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Features of the ethnic identity and social adaptation of Latvians working in England and Ireland

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Abstract

At present, in connection with economic problems, the stream of the Latvians leaving to work and live in England and Ireland, has increased. The issues connected with processes of social adaptation of Latvian emigrants and preservation of their ethnic identity remain poorly understood. Our research objective is studying ethnic identity and social adaptation of Latvian emigrants living in different cultural environments. The study involved the following participants: 30 Latvians from England and 30 from Ireland, 15 men and women in each group; aged 36-42; representatives of different professions; living in emigration for more than a year. The research is based on comparison of levels under scales of ethnic identity (Ethnic nihilism, Ethnic indifference, Positive ethnic identity, Ethnic egoism, Ethnic isolationism, Ethnic fanaticism) and scales of social adaptation (Adaptability, Conformity, Inter-activity, Depression, Nostalgia, Estrangement), as well as inter-correlation between them. It is preliminary established that processes of adaptation of Latvians in England and Ireland differ. In Ireland adaptation is more strongly connected with tendencies of hypo-identity, and in England – with positive ethnic identity.

Keywords: *Ethnic identity, social adaptation, culture space, tolerance*

Introduction

The necessity to study ethnic identity and social adaptation is prompted by a search of ways to study and understand unconscious and deliberative determinants of behaviour of people involved into the inter-ethnic communities.

The problem of social identity and social adaptation takes a prominent place in the modern social psychology. Different researches all over the world have been dealing with this problem. Identity as a continually developing social phenomenon, which, as shown by Valk (Valk, 2007; Valk, Karu, 2000) is widening the boarders of its group, making it possible to understand qualities of identity, such as how identity is ascribed, acquired and formed in the process of socialisation of personality in the context of definite environment and historical situation. That is why the issues around the social embededness of identity, which Ashmore and colleagues called the elements of identity (Ashmore et al., 2004), are important in modern social psychology. Berry and Finney, in turn refer to the complexity of the formation of identity in the process of adaptation, created the U-shaped adaption-curve. The real adaptation and formation of new/multiple identities depend on personal properties, age, level of education, social support, group

relationships and social and economical conditions, and chosen strategies of integration (Ward, Rana-Deuba, 2000).

Today the process of socialisation is passing under the conditions of more variability of ambiguous social situations. Personal manifestations of situation of social instability leads to the changes connected with time perspective disorder, increased anxiety and actualisation of psychological defences. The influence of psychological defence can promote the preservation of human's inner comfort in the cases of breaches of social norms and taboos, as far as it reduces the effectiveness of social control and gives the basis for self-justification. The selectivity of human's attitude towards a group or a collective is connected with psychological defence mediation. The effective adaptation of personality is possible under the conditions of satisfaction of minimal requirements and expectations of the society. The adaptability is expressed in acceptance and adequate reaction on those social expectations, which the person meets in accordance with his/her age and gender. In this case, we can refer to the conformity to those requirements and norms, which the society presents to the behaviour of personality; the adaptiveness means the flexibility and effectiveness in the cases of meeting with new and potentially dangerous conditions and also the ability to give the desired directions to events (*Безюлева* et al., 2005).

In 2004 Latvia has become a member of the European Union, and Latvian citizens have received the possibility to live and work in other EU countries. In connection with the economical crisis, the stream of migration processes increased. A significant number of representatives of major ethnic groups 'Latvians' and 'Russian' have settled in Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK).

The objective of present research:
The study researches into social adaptation and ethnic identity of Latvian emigrants living in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland.

***The Hypothesis of the research*:**
Ethnic identity of the representatives of different ethnic groups in other cultural environment is related with their social adaptation in this cultural space.

***The Task of the research is to investigate*:**

- How the level of ethnic identity of Latvians from Latvia living in UK differs from Latvians from Latvia living in Ireland?
- How the level of social adaptation of Latvians from Latvia living in UK differs from Latvians from Latvia living in Ireland?

Method

Participants

Sixty persons of ethnical group ‘Latvians’ from Latvia (in the age 36-42; 30 women; 30 men; 30 from UK and 30 from Ireland) participated in the investigation.
The research had been conducting as in Latvia, where the migrants came during their leave, as in Dublin and in Birmingham and in London during 2009-2010. 80% of participants live in the United Kingdom and Ireland for the period from one to two years. The majority of participants do not have higher education qualifications and work at simple works (at building sites, warehouses, transport, gardening farms, as nannies, house cleaners in hotels and in the social services). More than half of them have moved from Latvia with their families. All have children. One-third hope to return to Latvia in the next two years.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire consisted of two parts (Tab.1).

Tab.1. **Questionnaires and Scales**

	I. ‘Adaptation of personality to the new social cultural space’ by Yankovsky L.	II. ‘Types of ethnic identity’ by Soldatova, G.; Ryzhova,S.
Questionnaire	(*Платонов*, 2003, 374-379); Six scales:	(*Солдатова*, 1998, 189-193); Six scales:
	Adaptability Conformity Inter-activity Depression Nostalgia Estrangement	Ethnic nihilism Ethnic indifference Positive ethnic identity (norm) Ethnic egoism Ethnic isolationism Ethnic fanaticism

The description of the content of the scales of used methods is given in the works (Plotka et al., 2008, 2009).

***The methods of data processing*:**

Data were processed with the help of the computer program SPSS Statistics 17.0. The processing of data included: descriptive statistics, the accordance of the distribution of data to the normal distribution (the comparison of indexes of skewness and kurtosis with their standard errors, Kolmogorov-Smirnov’s test in modifications of Lillifor, Shapiro-Wilk’s test, the visual study of histograms with a normal curve and Boxplots). Was revealed that distribution of most variables, significantly differs from the normal distribution. Therefore, all further research were conducted with the help of nonparametric methods of statistics: The Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient for research of relationships; Mann-Whitney U-test for the comparison of levels of the

variables, Fisher's φ^*-Test for the comparison of percents, Pearson's Chi-square test for comparison of distinctions in distributions.

Results

I. *Social Adaptation*

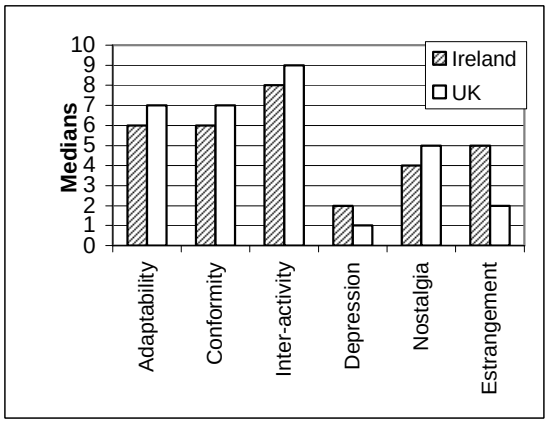

Fig.1. The levels of the scales of Social Adaptation

The following tendencies were revealed (Fig.1):

The level of adaptability is higher in England **(U=231,** $p \le 0.001$**).**

The level of conformity is higher in England **(U=298.5,** $p \le 0.05$**).**

The level of inter-activity is higher in England **(U=313,** $p \le 0.05$**).**

The level of nostalgia is higher in England **(U=150,** $p \le 0.001$**).**

The level of depression is higher in Ireland **(U=283,** $p \le 0.01$**).**

The level of estrangement is higher in Ireland **(U=282,** $p \le 0.01$**).**

II. Ethnic Identity

The distribution of contributions of positive ethnic identity, hypo-identity and hyper-identity into the total composite score (Fig.2) in the Ireland and England differ (Chi square=34.272, $p \le 0.001$).

According to Soldatova's methodology it is possible to determine the transformation of ethnic self-confidence. The types of identities are distributed pursuant to the scale of ethnocentrism: from the 'denial' of ethnic identity to the national fanaticism. Scales: ethno-egoism, ethno-isolation, ethnofanaticism – characterize transformation of the ethnic self-confidence pursuant to the type of hyperidentity (Hyper-I), whereas scales – ethno-nihilism and ethnic indifference – are pursuant to the type of hypo-identity (Hypo-

I). Ethnical toleration can be assessed pursuant to the scale of positive ethnic identity, but the level of intolerance can be assessed pursuant to all other scales.

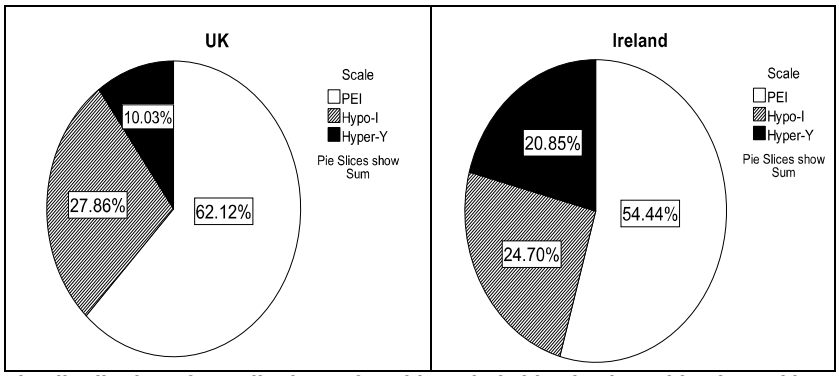

Fig.2. The distribution of contributions of positive ethnic identity, hypo-identity and hyper-identity into the total composite score.

The proportion of positive ethnic identity of Latvians, living in England exceeds the proportion of positive ethnic identity of Latvians from Latvia, who lives in Ireland ($\varphi^*=3.09,\ p \le 0.01$).

The proportion of hyper-identity of Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland is exceeds the proportion of hyper-identity of Latvians, living in England ($\varphi^*=6.02,\ p \le 0.01$).

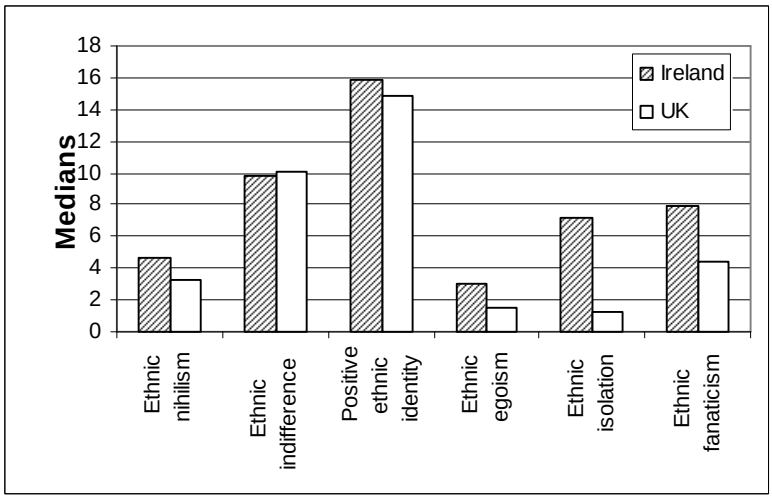

Fig.3. The levels of the scales of Ethnic Identity. Medians

The level of ethnic nihilism is higher in Ireland ($U=249.5,\ p \le 0.01$).

The level of ethnic egoism is higher in Ireland ($U=305,\ p \le 0.05$).

The level of ethnic isolation is higher in Ireland ($U=159,\ p \le 0.001$).

The level of ethnic fanaticism is higher in Ireland (U=200, $p \leq 0.001$).
(Mann-Whitney U test's statistics).

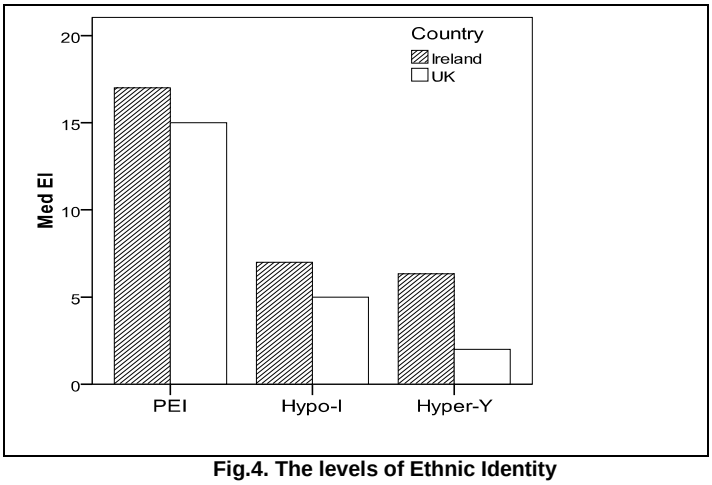

Fig.4. The levels of Ethnic Identity

The level of hypo-identical tendency is higher in Ireland (U=273.5, $p \leq 0.01$).
The level of hyper-identical tendency is higher in Ireland (U=37.5, $p \leq 0.001$).

III Analysis of Correlations

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used for the analysis of relationships (Tab. 2-3). The statistically significant relationships between scales of social adaptation and of the ethnic identity were shown on Figures 5 and 6 for Latvians from Latvia (N=30) living in Ireland and Latvians from Latvia (N=30), living in UK.

Ireland

Among Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland:
The relationship between positive ethnic identity and adaptability is negative.
The relationship between positive ethnic identity and depression is positive.
The relationship between positive ethnic identity and estrangement is positive.

The relationship between hypo-identity and adaptability is positive.
The relationship between hypo-identity and conformity is positive.
The relationship between hypo-identity and inter-activity is positive.
The relationship between hypo-identity and nostalgia is negative.
The relationship between hypo-identity and estrangement is negative.

Hyper-identity is negatively linked with adaptability.
Hyper-identity is negatively linked with conformity.
Hyper-identity is positively linked with nostalgia.
Hyper-identity is positively linked with estrangement.

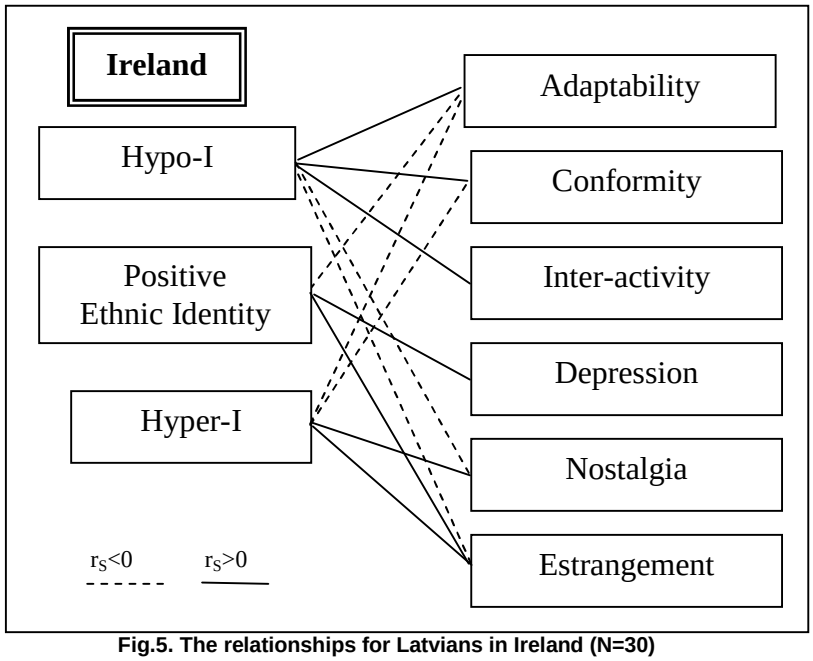

Fig.5. The relationships for Latvians in Ireland (N=30)

Tab.2. The Spearman's correlation coefficients and significances for group from Ireland (N=30)

Ireland	Spearman's rho, r_S	AD	C	IA	D	N	E
PEI	r_S	-.478**	-.063	.292	.464**	.295	.696**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.741	.117	.010	.113	.000
Hipo-I	r_S	.563**	.742**	.385*	.250	-.788**	-.802**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.036	.183	.000	.000
Hiper-I	r_S	-.523**	-.890**	-.323	-.324	.946**	.853**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.082	.080	.000	.000

Reductions: AD - Adaptability; C- Conformity; IA - Inter-activity; N- Nostalgia; E -Estrangement

United Kingdom

Among Latvians, from Latvia, living in United Kingdom:
Positive ethnic identity is positively linked with adaptability, conformity, depression and estrangement and is negatively linked with the tendencies of hypo-identity.
Hypo-identical tendencies are negatively linked with adaptability, conformity, inter-activity and depression.
The tendencies of hyper-identity are negatively linked with conformity and positively linked with inter-activity and estrangement.

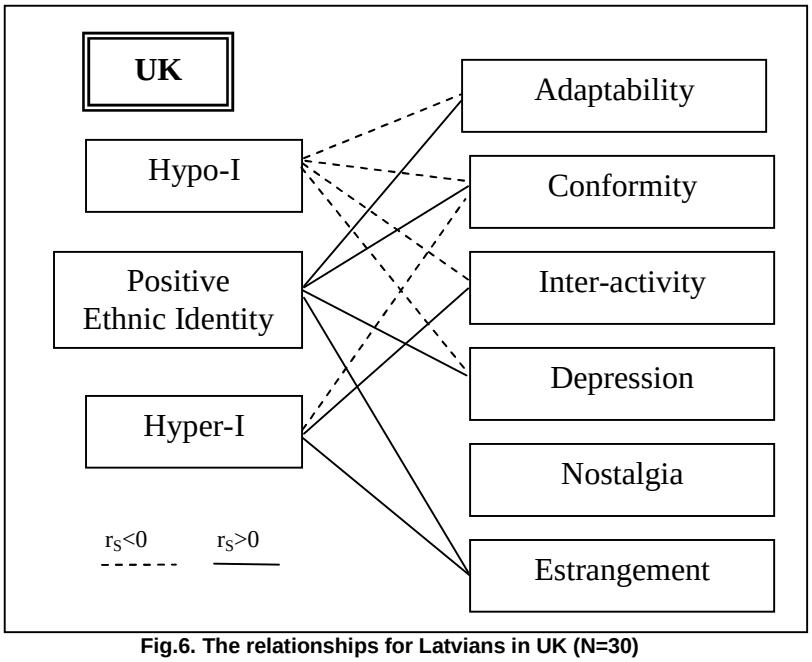

Fig.6. The relationships for Latvians in UK (N=30)

Tab.3. The Spearman's correlation coefficients and significances for group from UK (N=30)

UK	Spearman's rho, r_S	AD	C	IA	D	N	E
PEI	r_S	.445*	.434*	.304	.820**	.609**	-.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.017	.102	.000	.000	.649
Hipo-I	r_S	-.631**	-.367*	-.562**	-.752**	-.311	.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.046	.001	.000	.094	.588
Hiper-I	r_S	.135	-.400*	.495**	-.211	-.099	.539**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.476	.028	.005	.264	.603	.002

Reductions: AD - Adaptability; C- Conformity; IA - Inter-activity; N- Nostalgia; E -Estrangement

Discussion

Adaptability, conformity, inter-activity and nostalgia among Latvians from Latvia, who live in England, are more expressed in comparison with Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland.

Depression and estrangement among Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland are more expressed in comparison with Latvians from Latvia, who lives in England.

Among Latvians from Latvia, who lives in England, the positive ethnic identity is more expressed in comparison with Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland.

The tendencies of ethnic nihilism, ethnic egoism, ethnic isolation and ethnic fanaticism are more expressed among Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland in comparison of those, living in England.

The tendencies of hypo-identity and hyper-identity among Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland are more expressed in comparison with Latvians from Latvia, who lives in England.

Among Latvians from Latvia, living in Ireland the linkage of positive ethnic identity with adaptability is negative, but with depression and estrangement is positive.

Hypo-identity is positively linked with adaptability, conformity and inter-activity, but negatively with nostalgia and estrangement.

Hyper-identity is negatively linked with adaptability and conformity and positively linked with nostalgia and estrangement.

Adaptability is positively linked with the tendencies of hypo-identity and negatively linked with positive ethnic identity and hyper-identity.

In the process of adaptation the attitude towards the own ethnic group becomes worse. This process can be characterised as unsound adaptation to an environment in the unstable conditions of prolonged social changes. It can be possibly connected with the fact, that accepting a negative identity, the reactions of person towards judgement of his/her own ethnicity may be different. In this case, he/she has a possibility to avoid the sense of inadequacy and preserve the high level of self-appraisal. He/she can attribute the negative judgement to the other members of own ethnic group, but not to the self, therefore, setting a border between the self and the ethnic group.The correlations prove this tendency. The same tendency was revealed in the process of adaptation of Russians in Latvia (Plotka et al., 2009).

Among Latvians , living in England:
Positive ethnic identity is positively linked with adaptability, conformity, depression and estrangement and negatively with tendencies of hypo-identity.

The tendencies of hypo-identity are negatively linked with adaptability, conformity, inter-activity and depression.

The linkage between the tendencies of hyper-identity with conformity is negative, but with inter-activity and estrangement is positive.

The process of social adaptation in England is more successive than in Ireland. It can be approved, that if an individual has a positive ethnic identity, he/she is more positive and tolerant towards the representatives of another ethnicities that, in its turn will promote more effective socialisation in the other cultural societies.

The results of conducted pilot studies can be the basis of the main series of the researches, aimed to the further studying of adequate choice of the ways of migrants' integration in different cultural environments.

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