating potential losses (Stankiewicz, 2016). Surveys conducted by Poland’s Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) have been sounding a warning for years that Polish society is characterized by mistrust stemming from a conflict of interest (75%). A strong majority of Polish people believe that one has to be very careful in relations with others and that those who trust others – strangers – and who appreciate the role of trust in business are in the minority (Omyła-Rudzka, 2015). This is an alarming phenomenon in the Polish society, because trust is referred to as “the most valuable type of social capital” contributing to the coherence of goals in society (Sztompka, 2007: 244). It is assumed that societies can be classified according to the level of trust that their members show toward one another (Wódka, 2017). If this level is high, a culture of trust grows stronger, and trust is an important behavior-regulating norm. If, by contrast, trust is low, society is dominated by a culture of cynicism, which contributes to the emergence of conflicts of interests or goals.

An answer to the above phenomenon can be sought in mimetic theory. The essential elements of this theory are the motives of desire and the other. It becomes a desire to imitate the other in areas that include acquiring commonly valued goods, namely: power, prestige, and material values (in addition to health – a *sine qua non* condition for all the remaining goods). The other, in this situation, can be any subject involved in the conflict – an individual or group expressing the same desires to have certain goods. The smaller the distance between the object of desire and the rival, the more the danger of conflict between the subjects increases (Romejko, 2015).

Discrimination and racism

Systemic conflict is also associated with the phenomena of discrimination and racism. Aversion to migrants arriving in the country of settlement is perceived by the respondents as a kind of British *vox populi*, openly voicing the anxieties of the majority society. The arrival of a significant number of migrants in the UK can be seen as intensifying the long-standing phenomenon of scapegoating in the British society – a trend that has been evident as far back as the history of migration in the country goes. Issues in welfare, such as housing shortages, have often been attributed, on the one hand, to the presence of migrants and, on the other, to perceived inaction by authorities, who are accused of prioritizing social welfare for newcomers over native British citizens. This perspective acknowledges that scapegoating in the context of migration is not a new occurrence in the UK but, rather, a recurring theme in its history as a country shaped by in-migration. Some researchers openly speak about an anti-immigrant ideology of *moral panic* in the UK, which largely affected the Polish people living in the British Isles. This ideology petrified stereotypical ideas about Polish people in relation to issues such as threats associated with the labor market; consequently, it contributed to the social marginalization of migrants (Fitzgerald, Smoczynski, 2015).

The interviewees reported that racism was visible also in the Polish migrants' attitudes toward other nationalities in the UK. Researchers investigating this phenomenon observed that the dominant discourse in the Polish community portrayed migrants of other ethnicities and nationalities, often presenting "the other" as an opponent not belonging to a particular ethnic group (Pakszys, 2022). The noticeable type of structural conflict materializing in the form of racism toward other migrants in the UK does not entirely correspond with the classic model of this phenomenon, since many migrants arriving in this country, including Polish people, formally belong to the white race, they are commonly perceived as though they were racially different. The systemic conflict currently manifesting itself in what has been called the "new racism" (neo-racism) and "modern racism" relates to the diverse world of culture and values rather than to differences in the anthropological sense. It refers to phenomena that consist in certain prejudices being exhibited in an indirect and subtle way, partly because social norms prescribe tolerance for other groups. In their 1994 study, Elliot Aronson and colleagues observed that individuals generally sought to avoid suspicion of racism (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, 1994: 577). Sociological studies reveal that the traditional negative attitudes in Polish communities have changed into new forms of "symbolic racism" and "subtle prejudice." The previous stereotypes and prejudices have been evolving toward less overt and less direct forms (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2012: 160).

This qualitative study sheds further light on the issue of cultural conflict as manifested in cultural racism. It reveals that, while accusing the British of racism, Polish people themselves may exhibit xenophobic behaviors toward other cultures – a finding that corroborates the existing research on this complex interplay of prejudices and cultural dynamics. Moreover, this phenomenon is visible in the Polish community in the UK, and the respondents themselves are aware of it. The phenomenon of Polish people's xenophobic behaviors toward other cultures and nationalities in the UK is confirmed

by the latest sociological research. Semi-structured interviews with Polish people in the UK, conducted in 2019–2020, revealed Polish migrants' complex racist practices toward "strangers." It turned out that such behaviors present among the Polish people were caused, among other things, by their need to distance themselves from other migrant groups (Narkowicz, 2023).

Cultural insularity

When discussing structural conflict, the respondents spoke not only about attachment to their own culture and the resulting isolation from other cultures. Based on the conflict experienced in the community of emigrants, they very often drew attention to the context of inadequate command of English and its consequences. The respondents pointed out that although even before leaving their homeland some migrants had already had a cultural capital, including some knowledge of the language of the destination country, the situation of living in an insular Polish diaspora enabled them to function freely in the new place without improving their language skills. Individuals experienced a structural conflict materializing in the limited possibility of climbing up the social ladder due to being "stuck" in the community of migrants.

While clustering in ethnic enclaves is beneficial immediately after arrival, in the long term it may weaken the integration of immigrants into the host society and intensify the structural conflict that consists in migrants isolating (self-isolating) from the host society. Other researchers also point out that migrants may have difficulties finding a better paid job and a weakened need to learn the language of the new country if they isolate from the society of the place of settlement and are too strongly anchored in the migrant community (Zborowski, Gałka, 2008).

It should be noted, however, that the structural conflict manifesting itself in the cultural insularity of migrants in the UK is not specific to the Polish community. Examples of such situations are also visible in other diasporas, where migrants cluster in ethnic enclaves. The migrants who came to the UK, for example, from the Indian subcontinent are a highly closed social group that cultivates its own traditions and customs and integrates into the new society to a rather small degree. The same is the case with immigrants from Africa, who likewise not only refuse to integrate into the new society linguistically – or, in broader terms, culturally – but also have great problems assimilating in London's labor market. This concerns mainly women, who adhere to the traditions brought from their home countries and, for example, do not take up employment. Their social role comes down to taking care of children and tending to hearth and home (Zawadewicz, 2008).

The improvisational lifestyle of some Polish people in the UK, particularly those with limited skills in the local language, may have more far-reaching consequences. It is observed that, in many places where the migrant diaspora is present, there are no signs of social participation in the local communities. As a result of isolation, migrants are unwilling to engage in the British society (Dunin-Wąsowicz, 2022). Thus, the structural conflict materializing in the social insularity of the migrant diaspora has interesting implications regarding the need for further sociological research into this area.

Conclusion

The study of conflict presents multifaceted challenges, necessitating a comprehensive approach that extends beyond mere analysis of social structures, identifying various dimensions and levels of social diversity; it also requires the analysis of different social categories, communities, and groups, their interests, aspirations, and goals, and the social relations between them (Mucha, 2011). The results of the author's research show the difficulty of migrants' functioning in a social structure that is new to them. Structural conflicts are caused, for instance, by the fact that a part of the Polish society still carries the mark and complex associated with life behind the Iron Curtain. The interviewees' responses included the theme of low self-confidence, complexes, and ignorance of British people's mentality. As it turned out, these conflicts often took the form of previously unrealized incongruities. Years of political and cultural isolation, huge differences in living standards and financial status, and no freedom of travel have arguably led to diminished levels of self-confidence among Polish people when abroad. A significant barrier is the limited skills in the host country's language; this can impede not only the expression of emotions but also the understanding of nuances in social relations, resulting in considerable challenges. Multicultural and historically famous for its openness to other cultures, Poland became culturally homogeneous in the post-war years; as a result, every clash with the cosmopolitan culture of the British Isles carries an additional challenge for the functioning of individuals in a multicultural society, which may give rise to structural conflicts (Kwiatkowska, 2014).

Based on the results of research on Polish migrants in the UK, it can be observed that, even though Élise Féron's theory points to the structural nature of social and autonomizing conflicts, which are deeply rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural structures (Féron, 2017), the present study revealed no cases of conflicts transferred from the country of origin to the new setting of the host country. Instead of transferring the existing conflicts, migrants adapt and redefine their experiences, which is consistent with the concept of "autonomizing" conflicts as discussed by Elise Féron. Conflicts in diasporas may, therefore, undergo transformation and become autonomous, adjusting to the new sociocultural and political conditions. However, the study revealed no process of dynamization, consisting in a direct transformation and transfer of conflicts from the country of origin to the country of settlement, which means these conflicts take on a unique character specific to the new context that the migrants live in.

The unexpected findings yielded by the analysis of qualitative research results concerned the respondents' conscious tendency to engage in xenophobic behavior toward migrants of other nationalities in the UK and the lack of acceptance for Polish economic migration exhibited by the older generation of the UK's Polish community. The presence of xenophobic tendencies in the migrant community undoubtedly has an impact on the development of negative stereotypes regarding the "new" strangers and the strengthening of these stereotypes about the "old" ones in the British society. According to the interviewees, the latter phenomenon reflects a conflict of goals in the Polish migrant community and points to the generational character of the conflict of values between different generations within the same migrant diaspora. In respect to Polish people's racism toward other nationalities, it may

show a desire to retain the privileged social position in the place of settlement. This position may stem from the already mentioned social acceptance for Polish people as conditional citizens in the UK. The outcome is visible in Polish migrants' attitude of social reserve toward migrants from other countries.

The trap of structural conflict that Polish migrants can fall into at the beginning of their residence outside their country of origin was concisely presented by Polish sociologist Jerzy Mikułowski-Pomorski, who synthetically described the structural conflicts experienced by a Polish migrant:

The stranger assumes that people are similar to one another and expects those of a different culture to show behaviors similar to rather than different from their own. This is a mistake, for even the same elements of culture are understood in disparate ways, and behaviors that appear to be *normal* hold unexpected contents. The stranger then encounters behaviors and human reactions that they are unable to explain in light of their own values and experiences, [...] they try to adapt to the conditions but are aware of the failures suffered (Mikułowski Pomorski, 2012: 356–357).

However, the presentation of the social locations and manifestations of structural conflicts in the migrant community offered in this article is not a comprehensive one; it does not include all types of phenomena. The analysis covered those that appeared in the interviewees' responses most frequently. The specificity of the presented empirical portrayal of the structural aspect of conflict lies in its qualitative character, limiting the possibilities of describing structural conflicts in the migrant community. Broader comparative empirical research is recommended, which would identify the conditions that have the strongest influence on the emergence of structural conflicts and that, as a result, determine their characteristics, types, and outcomes to a significant degree. The presented characteristics of the social locations and manifestations of structural conflicts in the migrant community may serve as a contribution to the identification and further analysis of such conflicts.

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Konflikt strukturalny w społeczności migrantów polskich w Wielkiej Brytanii

Abstrakt: Artykuł prezentuje wyniki badań własnych dotyczących miejsca i charakterystyki konfliktu strukturalnego w funkcjonowaniu społeczności migrantów w Zjednoczonym Królestwie. Ma on charakter zarówno poznawczy, jak i praktyczny, gdyż pozwala nie tylko zrewidować zasadność jednej z podstawowych typologii konfliktu, ale także zidentyfikować na jego podstawie różne obszary konfliktu strukturalnego w środowisku migrantów. Tłem analizowanego zjawiska stały się migracje poakcesyjne, które, wywołując zjawiska i procesy istotne dla kształtowania się struktury społecznej, stanowią jeden z najważniejszych czynników zmiany społecznej. Posłużono się metodą analizy jakościowej, pozwalającej zidentyfikować, które z analizowanych obszarów społecznych wywołują konflikty strukturalne w badanym środowisku. Okazało się, iż konflikt strukturalny w wielu jego wymiarach występuje nie tylko pomiędzy migrantami a społeczeństwem kraju osiedlenia, ale ma on także miejsce pomiędzy migrantami z różnych krajów oraz między migrantami z tej samej diaspory. Tym samym zostało poddane pod dyskusję dotychczas dominujące przekonanie o spójności społeczności migrantów. Niniejsze opracowanie może stanowić przyczynek do dalszych rozważań, m.in. na temat występowania barier strukturalnych w społeczeństwie wielonarodowym.

Słowa kluczowe: konflikt strukturalny, migracja, konflikt interesów, konflikt wartości