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Better Migrants, Worse Migrants: Young, Educated Poles Look at New Incomers to Poland[1]

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Abstract:
This article concerns select aspects of social perceptions and categorizations of foreigners settling in Poland. The core of this work is an analysis of a series of qualitative interviews conducted with young, educated residents of Warsaw. Herein the authors draw attention to a significant change in the consciousness of Polish society: a recognition of the permanent presence of migrants in Poland as well as discernment of the sociocultural problems associated with that presence. In the eyes of our interlocutors, the past two decades have been a time in which the attitude of Poles towards incoming aliens has shifted. Influencing opinions have been personal or familial experiences of emigration, particularly after the 2004 accession of Poland into the European Union. Also affecting attitudes have been an immigration wave from Ukraine as well as the tangible consequences of the 2015 migrant crisis. On the one hand, all these factors together have caused Poland to be seen today as not only an emigration, but also an immigration country. On the other hand, these have also provoked a conscious classification of various categories of migrants with regards to their geographic and cultural background along with the roles they might possibly fill in this country.

Keywords:
Poland, migrant, refugee, migrant integration, perception of foreigners.

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1. Introduction – The Research Problem and Methodology

The paper at hand focuses on specific aspects of social perceptions and categorizations in Poland regarding migrants. This is an issue that has become more socially visible and politically significant since the European migrant crisis began in 2015 with its subsequent repercussions (Crawley and Skleparis, 2017, pp. 3–5). Here we would like to draw attention to a key shift in awareness in Polish society: recognition of the permanent presence of migrants in Poland and the perception of sociocultural problems associated with that phenomenon. It is clear that the experiencing of two recent migratory waves in Poland has born important comparisons with other European nations, evoking analytical consequences in the cognitive sphere. The first wave was the post-EU accession emigration of Polish citizens, primarily to Great Britain and Ireland. The second has been influenced by an envisaging (rather than real observing) of the 2015 immigration wave into Europe as well as by the ongoing immigration within Europe, from Ukraine into Poland. On the one hand, the homeland is seen as not only emigratory (as it has been historically), but also immigratory. On the other hand, a conscious definition and classification of various categories of migrants has emerged with respect to their presence in Poland (Jaskułowski, 2019, pp. 101–112).

The primary dataset under analysis comprises 21 semi-structured interviews, conducted at the cusp of 2018 and 2019, among young (22–30 years of age), educated inhabitants of Warsaw. For referencing purposes, interviews will be identified herein by the letter W followed by succeeding numbers. All of our respondents possessed life experiences associated with university studies as well as employment; occasionally, they had also had personal migratory experiences for educational or economic reasons. Likely a further influence on their thoughts about immigrants in Poland could be the fact that, among their family members or friends, there were persons who were migrating or living in various Western European countries or the USA. Our interlocutors were reflective; their responses were complex and diverse.

This demographic category was explicitly chosen under the assumption that it would be especially significant in the longer run. This cohort encompasses younger persons in large cities who have completed or are completing their tertiary education) persons. In time it is expected that they will have greater opportunities to hold decisive positions at the local and national levels. Anticipated, too, is that they will shape public opinion. Moreover, this group is seen – in both general assessments and research survey results – as the most tolerant and inclusive with reference to immigrants and other representatives of foreign nations; more frequently than other categories of society these young people meet foreigners on a daily basis at work and at play (CBOS, 2020a, p. 4; CBOS, 2020b, p. 10).

The queries posed of our interviewees pertained to opinions about the following aspects: 1. How do they themselves define migrants and refugees? What do they sense as the difference between these two categories?; 2. How do Poles generally perceive and treat immigrants? Which immigrants do Poles like and appreciate and which are unwanted in Poland? 3. How do they imagine Poland's future with respect to attitudes towards migration? Analysis of the responses to these three lines of inquiry structure our presentation.

2. Migrants, refugees, and perceptions of foreigners in Poland

In public discourse as well as casual conversations certain concepts have surfaced (sometimes under different labels) which are well-defined from the perspective of legal documentation (Pachocka and Misiuna 2015, pp. 294–300). Among the terms which have lately become operative social categories are those associated with migrations and migrants. More to the point, this affects understanding of the contradistinction between "refugee" and "migrant." Further impinging upon conception of these words is the national or cultural origin of the immigrants. Also entering the picture is a sense of safety and security vis-à-vis the presence of migrants in one's close environment (Konieczna-Sałamatin, 2019, pp. 71–73).

Most of the respondents whom we interviewed used "migrants," "immigrants" or "refugees" rather loosely in their replies. Evident in such applications of the terminology was a way of perceiving strangers that accented an intense or even permanent mobility (Trąbka, 2016, pp. 87–89). Their migration was seen as a broad social process acted out before the interviewee's very eyes – a phenomenon still temporary in nature, not yet signifying a permanent presence in Poland. Nonetheless, our interviewees were aware of the diverse statuses of migrating aliens and one of the most frequently summoned dividing lines was that between migrants and refugees (explicitly evoked, after all, in one of our questions).

In the interviews, migrants were described by their own decisions to freely leave for another land – usually undertaken for economic (employment) or educational reasons (achieving higher qualifications or fluency in another language). The immigrants were often assessed positively by our interlocutors; the latter recognized and appreciated the former's efforts to better their own and their family's standard of living. Serving as an illustrative example is the following response in which the interviewee assumed that we were speaking of people *(…) who are coming for a better life or better options as the first point, and the second point is that it's a rather positive matter, a situation full of hope and all that* [W1]. Another person added that *(…) it's migration for economic-cultural, educational-cultural, economic reasons* [W11]. Nearly identical were responses by other interviewees [e.g., W19].

Also appearing in the context of economic migration was the category of those employed by and earning high salaries in international corporations. Such individuals most frequently come from Western European countries and their situation is unique. In Poland, they tend to function in impenetrable professional enclaves, rather isolating themselves from closer contact with Polish society and culture [W10].

As submitted earlier, the terms migrant or immigrant were most frequently confronted with and often contraposed to the term "refugee." The latter was defined as a foreigner who, for reasons other than his own, has been forced to leave his homeland (Kowalczyk, 2014, pp. 105–106). An example of such a definition is found in the following response:

> *(…) An immigrant is a person who somewhat consciously made a decision to change his country of residence, who perhaps somewhat independently decided to change his place of residence in order to, for instance, improve material circumstances. A person who maybe did not find his own place in that fatherland. Or it could be a person who got, for instance, some better job proposal, some job offer in another country because he is a good specialist. In turn, a refugee is a person who was forced to change his place of residence due to some political or economic factors – well, for example, there was a war or crisis [W6].*

Another view expressly underscored the involuntary nature of the decision to leave one's homeland since a refugee is someone

who *(…) is absolutely escaping from war, from something… well, he has no choice, in other words* [W19]. Nearly the same were responses by others interviewees [see W20, W1, W10].

Although refugees were generally seen as people who had a series of difficult experiences and traumatic events behind them, some of the young, educated Varsovians still differentiated between persons geographically and culturally closer and those more distant in this regard. As one of the interviewed accentuated,

> *(…) In first order, let's help our neighbor – those Ukrainians. They understand our culture the best because they are simply close by. We don't have to save the whole world because there are people around us who need help. And that is precisely a refugee, a person who is escaping some threat. When bombs are flying overhead, or even grenades and you are really unable to exist in that society – you can't even speak of some minimum existence because there is nothing like that at all. Because if there is shelling, then that [situation] is simply below human dignity [W10].*

This lengthier statement is validated by the results of public opinion research in which support for acceptance of Ukrainian refugees was rather high (approximately 50–56%), and clearly higher than admission of refugees from other war-torn regions (approximately 34%) (CBOS, 2018, pp. 2, 7). Both the results of the survey and our interviews testify to an awareness of the geopolitical placement of Poland and to a sense of responsibility for the societies of neighboring countries. This is an effect of ever more common, personal contacts with foreigners from Ukraine as well as a sense of benefitting from the cultural proximity. Testifying to this are the findings of the earlier cited CBOS survey from the end of 2019: nearly all the respondents (93%) pointed to citizens of Ukraine as the most numerous group of immigrants settling in Poland (CBOS, 2020a, p. 1).

A few of our respondents did stress the possibility of individuals abusing or taking advantage of refugee status. Among other things, our Varsovians pointed to the economic and social benefits of this type of migration – particularly social welfare from the admitting state. In this context they also feared the emergence of cultural tensions and conflicts. A sample of such an attitude is this quote:

> *(…) A portion of the people who are called refugees, aren't refugees at all. They're the most ordinary of immigrants – lazy, if you ask me. They come to Europe simply to get money because we are a wealthy continent. And they know that here they can simply get money just because they're coming from a country engulfed by war – it doesn't even have to be their region. So, it is important to differentiate these people and call them what they are: are you really a refugee or are you just an ordinary idler, are you an immigrant who is simply looking for a better life? [W10].*

As yet another interviewee added, the primary motive for a refugee's actions is *(…) an escape from his country, to never return there again. But, well… he wants to settle permanently in a different land, draw benefits, not always accepting the customs and habits of the country in which he will be staying* [W5].

Additionally, discernable in the statements made by these educated Varsovians is a distinction between migrants and refugees made on the basis of an expected willingness or unwillingness to adapt to Polish society and culture. Unsurprisingly, individuals associated with a disinclination to acculturate were most often from African or Middle Eastern countries. Serving one interviewee as evidence are the comparative experiences of other states. In the eyes of this young Pole,

> *(…) Immigrants can be divided into two groups, different groups. The first, which actually does need help (they've left their home due to a bad situation in a country with war, famine, etc.) and is capable of adapting to the rules reigning in a given country while the second group are people from the margins of society who do not want to learn how to live in the new country. Looking at other countries which have acted on a desire to assist immigrants, we see that [those states] lose control over what is happening in their country [W18].*

Another interviewee declared that succor and support should depend upon a migrant's joining in and contributing to Polish economic life: *(…) We can help you at the beginning – yes, foster… take care, [provide] a home, shelter…. But, so to say, also prove something on your part. And also, so to say, work for it…. [Getting something] for free – well, no one will respect that, so to say* [W19].

Quite predictably, our interlocutors did call various events to mind while discussing refugees – especially mass media images illustrating the 2015 migrant crisis in Europe. The young people frequently criticized the biased presentations of refugees in media communiques; they renounced the negative opinions found therein, most often providing examples from their own lives or referring to the experiences of family or friends. Further, these Varsovians raised a few other points: the issue of security when dealing with persons in exile and changes in the very definition of the concept of "refugee." With regards to this term, "refugee" could be understood as someone leaving his homeland in order to save his life or elude persecution (i.e., a victim) or as someone who is potentially or actually dangerous to us (i.e., a suspect). This divide was augmented by the one between familiar and better versus unfamiliar and worse refugees – chiefly meaning persons from distant, Arab nations in which Islam dominates (see Hall and Mikulska-Jolles 2016, pp. 62–76).

In discussing various categories of aliens as well as personal attitudes towards migrants, our respondents most often referred to real-life examples drawn from experiences of family, friends, or their own. Some of these young people had had job experiences in Great Britain; now they commented on the negative consequences of Brexit. Others of these Varsovians had a number of family members in the USA (e.g., Chicago); others had family in Australia or the United Kingdom or parents working in Germany. These diverse, but intense experiences, rich in emotional weight, could act as a keystone in the drawing of lines between refuge and migration. As one of the interlocutors – whose father had legally worked and paid taxes in the UK for over a dozen years – claimed, refugees there were individuals *(…) sitting on social welfare packages* [W10].

Apart from the already noted refugee-migrant divide, the interviewees spontaneously mentioned other types of newcomers to Poland. Brought up especially were foreign persons who have lived and worked in Poland for quite some time, accepting the legal and social order as well as taking financial and educational advantage of their migration. Among these were students on exchange (e.g., the EU's Erasmus program), contacts with whom were described as positive and friendly. Also surfacing in conversation were close connections with international visitors who had come for the 2016 World Youth Day (held in Kraków) during which Roman Catholic families took young people from around the world into their own homes. Migrants were continually partitioned into those whose arrival is valued negatively (e.g., seen as coming just in search of a more leisurely life) versus those valued more positively (typically citizens of Ukraine, other post-USSR states, or

India) who come to Poland in order to work and earn a living.

Within this framework categorizing foreigners who end up in Poland, it is clear, firstly, that there is a fixed perception of both the presence of migrants and the phenomenon of migration. Secondly, attitudes towards migration to Poland are shifting. Above all, there is an acquiescence to incoming labor migrations. This is perceived as beneficial for the country and (albeit surprisingly in comparison with other European states) arouses no political tensions. The feelings of our respondents matched the results of surveys pertaining to the acceptance of foreign labor in Poland. Over the past three years or so, Poles have become much more sympathetic towards workers arriving from non-EU countries. Rising is the number of persons who recognize the advantages stemming from employment of laborers from countries outside the European Union. Moreover, Poles see real value added in the national economy, for the entire workforce, and in their own lives. Remarkably, dominating over other opinions is the conviction that foreigners should be allowed to perform any work in Poland (CBOS, 2020a, p. 9). In November of 2019, well over half of those tested (62%) was in favor of unhampered employment of immigrants, while less than a third (29%) felt that chances for a job should be limited. In the eyes of this latter group, it would be best if only specific types of jobs were open to immigrants, whereas barely 4% of the surveyed asserted that no foreigners should be allowed to work in Poland at all (CBOS, 2020a, p. 4). The semi-structured, in-depth interviews we conducted confirm these tendencies.

3. Who can we accept and why? Discerning attitudes about migrants in Polish society

A key component in the present day experiencing of migration in Poland is the opinions and attitudes of Polish citizens towards immigrants. Views on this are varied, ranging from the decidedly positive or even flattering to the decidedly negative. In this regard, Polish sentiments are greatly influenced by opinions stemming from other European countries. This is reflected in the words of one interlocutor:

> *(…) The stance taken by Poles is determined to a very high degree by the situation reigning, for example, in Germany and other countries grappling with problems with believers in the Islamic faith. I have a feeling that the skeptical mindset of Poles towards Muslims can only deepen. When it comes to other countries, such as Ukraine or Belarus, it seems to me that everyone is looking at the future with rather open arms [W8].*

At the start of each in-depth interview, the young Varsovians would typically claim that migrants are treated normally in Poland. By this our respondents meant that Polish attitudes are devoid of stereotypes and prejudices on the subject – and thus more easily accepting of migrants. Straight away interviewees would add that they had not had any negative experiences in contact with migrants in Poland. Nonetheless, as the interview progressed, thoughts would surface that did contain elements of generalized social fears and prejudices linked to this matter. Time and again, such preconceptions were exhibited straightforward, but especially when the surfacing image of a migrant or refugee was labelled "Turk" or "Arab" (Andrejuk, 2019, pp. 210–212). A young, bearded male with dark hair would automatically be associated with the image of a terrorist, arousing fear. In the eyes of one respondent, such a likeness,

> *(…) is associated with only one thing – with some Muslim, with a person from Africa who, it could be, wants to blow himself up or kill us. On the other hand, all in all, you don't hear about such things whatsoever…. Well, but the immigrant… I don't know [but] we luckily don't take in those immigrants. Instead we take in a lot just now from the East or Ukrainians, or from Asia and the Near East as well. For now, this reminds me just of that kind* [W19, see also W2].

Still, it should be noted that others among these Poles made more discreet statements, pushing for recognition of the fact that, *(…) We have to fight terrorism, but not call everyone a terrorist* [W11], or completely rejecting stereotyping since, *(…) These are normal people who come to earn money* [W7].

During the interviews, our educated interlocutors used their own, everyday observations from direct contacts with various kinds of immigrants in Poland. However, when questions were posed, directly asking for sources of knowledge about immigrants, it was usually the internet or various media that were named. These emblematic resources were critiqued, but still treated as a wellhead for colloquial knowledge on the subject. Judgmental words fell regarding the selectivity of mass and social media which often spot and then hype singular, negative events involving immigrants – thus provoking a media attack on migrants and refugees. Furthermore, the internet has become an anonymous means of communication, full of hate speech. Interviewees pointed out that these media manipulate Poles, so a hefty dose of independent thinking is necessary to maintain sober judgment. According to our respondents, the internet and media lead to a polarization of opinions with regards to migrants and exaggerate phenomena associated with migration (Bielecka-Prus, 2018, pp. 28–29).

To a large extent, the pejorative portrait of refugees and migrants is, in the opinion of our interlocutors, created by the media. Imposed upon readers and viewers have been pictures of poverty and the undeveloped, underprivileged countries from which migrants come. Furthermore, the migrating individuals themselves are depicted as demanding, indolent, and orientated exclusively towards abuse of the social welfare systems in wealthier countries. As one interlocutor expressed it:

> *(…) They don't bother me as long as a balance is maintained. They work and do so on our conditions and are not a starting point for violence. So far, I think it has not gone that way. I'm talking here about people coming from Ukraine that – no, there isn't anything like that, that people are afraid of Ukrainians on the streets. Still, I know that in other, bigger, European cities, for instance, there are sometimes various immigrant neighborhoods where people are afraid to cross because they know that something bad can happen to them* [W1].

Even if allegations are made that it is the mass and social media which kindle negative emotions against some countries, the educated Poles in our study felt that certain reports speak for themselves (Kropiński and Hansen, 2016, pp. 9–13). One young woman described the situation in France: *(…) Right now there is an excise bill, a tax being pushed through in France. As of now 1 person has died, 47 have been wounded. So, let's face it, but this does rather speak for itself. Indeed, there are a lot of people of Arab descent. There is a well-known saying about terrorists that not every Arab is a terrorist, but every terrorist is an Arab* [W10].

Axiomatically, the deleterious statements made about immigrants never involved

a single person from Europe or North America. Quite the contrary, the migrating cohort from those continents was seen as an important labor resource in Poland. It was perceived as offering unique professional corollaries, beneficial to the development and competitiveness of the Polish economy, and, as a consequence, a positive influence on the rising prosperity of Polish society. With relevance to this, the woman just cited commented: *(…) I think that Poles are very open to migrants, but also to a certain group of migrants who are professional migrants. This means they come to Poland on employment contracts to large corporations and they put in all their intellectual power into developing a Polish company or a foreign company that has its branches in Poland* [W10].

As can be seen, assessment of the presence of foreigners in Poland focuses on two spheres: work with industriousness as well as respect for the local social order. One of our interviewees remarked, *(…) Migrants leave because they are forced to do so by war, for instance, and are seeking – I really don't know what. But there are other religions – they destroy everything, so no one here likes them. So here there is a difference: immigrants come here for work, and those people come to do nothing and only get money from the government* [W7]. Another person added, *(…) China, Vietnam or other countries – those are people very respected in Poland. They pay taxes, have their popular shops, their markets with stalls – they work very honestly* [W10].

Evident is that the respondents in our study speak openly about the fact that migrants can be treated differently in Poland depending upon their country of origin. In fact, some of the young Varsovians bluntly declared that individuals of a European appearance are treated better than individuals who physically differ from Poles:

> *(…) The origin of a given immigrant has the greatest influence on how he is treated in Polish society. It seems to me that citizens of darker complexion – India or Nigeria – are often treated like people of an inferior type in comparison with citizens of France or Italy due to the reigning stereotypes among Poles about, for example, thieves from Chechnya or Romania* [W8].

Also pointed out are physical dissimilarities, such as visibly different skin color. For some of our interlocutors this could stand as a barrier to contact with migrants: *(…) When these are Black people or Asians, it's conspicuous and such a person is, so it seems to me, treated differently* [W1]. This assessment is confirmed in other sociological research studies, especially among the Arab states diaspora in Poland (Switat, 2018).

Consequently, cultural similarities, especially linguistic ones, facilitate more unproblematic inclusion in Polish society. This is something underlined by a respondent who had worked abroad and who had close family still living in Belgium:

> *(…) We gladly accept people of a religion like ours because Poland is, after all, still a bit that kind of country. It's changing now, but still more Catholic and patriotic. So, for sure, people from Ukraine or other countries where the religion is like ours we more easily accept than those from Islam who destroy everything, don't do anything. All of this is visible on television here, how they behave. Even in other countries, like in France or in Belgium – it's like that everywhere* [W7].

As an example of a language culturally closer, our interlocutors often mentioned Ukrainian which they could more or less understand. This element surfaced in all the interviews.

Looking from a different perspective, the attitude of foreigners to Poles depends to a great degree on the plans those aliens have with regards to their migration. Will Poland ultimately be the country of permanent settlement? If, however, Poland is treated as simply a transit country, then assessment by Poles is more often negative: the chain of circumstances means that temporary immigrants are less motivated to integrate and less eager to learn the Polish language. Those who intend to stay in Poland often (despite unpleasant or even hurtful experiences) do take notice of and appreciate the assistance they receive from "ordinary Poles" (Pachocka, Pędziwiatr, Sobczak-Szelc, Szałańska, 2020, p. 92).

4. Poland as an immigration country: tradition and modernity

The interviewees in our study were invariably convinced of a positive turn of events, leading to an acclimatization to "Otherness" and increased tolerance towards immigrants in Poland. In the view of one person, *(…) More and more often they move to other countries. However, coming to Poland are individuals who simply plan to live here. So, they simply want to move here permanently, maybe they want to somehow link their lives with Poland. And that's why this is maybe going in a good direction* [W6]. The young, educated respondents believed that the development of attitudes and opinions among Poles will move more in the direction of tolerance. Among the factors leading society this way is that the migrant might be, *(…) a person who works for Uber with a very strange name. And that's exactly the kind of thing, exactly that this slowly stops being exotic for us and just becomes something ordinary. And I think that, among other things, contact – whether it be in a Żabka [franchise convenience store] or something else – makes it so these reactions are simply not as strong against migrants* [W1].

Nevertheless, Poland is described as a country which is still less attractive for migrants since, *(…) We don't have much to offer them, taking into consideration some kind of economic support* [W2]. Running through the responses is an underscoring that Poland continues to be more of a transitory country rather than one of permanent settlement (Okólski and Wach, 2020, p. 147). From the perspective of these Varsovians, *(…) They will run off to Germany anyway because it is too poor for them here* [W19]. Yet it seems that Poland remains attractive enough for citizens of neighboring Belarus and Ukraine since they are culturally and territorially closer. The interviewees emphasized that neighbors from the east already arrive with some knowledge about Poland and Poles. They do not have to learn the language from the start; they understand much about life in Poland so they feel fine and adapt easily. That said, several of our respondents indicated that Poland fulfills the role of a starting point (especially for Ukrainians) that will facilitate entrance into the Western European labor market.

The image of the migratory reality in today's Poland discloses realistic evaluations of motivations. The inhabitants of bordering Eastern European countries, Central and Eastern Asia, and others are seen in terms of a labor migration with the goal of higher earnings. Since Poland's unemployment has been fairly low in recent years and there are labor shortages in specific areas, there are jobs to be had in construction, transportation, gastronomy, etc. It is precisely this that is described as the positive effect of immigration: the inflow of valuable workhands, the economic development, and even the demographic increase. Additionally, there is the expansion of an accessible cuisine through eateries and bakeries: *(…) Delicious*

Georgian bread – that's a very nice aspect, the mixing of cultures. They take something from us, we take something from them. And as simple as that, that's how things develop in social worlds and that's very cool [W10].

The positive side is not the only one detected by these educated Varsovians. The following citations from one interview illustrate deeper reflection about both sides of this coin: *(…) We found workhands…. It would have simply been very hard for some businesses if not for the people from Ukraine…. It's also a cultural enrichment as well as something that improves our relationship with Ukraine – we see nice people and not followers of Stepan Bandera [radical Ukrainian ultranationalist].* Then again, he noted negative economic consequences in the form of lowered wages or job loss (*(…) We already have ten Ukrainians that would take your place*). Delving further into undesirable features, this same respondent continued,

> *(…) We have to also speak of those… the most obvious negative effects. Meaning that, if these people do not assimilate and are unable to accept our social norms (because, for instance, they never learned them), well then we have just such this type of negative effect as a lack of assimilation, the clustering of these people in ghettos. And so then obviously – when there's no future, when they don't know the language – well then it's a natural thing that they will radicalize or move into some radical religion or move towards creating a criminal group. And that is what we observe in the West* [W20].

Our educated interlocutors also perceived the emergence of cultural conflicts in Polish society. Such apprehensions have been associated with fear of terrorist attacks, migrant ghettoization, and rising religious radicalism – meaning Islamic, meaning a sole focus on migrants from North Africa and the Near East. One respondent pondered, *(…) It could evoke some internal conflicts in the country to which they come. This could cause the appearance of social tensions or some social conflicts based precisely on a cultural or religious background, or on a political or economic background* [W6]. Still other possible negative outcomes arose in the interviews such as the spread of illnesses, viruses, etc. nearly unknown in Poland heretofore. For instance,

> *(…) Let's not fool ourselves, but every country to some extent must regulate which people enter that country. We don't want just anyone in Poland and this is not a symptom of some xenophobia for me – some racism, intolerance, or however you want to call it. This is just pure and simple control of the state over who comes in and stays in this country. If someone wants to come only in order to destroy the culture and introduce some chaos, then I don't want that here. And this is not a symptom of my xenophobia, but only my patriotism* [W10].

Over the course of the interviews for this study, we did not meet with views that were unequivocally directed at absolute acceptance or rejection of immigration into Poland. Yet the opinion did arise that, considering the scale of the phenomenon today, there is a need to legally and consciously regulate relations with immigrants with regards to their integration: *(…) Like in London or say in Paris – they have to defend themselves against this so as to not allow [the immigrants] a gaining of control, so to say* [W1]. Generally speaking, opinions about the future and about the right direction to take with reference to migration vacillate from the very careful to the more open. One respondent discussed various points:

> *(…) It's not that when we lock the gates of our country completely that we'll claim there is no migration. It will exist, it will mount up. It'll be like, those gates will balloon because those persons will be knocking on our door all the time and increasingly harder. And we'll just pretend that we are sweeping it under the rug, but that's not a solution. A solution would be to learn to live in a world which is rooted in the fact that we migrate for various reasons and we will learn to respect fellow man* [W11].

A young woman assigned a larger role in this issue to the mass and social media:

> *(…) Unfortunately, due to some such intensive terrorism in the world, we are mostly afraid of people who have different political views, but also those who profess a different religion. On the one hand, we are afraid because we don't know them, and, on the other hand, I am thinking that the media are also not exactly helping in acceptance of such people. However, I think that in such interpersonal contacts, if you meet someone personally, then a thread of sympathy is created. It doesn't matter if it's someone from Bangladesh or Ukraine or the United States* [W2].

5. Conclusions

This article has merely sketched a few of the issues associated with the perceptions of immigration into Poland of which the general population has become aware. An aim here has been to divulge the results of qualitative research into this matter. Certain cognitive frameworks operating among young, educated, and urban Poles are thus illustrated – the way they think and what they think about foreigners immigrating and settling in their homeland.

Analysis of the interviews conducted with this cohort of Warsaw residents leads to a few answers to the queries posed at the beginning of this article. The first of these pertains to the social definition of the categories of migrant and refugee and the respondents did distinguish both these concepts. Accented, however, was that the former were persons who freely made a decision to leave for another country for economic or educational reasons – something that was evaluated positively. Moreover, this type of immigration was perceived as a tough endeavor undertaken by migrants in order to better their own and/or their family's standard of living. Refugees, in contrast, were defined by their traumatic experiences in and escapes from their homeland. Moreover, interviewees additionally divided the refugees into those who are geographically and culturally closer (e.g., Ukrainians) and those who are geographically and culturally more distant (e.g., Arabs). Our interlocutors also noticed behavior evaluated negatively: the possibilities for abuse of refugee status and Poland's social welfare system. A similar polarization of opinion has manifested itself in other European countries (Rea, Martiniello, Mazzola, Meuleman, 2019, pp. 14–16).

Overall, the responses provided indicate that immigration is not only accepted, but the presence of immigrants in Poland is generally considered a natural and affirmative trend. Crucial to such an encouraging attitude, however, is their employment and ability to acculturate. Specific traits of the incomers are seen as guaranteeing a lack of danger and thus a sense of security. Furthermore, such characteristics are viewed by our interlocutors as both an "instrument" and a social "resource": aptly employed by the general population, these qualities could contribute to a deep and constructive economic transformation in Poland.

Regarding the direction that attitudes towards immigration will take in the future, our interlocutors underlined that, even if the majority continues to view Poland in terms of transit, this country is already sufficiently attractive for economic migrations from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The inflow of immigrants

from these two regions is presented as something contributing to Polish fiscal development and growth. Such an openness towards migration and migrants is confirmed by the results of previous diagnoses of this issue in Warsaw (Dudkiewicz and Majewski, 2017) of research on the topic of multicultural contiguity (Górny, Toruńczyk-Ruiz, Winiarska, 2018).

The outcomes of our analysis document a positive and reflective stance taken by this young group of Varsovians, but it does permit expectations of similar tendencies within the whole of Polish society. According to our respondents, the last twenty years have been a period in which the attitude of Poles towards incoming foreigners has changed. Not only have immigrants been accepted, but (to a certain degree) also familiarized: aliens no longer arouse a sensation as their presence is considered something natural.

Perceptions of migration are anchored in acknowledgement of the now fixed presence of immigrants in Poland as well as in the discernment of the sociocultural challenges associated with this phenomenon. Affecting the opinions of our interviewees were the real-life experiences of family, friends and/or themselves. Other factors have been the migrations of Poles to other (mostly EU) countries, a continuing stream of immigrants from Ukraine, and the perceptible consequences of Europe's migrant crisis in 2015. All things considered, especially young, urban, and educated Poles no longer see their homeland in terms of historical emigrations for political and economic reasons. They see a country attracting a spectrum of immigrants among whom there are individuals who will contribute to the development of Poland.

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Lepsi i gorsi migranci. Młodzi wykształceni Polacy o nowych przybyszach do Polski

Abstrakt
Artykuł jest poświęcony wybranym aspektom społecznego postrzegania i kategoryzowania cudzoziemców przyjeżdżających do Polski. Został on oparty na analizie serii jakościowych wywiadów przeprowadzonych wśród młodych wykształconych mieszkańców Warszawy. Zwracamy w nim uwagę na dokonującą się ważną zmianę świadomościową w polskim społeczeństwie, która zasadza się na uznaniu trwałej obecności migrantów w Polsce oraz dostrzeganiu problemów społeczno-kulturowych z tym się wiążących. Ostatnie dwie dekady według naszych badanych były okresem, w którym zmienił się stosunek Polaków do przybywających do nas obcokrajowców. Na takie opinie badanych wpływ miały ich własne lub rodzinne doświadczenia z migracji poakcesyjnych po 2004 r., postrzeganie obecnej fali imigracji z Ukrainy, a także poznawcze skutki kryzysu migracyjnego z 2015 r. Spowodowały one razem, że postrzega się obecnie Polskę z jednej strony nie tylko jako emigracyjny, lecz także jako kraj imigracyjny, a z drugiej strony pojawia się świadome klasyfikowanie różnych kategorii migrantów z perspektywy ich pochodzenia geograficzno-kulturowego oraz możliwych ról pełnionych w naszym kraju

Słowa kluczowe: Polska, migrant, uchodźca, integracja migrantów, postrzeganie cudzoziemców.