

# The Fiedorczyk Lecture

## in Polish American Studies

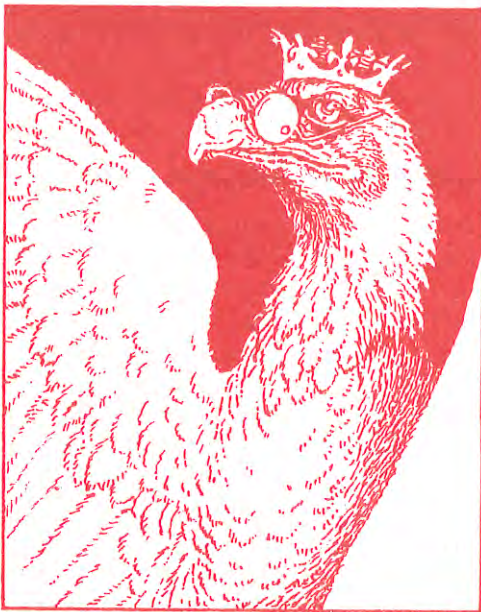


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**THE FIEDORCZYK LECTURE  
IN  
POLISH AMERICAN STUDIES  
1996**

**IMMIGRANTS, WAKACJUSZE, AND REFUGEES:  
The New Polish Migrant Cohort, 1960-1993**

**Mary Patrice Erdmans**



**Occasional Papers in Polish and Polish American Studies**

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## The Fiedorczyk Lecture in Polish American Studies

In 1987 the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Alphonse J.V. Fiedorczyk endowed the Polish Studies Program at Central Connecticut State University with an annual Lecture in Polish American Studies in memory of the Vincent Fiedorczyk Family.

Msgr. Fiedorczyk, the son of Polish immigrants, was born in New Britain on September 10, 1910. He attended Sacred Heart School in his native parish, and later graduated from St. Mary's College at Orchard Lake, Michigan. He then studied at St. Bernard Seminary in Rochester, New York and at the Seminaire de St. Briec in France, which he completed in 1935, the year of his ordination to the priesthood. Father Fiedorczyk returned to his home parish to serve as a curate for eight years. In 1943, he joined the U.S. Army as a first Lieutenant in the Chaplain Corps. Msgr. Fiedorczyk served as a chaplain with the 79th Infantry Division in Europe, and was decorated with the following honors: The Legion of Merit, The Bronze Star, the French Croix de Geure with Fouragere, and the World War II Victory Medal. He also served in Korea and two post-war tours in Germany. After 26 years of military service, he retired with the rank of Brigadier General.

Msgr. Fiedorczyk returned to Connecticut to the Bridgeport Diocese, where he was subsequently assigned to Holy Name Parish in Stamford. He served fourteen years as pastor, and was a critical figure in the revival of the parish's Polish profile.

First and foremost a priest, Msgr. Fiedorczyk always kept in the forefront during his 52 years of service the injunction "to preach and to offer sacrifice." He viewed service to the Polish community as an integral part of his priestly duties, and was deeply concerned with the preservation and promotion of the history of the Polish community in America. He encouraged the Association of Polish Priests of Connecticut to commission *Immigrant Pastor* by Prof. Daniel Buczek, an important biography of the pioneering Msgr. Lucyan Bojnowski of New Britain. Msgr. Fiedorczyk was also a long-time member of the Polish American Historical Association. He was active in Polish affairs at Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport and at Central Connecticut State University. He donated his papers and memoirs to the Connecticut Polish American Archives at CCSU.

After a long illness, Msgr. Fiedorczyk passed away on November 16, 1987.

The publication of the *Fiedorczyk Lecture* for the permanent record is made possible with funds from the Stanislaw and Anna (Kobierska) Wodarski Endowment in the CCSU Foundation, Inc. The Endowment

was established by Msgr. John P. Wodarski to help underwrite the publication of the *Fiedorczyk Lecture*. Msgr. Wodarski, member emeritus of the University's Polish Studies Advisory Committee, was a close friend of Msgr. Fiedorczyk and both shared a commitment to the preservation of the history of America's Polish community.

Professor Mary P. Erdmans is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She obtained her PhD from Northwestern University in 1992 with a dissertation on "*Emigres and Ethnics: Patterns of Cooperation Between Emigres and Established Residents in Chicago's Polish Community*." A revised and expanded version of this important work will be published shortly by the Pennsylvania State University Press. Professor Erdmans has published in *The Sociological Quarterly* and *Polish American Studies*, and presented papers at conferences in both the United States and Poland.

On behalf of the Polish Studies Program, it is my pleasure to present the 1996 *Fiedorczyk Lecture in Polish American Studies*, "Immigrants, *Wakacjusze*, and Refugees: The New Polish Migrant Cohort, 1960-1993." Professor Erdmans is among the first to study and to reflect upon the impact of recent immigration upon the Polish American community.

In disseminating this lecture, we hope, as have Msgr. Fiedorczyk and Msgr. Wodarski, to promote the further study and preservation of the Polish community in America.

Stanislaus A. Blejwas  
CSU University Professor of History  
Coordinator of Polish Studies  
Central Connecticut State University  
October, 1996

**IMMIGRANTS, *WAKACJUSZE*, AND REFUGEES:  
The New Polish Migrant Cohort, 1960-1993**

Fiedorczyk Lecture in Polish American Studies  
Central Connecticut State University  
April 29, 1996

Dedicated by the author to  
the memory of Hubert Romanowski

Mary Patrice Erdmans  
University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Ethnic community is not a static, definable set of artifacts, customs, or practices but instead it is continually constructed, remodeled, torn down, and expanded. The community is transformed with each new generation, and identity is contested with each new migrational cohort. Change is not always uniform or constant so that various expressions and interpretations of ethnic identity exist within the boundaries of ethnic community. The dynamic nature of ethnicity and the diversity within community is very apparent in the Polish American community. It is difficult to speak of "the" Polish community without wondering "which" Polish community. The Polish American community is an older community and its heterogeneity is related to its multiple migrational and generational cohorts. Migrational cohorts come from the crossing of physical borders while generational cohorts come from the passage of time. Each new migration brings with it an updated version of the homeland culture, and each new generation reorients and adapts itself to changes in American society. As a result, the identity of the new Polish immigrants who arrived in the 1980s from communist Poland, differed significantly from the identity of Polish Americans constructed over generations in the context of twentieth century America. Understanding the differences between these diverse migrational cohorts illuminates the heterogeneous nature of ethnic community (e.g., Blejwas 1981; Erdmans 1992, 1995), but there are also differences within migrational cohorts. It is this variation within cohorts that I want to focus on today. In particular I want to discuss the different motivations and legal statuses of the new Polish immigration, and then look at how these differences affected their entrance (or non-entrance) into American and Polish American communities.

New immigrants can be grouped into three broad categories according to their status at entry into the United States: immigrants admitted under the numerical limitations (that is, under quota restrictions and preference categories), temporary visitors (*wakacjusze*), and political refugees. I mark the beginning of the new Polish immigration with the year 1960, although most of the newcomers arrived in the 1980s and 1990s. A beginning point is necessary in order to separate the new cohort from the WWII emigres. By 1960, the new arrivals had lived in communist Poland for at least 15 years, and the majority of arrivals listed Poland as their last country of resident. Both of these factors separate them from the WWII emigres who had little or no experience living in a communist regime and who most often arrived from a third country (e.g., England or Germany).

Immigrants: For immigration scholars, the term “new immigration” refers to immigrants arriving after 1965 because of the changes in immigration policy. The Immigration Act of 1965 eliminated country of origin as a qualification for entry and thus opened the door to new Asian and Latino migrations. This act, however, lowered the number of European immigrants. By 1968, when this act took effect Polish immigration dropped by almost half from an average of about eight thousand immigrants in the early 1960s to an average of roughly four thousand immigrants a year during the 1970s.

Immigrants are admitted under a preference system. The 1965 act gave preference first to family reunification cases, allowing in many brothers and sisters of citizens and permanent residents, and second, to immigrants with professions of exceptional ability and skilled or unskilled labor which was in short supply in the U.S. Roughly 80-90 percent of Poles admitted under numerical limitations are family reunification cases. Immigrants exempt from numerical limitations included spouses, children, and parents of U.S. citizens (until 1993).

Between 1960-1993, 294,692 Polish immigrants were admitted, and 59.1 percent of them fell under numerical limitations (see table 1). This number is somewhat deceptive because of the large number of Poles admitted in the 1990s. In the first 30 years of this cohort, from 1960 to 1989, 201,606 Polish immigrants were admitted; and in the next four years 93,086 Poles were admitted. The high number of Polish immigrants in the 1990s was a result of several factors. First, 10,573 Poles who gained admittance under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) program were formally admitted in the 1990s but they had been living in the U.S. since the early 1980s (Statistical Yearbook, 1990-1993, table 7). Second, more Poles were admitted as a result of new legislation under the Immigration Act of 1990 that allowed in aliens from countries that were adversely affected by the 1965 Immigration Act. These “diversity immigrants” (also known as “lottery” immigrants because of the way visas were distributed) were mostly from non-Latin America and non-Asian countries. Polish and the Irish immigrants received the most visas. In 1992, 9,383 Poles were admitted as “diversity transition” immigrants, and in 1993, another 14,806 were admitted.



**Table 1 Polish Immigrants and Non-Immigrants admitted into the U.S., 1960-1993**

Year	Polish immigrants admitted*		Polish non-immigrants admitted**	
	Total #	# admitted under numerical cap (%)	Total #	# Admitted as Temporary Visitors for Pleasure (%)**
1960-1969	77,650	61,604 (79%)	166,815	121,390 (73%)
1970-1979	42,378	31,940 (75%)	352,269	239,619 (68%)
1980-1989	81,578	28,996 (35%)	449,235	356,266 (79%)
1990-1993	93,086	51,747 (56%)	262,861	184,663 (70%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>294,692</b>	<b>174,287 (59%)</b>	<b>1,213,180</b>	<b>901,938 (73%)</b>

\*Total immigrants include both new arrivals and those who adjusted their status to permanent resident. Beginning in 1993, immediate relatives were included under the numerical cap as were the "diversity transition immigrants", and as a result in 1993, 96.8% of all the new Polish immigrants were under the numerical limitation, whereas for 1990-1991 only 38% of new Polish immigrants were under the numerical limitations cap.

\*\*Other non-immigrants include: temporary visitors for business, treaty traders and investors, intra-company transferees, returning resident aliens, transit aliens, parolees, students, temporary workers and trainees, exchange visitors, foreign government officials, international representatives, NATO officials, representatives of foreign information media, spouses and children of students, temporary workers, exchange visitors, intra-company transferees, and fiancées of U.S. citizens and their children. Source: Columns 2-3: Immigrants admitted by selected class of admission and region and selected country of birth. Annual reports of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1965-1978 (table 6). Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1979-1986 (table 7), 1982-1986 (table 2.3), 1987-1993 (table 7). Columns 5-6: Nonimmigrants admitted by class of admission and region and selected country of citizenship. Annual Reports of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1965-1978 (table 16). Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1979 (table 16), 1980 (table 64), 1982-1985 (table 1.1), 1986 (table 38), 1987 (table 41), 1988 (table 43), 1989 (table 44), 1990 (table 40), 1991 (table 36), 1992-93 (table 39). Washington, D.C.: GPO.

*Wakacjusze*: The second type of arrivals in the new Polish cohort are temporary visitors. Temporary visitors are officially classified as non-immigrants when they enter this country. Unless they are on a special work visa (e.g., an H visa) most do not have permission to work and they do not have permanent resident status. They also have a time limit on their visas. This group includes tourists, business

people, students, and government officials. The largest group of non-immigrants are those Poles who enter on tourist visas usually valid for six months. They are known in Chicago Polonia as *wakacjusze* (vacationers). Between 1960-1993, over 1.2 million Poles arrived in the U.S. on temporary visas, and 73.3 percent of them were tourists on "temporary visas for pleasure" (see table 1). The number of *wakacjusze* has grown steadily over the years. The annual figures in the 1990s were almost four times higher than those in the 1960s. In the 1960s, the annual average was around 12,000, and in the 1990s the annual average was 46,000.

Poles entering on tourist visas are often not here as tourists but as temporary migrant workers. This temporary tourist visa does not give them permission to work, so when they do, they are illegal or undocumented workers. The majority of *wakacjusze* intend to work for one to two years and then return to Poland, but many stay. The director of Polish Welfare Association in Chicago in 1988 estimated that one-third of the *wakacjusze* have overstayed their visa limitations and remain in the United States illegally. In 1988, Polonian and social service leaders estimated that 50,000 to 100,000 *wakacjusze* were living (and working) in Chicago. Using a conservative one-third estimate, by 1991 there were about a quarter of a million *wakacjusze* in the new Polish cohort in the U.S. This estimate may be high. The number of illegal immigrants who applied for amnesty following the IRCA legislation 1986 was quite low. This legislation offered permanent residency to immigrants who could prove they had been in the country since 1982. As of 1991, only 17,014 Poles filed amnesty applications (compared to 1.2 million filed by Mexicans) (Statistical Yearbook, 1990, p. 91).

Refugees: The last group of new immigrants are the refugees. The coincidence of the Refugee Act of 1980 and martial law in Poland in 1981 resulted in a large number of new Polish refugees. Until the Refugee Act of 1980, there was no standard refugee policy, instead, refugees were admitted into the U.S. on an *ad hoc* basis of government acts and presidential directives. After 1965, refugees were admitted as a seventh preference of immigrants, and were given six percent of the total slots available to immigrants. The Refugee Act of 1980 eliminated this seventh preference category and began admitting refugees on a uniform basis according to the definition of a refugee as "a person residing outside his or her country of nationality who is unwilling to return to that country because of a well-grounded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." The number of refu-

gees admitted depends upon a ceiling determined annually according to geographic regions in the world. Asylees are similar to refugees except that at the time they apply for application they are residing in the U.S. or are at a port of entry.

Between 1960 and 1993, over 48,685 Polish refugees were admitted into the U.S., and almost 70 percent of them were admitted during the 1980s (see table 2). The peak years for arrival were 1982 to 1984. Beginning with the collapse of communism in 1989, the number of Polish refugee arrivals dropped significantly (to only a few hundred a year), and the high number granted residency in the 1990s represents mostly processing backlogs.

**Table 2 Polish Refugees & Asylees Granted Permanent Resident Status, 1961-1992**

Years	Numbers	Percent
1961-70	3,197	6.6%
1971-80	5,882	12.1%
1981-90	33,889	69.6%
1991-93	5,717	11.7%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>48,685</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1990 (Table 34), 1993 (Table 33).

Combining these three groups, roughly a half a million new Polish immigrants came to the U.S. after 1960 (estimating one-third of the temporary visitors for pleasure). This is the new Polish migrant cohort. A migration cohort refers to a group of people who migrated under the same economic and political conditions. The divisions I just outlined in this newest cohort, however, indicate that the three groups entered the U.S. under different policies. In the next section, I will emphasize some of the similarities among the three groups as they relate to reasons for emigration and demographic characteristics. Then I will discuss their different routes of incorporation.

### **Economic, political and psychological causes for emigration**

A migrant cohort is bound together by more than just the "time" of departure. There is a difference between "a lot of people" leaving and group emigration. When individuals travel alone, they are breaking from the traditional, binding group, but if they go as a group they bring with them the cohesiveness of tradition (Thomas and Znaniecki

1958, 1487-91). One of the differences between individual and group migration is that in the latter there is usually some causal force that precipitated the flow outward. Referring to the newest immigrants as a cohort implies a "group" migration, and correspondingly there must be some larger causal force. Poland's failing economic system, political repression, lack of freedom, inadequate housing, and saturated job market were factors that contributed to all Poles' decisions to seek a better life abroad — temporarily or permanently.

The refugees said that they emigrated because of political repression and the basic denial of citizenship rights. One emigre said: "Every person has a right to live in freedom, to live without the secret police knocking on the door." One man, who emigrated in his early 20s in 1987, said he decided to leave when he was 16 years old and had read about the massacre at the coal mines in Katowice during martial law: "I remember I was crying when I heard that I think 9 people died. And I told my parents, 'I don't know when I'm going to leave, all I know is I'm going to leave this country.'" Another said, "There was an awful hardship at home. My father was always kind of punished at work because he didn't want to join the communist party. He was suspended from being a sailor."

Other refugees left Poland between 1983-1985 because they felt that the "revolution" had failed and that it was no longer possible to resurrect the underground *Solidarność* movement. There was a mood of optimism and hope during the heady 1980-1981 days and even during the time of martial law when many were imprisoned. But once they were released from prison and returned home to communities that were scared, impoverished and simply tired of fighting, activists decided to pack it in and emigrate. One man said that when he was released from prison that "there was only a small group of people willing to fight. Most of the population didn't believe in anything, they didn't believe the communists, they didn't believe *Solidarność*." Another refugee who had been a regional union leader in Silesia described his hopelessness and feelings of a wasted life this way.

At a certain period of time I realized I was wasting my time.

One year after I left jail and I had made 100 attempts to do something I realized that the 101st attempt would be as good as the 99th. It means that it's hopeless. I didn't have any independent position in society and I didn't have anything to give my family.

One man left because he could not face going to prison a second time, "my colleagues told me the first time was much easier than the second time." Another emigrated because he considered his other two options to be: "stay in the underground or go to prison." In the 1980s,

political activists were constantly under surveillance, thrown in jail, and blacklisted. Many felt that there was no chance to change the ruling regime, that no real change could come about from working within the system, and that their lives would be wasted if they remained in Poland.

Other Poles emigrated to escape from a failing economic system, and they are often referred to as “economic” immigrants rather than “political” emigres. (Norman Davies has argued, however, that people who emigrate because their basic needs are also not met are making a political statement.) Both political refugees and economic immigrants suffered the same economic conditions in Poland, so it is difficult to say with confidence that economic decisions did not enter into the refugees’ decision to emigrate. During the interviews, however, refugees were more likely to talk about their political activities. In contrast the immigrants stressed economic hardships. One new immigrant said, “Most people come because they don’t have to wait in line for toilet paper.” These emigrants had lost hope in their economy and felt that the future in Poland did not promise anything. They were not suffering political nor economic oppression, they simply wanted to improve their standard of living.

The decision to come to America to better their lives was either a temporary or a permanent move — mostly dependent on what type of visa they could get. For the temporary worker, migration was like a summer job that, for many, stretched into several years of work. They came abroad because the exchange rate for dollars was extremely high. For the average worker, whose salary in the 1980s was comparable to about 20 U.S. dollars a month, two years working abroad would mean the difference between a life of struggle and a life of pleasure. Savings from abroad were used to buy apartments, cars, or taxis (for work), to build houses or barns, or simply to retire. The established Polish community in places like Chicago, New York and Toronto made it possible for temporary immigrants, the *wakacjusze*, to find work easily. One man said, “I arrived on Sunday with a job waiting for me and by noon on Monday I had earned a month’s salary.” Like the earlier peasants at the turn-of-the-century, these modern-day transoceanic migrant workers came to America for the dollars with the intention of returning to Poland.

For the past 100 years, working abroad has been seen by many Poles as a family tradition. Often one member of the family works in America in order to support the rest of the family back in Poland. Lech Walesa writes about his parents going to America in 1973:

[T]hey didn't go there out of a sense of adventure. The decision to go was dictated by common sense and tradition: in our family there had always been someone on the other side of the ocean. It was in our blood: one or another went over there so that the rest of the family could count on some security and a chance of financial help (1987, 33).

For those who emigrated permanently, often the decision to leave was motivated by the lack of opportunities for social mobility within Poland; opportunities were limited for noncommunist party members. Jadwiga Staniszkis (1984) mentions that in the 1970s upward mobility (a shock absorber in Eastern Europe) had slowed down; economic stagnation and a glut of university graduates left few open spaces for advancement. By the mid-1970s, every eighth employee was a manager (1984, 109). During this period of sluggish upward mobility, *Solidarność* offered an alternative status structure. "More people with personal status problems became members of regional authorities of *Solidarność*. Many dislocated, marginal, white-collar workers, their upward mobility blocked, were elected; one-fourth of the posts were kept by blue-collar workers" (1984, 115). When the union was disbanded many lost their social status. When this alternative status structure collapsed, many went abroad.

All Polish newcomers — immigrants, refugees, and *wakaćjusze* — talked about the lack of good occupational opportunities in Poland as a reason for emigrating. One immigrant said, "I was a photographer and studied law and philosophy. I couldn't do anything with these interests and I became dissatisfied. I felt I was wasted and I was only 30 years old." Another *wakaćjusze* who was a physicist in Poland came because he could not do research with the poor technical equipment he had in Poland. A sociologist/economist who came as a refugee said that it was not possible for him to find work in the universities because of his involvement in *Solidarność*.

These economic, political, and psychological conditions were experienced, in varying degrees, by all Poles. Thus, the conditions that gave rise to their departures were quite similar — Poles could not find a place for themselves in their home society. The routes by which they entered the U.S., however, were different, and reflect their variations in personal biography and legal status. Those who had family abroad could apply for immigration visas; those who had been very active in the *Solidarność* movement could apply for refugee status; all others applied for tourist visas.

## Data sources on the new Polish cohort in Chicago

My data on new immigrants are restricted mostly to the Chicago area, and come from several sources (see table 3). First, I was a participant observer in Chicago Polonia from 1986 until 1990. I attended public events (e.g., festivals, parades and demonstrations), organizational meetings, and private functions (e.g., parties and weddings). In addition, I formally interviewed 31 new immigrants in Chicago (N=21) and California (N=10), and had three times as many informal interviews, mostly in Chicago. I also conducted several surveys. The first was a survey of the Poles who voted by absentee ballot in the first partially free elections in Poland since WWII. On June 3, 1989, I surveyed 464 (8.2 percent) of the 5631 voters at the Polish consulate in Chicago. The sample included 457 members of the new Polish cohort. The second was a survey of members of a Polonian organization, the Polish American Economic Forum. This organization was formed in 1990 to support Poland's burgeoning free market economic system. I distributed questionnaires to the over 400 founding members of this organization, so the sample represents roughly 25 percent of the organization's membership in the winter on 1990. Third, I collected questionnaires from Polish immigrants enrolled in English language programs at the Polish University Abroad in Chicago (PUNO). I was an ESL teacher at this school for three years (1988-1990), and the questionnaires were completed by students in my classes at the end of the semester. Finally, I draw data from research I conducted in the summer of 1992 on Polish immigrants working illegally as home health care workers for the elderly in Chicago. For this study I completed 35 open-ended interviews with these workers. Throughout the rest of the paper I will refer to these surveys as the election survey, the Forum survey, the PUNO students, and the illegal worker interviews. Taken together, the interviews and surveys provide data on the three different newcomer groups. Information about refugees come from the interviews. The election survey provides data on permanent and temporary migrants/*wakacjusze* (42 percent); the Forum sample includes mostly permanent residents (86 percent); the PUNO students were permanent residents (42%) and temporary visitors (59%), and over 38% of the sample had invalid visas; and the illegal worker respondents were *wakacjusze*, 65% had invalid visas.

**Table 3 Characteristics of the New Polish Cohort**

SAMPLE	N	Type of newcomer sample best represents	% Men	Age at arrival	Year of arrival	Post-secondary education in Poland	Occupation in the U.S.	Plans to return to Poland
INTERVIEWS	31	refugees	84%	< 40 = 70%	1980s = 74%	92%	Professional = 41% Skilled labor = 19% Unskilled lab = 7%	Yes = 16% No = 50% DK = 33%
ELECTION	457	immigrants & <i>wakojusze</i> (invalid visas 25%)	68%	< 40 = 56%	1980s = 82%	38%	Professional = 6% Skilled labor = 45% Unskilled lab = 28%	Yes = 65% No = 4% DK = 31%
FORUM	92	immigrants	88%	< 40 = 82%	1980s = 71%	64%	Professional = 32% Skilled labor = 34% Unskilled lab = 13%	Yes = 22% No = 32% DK = 47%
PUNO	70	immigrants & <i>wakojusze</i> (invalid visas 38%)	24%	< 40 = 78%	1980s = 93%	78%	Professional = 6% Skilled labor = 31% Unskilled lab = 15%	Yes = 12% No = 56% DK = 33%
ILLEGAL WORKERS	35	(invalid visas 65%)	23%	< 40 = 60%	1980s = 95%	91%	all home health care workers for the elderly	Yes = 63% No = 20% DK = 17%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>685</b>		<b>65%</b>		<b>1980s = 82%</b>	<b>50.8%</b>		<b>Yes = 51%</b>

- (1) **EDUCATION:** Percentage of sample who received the post-secondary educations in Poland (includes bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees). The total is highly influenced by the election sample.
- (2) **OCCUPATION:** Percentage in occupational categories in the U.S. at the time of the interview. Prof = professional (e.g., chemists, accountants, media personnel, directors, editors, engineers, musicians), Skil= skilled (e.g., draftsman, electrician, machinist, printer), Unsk = unskilled. Not included here are those employed in clerical positions (Interviews = 26% and Forum = 9%), those who are small business owners (Forum = 10%), or those working in domestic service (PUNO = 42%, employed as childcare and elder care workers). In the Election questionnaire, respondents were given the following categories to choose from: professional, skilled, unskilled, student, not working. In the other samples it was an open-ended question.
- (3) **RETURN:** This reflects the answer to the question asked at the time of the interview, "Do you plan on returning to Poland?" For the Election sample, the temporary migrants were more likely to say that they will return home (83%) compared to the permanent residents (49%). For the PUNO sample, only half of the sample answered this question.

## Educational and Occupational Background

Most Poles in this cohort arrived in America when they were in their 20s and 30s. The *wakojusze* had a wider age range than the other two groups—almost 40 percent were over forty years of age when they arrived. The PUNO sample was the youngest sample, and this may be a characteristic of the sample rather than the type of immigrant. Younger people have an easier time and are more motivated to learn English than older migrants.

Many newcomers arrived from the established sending regions of Poland (e.g., Galicia and Masuria) but all of the regions were repre-



sented. The majority of newcomers (roughly 60 percent) were from large cities in Poland, and there does not appear to be any differences among the three groups. Poles in emigration, however, appear to be more cosmopolitan than Poles in Poland. In Poland roughly 38 percent of the population lived in rural villages in 1992 (*Rocznik Statystyczny* 1992, 56), whereas in my samples, less than 15 percent came from villages.

In general the three groups did not look too dissimilar in terms of age, gender, and region of origin. The majority were men (but this does not reflect the national statistics for Polish immigrants, roughly 50 percent are men). They also were likely to arrive as adults and to have come from cities and towns as opposed to villages. One difference was in the family structures of the groups. The refugees were more likely to arrive as a family unit; the immigrants had some family here in the States (80-90 percent came as family preference categories), and the *wakacjusze* usually travelled alone (originally the communist PRL government and later the U.S. government were not willing to give temporary visas to more than one member of a family).

This new cohort is an educated cohort. In the election sample, 82 percent of the voters sampled had a high school education or beyond, and 36 percent had higher educations. The subgroups within the new cohort differed only slightly from each other. The refugees were usually well-educated, or they had skilled craft positions especially those from Szczecin and other areas in the Northwest. The majority had masters degrees in a variety of fields -- journalism, economics, chemistry and engineering. The immigrants were also well educated, many with masters degrees, and all with high school or vocational school educations. The *wakacjusze* was the most diverse group in terms of education and occupation and this group included highly educated professionals as well as *gorale* and farmers who had only vocational or grammar school educations. In the illegal worker sample, more than 90 percent of the *wakacjusze* had post-secondary degrees (and 67 percent had doctorate degrees).

Unfortunately most migrants were unable to find positions in America that were commensurate with their education. For most, migration represented a decline in occupational status. The Polish phrase for the general downward mobility is *emigracja to deklasacja*. Medical doctors become nursing home attendants; engineers become drafters; and school teachers become maids and child care workers. The decline in occupational status is most evident among temporary workers, who suffer because their stay is (supposedly) temporary. But even for those who stay permanently it is very difficult to overcome

the negative effects of migration (i.e., the loss of language, networks, and cultural knowledge) to get a position at the same level they held in Poland (Erdmans 1995).

The two most common occupation for the *wakacjusze* in Chicago were construction for men (especially tuckpointing and roofing), and domestic services for women (maid services, child care services, and elder care services). These jobs were what sociologists refer to as secondary labor market positions characterized by low pay, low status, few benefits and few opportunities for mobility. Newcomers found jobs within a few days of arrival in the country, and the lack of work papers (i.e., a "green card") was not a problem. Employment agencies, newspaper advertisements, and word of mouth were all sources of information. Information about where to find jobs, how to circumvent the legal system, and how to avoid being sent back to Poland circulated quickly within the Polish community. In Chicago, employment broker agencies helped illegal workers find positions (Erdmans 1996). These agencies were listed in the phone book, and their offices were in high visibility areas, they were not clandestine, back room operations. It was not the Polish Americans who helped these new arrivals find work, but instead the employment services were run by Polish immigrants who had arrived in the 1960s and 1970s.

The newcomers who were permanent residents (i.e., the immigrants and refugees) were less likely to be working in these secondary labor market positions. When they did work in construction or domestic services they were able to negotiate better work conditions (i.e., salaries and benefits). For example, one woman who was an elder care worker for several years at the standard salary of \$50-\$60 for a 24-hour day (\$5/hour). After she got her work documentation, she upgraded her position to \$12 an hour and worked only in the afternoons. Permanent immigrants were more likely to be foremen and contractors at the construction site than the laborers. Permanent immigrants are also less willing to work twelve-hour days. (The *wakacjusze* often had to work long days, especially if they were domestic workers, cleaners, or construction workers in the summer; moreover they were in the U.S. to make money and they reasoned that if they were working they were not spending their money. This non-spending behavior is another characteristic of the *wakacjusze*.) Because the immigrant and refugee had work authorization, and because their stay in the U.S. is more permanent they had more opportunity and incentive to improve their job situation.

The refugees could stay out of the job market for a few months or even a year after arrival to improve their language skills and/or up-

grade their education so that they could get a better job. Refugees were eligible for government assistance as soon as they arrived. Government support has declined, but in the mid-1980s a refugee could receive assistance for up to 36 months. With government support for language and job retraining, as well as housing allowance and food stamps, the refugees were in the best position to secure work commensurate with their education and experience. The immigrant who had a family in the U.S. was sometimes able to rely on them for support and take a few months to learn the language. More often they were encouraged by their family (if not actively forced) to find a job within a few weeks after they arrived. Immigrants can not apply for government support until they are permanent residents (a process that takes at least one year). So if they were to stay out of the job market they needed family support. Only refugees could rely on government support, the other newcomers had to go to work almost immediately.

In summary, there was little difference among the newcomers in terms of education and occupation in Poland. They were mostly educated, working- and middle-class with skilled technical and professional occupations. Nonetheless, they had different routes of incorporation into the U.S. labor markets. The *wakacjusze* were more likely to be found in secondary labor market positions characterized by low pay, low benefits and low prestige. The immigrants and refugees eventually found employment as skilled laborers, technicians, low-level management, and professionals. Refugees had the best opportunities to improve their positions. The different routes of incorporation were not a result of educational or occupational differences, but reflected different sources of family or government assistance.

Patterns of incorporation were also greatly influenced by the perceived permanence of their stay in America. The *wakacjusze* were the most likely and the refugees were the least likely to return to Poland. Most *wakacjusze* came with the intention of returning, and the limitations of their visa reinforced this intention. In contrast, refugees usually left Poland with the intention of never returning. Most refugees had disposed of their material possessions in Poland and oftentimes there was some departure ceremony marking the closure of their relations with family and friends in Poland. Some refugees escaped from Poland, and this illegal departure reinforced the idea that they could not return to Poland. Immigrants were in between refugees and *wakacjusze* with respect to intention to return. They could stay if they wanted and return if they wanted.

Permanency of stay was determined in part by status at entry.

Over time some temporary migrants were able to change their status and became permanent residents: they applied for asylum, they married an American citizen, they received amnesty through the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, or their employer applied for an immigrant work visa for them. There was a relation between legal status and length of time in the U.S. The longer migrants were in America, the more likely they were to have a permanent status. In the election survey, 84.4 percent of those who came before 1982 were permanent residents, while only 20.3 percent of those who arrived after 1985 were permanent residents. This could indicate that temporary residents go home after a few years, so that *wakacjusze* by definition are likely to be fairly recent immigrants. But temporary emigres also changed their status. In the Forum sample, 47 percent of the respondents entered the U.S. as temporary immigrants, but in 1990 only 14 percent of the same sample had temporary visas. The general point is that while permanency of stay is in part determined by the status at entry, it is not totally determined by it.

It is important to consider not just the restrictions or conditions set by the legal status, but also the perceived permanency of the stay. Immigrants who believe they are going to stay have a different attitude than those who believe they will someday return home. Many immigrants were in a state of limbo — they came here with the idea that they would return in a few years, they ended up staying for more than a few years, and they still thought they would return home someday, but they did not know when. When migrants do not make a commitment to staying, they do not actively begin the resettlement process. In the election data, only four percent of the voters polled said they planned to stay in the United States permanently. Legal status only slightly influenced Poles' likelihood of wanting to return to Poland. In the illegal worker sample, 63 percent of the sample said they planned to return home. In the Forum sample (which was mostly permanent immigrants), 22 percent of the respondents planned on returning home. From these data it does appear that status affects the way one thinks about their stay in the U.S. Yet legal status alone did not determine permanency of stay. There was also a psychological component — even those who had permanent residency thought of returning to Poland, and some who had temporary status were committed to staying here in the U.S. The best example of this were the PUNO students, 59 percent of them had temporary visas, but 56 percent said that they were staying in the U.S. In fact, learning English was an indicator of their commitment to stay, or an attitude of permanency.

What was most important was the perceptions of the newcomers — whether they thought they would stay or go home — because this set up different motivations for them and thus influenced their resettlement patterns in America. One of the most interesting findings was the large number who did not know what they were going to do. The group of “don’t knows” were not as committed or resigned to living in the U.S. and in many ways acted like the temporary group who planned to return. A lot of the uncertainty, however, was connected to their visa status. Many wanted to stay, but were waiting on a green card. Yet, the uncertainty was there even among those with permanent status. In the refugees and Forum sample, a third to almost half of them were uncertain (perhaps a better word is ambivalent) about staying in the U.S.

### **Community building among new immigrants**

The temporary visa of the *wakacjusze* structured the occupational choices of these migrants, and the psychological attitude of temporary migrants influenced the process of resettlement. Temporary migrants made less attempt to assimilate into America than the more permanent refugees and immigrants. As a result, this subgroup often remained more “visibly Polish.” The *wakacjusze* lived in the Polish neighborhoods in Chicago, attended the Polish churches, and worked in the Polish enclaves of the construction and domestic service industries. Many of the opinions that Polish Americans and Americans had about new Poles came from the characteristics of the *wakacjusze*. For example, Polish Americans criticized new immigrants for not joining Polish organizations or not registering at the local Catholic church; Americans criticized new immigrants for not learning to speak English. These things were true of *wakacjusze*, but not necessarily of immigrants or refugees. The key determinant here was the temporariness of the newcomers stay. In this case the refugees and immigrants acted very similar — they arrived in America prepared for the “long haul” and began immediately to learn the language, upgrade their education if necessary, buy a house in the suburbs, and integrate themselves into a larger social structure — either American or Polish American — away from the strictly Polish ethnic ghetto. Those *wakacjusze* who had a “permanent” mentality also exhibited similar behavior as evidenced by the PUNO students who were learning English.

The center of the new Polish community in Chicago is located in a neighborhood known as *Jackowo*. (The name represents the locative case of *Jacek*, which is the Polish name of St. Hyacinth, the parish in

this community). *Jackowo* is considered to be the Polish ghetto of Chicago. Most of the Poles living in the neighborhood are *wakacjusze*. Because of the transient and illegal status of many of the *wakacjusze* it was difficult to get an accurate count of the size of their community, however the pastor at *Sw. Jacek* estimated that 60 percent of the community was composed of Poles, mostly new arrivals. The immigrants and refugees did not live in *Jackowo*. This area was considered to be the economic ghetto of the community. Instead, the immigrants chose to live in other parts of the city and suburbs that had concentrations of Poles (e.g., the Northwest side of Chicago) but were not ethnic ghettos. The refugees lived in suburbs and various areas around the city that were not at all Polish.

In 1989, I surveyed the 183 businesses located on Milwaukee Avenue between Belmont and Diversey, the business center of *Jackowo*. Many of the businesses were fairly new: 21 percent had been operating at that location for less than a year, 29 percent had been there for 2-4 years; and 19 percent had been there for 5-9 years. This survey revealed that 61 percent of the owners of the businesses were Poles or Polish Americans, with the majority of the Polish owners coming from the new Polish cohort having arrived in the late 1960s and 1970s. Almost 30 percent of the stores were owned and operated by a single family, but for those employing workers, the majority of the workers came from the new Polish cohort. The owners estimated that 91 percent of the customers were Poles, and of the Polish customers, 60 percent were from the new Polish cohort. The type of businesses found in *Jackowo* reflect the immigrant nature of the community: professional services (doctors, dentists, lawyers, morticians), entertainment services (restaurants, bars, and nightclubs), and immigrant services (employment agencies, travel agencies, visa and passport services, shipping companies). This was an immigrant community, not an ethnic community. While all new immigrants used these services and frequented this community, only the *wakacjusze* lived here.

One of the most dramatic effects of the new immigration was the proliferation of magazines, quarterlies, radio stations, and eventually Polish television stations created by new immigrants for new immigrants. Eight new monthly magazines were published in Chicago in the late 1980s (e.g., *Relax*, *Alfa*, *Rewia*, *Panarama*). Two ethnic oriented TV stations appeared (Polvision was the main Polish channel and other Polish programs aired on the Ethnic Broadcasting Television channel), and a half a dozen new radio programs. These were not "Polka hour" stations, but instead they had talk program formats, they broadcast interviews and they presented news from Poland. While

oriented toward events in Poland, these media also discussed current U.S. affairs.

In the 1980s, the community building among the new Poles in Chicago was extensive and reflected the characteristics of the new cohort. Similar to the WWII emigres (Blejwas 1981), new immigrants were more likely to form their own organizations than join the established Polish American organizations. The new Poles did not feel that the fraternal or ethnic associations met their needs. For one thing, the Polish American organizations were centered on ethnic activities and did not cater to the immigrants' housing and job needs. The Polish American organizations were ethnic associations interested in maintaining cultural heritage rather than immigrant organizations servicing the needs of newcomers. Secondly, the culture that the Polish American organizations were trying to preserve was the folk culture of their ancestors. Moreover, the new Poles often spoke a different language from their Polish American counterparts. Most third and fourth generation Polish Americans did not speak Polish, and when they did, the Polish they used was often grammatically incorrect, pronounced badly, and/or reflected outdated dialects. Thirdly, many of the lodges of the fraternal organizations were socially inactive. In a study done in 1975 of the PNA lodge activity, 61 percent of the lodges had no social activities for members, only 12 percent had a youth program, and only 33 percent contributed toward community activity (Pienkos, 1984). The established organizations the new arrivals did join reflect the educational and occupational needs of these newcomers. They joined professional associations, such as the Polish Medical Association and the Advocates Society, which had been formed in the 1940s and were populated by members from the WWII cohort and their descendants.

The new Poles created a variety of new organizations. Members of the new cohort helped to revive the Polish University Abroad in Chicago, they also created a chapter of the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia modeled after the KIK organization in Poland. In addition, much of the activity of the new Poles, especially the refugees, in the 1980s, centered on political activity oriented toward the homeland (Erdmans 1992, 1994). Several new political groups were formed: the Brotherhood of Dispersed Solidarity Members and Freedom for Poland were created by refugees in 1984; Pomost was created in the late 1970s by Polish immigrants who had arrived in the 1960s and 1970s. Poles politically active for the homeland also joined and worked together with the Polish American Congress, in particular with the WWII emigres who were active in the Polish Affairs Committee of the PAC.

Among the new immigrants, the refugees were most likely to be involved in political activity for Poland. Those Poles who had been involved in the opposition in Poland had moral and concrete ties to the opposition. The *wakacjusze* were not usually involved in the political organizations working for Poland's homeland.

The political activity of the Solidarity refugees and the economic activity of the *wakacjusze* led to different attitudes toward the new cohort. When asked to give opinions about the new immigrants, people often made distinctions between these groups. For example, one WWII emigre complained about having problems with new immigrants, but then I asked him about the politically active refugees. He said:

Oh yes, yes, yes...yes...There is a small, but this is a small group, not a large group. This is a small group politically active and this is no problem with them. They are adjusted and we understand them and we try to help them. There is no problem with this small group. But I am talking about the majority. Those who are not active politically, they came basically here just to have a good time, to live good, to have a better life than they had over there.

Attitudes formed about the new cohort were often based on the large numbers of *wakacjusze*, who were less likely to join the Polish American community because they did not intend to stay permanently.

## Conclusion

To understand differences within the new immigration we need to address the different biographies, legal statuses, and motivations of the newcomers. There was not much difference in level of education and occupational skills among the three groups. The key differences that influenced their resettlement patterns were the types of resources available to them (refugees had the most and *wakacjusze* had the least) and their perception of permanence of stay. The refugees were more likely to think of their stay as permanent and they began to resettle in America as soon as possible. *Wakacjusze* were transoceanic migrant workers—they expected to return home, and even when they did not, they often lived with an attitude of temporariness that made them less eager to learn the host language, upgrade their occupational position, or relocate in a non-Polish neighborhood.

Incorporation patterns were influenced most by the commitment to resettle. When newcomers relocated their arena of status from Poland to the U.S. they became more interested in getting ahead in America. If they continue to be Poland-oriented then their status or social position remained entrenched in Poland. Living in poor condi-



tions in the U.S. did not carry as much negative meaning if their social self was to be evaluated in Poland. Making a commitment to stay meant they shifted their circles of influence, their reference groups, and their location of status. Those committed to staying began to judge themselves by American standards. They chose a neighborhood to live in based on American evaluations of neighborhoods; they judged their social position and occupational prestige by American standards. Some were willing to take a smaller paycheck in return for higher occupational status; or they were more willing to spend a few years returning to school — deferring gratification — in exchange for a better position in the long run. This process of commitment changes over time and some became more committed to staying after they have been here for 10 years. For others, they arrived with this commitment. This was truest of the refugee whose departure from Poland was more thorough. Many refugees felt they would never return to Poland and they “hit the ground running” when they arrived. They were the most committed to staying in the U.S.

The commitment to stay also meant that the newcomers became involved in local community building — that is joining American organizations, Polish organizations or creating their own. The temporary immigrants not only did not join Polish American organizations, but they did not even join the new immigrant organizations. One reason was that they spent most of their time working. The more committed they were to staying the more they enjoined in making their environment more hospitable to themselves. That is, by committing to resettlement, the newcomer not only begins assimilating to the new environment (changing him/herself) but also begins accommodating the environment (changing their surroundings). The new immigrants in Chicago who founded the political organizations and new media sources were committed to staying in the U.S. Many of these new organizations were focused on Poland’s political needs, centered on Polish cultural issues, or were oriented to professional and social needs of immigrants. They created organizations that satisfied their needs as a new cultural group making a base on American soil. They wanted to maintain a cultural tie to their ancestral homeland for themselves and their children; they wanted to satisfy their moral obligations to their homeland and family; and they wanted to improve their status in America. The community building represented the needs of an immigrant (not ethnic) group resettling in America (not returning to Poland).

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## Polish Studies

The Polish Studies Program at Central Connecticut State University is a unique endeavor. It contributes to the diversity and strength of Central as a University, and is the only active program of its kind in New England with roots both on the campus and in the community.

The Program, inaugurated in January, 1974, seeks to preserve and to stimulate an awareness of Poland's history and of her contributions to European and world civilizations. The Program's core are courses in history, politics, culture, literature, language, and on the Polish American ethnic community. The Polish Heritage Collection in the University Library, numbering over 13,000 catalogued books and periodicals, supplements the course offerings. The Connecticut Polish American Archives is a research depository to the public and to scholars and students of the Polish community in America. It is supported in part by the Alex M. Rudewicz Endowment.

The Program also sponsors lectures, cultural events, exhibits, recitals and concerts, and literary evenings. Our activities include the annual Fiedorczyk Lecture in Polish American Studies, the annual Milewski Lecture in Polish Studies, and the biennial Godlewski Evening of Polish Culture. The Martin & Sophie Grzyb Prize for Excellence in Polish Studies is awarded in recognition of student achievement.

The Copernican Polish Heritage Endowment, which is located in the CCSU Foundation, Inc., supports all aspects of Polish Studies at the University. Donors are commemorated on the plaque in the University Library. Individuals, families, businesses, and organizations are listed in the following categories:

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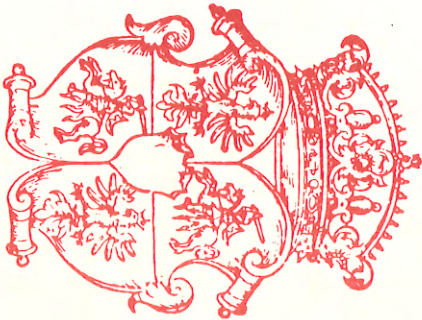
A person, family, business, or organization may wish to endow (\$10,000) a special lecture, a named scholarship, a book and publishing fund, a fund for exchange professors from Poland, a student exchange, or some other activity. These donations are commemorated with individual bronze plaques which are also in the University Library.

Our goal is to endow a chair of Polish and Polish American Studies at CCSU. To date, more than \$550,000 has been donated.

For further information contact the Coordinator of Polish Studies [(860) 832-2814] or the Vice-President for External Affairs [(860) 832-1765], Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT 06050-4010.

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