Inventing Home

Movement, Place, and the Rhetorics of Polish Chicago

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THESIS

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DEDICATION

to my parents

for supporting and encouraging me in all of my life’s endeavors
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My first thanks go to the Polish immigrants of my fieldwork. You have generously entertained my questions, shared your stories, and let me enter your lives in various ways. Because of academic conventions you must remain unnamed, but you will recognize yourselves, and I hope you will feel that I have honored your lives and words. Also, to my activist colleagues in the Chicago Polish Project: If you had not accepted me amongst you this dissertation would have become something quite different. To, że dzięki tej pracy miałem możliwość współpracy z Wami i zbudowania nowych przyjaźni, jest niewątpliwie wielką nagrodą. Bardzo Wam dziękuję za wszystko.

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SUMMARY

This is an ethnographic study of the rhetorical world of Polish immigrants in and around Chicago, with primary focus on a grassroots organization of Polish pro-immigrant activists. Through a series of specific investigations of the everyday ways of talk among this group, and among the Polish immigrant community more generally, I argue that rhetorical invention is always a profoundly situated event, and, moreover, that the work of rhetorical analysis demands the work of “radical contextualization.” My approach in the dissertation embodies these arguments: as I analyze both community and individual discourses, I situate them within a range of other concerns, including recent developments in U.S. immigration law, the pervasive languages of the pro-immigrant political movement, questions around the practice of ethnographic representation, theories of space and place, the changing global socioeconomic order, and my research participants’ historical experiences of life in communist and post-communist Poland. By continually placing the rhetorics of my fieldwork within this web of overarching forces, I demonstrate how the symbolic and material realms—or “rhetoric” and “reality,” or perhaps even “words” and “things”—interlock and overlap in ways that render them, effectively, indivisible. What emerges, instead, is an irresolvable tension between “symbolic desire” and “material constraint,” which provides a generative source of everyday rhetorical inventions.
I. INTRODUCTION: FIGURES OF RHETORIC, FIGURES OF IMMIGRATION, FIGURES OF POLONIA

A. Introduction

It’s a Sunday afternoon and I’m kneeling down behind a table in the back of a church on Chicago’s northwest side. Martyna, Robert, Wiktor and I are all wearing black baseball caps and T-shirts that say “ICE POLICE.” Our friend Michalina stands up near the alter, speaking into a microphone to the 75 or so people gathered in the pews. Then we hear the words, “Zapraszamy Państwa na naszą prezentację,” our cue, so we bang on the table and scream, “This is U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement—get out your IDs—everybody—now!” We charge down the aisles, yelling wildly. Some of the people in the pews look stunned; others seem amused. As scripted, another colleague, Marcin, tries to run out of the church, but he’s caught by Robert. I approach Iwona, who’s sitting in a pew as though she is one of the attendees, and begin interrogating her aggressively: “What’s your name?” She shrugs. “I asked you your name? Can’t you hear? What’s the matter with you? Don’t you speak English? Imię i nazwisko?” I continue in Polish and she reluctantly answers all of my questions, naively revealing that she—or her character, anyway—works in the U.S. but doesn’t have a green card. Upon hearing her confession I order Wiktor to take her away. We then approach Ala and try to get her to answer the same questions, but she refuses, instead pulling out a “Rights Card,” which we read into the microphone (in Polish) for all to hear: “I am giving you this card
because I do not wish to speak to you or have any further contact with you. I choose to exercise my right to remain silent and to refuse to answer your questions. If you arrest me, I will continue to exercise my right to remain silent and to refuse to answer your questions. I want to speak with a lawyer before answering your questions. I would like to contact a lawyer at this number…” We have to honor those rights, so we leave her there.

And so ends the first skit of our “Know Your Rights” workshop, which about fifteen of us are putting on this fall afternoon in 2010. We are members of a grassroots Polish immigrant rights organization, which I’ll be calling the Chicago Polish Project (CPP) throughout this dissertation. Offering such workshops is one of the numerous activities we engage in to help improve the situation of Polish immigrants in Chicago. More broadly, our work focuses on pushing for pro-immigrant policies at the local and national levels, educating Chicago Poles about the workings of the American political system, creating forums for Poles to engage in public conversations about immigration, and encouraging political engagement among members of the Polish-American community. On that particular Sunday afternoon, the group had been operating for about three years and had put on several such workshops. Since then, we have continued to carry out such educational activities. Given the current state of immigration politics in the U.S., the presentations remain necessary, as ICE has ramped up its efforts to pursue unauthorized immigrants in the last few years. The large-scale work-place raids, like the one we were enacting in that first sketch, are actually quite rare now, but the federal government has developed other mechanisms for finding the undocumented. In
particular, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) uses the “Secure Communities” program, which rolled out in select states in 2008, now covers more than 1,700 jurisdictions, and is supposed to cover all U.S. law enforcement jurisdictions by 2013 (“Secure Communities”). The goal of this program is to strengthen cooperation between local law enforcement agencies and the federal government. The effect is that an encounter with a local police officer can be the basis for data-sharing with the Department of Homeland Security, which could then lead to one’s being sent to an immigration detention center, and possibly to the issuance of a deportation order if ICE discovers an immigration infraction. In the case of some jurisdictions—including Cook County and Illinois—there has been resistance to the federal government’s efforts to force participation in “Secure Communities,” so not all local law enforcement are currently sharing data. Overall, however, the Department of Homeland Security has been setting new records for deportations in recent years—reaching 400,000 for the 2010 fiscal year. For all of these reasons, we feel our “Know Your Rights” workshops are important for Polish immigrants, many of whom are undocumented because they have overstayed tourist or other short-term visas. Also, as we know from observing the question-and-answer sessions that occur during these workshops, there is a great deal of inaccurate information circulating about immigration law among Chicago Poles. Thus, our goal is to help people develop a clearer understanding of what their rights are, so that they can make well-informed choices during an unexpected encounter with law enforcement.

In the case of our first “Know Your Rights” skit, Michalina explains to the audience what has happened, using the different characters’ methods of reacting to the
mock Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid as examples of what to do, or not to do, if this were to happen in real life: do tell officers your real name; don’t reveal anything self-incriminating about where you were born or your status in the U.S.; don’t lie or show false documents; do exercise your right to remain silent and have contact information for a reliable lawyer; do have a plan for who will take care of your children if you end up in an immigration detention center. As Michalina goes through this information, she displays her knowledge on immigrant issues and her experience in front of crowds. (I once watched her deliver an impassioned speech to several thousand pro-immigration marchers at the Daley Plaza in downtown Chicago.) However, her cool, confident style should not be misinterpreted. Indeed, the issues of ICE arrests and deportation are very close to her. She first got involved in the pro-immigrant movement a few years back as a result of the deportation order a relative of hers was facing. Michalina, along with the other founding members of CPP, rallied around the relative, gathering petitions, making media appearances, and urging politicians to stop the deportation. Despite a great deal of local attention, they were ultimately unsuccessful. Instead, after weeks of fighting, they had to participate in a heart-wrenching goodbye at O’Hare airport, where the relative, who had lived in the U.S. for 18 years, boarded a plane to Poland together with her 6-year-old son, a U.S. citizen. On the Sunday afternoon of our “Know Your Rights” presentation in fall of 2010, the husband was still fighting to get his wife back to the U.S.—an all-consuming effort which landed him in front of the U.S. Congress to tell his story and made him the star of a documentary film. Less than a year after that Sunday, in summer of 2011, the government reversed their
decision on the wife’s case, allowing her to return to the U.S. and receive a green card, on
the grounds that her continued absence would impose “extreme hardship” on the
husband. This was hailed as a victory by CPP and immigrant activists around the
country. Nonetheless, this was an isolated “success” story of family reunification among
thousands and thousands of unresolved cases. Rather than proving that individuals can
find ways to successfully navigate the immigration system if they try, the incident
highlighted how it takes an overwhelming concentration of media attention, community
involvement, political clout, money, and personal suffering—on the part of the family
and especially the husband—to reverse a single deportation.

This is a quick sketch of some of the overarching political issues that frame my
dissertation. By drawing on my participant fieldwork with CPP, and with the Chicago
Polish immigrant community more broadly, I work to investigate how rhetorics—or,
more specifically, what Martin Nystrand and John Duffy call “rhetorics of the
everyday”—intersect with larger political, social, economic, and historical forces to
produce lived experience. What I want to do in this introduction is offer a way into the
dissertation by addressing some of the following issues: the intellectual contexts and
rationales for my inquiry, which include both political theory on immigration and
citizenship, and rhetorical theory; a background description of the world of Polish
immigrants in Chicago; an explanation of my methodological orientation and practices,
including attention to my own positioning as an ethnographer among Chicago Poles; a
presentation of the overarching arguments that drive the dissertation, including short
summaries of how I develop these arguments in the chapters; and a brief description of
the key rhetorical figures that help link the various chapters. As my project is decidedly interdisciplinary, I am conscious of the difficulties that this can entail for readers: those who know a great deal about rhetorical theory may know little or nothing about conversations around immigration and citizenship; likewise, experts in political theory or other fields that intersect with my work may have limited experience with rhetorical criticism. Thus, my goal in this introduction—and, moreover, throughout the dissertation—is to offer an account that allows people from a range of interests to enter my work. To this end, I try to introduce experts whom I cite by mentioning their field of expertise, and to explain some of the most important terms and concepts that could be unfamiliar to some. My hope is that this approach will both help rhetoricians appreciate how insights from other fields can be directly applicable to our own work and allow scholars outside of discourse studies to see how rhetorical theory may suggest new directions for their own areas of investigation.

B. **Why Immigration, Why Now?**

Debates around immigration in the U.S. have existed since the beginning of the republic. According to immigration historian Roger Daniels, the framers looked favorably on immigration, which is why they addressed the need for a regular system of naturalization in the Constitution and made it possible for citizens who were born abroad to hold governmental offices—except the presidency and vice presidency (12). This positive attitude towards immigration continued for several decades, but it began to change after the Irish potato famine in the 1840s, when more immigrants started entering
the U.S., and when “nativist” movements emerged (12-13). By the last decades of the 19th century, something like “immigration law” was taking shape, most notably through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was the first effective restriction on completely free immigration (11-24). This policy barred the admission of new Chinese immigrants on the grounds that “the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory,” as the opening paragraph of the Act puts it. This was the first of many more policies in the decades to come, some of which imposed more restrictions on potential immigrants, and others of which lifted obstacles to entrance. In all, Daniels’ telling of the history of U.S. immigration law constructs a series of shifts among periods of growing restriction (1882-1924), severe restriction (1924-1943), decreasing restriction (1943-1965), low restriction (1965-1980), and increasing but ineffective restriction (1980-2001) (5-6). Most recently, as described earlier, the U.S. government has been working to develop new strategies by which to enforce immigration law — such as “Secure Communities” and a more expansive use of deportation, as well as the on-going construction of a fence at the southern border. But it is unclear exactly how effective these efforts have been in deterring new arrivals.

While U.S. immigration policy has historically had some influence on the number of people entering the country, the current phenomenon of transnational human movement needs to be understood in a much broader context. Indeed, recent state actions around immigration in the U.S. and elsewhere are best understood as responses to a range of wide-reaching socioeconomic and geopolitical shifts, which often get collapsed under
macro-level terms such as “globalization” and “neoliberalism.” Most simply, as the world becomes more culturally, economically, and politically interconnected; as the gap between the rich and poor increases, both within individual countries and on a global scale; and as transportation technologies make global moves increasingly easy, more and more people are deciding to leave their home countries in search of better economic conditions. These are complex, multidimensional processes that are rife with tensions and ambiguities, and part of what I will do in Chapter IV is explore the ways in which “globalization” and “neoliberalism” affect immigration—both as material phenomena and as rhetorical frames. For now, though, my point is simply to note that the world is going through a period of profound socioeconomic and political restructuring—one that political theorist Seyla Benhabib has described as a “volatile and obscure moment” (“Twilight of Sovereignty” 21)—and that one result of this process is an increase in transnational human flows. This story was perhaps most evident from the beginning of the 1990s and into the 2000s. According to UN data, by the year 2010, 3.1% of the world’s population (214 million people) were living in a country different than their country of birth, which was a higher number than had been seen for many years (Bilsborrow 79-80). In the case of the U.S., migration researchers Demetrios Papademetriou and Aaron Terrazas show that the number of foreign-born increased by more than 25% between 2000-2008, going from almost 30 million to nearly 38 million (2). In the last four years, however, since the beginning of the global economic downturn, it seems that fewer people are moving abroad, and some immigrants may even be returning to their home countries, as employment opportunities in particular sectors
diminish. In Papademetriou and Terrazas’ analysis, the specific causes and ramifications of these developments are still not clear, and authorized and unauthorized immigrants are affected differently (4-5). Whatever the changes may be, though, and however they develop in the years ahead, large-scale immigration continues by historical standards, and as of now there are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants living within U.S. borders. In many instances, this population has become the primary focus of U.S. immigration debates. On the one hand, groups and activists from the political right try to push for more limitations on the everyday experience of living in the U.S. without authorization, and for a more extensive use of deportation (indeed, for many, the Obama administration’s expanded use of deportation is seen as a politically calculated effort to appease critics on the right). On the other hand, those from the political left often advocate for immigration reform legislation, which would include a “path to citizenship” for the undocumented, and for a very limited use of deportation, which is typically understood as destroying families.

For legal theorist Linda Bosniak this presence of large numbers of “non-citizens” within the borders of a liberal democracy opens up range of social and political challenges around the institution of citizenship. In her analysis, two regimes of citizenship emerge in response to the undocumented—one focused on “the inclusion of persons,” the other focused on “the exclusion of strangers” (9). Together, they produce “the ambiguities of alien status in liberal democratic societies” (9). Part of this “ambiguity” comes from the fact that the undocumented occupy a liminal position in the eyes of the state, because they are at once on the “inside,” which means they can claim
certain rights that the Constitution grants to “persons” and not “citizens” (94), and on the
“outside,” and thus have limited legal status (34). In the end, though, the question for
Bosniak is not so much whether non-citizens should be legally included or excluded,
because, as she sees it, both approaches accept the assumption that the nation-state has
some right to regulate such matters through immigration and citizenship policies. Rather,
her critique is more fundamental, in that she sees the category of alienage as “inevitable”
(132) in a world of nation-states, and she holds that traditional notions of state
sovereignty and border control are untenable with the realities of large-scale migration.
As she puts it, “[c]haracterizing the world as divided into the domains of inside and
outside is simply inadequate. We have to introduce another domain into the equation—
that of the border between them” (126).

Imagining what “the border between” might mean in terms of state policy is
challenging, but the phrase offers an apt heuristic for describing the everyday experience
of being an undocumented person in the U.S. today. On the one hand, one can live a
relatively “normal” life without legal status—working, using a credit card, taking out a
mortgage, paying taxes to the federal government, visiting the doctor, sending a child to
school, traveling within the U.S., participating in community life, and advocating for
political changes, to name just a few activities. In these and myriad other ways, the state
makes no effort to disrupt the everyday lives of the undocumented. On the other hand,
without legal status, one always occupies a space of “nonexistence,” as anthropologist
Susan Coutin describes it, to the extent that undocumented immigrants are not actually
“present” within U.S. borders, at least in the eyes of the state (Legalizing Moves 28).
Thus, one cannot vote, receive a range of support from federal and local government organizations, or, in most cases, get a driver’s license or pay resident tuition at state institutions of higher education; and, most importantly, one is always subject to the possibility of forced removal and repatriation, sometimes as a result of being pulled over for a minor traffic violation. In these ways, life “without papers” is anything but “normal,” which is precisely why I have often heard from undocumented Poles in my fieldwork that all they really want is the chance “to live normally, to function normally in society,” as one man put it to me.

These are some of the specific factors that affect the undocumented, but the focus of my work is not necessarily, or not only, this population. Indeed, as anthropologist Nicholas De Genova advises, there is a danger in treating undocumented immigrants as “an epistemological and ethnographic ‘object’ of study,” because researchers easily become “accomplices to the discursive power of immigration law” simply by accepting and reproducing the distinction of “illegal” as legitimate or meaningful (“Migrant Illegality” 423). As I understand it, and as will emerge from some of the specific ethnographic inquiries in the chapters that follow, the phenomena of both authorized and unauthorized immigration open up vital concerns—some of which may be distinct, and others of which coincide. But the presence of both groups is indicative of the kinds of larger global shifts that I have been trying to describe here.

These are some of the overarching theoretical concerns from fields such as immigration studies, citizenship studies, and political theory that frame my dissertation. However, discourses on immigration are not just theoretical or academic; indeed, they are
ubiquitous in everyday American life, and they have become especially noticeable in recent years. Although immigration has been a “hot” political topic for decades, there has been something of an explosion of anti-immigrant rhetorics and policies over the last few years at various places around the U.S. I will outline some of the legal developments in more detail in Chapters IV and V, with specific focus on the rhetorics surrounding the debates, but, in short, Arizona’s passage of the infamous SB 1070 law in the summer of 2010 seemed to open the doors for new anti-immigrant legislation around the country. Among other aspects, SB 1070 essentially promotes “racial profiling” by requiring local law enforcement officers to check the immigration papers of anyone who might be suspected of being in the U.S. without authorization—which is widely understood as meaning, in practice, Latinos. In some other states, laws have been even more restrictive, such as Alabama’s HB 56, or the “Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act,” which criminalizes everyday activities such as enrolling a child in school, paying rent, or entering into business transactions without proof of legal presence in the U.S. Aspects of these various state laws have been put on hold by district courts, and many are being challenged by the Department of Justice, typically on the grounds that they are unconstitutional in their attempts to overstep federal jurisdiction on matters of immigration. The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear arguments on the constitutionality of the Arizona law in its upcoming session, and it is expected to issue a ruling by July of this year. This decision will certainly provide new legal guidance about what states can and can’t do in terms of immigration legislation—and it will undoubtedly make the issue of immigration a key figure in the 2012 presidential campaign.
If these are some of the ways that immigration discourses currently enter everyday American life through politics, it is important to note that “immigration” also has profound significance as a *topos* within the American imaginary of the nation’s history and identity.¹ Some of the most evident markers of this might be phrases such as “the melting pot” and “a nation of immigrants,” as well as the symbol of the Statue of Liberty. These popular linguistic and visual rhetorics offer positive formulations of who Americans are and where they come from. In the particular case of Chicago—and I think also in the cases of many Midwest and Northeast urban immigrant hubs of the 19th century—the history of immigration is elevated to a transcendent origin myth that has ongoing power. This seems to be especially true for so-called “white ethnics,” or just “ethnics,” whose European ancestors—from countries including Ireland, Italy, Greece, Poland, Germany, Sweden, and Lithuania—came to the U.S. as part of the massive immigration waves in the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. In Chicago, it is not uncommon for Americans who may be two, three, four, or more generations removed from their immigrant ancestors to identify strongly as

¹ I will be using the term *topos*, or its plural *topoi*, throughout the dissertation. This is a key concept from ancient rhetorical theory that literally means “place(s),” but which is used to describe both “the stuff of which arguments are made and the form of those arguments,” as Richard Lanham puts it (152). In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle devised systems of *topoi* to give rhetors “places” they could go to invent their arguments, since scientific explanations were not applicable to rhetorical deliberation, as he conceptualized it (1155a). Some of these *topoi* were “common,” because they could be useful in all situations, and others were “special.” The three common *topoi* are the possible and the impossible; whether something has (or hasn’t) happened and whether something will (or won’t) happen; and extent (degree) (1391b-1392a). When I use the term, as when many contemporary rhetoricians use the term, I don’t necessarily have Aristotle’s typology in mind, but rather I am referring more generally to specific discursive “places” that rhetors often go to formulate claims. Thus, to say “immigration” is a *topos* within the American imaginary is to say that in this particular cultural context, it is common to see rhetors using “immigration” to make arguments about American identity or history. To this extent, the notion of the *topoi* gestures towards systems of belief—or perhaps even ideologies—that are “contained in the collective wisdom of the community,” as Susan Crowley puts it in a discussion of ancient systems of rhetorical invention (2).
“hyphenated” Americans, and the city offers a seemingly countless range of festivals, parades, cultural centers, museums and other institutions that memorialize particular groups. Along the same lines, the topos of immigration—and particularly, again, European immigration—is central to Chicago’s narration of its own history. As Walter Nugent puts it in the Chicago History Museum’s Encyclopedia of Chicago, “Immigration from abroad… has been the city’s hallmark characteristic in the public mind,” not least of all due the fact that Chicago’s explosive 19th-century growth coincided precisely with the mass migration waves from Europe. Indeed, according to Nugent, half of Chicagoans were foreign-born in 1860, and by 1890, 79% of the city’s residents were either immigrants of children of immigrants. The Jane Addams Hull-House Settlement, which provided social services for Chicago immigrants during the 19th and 20th centuries, carried out research in the 1890s that formed the basis for a series of block-by-block maps of immigrant settlement on the Near West Side. These documents continue to serve as powerful visual representations of the incredible ethnic diversity (albeit not racial diversity) that typified the city’s central neighborhoods in those years (see Fig. 1). However, these proud immigrant histories of Chicago, and the U.S., are probably not as simple as they appear. As political scientist Bonnie Honig has argued, Americans’ “xenophilic” appreciation for immigrants also contains within it a paradoxical xenophobia, such that immigrants have been mythologized both as “givers to the nation” and “takers” from the nation (99). This offers at least one interpretation for the co-existence of pervasive talk about the “nation of immigrants”—and America’s willingness to accept the “tired,” the “poor,” and the “huddled masses” at the “golden
Figure 1: Hull-House's *Nationalities Map No. 1* from 1895. This map covers several blocks just east of Halsted Street and south of Polk Street. (The present-day campus of UIC, where the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum is located, is directly east of the area covered by the map.) What appear to be various shades of gray on this map are actually a range of colors, each of which represents a particular ethnic group. Many of the darker sections towards the top of the map are blue, for Italians, and many of the lighter shades near the bottom are yellow, for Bohemians.
the reality of the newly restrictive immigration policies that I described earlier. There is much more to be said about all of these discourses and their motivations—and how they might intersect with other issues, including changes in the U.S. economy in recent decades—but such concerns are beyond the scope of my project. I am less interested in trying to understand why people believe whatever they do about immigrants, and more interested in trying to analyze how a range of ideologies, policies, and discourses circulate and collide to produce some of the everyday experiences, and rhetorics, of recent immigrants—and most specifically, of recent Polish immigrants in and around Chicago.

For all of these reasons, I believe that immigration is a site of deep social, political, and cultural significance that merits close critical attention. Also, given the world restructuring that we are currently witnessing, and its effects on human movement, I believe now is an important moment to be carrying out such work. Indeed, I don’t think it would be too much to claim that immigration will emerge as one of the core issues of academic analysis in the 21st century. As social theorist Etienne Balibar puts it in one of his discussions on nation-states, border security, and “strangers” in Europe, “…we know that citizenship, by definition, is an institution; it is in a sense the institution of institutions, which commands all the others” (“Europe as Borderland” 210). This description is certainly relevant to the U.S. situation, where there are now millions of non-citizens who occupy ambiguous and tenuous places in the realm of American life. How the state and society decide to deal with these immigrants inevitably informs and
determines the ways that we understand notions that are central to our identity, including “freedom,” “democracy,” “equality,” and “the pursuit of happiness.”

C. Why Rhetoric?

So far, I have offered a very broad overview of why I think immigration matters—not only to immigrants and immigration researchers, but to everyone, since we all live in places where people arrive from other countries or leave for other countries, and these moves always affect our societies. However, scholars from areas such as social theory, political theory, and citizenship studies, to name a few, are already doing important work on immigration issues, and I do not claim that I have anything unique to contribute to those conversations, at least not on their own terms. What I do have to offer, though, is a particular approach for bringing together rhetorical theory and immigration concerns. As I conceptualize it, this is both an effort to bring immigration to rhetorical studies, as a site of specific inquiry, and to bring rhetorical theory to immigration and citizenship research, as a generative mode of analysis. I am certainly not the first to take on either of these tasks: in the fields of rhetoric and discourse studies, researchers including Ralph Cintrón, Robert De Chaine, Anne Demo, and Jolanta Drzewicka and Rona Tamiko Halualani have offered insightful analyses on the intersections of language and the lives of immigrants; also, it is certainly not the case that social scientists who write about immigration and citizenship—including influential theorists such as Etienne Balibar, Linda Bosniak, Susan Coutin, and anthropologist Nicholas De Genova, to name a few—don’t have some understanding for the ways that
discourse itself contributes to the construction of phenomena surrounding immigration. Indeed, since the “linguistic” and “rhetorical” turns, and more generally since the adaptation of post-structuralist ideas across disciplines, there is widespread appreciation for language as a constitutive force. However, while this kind of theoretical acknowledgement of the power of discourse certainly enriches all research, it rarely leads to close analysis of rhetoric, especially as it circulates in everyday life.

The notions of “everyday life” and “everyday rhetorics,” the latter of which I attributed to rhetoricians Martin Nystrand and John Duffy earlier, are central to my own approach to Polish Chicago. To speak of “everyday life” is, at least partly, to enter into dialogue with the fields of anthropology and sociology, which have traditionally, albeit in different ways, concerned themselves with the ways that seemingly unremarkable life practices contain and re-produce larger sociocultural and political structures. The phrase “everyday life” itself is often associated with French social theorist Michel De Certeau, whose influential book *The Practice of Everyday Life* was translated into English in 1984. In that work, De Certeau analyzes various practices—including talking, reading, moving about, shopping, and cooking (xix)—as “tactics” used by “the weak” (37) to respond to larger “strategies,” which the state and other powerful entities employ to assert authority over space (xix) and knowledge (36). Perhaps most famously, he describes the practice of walking around the city as an act of resistance against hegemonic conceptualizations of urban space as a “totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies” (95). While I am more skeptical than De Certeau about the power of everyday acts as “tactical” forms of resistance against oppressive structures, I do share
his assumption—and the general assumption of both anthropology and sociology—that everyday life practices always constitute complex engagements with larger structural phenomena. In my case, the practice that interests me most is “everyday rhetoric” or “everyday talk.” In Nystrand and Duffy’s presentation, a focus on “everyday rhetoric” entails an appreciation for the ways that discourse “is mediated by the material conditions and multiple circumstances of the everyday world” (viii). Thus, to focus on the language of the everyday is to assume that such discourse tells us something not only about any immediate rhetorical situation, or any immediate set of rhetors, but rather that it necessarily contains and engages with a multifaceted web of forces. Anthropologist Michael Carrithers offers a useful insight on this matter, when he calls rhetoric the “the moving force which connects that which is learned, culture, to that which happens” (6).

These are explanations for why my work focuses explicitly on everyday discourses: I believe that they tell us a great deal about something beyond the everyday. Or perhaps more rhetorically, they offer a chance to make inductive arguments about the nature of rhetoric itself, as well as about some of the sociopolitical issues that affect immigrants. I should be clear, though, that I don’t treat my analyses of everyday Polish immigrant discourses as an opportunity to theorize the ways that “oppressed” peoples unwittingly engage in “resistant” or “subversive” practices against hegemonic structures. As I noted earlier, this is basically how I read De Certeau, and this is a pervasive mode of
analysis in what is broadly referred to as “cultural studies.” I do not want to claim that such analyses don’t tell us something useful, or that everyday practices and discourses cannot do this kind of political and cultural work; indeed, as I will point out at different moments in the dissertation, this is certainly how discourse sometimes functioned in the world of communist Poland, where everyday practices often functioned to challenge, or at least circumvent, limitations imposed by the state. However, I would agree with Pierre Bourdieu’s critical response to such analyses, when he notes that this approach, which he terms variously as a “canonization” of “the language of the ‘dominated classes’” and an effort to “rehabilitate ‘popular speech’” (Language and Symbolic Power 53), essentially entails an inversion of the value system (Language 85) and, in turn, a reproduction of the high/low or dominant/dominated dialectic (Language 93). Instead, Bourdieu proposes that any such observed differences are better understood as existing on a continuum (Language 93). In the case of my field of analysis, such a “continuum” might apply to the political and social ideologies that circulate among a range of rhetors, including documented Polish immigrants, undocumented Polish immigrants, other immigrants, “Americans,” and the U.S. state, to name a few. In short, my fieldwork has shown me that all of these groups’ discourses overlap and reproduce one another in decidedly “messy” ways. Furthermore, in the particular case of immigration studies, I am not

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2 In their introduction to a foundational collection of essays for Cultural Studies, Resistance through Rituals, John Clarke, Stuart Hall and their colleagues describe how resistance is always present in “hegemonic cultures.” They note, however, that this resistance can take on various forms (“oppositional,” “alternative,” “emergent”), and that resistance often becomes “redefined and absorbed” by hegemonic forces (52). The essays in Resistance through Rituals take up the cases of various youth subcultures in 1960s and 70s Britain, including hippies, Skinheads, and Rastas, in order to explore how their everyday practices can be read as subverting dominant ideologies. While all of these investigations are engaging and insightful, my sense is that they end up serving a certain structuralist reading of society, according to which those at the margins are continually engaged in “resistance” against those at the center.
comfortable figuring, or perhaps “celebrating,” immigrants’ lives as unique political and cultural spaces from which to launch subversive texts against the state. Like communication scholars Jolanta Drzewicka and Rona Tamiko Halualani, who are critical of the idea that diasporic subjects necessarily oppose and challenge “capitalism and state power” (345), I believe that the discourses of immigrants (like all discourses) are deeply situated and complex, and that they often entail what Drzewicka and Halualani call an “interplay of fluidity and fixity” (344). In the case of the Polish immigrant discourses that I know, this “interplay” often produces ideologically complex rhetorics, which can be read variously as challenging or affirming “capitalism and state power.” In the analyses of my chapters, I work to present these everyday discourses precisely with an eye to such ambiguity and complexity.

If an interest in everyday rhetorics guides the specific discursive scope of my work, then the broader theoretical foundation is grounded largely in the thinking of Kenneth Burke, one of the most innovative American rhetorical theorists of the 20th century. Burke’s work on rhetoric encompasses a dazzlingly wide range of concerns. Most simply, however, for the purposes of this dissertation, I would pinpoint some of his key organizing principles as the following: that people are, by definition, “symbol-using animal[s],” which implies that “reality” is a “clutter of symbols about the past combined

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3 Susan Coutin offers her own explanations for why she does not treat immigrant narratives, and particularly narratives of the undocumented, as “subversive.” In a discussion of undocumented Salvadorian immigrants’ struggles to legalize their status in the U.S., she notes that such an immigrant discourse is decidedly un-subversive, because it accepts the authority of the state to control citizenship and, in this way, “reproduces law, which in turn justifies the social and physical exclusion of the undocumented” (Legalizing Moves 12). Elsewhere, she defines “nonexistence” as a space without “personhood,” and responds to others’ “celebration” of such a space in the following way: “I cannot celebrate spaces of nonexistence. Even if these spaces are in some ways subversive, even if their boundaries are permeable, and even if they are sometimes irrelevant to individuals’ everyday lives, nonexistence can be deadly” (Legalizing Moves 46).
with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like…” (Language as Symbolic Action 5); that language always functions as “a striking of attitudes” (Rhetoric of Religion 289) and an ideological “screen,” or what Burke calls a “terministic screen,” through which we both “receive information” (Language 48) and formulate our own language, such that “whatever terms we use … necessarily constitute a corresponding type of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another” (Language 50); that all rhetorics emerge from “motives,” or “basic forms of thought” (Grammar of Motives (x), which include desires for transcendent categories such as “perfection,” “purity,” “order,” and “hierarchy” (Language 15-20); and that language is always a form of “symbolic action,” because of its “necessarily suasive nature,” and to this extent language always “acts” ideologically. These are all far-reaching philosophical claims, and I will return to some of them in more detail in specific chapters. However, the overarching analytical orientation that I take from Burke may be his focus on—or perhaps even obsession with—the ways that language and the material world always maintain a profoundly mysterious and dynamic relationship that seems to defy articulation. Indeed, for me, this may be the broadest rhetorical problematic underlying my dissertation: How do we figure the relationship between “rhetoric” and “reality”? 

This may sound like a lofty concern—one that is detached from immigration politics and the everyday world of Polish immigrants in Chicago. But the overall goal of my various analyses is to demonstrate how attention to this question can indeed be relevant. Moreover, my “answer” to the question is thoroughly ethnographic, because all
of my efforts to understand rhetoric and reality—or differently, the symbolic and the material realms—arise from investigations of how people use discourse to figure their everyday worlds. As I see it, developing a theoretical understanding of how rhetors—such as my research participants, but also the state, and academic theorists—negotiate the symbolic and material potentially opens up useful insights on issues such as immigration law, everyday life as an undocumented person, and the ways that mass immigration in a “globalized” world is forcing new conceptualizations of citizenship and belonging. In short, rhetorical analysis does not simply map out the names that people attach to things in the world; nor, conversely, does it prove that material phenomena are actually nothing more than “rhetoric.” Rather, as I see it, rhetorical analysis offers a chance to probe some of the ways that material phenomena and language interact to produce our experience of the everyday. I highlight the word experience because I mean it not as a synonym for “phenomenon,” but rather as a description of what we believe is happening to us, and around us, as we go through the world. As I will explain later, the basic articulation of the relationship between rhetoric and reality that emerges from my work is the idea that rhetorical invention always embodies the tension between symbolic desire—or what Burke would call symbolic “motive”—and material constraint. More specifically, in the cases of many of the Polish immigrant rhetors whom I have met in my fieldwork, their rhetorical inventions seem to arise in response to various tensions—or perhaps even “impossibilities”—that frame their worlds. In some cases, this may be the tension between competing desires to feel like one “belongs” to Poland or the U.S.; in other cases, it may be a tension between trying to achieve a certain kind of desired life but
finding those efforts stymied by the legal constraints that characterize existence “without papers.” In either case, though, the overall effect of rhetoric is not to resolve these tensions—because they are, in some sense, “irresolvable”—but rather to create a rhetorical world in which one can somehow co-exist with impossibility.

D. Chicago’s Polonia

The word Polonia, which I will be using on and off throughout the dissertation, refers to the Polish diaspora around the world, including both Polish immigrants and individuals of Polish heritage. The term comes from the Latin word for Poland, and during the years 1795-1918, when the state of Poland ceased to exist and the Polish lands were partitioned among three invaders (Russia, Prussia, and Austro-Hungary), Polonia was thought of as “the fourth province of Poland,” or, essentially, as Poland in exile, which would return upon the re-establishment of a Polish nation-state (Kantowicz 8). Today, Poles can talk about Chicago’s Polonia, or American Polonia, or the Polonia of any of the myriad other places around the world where there are concentrations of Poles or people of Polish descent. In Chapter III, I will provide a somewhat detailed account of the historical development of Chicago’s Polonia, with specific emphasis on the ways in which this community began establishing and defining its own spaces in and around the city. For now, though, I will just give a general overview.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey estimates for 2009, there are around 140,000 Polish immigrants in the Chicago metropolitan area,
of which 46,000 live in the city itself.\textsuperscript{4} In the national U.S. context, this means that nearly 1/3 of all Polish immigrants live in the Chicago area, and that metro Chicago has more Poles than any other metro area in the U.S.\textsuperscript{5} (The New York City metro area is in second place, with an estimated 110,000 Poles; but New York City itself is thought to have over 55,000 Polish immigrants, which is more than the estimated 46,000 who live in the city of Chicago.) Amongst other immigrant groups in metro Chicago, this places Poles as the second largest group, quite far behind Mexicans. Census Bureau data are supposed to account for all U.S. residents, whether or not they are authorized to be in the country; however, it is well known that many undocumented immigrants do not respond to Census questionnaires and sometimes avoid Census workers, out of fear, so it is quite possible that these official estimates are lower than the actual numbers.\textsuperscript{6} In any case, there is certainly a strong concentration of Poles in and around Chicago, and the reasons for that are, generally speaking, similar to those for other groups: certain economic and/or

\textsuperscript{4} Unfortunately, data from the 2010 census, which are based on real numbers, are not helpful. The standard form was simplified for the 2010 Census to ten questions, and while individuals were asked about race, they were not asked to give information about ethnicity or languages spoken at home (there was, however, a question about whether one is of “Latino, Hispanic, or Spanish origin”).

\textsuperscript{5} I feel it necessary to dispel a certain myth that is often repeated both by American Chicagoleans and many Chicago Poles—namely, that Chicago is the world’s “second Polish city” after Warsaw. The number of Polish immigrants who are estimated to live in the Chicago area, 140,000, would place metro Chicago about 25\textsuperscript{th} on the list of Polish cities in terms of population—and the city of Chicago itself, with 46,000 Poles, would not even make the top 50. The only rationale by which this myth might have some veracity is by treating “Polish” or “Poles” to mean anyone who claims Polish ancestry, of which there are an estimated 800,000 people in the Chicago metropolitan area, which might indeed place the greater Chicago area in second or third place among Polish cities (depending on whether one counts Katowice as a single city or as part of metropolitan Upper Silesian). For me, this interpretation of national affiliation is dubious, to say the least; although, as I noted earlier, it represents a popular line of thought among Chicago’s “white ethnics.”

\textsuperscript{6} The percentage of Poles in Chicago who are undocumented is also impossible to know. In 2000, on the basis of 1996 data, the Immigration and Naturalization Service estimated that there were 70,000 undocumented Poles living throughout the United States, which put them in 10\textsuperscript{th} place among all national groups—just behind Nicaraguans and just in front of Colombians (\textit{2000 Statistical Yearbook} 271). However, by 2000, Polish immigrants were not among the top ten, and on the basis of Department of Homeland Security estimates for 2009, it is safe to assume that they are now probably not even close, since China occupies 10\textsuperscript{th} place with an estimated 120,000 undocumented immigrants (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 4).
political conditions in the home country and in the U.S. made immigration an attractive and accessible option, and as a community built up, established immigrants “pulled” family members and friends, creating a familiar “chain” immigration pattern. In historian Dominic Pacyga’s description of Poles’ specific case in the last third of the 19th century, it was the “explosion” of capitalism in Europe and around the world that allowed Polish peasants to feel “released from many feudal obligations” (5) and made emigration a “positive response to the new economic parameters” (5). He also notes that the coinciding development of steamship technology dramatically changed the options for prospective emigrants (16). In actual numbers, somewhere between 1.14 and 1.78 million Poles came to the U.S. between 1899 and 1932, with 1912 standing out as the peak year, when about 175,000 Poles entered (Pacyga 17). In most cases, these were rural to urban moves (Pacyga 23). According to a 1911 study by the Immigration Commission, 81.5% of Polish immigrants in the U.S. had once been farmers and farm laborers (Kantowicz 7).

These numbers account for the arrival of Poles in the final third of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century. Immigration continued throughout the 20th century, when there were three moments of notably higher numbers: during and after World War II; during and after the emergence of the Solidarity movement in Poland in 1980-81; and following the fall of communism in 1989. According to sociologist Mary Patrice Erdmans’ analysis of U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service data, more than

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7 As historian Edward Kantowicz notes, there is an important caveat for all of these pre-World War I numbers. In those years, the Census asked about “country of origin,” and since there was officially no Polish state, it is difficult to know exactly how Poles dealt with this question (9).
200,000 Poles came to the U.S. during and after World War II (43); nearly 81,000 Poles gained entrance in the 1980s (59); and well over 90,000 were admitted in 1990-93 alone (59). These numbers may be deceptively low, because they do not include Poles who came over on tourist or other non-immigrant visas, many of whom certainly decided to overstay their visas and remain in the U.S. According to Erdmans, the total number of all Poles who entered the U.S. between 1980-89 was nearly 450,000, and more than 260,000 entered between 1990-93 (59). During the second half of the 1990s, the number of Poles being admitted as resident immigrants began to drop off (to about 8,000 in 1998 and in 1999), only to start rising again in 2000 (2000 Statistical Yearbook 23). In terms of Poles who entered on non-resident visas, the numbers stayed very high—between 150,000 and 180,000—throughout the 2000s, although the numbers have been falling in the last few years (2010 Yearbook 69). Fewer Poles are now arriving in the U.S. for at least a few reasons. First, after Poland’s entrance into the European Union in 2004, it became easy for Poles to migrate to other parts of Europe, where they could earn good wages, make easy trips back home to visit family and friends, and enjoy the advantages of E.U. membership, such as complete legal status and access to state health care. It has been estimated that between 2004 and 2006, two million Poles migrated to European Union countries (“2 mln Polaków”)—although, large numbers of these migrants have since returned to Poland. Second, the exchange rate between dollars and złoty has made moving to the U.S. much less attractive financially than it was in the 1970s, 80s, and even early 90s. Whereas a Polish immigrant working in Chicago in the 1980s could earn as much in a week as he or she could in a month or more in Poland—according to the stories
I have heard from people—and quickly save up to buy a home in Poland, there is no such possibility today. Indeed, the złoty is a very stable currency that has been attracting foreign investors for several years, and it has a strong exchange rate against the dollar.

Third, as noted earlier, the economic downturn has affected certain work sectors dramatically, including construction, which is one of the primary areas of employment for Polish men in Chicago. (The other three areas in which many Chicago Poles work are elderly care, childcare, and cleaning.) As an effect of all of these factors, fewer Poles have been migrating to the U.S., and, furthermore, it is quite common for me to hear from Chicago Poles that they know people who have moved back to Poland, due to the lack of job opportunities.  

One interesting result of this history of Polish immigration to Chicago—reaching back more than 150 years—is the development of many different kinds of Chicago “Poles.” There are the “ethnics” that I mentioned, whose ancestors may have come over from Europe at the beginning of the 20th century or even earlier; there are Polish immigrants who came in the waves after World War II, who have spent the large majority of their lives in the U.S.; there are those who left communist Poland in search of “freedom,” particularly in the early 1980s; there are those who left post-communist Poland in search of better economic opportunities (the group that has constituted almost all of my research participants); and there are teenagers and young adults who were born in Poland and emigrated with their parents in the 1990s or 2000s (so-called “generation

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8 As anecdotal evidence of this, in recent years on one of the Chicago-based Polish television stations, there have been on-going advertisements about how one can order a large cargo container in which to ship a household’s worth of furniture and personal belongings back to Poland.
for many ethnics, being Polish often seems to mean carrying on some of the traditions that their ancestors brought with them—such as folk dancing and particular foods—and there are multiple fraternal and other organizations in Chicago through which these Polish-Americans congregate to perform this notion of “Polishness.” For many immigrants who left communist Poland, the spirit of anti-communism itself seems to be understood as an identifying characteristic of being Polish. Indeed, it is not atypical in Polish discourses among this generation of immigrants to hear the word “communist” lodged at an expansive range of American and Polish politicians. For many of the participants in my fieldwork, who left post-communist Poland in the 1990s or 2000s, both of the aforementioned groups seem to have little or no connection to contemporary Poland—where no one dances the polka (which is, for the record, a Bohemian folk dance), where “freedom” is most often used as an ironic critique of the on-going economic difficulties that many face in their day-to-day lives, and where rabid anti-communist language is all but disappearing from mainstream discourses (although it persists at the margins, and probably will continue to do so for many decades). Some of these conflicted understandings of “Polishness” in Chicago have been examined by

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9 My activist colleagues in the Chicago Polish Project have frequently told me about how other Polish immigrants use the label “communists,” or even “commies” (komuchy), to describe the group, although I have not witnessed such name-calling myself. I will look at this more closely in Chapter V, but basically the grounds for such an attack seem to be a belief that any effort to do activist work, or to enter the public sphere through demonstration, is related to the kinds of public political displays in which citizens of communist Poland were sometimes required to participate. For my part, when I have helped out with some of CPP’s public educational workshops, which always include time for attendees to ask questions, I have listened to Polish immigrants of various ages call the American Democratic party “communist,” which has also somehow been extended to mean that Democrats oppose federal immigration reform.
others—most notably by Erdmans in her excellent book *Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago 1976-1990*—but this is not an issue I take up in this dissertation. I would only note that my own uses of “Polish” or “Poles” are limited to describing those who were born in Poland and spent most of their lives there.

One particular reason I focus exclusively on this group is because of their shared experiences of life in communist and post-communist Poland. In various analyses throughout the chapters, I gesture towards these experiences, because, as I understand my research participants—and Polish immigrants more generally—the history of communism bears down very directly on their dominant ideologies and rhetorics. In some instances, this happens in a fairly predictable way, as with the Polish immigrant rhetors I noted who use “communist” as a seemingly indiscriminant political critique. More fundamentally, however, the experiences of life in Poland shape an endless range of attitudes and life practices, including how one conceptualizes and interacts with the state; how one thinks about work and money; how one understands public and private space; and how one imagines political agency, among many other concerns. Offering a thorough discussion of the dimensions of everyday life and rhetoric in communist Poland—which I will often refer to by its official name, “The People’s Republic of Poland”—is far beyond the scope of my work here, but I do see these forces as deeply consequential in the everyday practices of my research participants, and I will address specific issues from those worlds as they become relevant. My orientation in doing this is not to offer ideological commentary on life in the Eastern Bloc or in capitalist
America; rather, my aim is to present these worlds as my research participants have lived them, and to build up analyses that honor those perspectives.¹⁰

E. An American Ethnographer among Poles

It is an obligatory rhetorical move these days for an ethnographer to describe his or her personal standing among research participants; or as ethnographer John Van Maanen puts it, including some kind of “confessional” in ethnography has become “institutionalized,” and it is now “pro forma” for ethnographic dissertations (81). For some, “confession” or “self-reflexivity” is a central feature of ethnographic writing—so-called “self-reflexive ethnography,” or in some cases even “auto-ethnography”—while for others it is merely a requisite statement of one’s own subjectivity, as a way of mediating and contextualizing theoretical claims. According to anthropologist Charlotte Aull Davies, ethnographic self-reflexivity emerged out of the “self-criticism” that the field of anthropology began experiencing in the 1960s, when ethnographers started to reflect on the ways that their own work, and the work of their predecessors, had been “a

¹⁰ To be clear, I am not claiming that I offer a “disinterested” perspective. As I will explain in the next section and in the next chapter, I am not persuaded by arguments for “unbiased” research. Rather, I am trying to say that one of my core commitments as an ethnographer is to accurately understand and represent my research participants’ worldviews. This is what anthropologists call an “emic” perspective, as opposed to an “etic” perspective. (These words come from the linguistic terms phonemic and phonetic: the former describes all of the possible sounds that are known to exist in human languages, while the latter describes the specific inventory of sounds that any given language uses. Thus, an emic perspective is one that enters into the specific cultural milieu of research participants and tries to experience and understand the world according to their own assumptions and ideologies.) Nonetheless, I will admit that my own ideas about life in a communist/socialist state have been profoundly shaped by years of interaction with Poles, and by my own experiences in post-communist Poland. This does not mean that I am easily given to anti-communist discourses—and neither are the people who form the center of my fieldwork—but I will confess to having (much) more sympathy for those kinds of rhetorics than for American (or “Western”) intellectual, anti-capitalist discourses from the political left. It has always been very ironic, and telling, for me that such discourses inevitably come from those who have little or no depth of experience with the worlds of European communism and post-communism. What I believe ethnographic investigation offers is a chance to complicate and nuance any such ideological proclamations.
product and beneficiary of colonial expansion,” and may have even “inadvertently aided
the designs of the colonizers” (11). Over the next two decades, under the influence of
post-structuralism and postmodernism, ethnographers began to problematize their own
assumptions and discourses, and self-reflexive writing developed as a rhetorical strategy
for at least acknowledging, if not resolving, these epistemological dilemmas. I will talk
about these questions in more detail in Chapter II, especially in relation to the problem of
representation in ethnographic writing. For now, though, I want to give a brief
description of how I ended up carrying out research among Chicago Poles, with the
explicit goal of providing some context for the ethnographic fieldwork that forms the
core of my investigations, and with the perhaps more implicit goal of building up my own
*ethos* as researcher. Beyond these few paragraphs, I will not devote much attention to my
own positioning—not because I do not appreciate the ways that my subjectivity has
influenced my fieldwork and the analyses that follow from it, but rather because I find
my personal experience much less interesting than the stories and discourses of my
research participants.

I have no Polish heritage, but for a series of complicated, and perhaps whimsical
reasons, I ended up moving to Krakow, Poland in July of 1997, two months after
graduating from college. I had arranged to work at a private language school teaching
English to teenagers, university students, and adults, and I had planned to stay for a year
as something of a personal adventure. Very quickly, though, I found myself hopelessly
enamored with the city of Krakow, with the rich historical pathos that seemed to surround
everyday life in Poland, and, most of all, with Poles themselves. For me, the hardened,
unaffected, skeptical, and unassumingly intelligent and good-humored people I met were very inviting. It would not be an exaggeration to say that I quickly felt as though I shared some elemental connection with Poles and Polish culture—and I continue to feel that way today, 15 years after that first arrival in Poland. I present my entry into the world of Poland in this somewhat “romantic” way to make clear that my relationship to Poles has always been characterized by a deep sense of attraction, affinity, and admiration. In some ways, this has been a driving force behind my research.

It took quite a while, however, before this initial excitement could develop into more substantial personal and intellectual experiences. Most importantly, it wasn’t until I became fairly proficient in the Polish language—probably after about two years of tireless self-study—that I began gaining direct access to everyday Polish life. I read Polish newspapers and watched Polish television shows religiously (including a particular soap opera, Zlotopolscy, which was a great help to me both linguistically and culturally); I began spending more time in Polish homes, sharing family meals and holidays, and interacting in Polish with parents and other relatives of the friends I had made; I traveled to several places around the country, often on my own; I began reading 19th- and 20th-century Polish literature, first in translation and then in the original. In all, my zeal for experiencing and learning about Poland was insatiable—and it never waned throughout the four years I lived in Krakow, the whole time of which I continued working as an English teacher. During my final year, I also studied Polish language, literature, and other subjects at the Jagiellonian University, which was very helpful in deepening my intellectual awareness of Polish issues.
I also met my wife in Krakow. If all the factors I have been describing so far illuminate my general fascination with Poland, then the development of my wife’s and my personal relationship made all of these larger issues more intimate—and, of course, it helped my Polish language skills immeasurably. It was also through her that I was able to enter the world of rural Poland, where she had spent her entire life before moving to Krakow in the early 1990s to attend university. We made regular visits to eastern Poland to stay with her parents in their village outside the border city of Chełm, and we spent time with extended family in a different village about 20 kilometers west of there, just off the road to Lublin. By engaging in seemingly never-ending conversations with my now-parents-in-law at their kitchen table—about politics, agriculture, family stories, and food—and by participating in countless gatherings with my wife’s relatives, I developed an appreciation for, and I think a passable knowledge of, life in the Polish countryside, both in the communist years and in the present-day. Although some of that knowledge has not directly influenced my ethnographic work with Chicago Poles, it did give me—and continues to give me—an expansive understanding of Polish life. Furthermore, many hours in the kitchen with my mother-in-law helped me become a half-decent Polish cook, a skill which still earns me quick respect among Poles, and especially among Polish women of a certain generation. More generally, thanks to my abilities as a speaker of Polish, my marriage to a Pole, my wife’s and my commitment to raising our two daughters bilingually, and my familiarity with Polish culture and history, I have never had any problem developing immediate acceptance and trust among Polish immigrants. Moreover, since there are very few non-Poles who can engage confidently and fluently
with Poles on their own terms, I am often treated as a kind of novelty, and accordingly am granted special status as an honorary community member. I include all of this information not to congratulate myself on years of humble dedication to all things Polish, but rather to frame the ways in which I have managed to achieve access into the world of Polish Chicago.

There are, of course, research epistemologies that would see my biography, as I’ve presented it here, as an obstacle to carrying out effective analysis of Polish immigrant discourses. Well-known ethnographers Patricia and Peter Adler describe how others have framed some of the supposed problems of “going native”: it creates “over-rapport” that harms the collection of data; it prevents access to groups outside the core research participants; it produces biased research; and it diminishes the possibility of an “analytical” perspective (17). These critiques are grounded in positivistic assumptions about the nature of knowledge and “experience.” That is, they imagine that there is some factual reality out there in the world, and that the researcher can observe that reality and provide some “objective” or “detached” rendering of it. As I will explain in the next chapter, I see this conceptualization of fieldwork as deeply antithetical to a core assumption of rhetorical theory—namely, that our apprehension of reality and experience is, to some degree or another, inextricably dependent on discourse. In terms of my own approach to fieldwork, it has been essentially phenomenological, to the extent that I assume that the fieldworker gains the deepest access and the most insightful perspective by “becoming [an] actual practitione[r] in members’ social worlds” (Adler and Adler 28). Clearly, this means I am sympathetic to my research participants; however, at the same
time, as I hope will become clear in the chapters, I am quite willing to offer analyses that frame Polish immigrants’ rhetorics and choices in a critical light. Indeed, in my own case, my life is so deeply enmeshed with the world of Poles and “Polishness”—and has been for so many years now—that my attraction and fascination are always coupled with a critical perspective.

Beyond these points, I would note that my Polish language skills have been completely instrumental to my research. Actually, I have a hard time understanding how ethnographers carry out effective research without having highly advanced, and perhaps even “native-like,” language abilities; and the possibility of carrying out ethnographic research through a translator is unimaginable to me. In the field of anthropology, the traditional research project has involved entering some “exotic” community and developing a comprehensive analysis of the group’s practices and rituals, typically focusing on how the structures of everyday life reveal a map of ideologies and beliefs. As a prerequisite to this work, one usually spends some months learning the language, or in some cases that learning might even happen after entering the fieldsite. To me, such an approach is rife with limitations (although I understand the practical considerations behind such practices). In my own case, facile communication in Polish has been crucial not only to understanding the field, but also to developing acceptance and trust among research participants. Indeed, with some exceptions, I find that a conversation with a Pole in Polish opens up a completely different discursive and ideological landscape than a conversation in English with the same person—even when that person is a highly proficient speaker of English. In Polish, certain things are assumed from the start, and
certain things can be spoken—things that might not be spoken in English. Having said that, I am not a native speaker of Polish, and there are definite limitations to my linguistic and cultural skills. Indeed, even after 15 years, I can still find myself at a gathering of Poles and hear a joke that everyone seems to find hilarious, but I remain confused, either because I don’t understand, or because I might think I understand—linguistically—but I don’t know why the joke is funny. Nonetheless, I have never felt that these limitations hamper my research, and when I have had trouble understanding the connotations or cultural implications of certain terms, I have always been willing to ask for help.

After moving back to the U.S. in 2001, and after various life-turns, my wife and I ended settling in Chicago in 2005, and slowly we began building up a relationship with Chicago’s Polonia. This was not easy at first, not least of all because “Polish Chicago” often suggests the cultural world of the ethnics, which was never of any interest to us. The polka parties, dance balls, parades, and century-old Polish-American organizations and institutions are sometimes the most visible aspects of “Polishness” in Chicago; but, with time and exploration, other social and cultural dimensions of Polish Chicago—and particularly Polish-immigrant Chicago—began to open up. As far as the development of my fieldwork, it was with the help of one particular Polish acquaintance in the summer of 2009, a fellow graduate student at UIC whom I met in an Urban Planning course, that I heard about the Chicago Polish Project. This led to my attending a CPP organizational meeting one night and immediately feeling extremely excited about the work they were doing. Unlike many Chicago Poles I had met, the CPP activists were committed to direct engagement with American politics, in the interest of improving their own situations and
the situations of others in the Polish immigrant community. Additionally, I found them extremely charismatic—with their loud voices and fearless proclamations about immigrant politics—and they struck me as an exceptionally smart, focused, knowledgeable, and dedicated group of people. Now, more than two years after that first encounter, and with many shared experiences behind us, I continue to be impressed by the sustained energy with which some of my CPP colleagues work on immigrant issues—week after week, year after year, as unpaid, and often underappreciated, volunteers. Despite their other life commitments as working people, students, and parents, they press on, driven by a belief that the federal and local governments could be more responsive to the needs of immigrants—both Polish and non-Polish, documented and undocumented. Going to that first meeting was a serendipitous event for me, and I still feel deeply honored that my CPP colleagues and friends accepted me as a full-fledged participant.

These are some of the subjective factors that have framed my fieldwork. In terms of specific methodological parameters, my research developed in the following way: after spending time exploring some dimensions of the Polish immigrant community, I received Institutional Review Board approval to begin carrying out research in June 2010. At that point, I started taking fieldnotes as I engaged in various activities in the community. Many of these activities centered around my work with CPP, such as participating in weekly meetings; helping to organize workshops and other public events (including several “Know Your Rights” sessions); assisting in the less formal, day-to-day aspects of our work, such as writing and editing various documents; giving interviews for Polish media from Chicago and from Poland; and taking part in larger, city-wide pro-immigrant
events, such as marches and rallies. All of these activities were invaluable to me because they gave me a chance to develop a very intimate understanding of the work of “immigrant rights,” at least in its particular (and perhaps peculiar) Polish incarnation. Furthermore, this aspect of my fieldwork has been extremely important because it has allowed me to actively contribute some positive value back to the Chicago Polish community. In my own readings of ethnographies and other kinds of fieldwork in communities, I have had little patience for researchers who seem to see their participants as, above all, a means for furthering their own ideological or professional goals.

In addition to my participation with CPP, a central aspect of my ethnographic fieldwork has been a series of interviews both with members of CPP and with other Polish immigrants in and around Chicago. Specifically, I have carried out ten in-depth interviews—two of which were with couples, so 12 people have been involved. In many cases, these interviews have taken place in research participants’ homes, and the recorded portions of our conversations have typically ranged from 1.5-2.5 hours. The meetings during which these interviews occurred were often much longer and involved sharing meals or coffee. As I think will become evident in the chapters, I have privileged depth over breadth in my use of interview data. That is, I have, in most cases, focused on the narratives and rhetorics of individuals as a way to build inductive arguments, rather than on the frequency or popularity of any given discourses across the Chicago Polish community. I have also tried to offer detailed, humanistic portrayals of the individuals with whom I have spoken. As noted before, and as I will describe in more detail in the next section, I work with the conviction that rhetors and their discourses are typically
grounded in convoluted, ambiguous, and often contradictory sets of beliefs. For me this observation is not a critique, but rather it is an appeal to the subtlety and complexity of everyday life.

Beyond working with CPP and carrying out interviews, I have also engaged in many other, less organized opportunities for observation and note-taking. Whether attending Chicago-area Polish cultural events, spending time in Polish neighborhoods, following local Polish media, or talking informally to Poles in various contexts, I have treated all aspects of my interactions with the world of Polish Chicago as a chance to learn more and expand my perspective. The insights I have gained from many of these experiences have found their way into my work only indirectly—sometimes as sparks for ideas that I later explored in more detail with research participants. In all cases, though, I have attempted to draw on this range of knowledge—no matter where I acquired it—to evaluate and triangulate my own claims and the claims of others.

These are some of the basic technical details of my research practices. In Chapter II, I will offer an extensive exploration of the ideological convictions that drive my ethnographic work, and I draw on one specific field encounter to develop a particular perspective on the idea of “rhetorical ethnography.” However, there are two more matters that deserve explicit attention here. First, since almost all of my fieldwork has been carried out in Polish, I have translated the language that I present in the chapters, much of which comes from the recorded interviews. I try to give fairly straightforward, if sometimes un-poetic, translations of language from the field. Nonetheless, as a caveat, I will say that I don’t imagine translation is ever a “pure” or “transparent” activity,
because it always involves interpretations, choices, and approximations. My goal is to offer translations that remain fair to the originals while also allowing me to carry out effective rhetorical analysis in English. In cases where I have used key terms that seem potentially problematic, I have included the Polish word for the benefit of Polish readers. Second, since some of my research participants are undocumented, and certain aspects of their legal situations make their way into my analyses, I have been particularly careful to remove any identifying information for my research participants. Thanks to the IRB, I was given permission to carry out research through oral consent—which has meant that after reviewing my IRB-approved consent form with research participants and giving them a copy, I collect no signed form. Thus, there exists no identifiable record of our interactions.

F. Three Arguments

The overall structure of my dissertation is something like “variations on a theme,” or, perhaps more appropriately, “variations on themes.” Thus, there is not one central thesis that I develop linearly as the chapters progress; rather, the dissertation has three overarching arguments that I take up in different specific contexts among four central chapters. What I would like to do here is lay out those arguments, and also to foretell how I see them being worked out in the chapters. Each argument “intervenes” in a different theoretical realm—rhetorical theory, qualitative research methodology, and immigration politics—though all of them arise out of my fundamentally rhetorical perspective, and all of them are interrelated and mutually constitutive.
1. **Rhetorical Theory**

   My largest argument about rhetorical theory, and rhetorical analysis, is the following: *Rhetorical invention is a profoundly situated event that embodies the tension between symbolic desire and material constraint—and, accordingly, the work of rhetorical analysis demands the work of radical contextualization.* Aspects of this argument may seem fairly self-evident—especially the part about the situatedness of rhetorical invention. Indeed, in the decades since post-structuralism and postmodernism took hold, the notion of “social constructionism” has become *doxa* across the humanities, and efforts to highlight “context” have driven work in multiple approaches to discourse, including literary studies, cultural studies, communication studies, and educational linguistics, to name a few. In the field of rhetorical studies, however, I would argue that the question of how to—or even whether or not to—attend to both the “situations” of rhetoric and rhetoric itself is still unresolved. That is, despite a growing range of work that considers the “rhetorics of _______,” or perhaps “_______ rhetorics” (e.g., feminist rhetorics, Native-American rhetorics, Black Muslim rhetorics, Christian rhetorics, video game rhetorics, environmental rhetorics, and citizenship rhetorics, to name a few of the myriad panel topics that appear on the schedule for the Rhetoric Society of America conference that will take place in May of this year), and despite clear acknowledgement among rhetoricians that social and political contexts matter, it is not clear to me that rhetorical studies, on the whole, has developed a widely accepted discourse through which to examine the relationship between rhetoric and its situations. Or, if it has, I find that discourse limited in its conceptualization of just how much...
attention rhetoric’s “situations” demand. To this extent, my argument is one of extent or degree (to borrow a common *topos* from Aristotle), which is why I say that rhetorical invention is *profoundly* situated and that rhetorical analysis demands *radical* contextualization. Not only do we need to ask questions about how rhetorical invention unfolds at specific sites, or at specific historical moments, or for specific rhetorical subjects, or in response to specific ideological forces; rather, we need to explore how rhetoric interlocks with its material “contexts” in ways that defy any effort to separate the two into “rhetoric” and “situation.” I see my dissertation as one particular attempt to model this kind of “radical” work. To be sure, it is not politically radical, nor is it discursively radical, but it may be “radical” in the degree to which it elevates the importance of situation. As will become clear in the chapters, my approach to rhetorical analysis entails extensive contextualization—within macro-level global concerns, within local ideologies and practices, within particular political and historical experiences, within closely defined spatial settings, and within some of the social and economic pressures that bear down on my research participants as they go through everyday life. The larger goal of this work is to articulate some understanding of how rhetorical invention *embodies the tension between symbolic desire and material constraint*, as I am describing it here.

There is a way in which I may seem to be rehashing some of the arguments that James Berlin was making in the 1980s and 90s. Influenced by post-structuralism, he (and others) insisted that rhetoricians and composition instructors must direct their attention towards the ways that power, rhetoric, and ideology are inextricably “imbricated”
(“Revisionary History” 149). In particular, he was responding to the emergence of cognitive process pedagogy, which had become the dominant approach to the teaching of writing by the middle of the 1980s. While these pedagogies constructed rhetorical invention as a private, solitary activity, Berlin insisted that language is always grounded in certain configurations of power, and that rhetorics are always ideologically interested. This was also a call for a kind of “radical contextualization,” at a moment when the field of composition studies was clearly pursuing a very different epistemology. However, Berlin’s motives, and the motives behind what was to become the “post-process” movement in the 1980s and 90s (and perhaps the motive behind some of the “rhetoric of ________” work that we see today), were different than mine. That is, Berlin had an explicitly neo-Marxist orientation, which is evident in his articulation of rhetoric as “the center of the reproduction of economic, social, and political activities,” and as “the mediation” between “the material and social” and “the political and cultural” (“Revisionary History” 141). While I wouldn’t deny that rhetoric does all of the work that Berlin and neo-Marxists assign to it, my line of thought is somewhat different. In my conceptualization, delving deep into rhetoric’s “situations” isn’t an effort to reveal how those situations get reproduced rhetorically as veiled ideologies of oppression; rather, it is an effort to understand something more foundational about how language and symbolic structures seem to constitute the very materiality of everyday experience.

In the chapters that follow I will carry out this work of “contextualization” in these more specific ways:
In Chapter II, “Rhetorical Ethnography: Figuring the Everyday,” I draw on an interview encounter with a Polish man I call Józef in order to formulate my own conceptualization of what it means, exactly, to do ethnography as a rhetorician. In the process, I explore some of Józef’s past and present experiences as an immigrant, including his first years of struggle to find a comfortable place for himself in Chicago’s Polonia community, and his on-going feelings of anxiety as an undocumented person. By constructing a multi-layered portrayal of Józef and his world, I work to contextualize both his discourses and the discourses of ethnographic research.

In Chapter III, “From Urban ‘Community’ to Suburban ‘Success’: the Changing (Rhetorical) Spaces of Polish Chicago,” I focus on the intersection of space and rhetoric, specifically as it gets played out in some of Chicago’s key areas of Polish settlement. To this extent, the chapter offers a spatial contextualization of rhetorical invention. But it does more than that, because telling the stories of spaces also entails talking about history, economics, politics, and social structure—and, in the case of my research participants, about their experience of space in communist and post-communist Poland. Thus, again, this work of contextualization is “radical” in that it imagines rhetoric as inseparably linked to an entire field of material forces.

Chapter IV, “All I Wanted to Hear Was “Welcome Home,”” offers the broadest contextualization, as I juxtapose some of the everyday talk from my fieldwork against the macro-level discourses of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state.” My approach here is to describe some of the material and rhetorical phenomena that bolster mass migration, and then to analyze the narratives of three specific research
participants—whom I call Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela—in order to map out some of the ways that their ideologies intersect with larger structural forces. In the end, this particular mode of contextualization leads to an analysis of how immigrants’ everyday rhetorical inventions can be read as efforts to resolve tensions between competing desires for “place” and “placelessness.”

In Chapter V, “Inventing Political Movement: Immigrant Action and the Nation-State,” the primary context for my analysis is contemporary immigration politics in the U.S. By looking at how the “moves” of both immigrants and the state shape public discourses, I analyze how both sets of actors’ rhetorics point to a kind of structural “incoherence.” This contemporary American political frame, however, opens up a very different frame, which is the experience of everyday life in communist Poland. By contextualizing some of my research participants’ “movements” within that history, and particularly the historical practice of kombinowanie, I offer an alternative perspective on what it might mean to “act” rhetorically in relation to the nation-state.

2. Qualitative Research Methodology

If my argument about the situatedness of rhetorical invention participates in conversations around rhetorical theory and rhetorical analysis, then its effectiveness is completely dependent on the ethnographic methodology that forms the basis of my dissertation. Thus, what emerges from my use of field data is an argument about the rhetorical power of community-based qualitative research: The everyday experiences and rhetorics of individuals, as community members, provide a persuasive basis upon which
to make inductive, ethos-based arguments about larger theoretical concerns. Like the
pervious argument, this may seem like an unassuming claim, since it is quite common
these days to encounter qualitative ethnographic studies across a range of disciplines, and
individual or community narratives often form the core of those projects. However, I
would like to complicate some of the assumptions behind that work, and to elaborate on
why I think this particular methodological argument is worth making. First, my basic
premise for highlighting the individual, or community, narrative may not be far from
postmodernism’s inclination towards fragmented “micro-narratives” over totalizing
“grand narratives,” as famously described by Jean-François Lyotard. Indeed, I am
thoroughly convinced that the top-down, “structural” explanations of the world—and
most pointedly, the Marxian explanations that underlie so much qualitative research—
overlook a great deal of the incoherence and nuance that constitute everyday experience.
Second, within the postmodern tradition, I may be taking a more specific cue from the
work of feminists, who have long considered “experience” a “foundational
epistemology,” as gender studies researcher Allaine Cerwonka puts it. According to
Cerwonka, such work emerged as an effort to emphasize “the political value of building
knowledge claims from people’s lived reality and the value of experience (standpoint) to
provide alternative explanations of power, relations, ideology, and dominant discourses”
(60-61). I would not disagree with these ideas about the importance of giving “voice” to
“marginalized” narratives, and I would acknowledge that my own ethnographic writing
about Polish immigrants sometimes adheres to this model. Even though I don’t
fundamentally perceive my research participants as “oppressed” individuals at “the
margins,” I do think their stories are unfamiliar to many, and to that extent, I see political value in bringing them into discourses around immigration and citizenship. However, I am also suspicious of the way in which the epistemology of “experience” can posit the individual human subject, or a whole community, as an essentialized “window onto social reality” (67), as Cerwonka puts it in her own critique of such work. As I have explained, I understand my research participants as deeply complex human actors who embody a range of overlapping discourses and ideologies—some of which might be understood as challenging “hegemony,” and others of which might be understood as reproducing that same hegemony. My use of Polish community “experience,” then, is not so much an attempt to de-center the powerful discourses that bear down on immigrants, and especially the undocumented—and certainly there are many such discourses—but rather it is an effort to develop a situated, or “grounded,” perspective on a larger discursive terrain, according to which both dominant rhetorics and individual, or community, rhetorics become deeply complicated. As I understand it, this work gains its persuasive force precisely through “thick” ethnographic presentation of research participants and their worlds. Or, differently, it is only from the human vantage point of community and individual “experience” that we can begin to see the complexities of the larger ideological map.

As a clarification, I am not trying to suggest that my privileging of the community perspective is meant to complicate our perceptions of rhetoric and reality as some kind of postmodern deconstruction or “demystification.” Rather, for me, “experience” offers an exceptionally powerful rhetoric through which to call into question the pervasive
ideological figurations of the world—whether they come from the political left (most
typically “pro-immigrant”) or from the political right (“anti-immigrant”). If we can begin
to appreciate the “messiness” of everyday life and rhetoric, we can begin to see some of
the ways that the politics of “structure” always overestimate their own potential to affect
human “experience.” Like every methodology, however, my approach to analyzing
phenomena has entailed the exclusion of other perspectives. For example, I rarely frame
my analyses within the considerations of political economy or social psychology, even
though I think both of these discourses, and many others, could offer useful insights on
my investigations. I have simply decided to tell a different story—one that is, for me at
least, more engaging, and as I have explained above, uniquely persuasive.

This argument of qualitative research methodology runs implicitly throughout the
entire dissertation, although there are moments when it becomes more apparent. In
particular, in Chapter II, which draws on my interview with Józef, I develop my own
conceptualization of “rhetorical ethnography,” and a central tenet of this is the role of
rhetorical ethos in ethnographic writing. To some extent, Chapter II serves the purpose
of expanding and deepening my argument about methodology. In other chapters, I use
individuals’ narratives and experiences to varying degrees, often taking them as a starting
point for developing larger theoretical commentaries. Chapters IV and V involve the
most extensive use of such narratives, and the most elaborate presentation of individuals
as nearly literary “characters.” In Chapter III, in which I focus on the spaces of
Chicago’s Polonia, I take a different approach, drawing on research participants’
quotations selectively and never connecting them to individual rhetors. In the case of that
chapter, my focus is on telling a larger story of the Chicago Polish community as a whole.

3. **Immigration Politics**

My argument about immigration politics is inseparably intertwined with the first two arguments, because it emerges precisely out of my efforts to engage with the nuances of Polish immigrant rhetorics, and with my efforts to understand the interaction of the symbolic and the material. In short, my argument is the following: *Pro-immigrant rhetors should abandon some of their most popular topoi—including “rights,” “freedom,” and “equality”—and develop more pragmatic arguments through which to build support among a range of interested audiences, including politicians, the mainstream U.S. electorate, and immigrants themselves.* My rationale for this position is rooted in a couple of observations. First, over the last two and half years of reading about immigration issues, following local and national political developments around immigration, and carrying out my fieldwork, I have come to believe that the pro-immigrant movement is faced with a serious rhetorical problem. That is, while it is undeniable that there is a growing tide of anti-immigrant rhetorics in the U.S.—or, at least, a growing enthusiasm for exploiting long-standing anti-immigrant sentiment in support of new anti-immigrant legislation—there also seems to be limited mainstream discourse in support of immigrants and immigrant issues. Or, when that discourse is there, it often revolves around a handful of *topoi*, including “rights,” “freedom,” and “equality,” all of which share what I would call a “transcendent” quality. Surely, I think
these topoi, and others like them, open up essential questions that constitute the ideological core of the immigration debates: Who has the right to do what, where? What does it mean to be “free”? Is “equality” premised on our nation-state affiliations, or on something more fundamental, such as our shared humanity? Nonetheless, I’m not convinced that the most effective rhetorical strategy is to speak directly to these kinds of philosophical issues. As I understand it, the views of many voting Americans and U.S. politicians on these kinds of questions are so drastically different than the views of many pro-immigrant rhetors that “transcendent” discourses are, quite simply, a losing strategy. Perhaps I am cynical, but I have seen no evidence to convince me that a majority of Americans are likely to believe that physical presence in a place guarantees one a “right” to anything, that the desire for “freedom” or even economic opportunity supersedes the nation-state’s supposed imperative to control its borders, and that undocumented immigrants are “equal” to native-born Americans in any legal sense. Thus, if my assumptions are accurate, then the question of rhetoric is how to convince this particular audience that the U.S. state and American society have some interest in helping, accommodating, and actively supporting immigrants—no matter what those immigrants’ status may be.

I do not claim to have ready-made answers to these questions. However, an example of a more pragmatic, pro-immigrant rhetoric that has begun appearing recently in public discourse, precisely in response to the newly restrictive local laws, is the constitutional argument—or, I might even say, the argument by which “the Constitution” emerges as an all-powerful topos, or as what Burke would call a “god-term.” As I
mentioned earlier, the laws that were recently passed in Arizona, Alabama, and South Carolina have all been challenged by the U.S. Department of Justice on the grounds that they violate the Constitution’s directive that the federal government has jurisdiction over matters pertaining to borders and immigration. Furthermore, the specific “racial profiling” dimensions of these laws have been challenged by civil rights groups on the grounds that they violate the First Amendment, and the Alabama law’s requirement that parents prove their legal status before enrolling children in school is being critiqued as a direct violation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s protection against discrimination. It remains to be seen where these legal disputes will end up, but my point is simply that “the Constitution,” as a *topos*, has the potential to persuade many in the U.S. who are not likely to respond to arguments about (human) “rights,” “freedom,” and “equality.”

The second rationale for my particular argument about immigration politics comes directly from my work with Chicago Poles. I do not know to what degree the ideologies of this community are similar to or different than those of other immigrant groups—indeed, I explicitly avoid trying to perform any comparative analysis in the dissertation, precisely because of my beliefs about the power of the “inside,” or phenomenological, perspective, which I do not have with any other immigrant group—but I do know that many of my research participants have themselves expressed various degrees of ambivalence about the notion of “immigrant rights,” and about the possibility of anything like “equality” outside of legal, nation-state structures. Thus, what I take away from this is a conviction that some immigrants themselves may be in need of a more persuasive rhetoric by which they could come to believe in and act upon their own
potentials as political rhetors. In this case, “the Constitution” might not be the most powerful *topos*; however, I would speculate that there are other “pragmatic” arguments that could be very effective for this audience. In the case of Poles, I have noticed that the “economic” argument—that is, generally speaking, the claim that immigrants are a boon for local and national economies, and that “a path to citizenship” would benefit the state and society tremendously—seems to be particularly inspiring. No doubt, this resonates deeply with many Poles because of their own terrific work habits, and presumably it might motivate other groups for the same reason. My larger point, though, is simply to suggest that all groups (and individuals) are responsive to some or another rhetoric, but that the most pervasive pro-immigrant rhetorics in circulation today may not be working effectively for the most important audiences. In my view, talking about “rights, “freedom,” and “equality” is a kind of “preaching to the choir,” as the popular metaphor would have it, and rhetoric is the “art” of *persuasion*.

It is primarily in Chapter V, “Inventing Political Movement: Immigrant Action and the Nation-State,” that I develop this argument about immigration politics. There, I look very directly at some of the specific language that has been circulating around the issue of immigration in the U.S., paying most careful attention the discourse of “immigrant rights.” Although the chapter does not offer concrete alternatives to the rhetorics of “rights,” “freedom,” and “equality,” it does propose a mode of critique—centering on the symbolic and incoherent nature of state power—that might be helpful in the generation of new pro-immigrant rhetorics.
G. **In Closing: A Word about Figures**

The notion of *figures* comes from ancient rhetorical theory, and many of the figures that were defined by ancient rhetoricians are widely familiar today, including metaphor, paradox, allegory, personification, repetition, and even the “rhetorical question.” In short, while figures are sometimes considered embellishments that decorate language (such as a particularly memorable metaphor in a poem), rhetoricians have typically understood figures as serving a more essential, persuasive purpose. As Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors put it in a discussion of Aristotle’s understanding of figures, “Figure, in his view, provided one of the best ways to strike that happy balance between ‘the obvious and the obscure,’ so that the audience could grasp our ideas promptly and thereby *be disposed to accept our arguments*” (377; my emphasis). They go on to quote Quintilian, who considered figures a way of giving “credibility to our arguments,” of “exciting the emotions,” and of earning “approval for our characters as pleaders” (qtd. on 378). Rhetorician Richard Lanham offers an even more foundational explanation for the importance of figures. Drawing on evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson’s speculation that analogies and metaphors have allowed humans to pull together “chaotic sensory experience into workable categories,” Lanham proposes that figures may be “a kind of data-compression, an immensely rapid substitute for iterative searching” (80). I find all of these explanations useful in describing the way that figures function in my own work. I will go into a more detailed consideration of the connection between figures and ethnographic persuasion in the next chapter, but here I simply want
to mark some of the key figures that thread throughout the dissertation and, I hope, help pull together a “chaotic” field of ideas.

The figure of “movement” provides a critical link among many of my explorations. Immigrants are, on the one hand, defined by their choice to undertake transnational movement; on the other hand, as in the case of some of my research participants, there seems to be a strong resistance to movement, as they struggle to feel something like “belonging” and “place” in their newly adopted homeland. Additionally, for the undocumented, “movement” outlines the parameters of life: if one decides to travel outside U.S. borders there may be no return, and even movement within the U.S. is regulated by the state, especially in places where local traffic stops could lead to deportation (which is, in itself, another kind of movement). In these ways, I see “movement” as a generative figure for encapsulating some of the tensions and ambiguities that characterize many Polish immigrant rhetorics. Furthermore, “movement” points to rhetorical theory, as speakers and writers make “moves” that help them advance their arguments. Thus, the figure of “movement” also suggests a link between my research participants’ specific life choices, and life struggles, and their corresponding rhetorical inventions. Similarly, “home” is an important figure. It is the very literal place where one typically has a chance to experience something like “belonging,” but it is also a much more ideological place, one that architectural historian Witold Rybczynski has described as a “sense of satisfaction and contentment” (62). I have included “home” in the title, Inventing Home, because I believe that in a very foundational sense, my research participants are all trying to “invent” ways in which they
might successfully meld together their literal and ideological homes. The word “invent,” or more often “invention,” is also a central figure. In ancient rhetorical theory, “invention” described a system, or method, by which rhetors could find, or perhaps “discover,” arguments. As outlined earlier, Aristotle offered the common and specific *topoi* as heuristics for “inventing” arguments; for Cicero, a rhetor needed “native genius,” “method or art,” or “diligence” to formulate effective claims (Corbert and Connors 17). Throughout the centuries, invention has received various degrees of attention from rhetorical theorists, but in the 1960s and 70s American rhetoricians developed renewed interest in the ways that rhetors “invent” arguments. For me, “invention” provides an effective pulling together because it describes the ways in which my research participants seek language and symbols to make sense out of their everyday lives. However, at the same time, “invention” not only involves attaching names to lived experience, but it also (always) creates and promotes a certain ideological argument about the world, as Burke continually reminds us. To this extent, I see “inventing home” as a description of the ways in which the Polish immigrants I have met work simultaneously to find “places” for themselves in and around Chicago, and to find stories and narratives through which they might learn to inhabit those particular “homes.”

As a final note, and as a lead-in to the ideas that will be developed in Chapter II, I would observe that researchers, theorists, and dissertation writers are all “inventors,” too—and all of us, just like my research participants, are continually searching for symbols through which to make sense out of what we know and to argue the world into
particular ideological shapes. Understanding research this way is, for me, a liberating aspect of rhetorical thinking. I have no charge to observe and represent reality “transparently,” or to analyze it with “scientific” infallibility; rather, my work is that of inventing figures—figures that bear some or another correspondence to my research participants’ lives, figures that participate in broader intellectual conversations, figures that adhere to my own ethics and politics, and figures that might persuade readers to believe what I’m saying. These have been my goals in the writing of this dissertation, and I hope I have managed to achieve them in at least some small measure.
II. RHETORICAL ETHNOGRAPHY: FIGURING THE EVERYDAY

Much of what we mean by “reality” has been built up through nothing but our symbolic systems.

—Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action (5)

Życie w Ameryce to dobrowolne niewolnictwo.
Life in America is slavery by choice.

—Józef’s father, as quoted by Józef

A. Introduction

In the preceding chapter I used the phrase “rhetorical ethnography,” which sometimes describes ethnographic research carried out by rhetoricians, typically meaning something like “ethnography that pays special attention to language.” Or, as communication scholar Robin Patric Clair puts it, rhetorical ethnography is research that highlights how “[t]he meaning and meaningfulness of life is found in the performances and can be analyzed through a rhetorical lens” (118). Compositionist Mary Jo Rieff offers a similar description, observing that ethnographic research in the field of rhetoric and composition concerns itself with “not just the lived experience or behavior of cultures (as in anthropology or sociology) but with the way in which this behavior manifests itself rhetorically…” (qtd. in Brown and Dobrin 3). While these definitions certainly capture some of what rhetorical ethnography can do, the conceptualization that underlies my work is somewhat different. I do not see my research as an effort to examine the rhetorical “manifestations” of culture; nor is it an attempt to bring a rhetorical perspective to data gathered at fieldsites. Both of those attitudes seem
to assume that the observable events of the world—whether we call them “performances,” “behavior,” “lived experience,” or something else—are material “facts” that can be analyzed, and that rhetorical theory is one of the many “lenses” through which to carry out that work. The assumption behind my approach, on the other hand, is that all terms—including “fact,” “material,” and “symbol”—are inherently tenuous and problematic, and that rhetorical ethnography offers a chance to probe the mechanisms by which these claims gain their persuasive power. Or, differently, I see rhetorical ethnography as an invitation to participate in the visceral contexts of everyday life in order to theorize about the very nature of language itself—which is different than examining language in order to reveal something about “culture” or “society.” Certainly all work in rhetorical studies theorizes language to some degree or another, but the claim I want make here is that ethnographic writing can offer particularly persuasive theorizations of language, to the extent that they may be—or, at least, may seem to be—more valid and reliable. As I understand it, and will explain in this chapter, ethnographic persuasion is grounded in various types of ethos, which emerge through rhetorical figures and then form the basis for broader theoretical claims. In the case of my own project, the driving theoretical claim about rhetoric is the one I described in the introductory chapter—that rhetorical invention is a profoundly situated event that embodies a tension between symbolic desire and material constraint, and that the work of rhetorical analysis demands the work of radical contextualization.

The goals of this chapter, then, are the following: first, to offer a description of “rhetorical ethnography” and its mechanisms of persuasion; second, to explain how this
methodological approach forms the basis of my broader understandings of rhetorical invention and rhetorical analysis. To do this, I will draw on one specific encounter from my fieldwork with a man I’ll call Józef. By pivoting between descriptions of a day I spent with him at his home and my own conjectures about those descriptions’ theoretical implications, I will build up something like “grounded theory.” As I final note, I would add that my investigations here are needed right now in rhetorical studies, because there is growing interest in ethnographic research but limited theoretical discussion about what it might mean, exactly, for rhetoricians to use ethnographic methodology. I see this chapter, and more broadly my dissertation, as an effort to help open up that conversation.

B. Entering the Fieldsite

On a cold Wednesday morning in December, I pull out of the Chicago alley where I park my car. It’s a little after 9:00, probably earlier than I need to be leaving, but I don’t know how long the drive to the suburbs will take and I don’t want to be late for my 10:00 interview at Józef’s place. As it turns out, there is almost no traffic this morning, despite some light snow, so I make great time. At 9:30 I exit the expressway where Józef told me to and make a couple turns, but I don’t want to arrive too early, so I pull into a shopping center where I see a doughnut shop. I buy something and sit down for a few minutes, thinking about the interview ahead.

Józef and I have known each other for almost a year. We work together as activist colleagues in the Chicago Polish Project and have participated in numerous activities together, including some of the “Know Your Rights” workshops that I
described earlier. Despite the fact that our personal situations and life experiences are very different, Józef and I have always enjoyed talking. We share a mode of discussion that I might say is speculative and philosophical. Even though Józef never finished his university studies in Poland, his personal rhetorical style often reminds me of a kind of free-form academic essay, because he offers an idea (I could say a “thesis”), describes some situations from his own experiences and the experiences of others, then explains how the stories work to illustrate a larger point. His ability to build cohesive, insightful arguments through a contemplative mode of discourse has always held my attention. This is why I want to sit down for an interview with my voice recorder turned on, because there have been occasions when he has said things that were very interesting to me, but I haven’t been able to catch them word-for-word. I am hoping we can revisit some of those same conversations today, while also exploring new ground.

As I pull into the parking lot of Józef’s condominium complex, my phone rings—it’s him, wondering if I’m making it okay. He comes out and greets me at the building door. He is tall and thin, with brown hair and a trim goatee; today he is wearing jeans and a sweatshirt. We shake hands and he leads me down a flight of stairs to the front door of his condo. After I’ve taken off my shoes—as one always does upon entering a Polish home—he leads me inside for the tour. There is an open floor plan kitchen-dining room-living room, and then a short hall that leads to the bathroom and the bedroom. As we stand in the doorway of the bedroom, I notice a few remote-controlled airplanes and helicopters on top of the dressers, so I ask about them. He enthusiastically begins talking about his hobby and then leads me back into the living room, where he pulls a small red
helicopter out of a metal case. He points out some details on the propellers and the remote control, and then he flies the helicopter around the room. He offers me a turn, but I decline, saying I’d probably wreck it into the wall. Instead, he opens up a helicopter flight simulator program on his computer, which I try delightedly for a while, having not played a computer game since I was a teenager. Later, he shows me pictures of the times that he, his wife, and some friends have taken flights in a Cessna down the shore of Lake Michigan, right alongside the skyscrapers of downtown Chicago. The flights are offered by a local flying school, and the instructors allow guests to spend some time behind the steering controls, which is a great thrill for Józef, an aviation buff. He tells me that if things were different—that is, if his legal situation in the U.S. were different—he would like to become a pilot.

After all of this, and many other small conversations, we sit down at the coffee table, where Józef has put out some chips and salsa. He tells me he’s ready to begin the interview, so I turn on my voice recorder. In the next two hours, we cover several topics, including Józef’s personal immigration story, his ideas about how a more just U.S. immigration politics might look, his dreams of opening his own business one day, his recent confusion about whether he considers himself more comfortable on the political right or left, his strained relationship with his father who also lives in Chicago, and his daily challenges and anxieties as an undocumented person. Later, after all this heavy talk, we eat some pierogi.
C. **Figures of Ethnographic Ethos**

I want to pull back from the space of Józef’s home for a moment to talk about how my description of that place opens up one of the central theoretical concerns of this dissertation—the question of the relationship between linguistic representation and material experience. As I presented it, the fieldsite is an unproblematically material place that I entered on material terms—in my car, via an expressway, with a stop in a doughnut shop along the way. The space of Józef’s condominium was also a material fact that merited description—the lay-out of the rooms, his remote-controlled airplanes and helicopters, and even the food we consumed. To this extent, my manner of introducing Józef and our conversation was very much within the conventions of ethnographic discourse. More specifically, my style displays features of what ethnographer John Van Maanen calls “confessional” and “impressionistic” writing: it was “confessional” to the extent that I placed myself explicitly in the scene and explained some of “how the fieldwork odyssey was accomplished by the researcher” (75), and it was “impressionistic” in that I tried to “draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world” and “seek to imaginatively place the audience in the fieldwork situation” (103). My point here is not to critique these particular styles—I like them and am comfortable with them—but rather to highlight some of the tensions that these, and all other modes of ethnographic representation, entail.

The question of representation has been a primary focus in literary and cultural studies for several decades. Under the influence of these fields, representation also
became a key *topos* in anthropology, perhaps most famously with the publication of the 1986 collection of essays *Writing Culture*. The contributors to that volume challenged some of the “scientific” assumptions of anthropology, including the possibility of objective observation and transparent research reporting. At their core, many of the commentaries in *Writing Culture* are grounded in a rhetorical perspective. For example, in his essay in the volume, Stephen Tyler critiques the historically positivistic discourse of science for its dependence on “a prior and critical disjunction of language and the world,” by which “[i]t made visual perception unmediated by concepts of the origin of knowledge about the world, and it made language the medium by which that knowledge appeared in descriptions” (123). Instead he understands ethnography (or, what he calls “post-modern ethnography”) as “evoking” rather than “representing.” For him, this perspective “frees ethnography from *mimesis*” (130), opening up instead the possibility that ethnography can “perform a therapeutic purpose by evoking a participatory reality” (128). Similarly, in the introduction to *Writing Culture*, James Clifford states that all ethnographies are “fictions,” by which he means that they “make up” and “invent” things “not actually real” (6). His point is not that fieldsites are not “real,” but rather that “ethnographic texts cannot avoid tropes, figures, and allegories that select and impose meaning as they translate it” (7); and, moreover, that ethnographic “truths” are always “partial—committed and incomplete” (7).

Such observations are not controversial for rhetoricians. Indeed, the rhetorical perspective of *Writing Culture* emerges out of postmodernism and post-structuralism, which have been interpreted by rhetoricians Susan Jarratt and Bruce McComiskey,
among many others, as embodying a neo-sophistic intellectual tradition. But the insights that ethnographies work by “evocation,” rather than \textit{mimesis}, and that they entail “inventing” and “making up” material experiences via language offer a generative way for describing rhetorical ethnography. In particular, Clifford’s use of the terms “tropes, figures, and allegories” casts the work of ethnographic writing as an act of rhetorical figuring—of people and places (for example, of Józef and his home), but also a figuring of how people figure their own worlds. According to Richard Lanham, there has been persistent ambiguity around the terms “trope” and “figure” since ancient times. Generally, a “trope” is understood as a particular kind of “figure” that “changes the meaning of a word or words, rather than simply arranging them in a pattern of some sort” (154-155). He notes that some theorists have distinguished between the two terms by defining “trope” as describing a change of meaning to one word only, while “figure” does the same for more than one word (155). According to Lanham, however, the key insight comes from Quintilian, who emphasizes that “change in signification is the crucial issue” (155). This analysis of figures and tropes seems to resonate with Clifford’s claim that ethnographies cannot avoid “inventing” through language, because all language is essentially figurative.

Philippe Salazar’s analysis of “figure” introduces another level of insight. He translates Quintilian’s definition of “figure” in the following (literal and “cumbersome”) way: “Figure… is a certain conformation of speech removed from a thinking commonly shared and presenting itself first” (153). For Salazar, the thrust of this definition is that
figures can offer less obvious, or less “common,” perspectives in the interest of persuasion:

Quintilian’s definition [of figure] is therefore a way to signify that, in the process of producing ‘fictions’ (fiction, figure, which are the same etonym) aimed at producing persuasion and social action (a rhetorical action is fulfilled only when it is acted upon by the audience or part of it), through scenarios for decision making, ‘figures’ of speech behave like ‘calculations’ that both depart from ‘common’ thinking and give formulations to that which does not ‘present itself first’ to current, and common, opinion. (154)

The implication of Salazar’s point for ethnographic writing seems to be this: not only does ethnographic writing render the materiality of the fieldsite through a web of language (as Clifford and others have observed), but it also works to construct that language in a way that transforms the experience of the field—that which is not “commonly shared” and does not “present itself first”—into arguments that are relevant for an audience. Salazar offers his own figure to describe this process: “The orator stands as a gateway, as it were, to allow this ushering in of a new ‘conformation’ (reshaping) which, if the figure is used effectively in the persuasive act, should result in the proposed ‘fiction’ (do, judge, value, this or that) becoming an action, a reality” (154). In this light, my description of entering the fieldsite with Józef might be understood as an argument through which I “usher in” a particular “reshaping” of material experience. Central aspects of this argument would include the way I figure myself—as an earnest and punctual researcher who respects his research participant and wants to “explore new
ground” with him; the way I figure Józef—as an “activist,” a kind of self-made “academic,” and a warm, accessible man who enjoys flying model airplanes and taking joy rides in a Cessna alongside the Chicago skyline; and the way I figure our relationship and interaction—as two men whose “personal situations and life experiences are very different” but share an interest in “speculative and philosophical” conversations about politics and personal issues. If these figures all work together to construct an argument, then that argument is that Józef may have something very important to teach us about life and language, despite his humble and unassuming nature, and that I am the reliable researcher-rhetorician who can interpret his message for the audience. All of this seems in line with Salazar’s discussion of figures as persuasion. What it also suggests, however, is that ethnographic persuasion, in particular, is squarely grounded in rhetorical ethos. In the case of my writing about Józef, the argument seems to draw on the following constellation of ethos: my ethos, Józef’s ethos, and the ethos of our relationship. In my description of “entering the fieldsite,” all of these layers of ethos work in concert to convince the reader of the validity and reliability of what lies ahead.¹¹

¹¹ I may be using the words “reliability” and “validity” somewhat loosely here. These notions have deep significance in the social sciences, as they have been two of the key criteria by which empirical research has traditionally been judged (“generalizability” is the third). In short, “reliability” refers to “the repeatability of research findings,” while “validity” is “the truth or correctness of the findings” (Davies 96). However, in light of the epistemological changes brought on by the “linguistic” or “rhetorical” turn, there has been on-going debate about what these terms might mean for qualitative research in the social sciences today. This debate is beyond the scope of my interests or expertise. For my purposes, my own point about the terms would be the following: Both the reliability and validity of ethnographic research are rhetorically constructed, and as I have been describing here, I think that rhetoric is essentially one of ethos. Moreover, rhetorical ethnography, with its self-conscious attention to its own rhetoricity, may not have much use for “reliability” and “validity,” as such, if indeed the end goal of such work is formulating convincing insights about the nature of language. This does not mean that there is no “materiality” or “truth” at the fieldsite; nor does it mean that rhetorical ethnographers should not try to apply methodological rigor to their research. Rather, as I see it, the point is that rhetorical ethnography is not out to describe the world as “fact”; it is out to examine “facts” as discourses, and to see what might be learned from engaging with rhetorical invention in everyday settings.
Others have also highlighted the importance of ethos in ethnographic writing. Rhetorician Ralph Cintrón, for example, has argued that “[t]he persuasiveness of the ethnographic knowledge claim is constituted through and through, both in the moments of fieldwork and the moments of the final text, by ethos” (4); indeed, for him, ethnographic logos is completely dependent on the ethnographer’s performance of ethos (3). Compositionists Robert Brookee and Charlotte Hogg have proposed that Kenneth Burke’s refinement of ethos, as “ethos via identification” (119), reveals not only how ethnographic texts can persuade readers, but also how ethnographic research projects can engage in “social action,” to the extent that they are “formative of the entire rhetorical field itself” (118). Both of these descriptions of ethnographic ethos are convincing to me, but I would like to propose a slightly different formulation, borrowing Jim Corder’s notion of “generative ethos.” For Corder, ethos can be parsed into five specific types: dramatic ethos, gratifying ethos, functional ethos, efficient ethos, and generative ethos. Generative ethos, which is Corder’s primary focus, offers an expansive understanding of how ethos functions between rhetor and audience. Corder first describes this type of ethos as “always in the process of making itself and of liberating hearers to make themselves…. It is a speaking out from history into history” (114). Later, he calls it “an invitation” that “brings a hearer (guest) into a world that he or she can live in, that has living space and time” (127-128). In this conceptualization, ethos not only persuades an audience through a rhetor’s “character,” as Aristotle described ethos, but it also renders a shared discursive realm, which Corder calls “a commodious universe” (128), where “we can both speak ourselves into existence and be with another in language” (132). As I
understand it, this is very much how ethos functions in ethnographic writing: attention to “character” opens up a figurative lifeworld in which arguments unfold, circulate, and serve as “invitations” to listeners. Going back to Salazar’s insights, I might put it this way: the ultimate goal of ethnography’s rhetorical “reshaping” of the fieldsite, via ethical figures, is the production of an inviting discursive space where theoretical propositions become convincing.

These claims are, of course, decidedly rhetorical, and would probably run contrary to some social science epistemologies about the materiality of “facts” at fieldsites. Nonetheless, my point here, much like Clifford’s point in Writing Culture, is not that there are not “facts” out there, or at least some kind of phenomenological experience, but rather that an ethnographic engagement with those “facts” entails interpretation and representation, which are necessarily grounded in rhetorical figures (indeed, “facts,” “interpretation,” and “representation” are all themselves rhetorical figures). What I am trying to point to, then, is not a resolution to the question of how representations interact with fieldsites, but rather to the very irresolvability of the tension between rhetorical invention and material experience—or, perhaps more simply, between words and things. Rhetorical ethos offers one way into this tension; moreover, for me, it opens up a particular way of figuring what happens when we write about grounded sites.

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12 The idea that language somehow subsumes material experience, or “reality,” is an unfortunate caricature of the rhetorical perspective. My guess is that this critique is the result of the pervasive influence of postmodern philosophies of language (and perhaps most notably the ideas of Derrida). It’s not clear how anyone might claim that all we have is language and representation (and I don’t know of any postmodern or post-structuralist theorists who claim this); we can all agree that there is something undeniably “real” about the material realm. In my understanding, however, what a rhetorical perspective suggests is that the relationship between language and that realm is never simple, and that what we call “experience” is necessarily bound up in the interplay of “rhetoric” and “reality.”
of rhetorical invention. In order to develop this line of thought more fully—and to connect it to my understanding of rhetorical invention as embodying the tension between rhetorical desire and material constraint—I want to return to my meeting with Józef, and to a few select moments from our recorded conversation.

D. The “Black Desperation”

While we were talking that day, Józef told me several stories about his negative experiences with other Polish immigrants during his first years in Chicago. For example, when he came to Chicago for the first time in 1996, on leave from his university studies in Poland, he worked in a sausage-making shop in a heavily Polish neighborhood where his bosses were an elderly couple and their grandson. He described the challenge of working for the three in this way: “One would come in and tell me what to do, the second would come in and tell me what to do, and the third. And since I wasn’t able to do what all of them told me to at the same time, the first would come in all pissed off that I didn’t do what they said, then the second would get pissed off, and then the third.” In a later job, he worked for a Pole whom he described as “honest,” but also as a pathological manipulator who, if given the chance, would steal five dollars from an elderly woman, and “he’d be happy because he’d gotten five dollars from an old grandma. Just like that.” He then worked for another Pole who was also a small-time criminal. He habitually offered bribes to get out of situations, robbed people of petty cash whenever he had the chance, and fired employees on the last day of the pay period, keeping their final two weeks’ salary. Józef learned he was being fired when the man brought over a new
employee and announced to Józef, “He works here today, and you don’t work here anymore.” Józef engaged in a shouting match with the employer until he succeeded in squeezing out his final check.

As he told me about these negative experiences and described the characters—all of these events several years in the past at this point—Józef’s manner remained cool and reflective. He used the stories to illustrate how the most recent immigrants don’t have access to good information because they are dependent on others and have no choice but to take what they can get. He described his own attitude towards work for the first period of his immigration in this way: “At the beginning I just took whatever fell into my hands. I didn’t plan out that I was going to work in some great company or something, because it seemed out of reach to me, so I just found someone who had some use for me.” But after telling me these stories, Józef began to talk about his most negative experience with another Pole, when he tried to meet a man who was supposed to help him legalize his stay in the U.S.: “When I was here the first time and worked in the store, one of the employees told me, ‘Meet with this guy who lives here, and he’ll help you find a way to be here legally.’ And at first I didn’t believe it, and then—I was supposed to meet this guy…. But—” And at that moment, as he was telling me the story, Józef’s cell phone rang. It was a call from work, so he took it. After finishing the call, he left the room for a moment, then came back and sat down again, but he didn’t speak for a time. He sighed heavily and stared at the wall. I told him he could say whatever he wanted, but that he shouldn’t tell me anything he didn’t feel comfortable saying. Finally he asked me to turn off my voice recorder, and he talked briefly about the situation in the past. Then he told
me to turn on the recorder again. Without going into much detail about the story of the man, which was clearly a painful memory, he ended up explaining it this way: “Back then I couldn’t understand anything. When I came back here [to the U.S. for the second time in 1999]—how does it work?—you just go and see what’s going on. And you respond to whatever is going on. The other thing that you could do was to get in touch with someone who can promise you some kind of help, and at that moment, it’s like you give yourself over to whatever that person tries to do to help. And I had a very bad experience. In short, this was a person who promised me help, and it seemed that he could help, but maybe if I’d never met him it would have been better for me.” I asked if the man had tried to take money from him, but he said no. What he experienced was more like psychological abuse. He didn’t elaborate much more, but he did later say that he was “tied” to the man in question for a period of time, and that the man directed him in ways that led him further and further from building the kind of life he wanted in the U.S. In all, he wasn’t able to escape the emotional “black desperation” that his life had become until his wife came over from Poland to join him and immediately pulled him out of the situation.

E. The Space of Invention: Symbolic Desire and Material Constraint

What emerges for me from Jozef’s stories about his difficult experiences—or, more to the point, from my representation of those stories, and from the ethical lifeworld that foregrounds the representation of those stories—is a certain conceptualization of what I might call the “space” of rhetorical invention. In Józef’s case, this space is
situated between his desire to shape his world according to his personal dreams for the future, and the legal and social constraints that stymie those desires. What appears as a result of this tension are figures, including Józef’s figure of the abusive Polish immigrant who takes advantage of new arrivals, and his figure of the “black desperation,” as a kind of psychic black hole out of which he could not pull himself without the help of his wife. As I understand them, these everyday figures are not meant to resolve the tension between symbolic desire and material constraint—that is, Józef does not imagine that by saying these things he will somehow be able to push through various impasses and realize his dreams—but rather they allow him to construct a kind of discursive realm in which his life seems to make sense. Or, perhaps more rhetorically, Józef invents his own “commodious universe,” to borrow Corder’s phrase, in which he is able to accommodate his profound sense of frustration as an undocumented immigrant in the U.S. To this extent, then, the space of invention is constituted both by “reality”—including the kinds of social, political, and economic forces that shape Józef’s everyday situation—and an effort to figure that “reality” in a way that corresponds to a particular set of desires and motives, such as Józef’s desire to improve his personal standing. In terms of the work of rhetorical analysis, what these insights suggest to me is that “rhetoric” and its “situations” overlap with each another to such a degree that they are effectively indivisible—which is precisely what I have in mind when I say that the work of rhetorical analysis demands the work of radical contextualization. Without this contextualization, it is impossible to appreciate rhetoric as a living, moving force in the world.

13 I am translating literally here from a Polish expression, czarna rozpacz, which is what Józef actually said to me that day.
To clarify the understanding of language I am trying to articulate here I want to situate it in relation to other theorizations to which it is similar, but from which it departs in important ways. For example, what might be called “social” approaches to language figure discourse as deeply intertwined with material and social experience. In a discussion of such approaches, cultural theorist Raymond Williams notes that they frame language as “necessarily a social action, dependent on a social relationship” (36); furthermore, he claims that such approaches refuse both representative and expressionistic ideologies, focusing instead on the dynamic relationship between language and the social realm: “What we have… is a grasping of reality through language, which as practical consciousness is saturated by and saturates all social activity, including productive activity. And since this grasping is social and continuous… it occurs within an active and changing society” (37). A more expansive, but in my reading closely related, articulation of this “social” analysis comes from Pierre Bourdieu, who portrays all discourse as participating in an “economy of symbolic exchanges,” or a “linguistic market” (*Language as Symbolic Power* 37), by which speakers can earn “symbolic profit” (*Language* 67) and “symbolic capital” (*Language* 72-76) through effective performances. Part of Bourdieu’s point, and perhaps a central point of all “social” theories of language, is that language, including everyday discourse, necessarily engages with social structure, hierarchy, and relations. But Bourdieu also augments this perspective by noting that power—both institutional and interpersonal—is inscribed in language, such that discourse, and “symbolic domination,” can reproduce social order (*Language* 136). The connection between the figures of “power” and
“discourse” is even more central for Michel Foucault, whose conceptualization of language goes far beyond that of the “social.” Perhaps Foucault’s most basic claim about language is the following: “[I]n every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its power and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality” (216). In this perspective, then, language and rhetoric not only engage the social world, or larger structures of “power”; rather, discourse is the site from which power emanates.

All of these perspectives are relevant to the notion of rhetorical invention that I am trying to formulate here. In their own ways, they highlight how language is necessarily indivisible from larger structures—including social, political, and economic structures—all of which make up what I am calling “material constraint.” In the very specific case of Józef, some of these forces would include his legal standing as an undocumented person in the U.S., his resulting low status in his relations with employers, and the vast discursive and ideological milieu of Polish immigrant society, within which his figures of the innocent new immigrant arrival and the more experienced abusive compatriot circulate as powerful topoi.14 Also, as the quote from Józef’s father that I

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14 Indeed, I have heard many variations on Józef’s story of being mistreated by other Poles during the first years of immigration. One memorable example of such a story comes from a man I’ll call Witek, a former high-earning business man in post-communist Poland who struggled to find decent work during his first years in the U.S. Because he had experience as an electrician, he found work as a sub-contractor on a Chicago building site managed by a Pole. For six weeks he wired up the electricity for a multi-level residential building, taking a couple advances along the way. When he had finished the job and asked for his money, he was told (and he claims to remember the quote verbatim), “Fuck off, dick. You’re illegal, so what are you going to do to me?” Witek didn’t learn until some time later that his legal status didn’t limit his ability to sue an employer for wage theft, but he did develop a phrase to describe the mechanism by which some established Polish immigrants rob newcomers through various schemes, such as selling
have included as an epigraph for this chapter demonstrates, figuring immigration as a kind of hellish experience—including one of slavery, and perhaps a slavery of one’s own making—is not uncommon in Polish immigrant discourses (and I am sure that this same figure exists in other immigrant discourses, as well). However, while these “social” theorizations of language effectively illuminate some of the ways that power and society shape the conditions of discourse, they do not address rhetorical invention—or, more to the point, they do not address the motives that might underlie Józef’s particular rhetorical inventions. This may be a question of academic disciplinarity. That is, the theories I have been describing are generally understood as theories of “language,” not “rhetoric,” and theories of language typically do not concern themselves with invention, as such, since this is a specific topos of rhetorical theory. However, I would argue that every theory of language assumes a theory of invention, and likewise, every theory of invention assumes a theory of language. In the case of the “social” language theories that I have been describing, the assumption is typically that overarching social structures somehow subsume individual invention. Indeed, as Williams puts it, “…just as all social process is activity between real individuals, so individuality, by the fully social fact of language…is the active constitution, within distinct physical beings, of the social capacity, which is the means of realization of any individual life” (41). For Foucault, the case is more radical, as the subject, or perhaps “the rhetor,” is collapsed into language itself:

“[D]iscourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject

“international driver’s license” (which are useless) and IRS tax numbers (which can be obtained for free): the Polonia machine.
and his discontinuity within himself may be determined” (55). There is a larger debate here about whether the very notion of “rhetorical invention” assumes a certain “subjectivity,” and in the case of Foucault, about how postmodern thought may challenge the very possibility of “the rhetor,” as typically understood; but these concerns go beyond the scope of my focus here. Rather, the more specific point I want to make is that the everyday talk of Józef, and of other Polish immigrants whom I have encountered in my fieldwork, suggests to me that language and rhetoric are much more than cultural artifacts that result from an intersection of political, economic and other forces. Indeed, there is also a deeply metaphysical dimension to the ways that people figure their worlds, and a theory of invention needs to account for how these very specific individual (and community) desires interact with larger structures.

15 In the view of Debra Hawhee, for example, our most familiar understandings of rhetorical invention assume “an active, sovereign subject who sets out either to ‘find’ or ‘create’ discursive ‘stuff,’” and postmodernism’s questioning of modernist subjectivity “forces a reconceptualization of rhetoric itself” (“Kairotic Encounters” 16). In response, she proposes the term “invention-in-the-middle,” which she describes in the following way: “In the middle, one invents and is invented, one writes and is written, constitutes and is constituted” (“Kairotic Encounters” 17-18). Other theorists, including Yameng Liu and John Muckelbauer, take similar positions, trying in their own ways to formulate analyses of rhetorical invention that reconcile this dilemma. Liu develops the idea of “inventiveness,” by which “[w]hat is ‘new’ is always saturated with traces of the ‘old’” (60); Muckelbauer describes the concept of “singular rhythms,” which is grounded in the logics of deconstruction. In short, the singular rhythm involves a kind of selective repetition which offers a way out of the “trap” of the old-new dialectic (33).

All of these discussions frame the question of the inventing rhetor as a tension between “modernist” and “postmodernist” ideas. But this debate has echoes in rhetorical theory that reach back further and are more complicated. For example, according to Sharon Crowley, the notion that the self, and individual perceptions of the world, form the basis of invention did not appear until the 17th century (5); and by the 18th and 19th centuries, the canon of invention was being roundly dismissed by Enlightenment theorists (11). This was a dramatic shift away from the ancient belief that “knowledge was contained in the collective wisdom of the community” (2), which was the foundation of the classical topoi. When invention did make a come back in American rhetorical theory in the 1960s and 70s, it was through the work of early compositionists, who began theorizing invention as an individual, private activity (Berlin Rhetoric and Reality 145). The challenges to this ideology, and its related pedagogy, were sometimes grounded in neo-Marxist and postmodern thinking, as in the case of James Berlin; but they also echoed ancient ideas about “the wisdom of the community,” as in the case of Karen Burke LeFevre’s Invention as a Social Act, in which she proposed invention as a “dialectical process,” through which “the inventing individual(s) and the sociocultural are co-existing and mutually defining” (35). Also, as noted earlier, postmodern theories of discourse are often interpreted as rehabilitations of sophistic rhetorics.
Another way to frame what I am trying to say here is through the familiar language of “structure” and “agency.” I am essentially working to develop a notion of rhetorical invention that resists either of these antimonies, because, as I see it, these terms construct a false dichotomy. Social theorists have also looked for ways to deconstruct the structure/agency debate—perhaps most famously Anthony Giddens through his term structuration, by which structure and agency “presuppose one another” (53), and Bourdieu through his idea of the habitus, which is an individual’s or social group’s “acquired system of generative schemes” that is shaped by the “constraints and limits” of structure (Logic of Practice 55). But my goal is to offer a particularly rhetorical perspective on the problem. Thus, when I say that we cannot effectively separate rhetoric from its situations, and that the work of rhetorical analysis demands the work of radical contextualization, I am trying to collapse the polar terms together in a way that renders their original meanings ambiguous, at best, and perhaps even incoherent. Or, differently, what we call “rhetoric” and “situation” (or “structure” and “agency,” or “symbolic” and “material”) interlock in ways that defy our most common efforts to split them up; instead, all we seem to have, for sure, is a tension, which I am calling the “space” of rhetorical invention.16

16 I am describing a “space” of rhetorical invention because that particular figure allows me to draw links to the material “spaces” of fieldwork (like Józef’s condo), and because the term is central to my analyses in the next chapter. However, I could just as easily talk about a “moment” of rhetorical invention, which is perhaps the most common way of figuring invention, particularly through the use of the term of kairos. This is, for example, central to Debra Hawhee’s effort to articulate a conceptualization of invention that is perhaps not all that different than my own. She uses the example of Gorgias’ extemporaneous speaking, when he would “exploit the possibilities immanent in a particular rhetorical moment—a kairos—to create a discursive offshoot, and along with that a new ethos to go somewhere else (“Kairotic Encounters”18). Whether or not there is some qualitative difference between talking about invention as a “space” or “moment” would be a separate topic of inquiry. For now, I will keep with the term “space.”
An echo from rhetorical theory of the idea I am trying to explain here can be found in Scott Consigny’s well-known 1974 essay, “Rhetoric and its Situations.” In this piece, Consigny critiques Lloyd Bitzer’s famous description of the rhetorical situation, observing that Bitzer’s “situation” is too objective, and that it seems to control a rhetor’s response in a “predetermined” way (59). At the same time, however, Consigny critiques the opposite position (as represented by Richard Vatz in Consigny’s telling), which assumes that situations are essentially determined by rhetors (59). Rather, for Consigny, these two polar positions miss “actual rhetorical practice,” in which rhetoric functions as a situated “art” (60). He describes his own position in this way: “The real question for rhetorical theory [is] not whether the rhetor or situation is dominant, but how, in each case, the rhetor can become engaged in the novel and indeterminate situation and yet have the means of making sense of it” (63). In another moment, he defines the rhetorical situation as “an indeterminate context marked by troublesome disorder which the rhetor must structure so as to disclose and formulate problems” (62). This perspective is relevant to the analysis I am trying to apply to Józef’s rhetorical inventions. As I understand them, these inventions are not the products of structures; nor are they one rhetor’s attempt to “determine” his own material and rhetorical constraints. Rather, they are a discursive “art,” by which Józef attempts to “make sense” out of the situation he encounters and to insert certain ideological figures into that situation.

In order to ground some of these theoretical speculations more firmly, I would like to return to Józef’s home—one last time—in order to borrow a bit more of his own
language. Then, I will outline how my conceptualizations of rhetorical ethnography and rhetorical invention coincide to form the basis of my work in the following chapters.

F. Immigration Politics and “Human Energy”

As I mentioned, the day I went out to Józef’s condo was a Wednesday in December, specifically Wednesday, December 1, 2010. Exactly seven months earlier, to the day, he and I, along with our CPP colleagues, and thousands of other Chicago immigrants and their friends, had marched for two miles along Washington Avenue, from Union Park on Chicago’s west side to the downtown Loop for a rally outside the Daley Federal Building. The members of our group wore our red, white, and black Chicago Polish Project t-shirts and carried Polish and American flags. We weren’t the first to arrive at the rally, but we worked our way up to the front so we could be close to the stage. Our colleague Michalina was to be one of the many speakers, and we wanted to be right there with her. Finally she spoke, and we cheered for her with all we had; we took pictures of her; we imagined that her rhetoric might have real power—that is, specifically, the power to improve the situations of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. But this was only a fantasy. The reality was that the immigration reform bill that had been proposed by Illinois Congressman Luis Gutierrez a few months earlier—one that would have offered immigrants like Józef a “path to citizenship”—had no chance of passing during the 2010 legislative session. Republicans were incensed that Obama had managed to pass health care reform, and many Democrats who had supported the health care bill weren’t about to
take on anything as politically dangerous as immigration reform. Obama, who had once seemed a genuine supporter of immigrants, had already spent all of his political capital, and he wasn’t doing anything to suggest he might be willing to move things along that year. Nonetheless, at the march in May 2010, some activists still believed, or wanted to believe, that there was hope.

However, by December, when Józef and I sat down to talk, all hope was gone. Republicans had won a majority in Congress a few weeks earlier, so we knew that there was no chance of reform any time soon. When I asked Józef about whether or not he thought there might be a new immigration reform bill at some point in the future he seemed to waver between hope and pessimism: “I try not to pick a certain time. I think that there’s a problem and I think there will be a positive solution. But that’s a question of faith. It’s not based on any kind of knowledge I have. … If they really tighten up the borders, and they make it really controlled—they could do it in the long run—the immigrant communities will get smaller with time, people will assimilate, and that’s it. I’m not convinced that—[long pause]—that they have to find a solution. My dad is convinced that they have to work it out, but I’m not.” He then shifted the conversation, offering a comparison from his own political experiences: the “isolating” border policies of the U.S. and the closed borders he had grown up with in communist Poland were similar, and the U.S. policy was doomed to fail, as the Polish one had, because, as he put it, “isolating yourself generally leads to collapse… to disintegration.” This was an interesting comparison for me, but it was theoretical. I took it to mean that there really
wasn’t much more to be said about the more immediate issue of U.S. immigration reform, because it opened up painful feelings of frustration and hopelessness.

Later, in describing his understanding of nation-state borders, he said this: “It seems to me that a person should have a chance to realize what he wants in life, what he dreams of. Because sometimes it is the case that you can have a moment in life, you’re in a situation that forces you to leave and look for something on the outside. That moment happened for me when I left Poland.” He went on describe these kinds of movements as “natural,” and said they are “exactly the same” as Americans’ efforts to move among states in search of better jobs. But of course, the fact of nation-state borders makes the political and legal ramifications of such moves quite different. He made clear that he doesn’t believe in open borders, acknowledging that “some kind of control over the flow” prevents people from taking advantage of the “weak elements” of the system. However, he emphasized the need for individuals to pursue their individual dreams: “But it should also be the case that when a person in some sense works towards some goal, that he would have a chance to realize that goal, that dream. … So, saying something like, categorically close the gate, and in the moment when there’s a need, that’s a destruction of human energy.”

G. A Reality of Symbols

Józef’s figure of “human energy” offers a perfect case of what I have been trying to explain. As Józef aspires towards certain life possibilities—both ideological and material—he presses up against various limitations—also both ideological and material—
and amidst these conflicting forces, he invents a figure that somehow makes it possible for him to inhabit his own experience. “Human energy” perfectly encapsulates Józef’s frustrations as an undocumented immigrant, and it portrays those frustrations as embodying a “natural,” visceral force, in contradistinction to the artifice of nation-states that want to “close the gate” on people’s desire to move about the world and transform their own lives. In this way, “human energy” is Józef’s method of “ushering in” a “new ‘conformation’ (reshaping),” to borrow Salazar’s language again. But as Salazar also notes, this figuring is essentially a “persuasive act,” which “should result in the proposed ‘fiction’ (do, judge, value, this or that) becoming an action, a reality” (154). Thus, by inventing “human energy,” Józef uses his rhetorical “art” simultaneously to respond to his own particular experience of nation-state power and to transform that power into an argument or action, which then guides his own (and perhaps others’) vision of the world moving forward.

This is the central notion of rhetorical invention that drives the analyses in the following chapters of the dissertation, and it is my rationale for pursuing a method of “radical contextualization.” Because if invention is indeed as “profoundly situated” as I imagine it to be, then the only way to analyze rhetoric, as symbolic activity, is to simultaneously analyze its material situations. And, as I understand it, rhetorical ethnography is a research method that allows a uniquely persuasive way for doing this—not because it gives us something “real” or “material,” but rather because it demands that

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17 As I will explore in Chapter V, this is very similar to the way that the figure of “freedom of movement,” or something like the “right” to “free movement,” is typically pitted against nation-state borders: It is a natural force vs. an artificial force.
we engage with the “real” and the “material” as inherent dimensions of rhetoric. Perhaps differently, I might say that the work of the ethnographer-rhetorician is parallel to the work of any particular research participant. That is, just as Józef invents figures that allow him to somehow inhabit and shape his own experience, the ethnographer-rhetorician invents figures—including, in my case, the figures of Józef, me, and our shared textual ethos—that allow him or her to shape the world both for oneself and an audience. And both of these figurings—the research participant’s and the ethnographer-rhetorician’s—help illuminate rhetorical invention as a “profoundly situated event” that demands “radical contextualization”: we cannot deny the reality of the fieldsite, but we also cannot deny the ways in which that reality “has been built up through nothing but our symbolic practices,” as Burke puts it (Language as Symbolic Action 5). This is the assumption that informs all of my analyses in the following chapters. In the next chapter, in particular, I will apply this perspective to an analysis of the relationship between Chicago’s Polonia and space, both historically and in the present day.
III. FROM URBAN “COMMUNITY” TO SUBURBAN “SUCCESS”: THE CHANGING (RHETORICAL) SPACES OF POLISH CHICAGO

Most Poles reside along Milwaukee Avenue where they have purchased homes. When I arrived in Chicago at daybreak and visited this part of the city, it seemed at times as though I were in Poland. The morning sun rising from the waters of Lake Michigan illuminated Polish inscriptions and names on the buildings. Only the innumerable telegraph wires and posts—a sight unfamiliar in Europe—and the limitless lake spoiled the illusion. Meanwhile the sun climbed steadily higher. Doors and windows began to open and the illusion was restored for the first words I heard were uttered in Polish.

—Nobel Prize-winning writer Henryk Sienkiewicz’s description of first visiting Chicago in 1876, as published in his collection of essays Portrait of America (Listy z Podróży do Ameryki) (277)

A. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the narratives of Józef offered a look at how “movement,” as well as legal restrictions on movement, can shape one individual’s life and rhetorics. In this chapter, I want to expand the scope by examining how the historical and present-day movements of Chicago’s Polonia community, as a whole, may suggest a certain understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and space. My goal here is two-fold: first, I want to theorize rhetoric and space as mutually productive and constitutive forces; second, I want to offer a particular story of Polish Chicago that highlights some of the community’s histories, ideologies, and aspirations. Before I get into these specific issues, though, I offer two ethnographic scenes that I think help encapsulate, in miniature, the larger argument I am trying to develop. Both scenes involve maps, and both scenes take place in a small room in the basement of a Polish church on Chicago’s northwest side, where other members of the Chicago Polish Project and I gather for weekly
organizational meetings. The room itself is adorned with oil paintings of Italian scenes, a crucifix, a picture of Pope John Paul II, children’s artwork, and posters advertising past performances of a children’s theatrical group. One corner of the room contains old book cases that are cluttered with coffee makers, stuffed animals, and other miscellaneous items, and there are six long folding tables in the center of the room that we typically pull together as one long conference table. For us, the space is attractive primarily because it’s free—one of our members is a parishioner—but the location is also agreeable, since most of us live either in nearby city neighborhoods or in the northwest suburbs, located just a few miles out on the Kennedy Expressway. In all, the room allows us to carry out our important weekly discussions, which are variously intense, thoughtful, emotional, contentious, and, not infrequently, profanity-laced—although we sometimes have to tone that down, due to the Bible-study groups who meet next door.

1. **Map scene 1: *Polish Highways and Byways***

   We are about to begin this week’s meeting, and for reasons not worth explaining, we have on the table in front of us a large, hardcover, English-language atlas called *Polish Highways and Byways*. For this week’s “ice-breaker,” everyone is supposed to find the number of the “highway” that goes nearest to his or her home in Poland. But before we can begin, Magda wonders aloud, “‘Polish Highways’—why is it such a big book? It should have like three pages.” We all fall apart in laughter. The lack of a national highway system in Poland has been a point of great debate and anger since at least the 1990s—and the public has grown increasingly bitter about the lack of
progress since Poland joined the E.U. in 2004, which was supposed to open up funds for infrastructure projects, but which has resulted in the completion of only a fraction of the 2,000 kilometers of planned limited access highways, due at least partly to political wrangling. This leads to a string of jokes about the roads in Poland and some speculation about what the publishers of the atlas might have had in mind when they titled the book. In the end, though, everyone takes a minute to scan the book’s colorful pages in search of the “highway”—in some cases just a two-lane road—that goes by his or her Polish home. Gabriel lives on Highway 79. Magda lives near 46. I use my parents’-in-law house on Highway 12, even though I actually lived quite close to Highway 7 in Krakow for four years. Through the process—which involves much more laughter, as a new thread of jokes about Polish infrastructure seems to spin out at every turn—the atlas becomes a kind of spatial-rhetorical compass for everyone in the room. Or, differently, it comes to stand in for, and even mean, our faraway, shared place, “Poland.” In this sense, it is like all maps—a representational rhetoric of material phenomena. But also, and perhaps more importantly for us, it contains our feelings of solidarity.

2. **Map scene 2: The 38th Ward**

We are gearing up for another “door-knocking” campaign—this time to encourage Polish immigrants to vote in the upcoming elections for local, state, and federal offices. We have spent several months registering Polish voters, and now it’s time to try to get them out to the polls, with the hope that they will vote for candidates who have pledged to support initiatives for immigrants. Michalina pulls out a thickly
folded piece of paper—a map of the 38th Ward (Fig. 2). It covers many of the streets surrounding the church, which is located in the Portage Park neighborhood, the area of Chicago that has the strongest concentration of Polish immigrants. She opens it in front of her on the table and we all pull in close to take a look. The ward forms a jagged, horizontally elongated shape, and the map is detailed enough to see every city block. We discuss which streets we’ve been on before, where we know there are heavy concentrations of Poles, and then we begin plotting out a strategy. Who can join a group of door-knockers on Monday evening? On Tuesday? What is our goal for the next two

Figure 2. Official map of Chicago’s 38th Ward.
weeks? As we plan out all of this—and soon someone takes on the duty of making a sign-up sheet of days and times—the map begins to take on a significance far beyond the streets, buildings, and parks of the 38th Ward. Like the *Polish Highways and Byways* atlas, the ward map comes to stand in for, and even participate in, our discourses of collaboration as CPP activists, and perhaps more pointedly, our shared ideal of a politically engaged community of Polish immigrants. If this is our imagined ideal, then it is the rhetoric of the ward map itself that makes it seem real for those moments.

These are both short scenes, but for me they help capture the particular way of figuring the relationship between rhetoric and space that I want to develop here. More specifically, what the map scenes and the broader discursive practices of Polish immigrants suggest to me is that space is not only a landscape where rhetorics happen (which would be, in the case of my two map scenes, the neighborhood of Portage Park and other Polish areas of Chicago); nor is space simply a set of material conditions that shape rhetorical production (as the geographies of Poland and the 38th Ward shape the rhetorics of the maps themselves). Rather, what I see in the rhetorics of Polish Chicago is evidence that space is something of an empty container that we fill with our rhetorics, and through that process, we transform space into an active participant in our discourses. Thus, the maps that I described not only reproduce specific spaces as specific symbolic configurations, but rather they mediate between space and the ideological realm. In the case of Polish Chicago—or, in the case of Polish “Chicagoland,” a term that refers to the entire metropolitan Chicago area—the overarching story I want to tell here is about how
Poles’ historical and present-day movements out from the original urban “enclave” communities near the center of Chicago, to different points along the corridor of Milwaukee Avenue, and on out to surrounding northwest suburbs seem to construct a rhetorical world in which outward migration constitutes an ascendance up the ladder of Polish immigrant “success.” This story is not unique to Poles, because city-to-suburb moves have characterized American life for many decades. But the Polish case has its own particular dimensions, which will be the center of my focus. My method for developing this investigation will include two parts. First, as a theoretical background, I will give an overview of some recent discussions on the relationship between rhetoric and space, and then I will situate my own line of thought in this conversation; second, I will explore three specific spaces of Polish Chicago—drawing on both textual and ethnographic evidence—in order to tell the story.

B. From Space to Rhetoric, From Rhetoric to Space

In their introduction to a collection of multidisciplinary perspectives on space, Barney Warf and Santa Arias outline the intellectual shift of recent decades that many refer to as “the Spatial Turn.” As they tell it, this “turn” is rooted in a questioning of 19th-century historicist paradigms, which assumed a “despatialized consciousness” (2). In response, the spatial perspective highlights the ways in which space and geography, in addition to history, contribute to the construction of social, economic, and other kinds of experience (2-3). They cite the 1920s Chicago School of sociology as laying the groundwork for the shift, with its focus on the experiences of immigrants and “the
textures of ethnic neighborhoods” (3), and they trace how a handful of theorists from the 1960s through the 2000s—including Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, David Harvey, and Manuel Castells—helped develop this perspective into a theoretical movement. For Warf and Arias, spatial thought is gaining popularity across the disciplines because of a growing realization that “[g]eography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space, but because *where* things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen” (1). David Harvey offers an even stronger version of that claim about urban space, in particular, when he says that “[w]e would abandon the view of the urban as simply a site or container of social action in favor of the idea that it is, itself, a set of conflicting heterogeneous processes which are producing spatio-temporalities as well as producing things, structures and permanencies in ways which constrain the nature of the social process” (“Contested Cities” 229). In rhetorical studies, where there is also a growing interest in spatial perspectives, this observation might translate into an assumption like this: if we want to understand rhetorics, we have to consider the spaces in which those rhetorics happen, because rhetorics and their spaces are inextricably linked.

Drawing attention to space is actually not new for rhetorical theory, as space had a prominent place in ancient rhetorical systems. Specifically, a rhetor was advised to memorize a speech by imagining a walk through a particular space, such as a house, where each room would represent a different part of the oratory (Dickinson 2-3; Wright 52). More recently, as an increasing number of rhetoricians have become interested in space, there is an expanding range of perspectives on the issue, as well as an expanding
range of sites that have been investigated. What I would like to do here is outline what I see as some of the basic conceptualizations of rhetoric and space that emerge from recent literature. I do not intend to suggest that this is an exhaustive review, but, rather, my goal is to map out a basic theoretical terrain on which to situate my own line of thought.

One approach to the relationship between space and rhetoric, and certainly the most familiar, is to treat space as a backdrop against which rhetoric occurs. In some cases, this might be understood as a de-spatialized perspective, if space is figured as a passive landscape for rhetorical activity. However, the position can also grant space a more active role if any given spatial backdrop is interpreted as offering a unique set of characteristics that help create a unique rhetorical situation. An illustrative example of this second approach would be Jenny Edbauer Rice’s writing on rhetorical ecologies. In her essay “Unframing Models of Public Distribution,” she critiques traditional theorizations of the rhetorical situation, by which rhetoric is understood as “the totality of its discrete elements” (8), proposing instead a model of “rhetorical ecologies,” which highlights the dynamic and fluid interplay of “effects, enactments, and events” (9). Her example of how this works is the case of the slogan “Keep Austin Weird,” which became popular in Austin, Texas in the early 2000s in response to an increasing presence of big-box retailers and the city government’s plan to give tax breaks to some of the chains. Rice illustrates how the slogan began circulating in Austin and eventually expanded into a wide-reaching rhetorical-ecological system, full of arguments, counterarguments, and multiple adaptations of both. These points about the dynamic nature of rhetorical invention notwithstanding—because they are interesting and insightful—what I draw
from Rice’s piece with regard to space is that Austin can be understood as a kind of stage on which a certain set of social, economic, and political forces interacted to support a rhetorical ecology. It is not quite the case that space does not matter in Rice’s analysis, because as she explains it, the “Keep Austin Weird” slogan took hold due to a unique set of local economic events that, presumably, interacted with Austin’s unique cultural and political climate to create unique rhetorics. But the nature of the space itself is secondary, mattering only to the extent that it provides a backdrop for the production of a self-perpetuating discursive world.

A somewhat related line of thought is to theorize space as an active force that produces, shapes, and perhaps even limits rhetorical possibilities. The connection to the previous approach is that both attitudes understand spatial phenomena as preceding rhetorical phenomena. However, the notion that space actively shapes rhetoric is markedly different than the idea that space serves as a backdrop for rhetoric, in that the former grants space itself—that is, space in its very nature, as arrangement, form, and design—a constituent role in rhetorical invention. This line of thought adheres quite closely to one of the core assumptions of spatial thinking, which sociologist Mark Gottdiener articulates in the following way: “…space itself must be considered as one element of the productive forces of society, especially through the operation of form or design” (123). The rhetorical version of this claim might be that space, especially through its form and design, is one of the productive forces of rhetoric. Examples of recent work that seems to mobilize this theory include Jordynn Jack’s study of the ways that the differentiated spaces of everyday life in and around the Los Alamos laboratory—
including the lab’s elite “Tech Area” spaces, its domestic spaces, and the surrounding desert’s natural spaces—produced temporalized and spatialized memory rhetorics that encapsulate ideologies of science and gender. Also, Elizabethada Wright’s writing on how cemetery spaces—by way of their stability and quiet, as well as their cultural complexity—allow for the production of rhetorics that have historically been treated as inappropriate for more prestigious public spaces, namely the memorialization of women and specifically African-American women, seems to fit into this category. In both cases, defining features of particular spaces are seen as constituting particular rhetorics.

A more expansive example of this line of thought is David Fleming’s *City of Rhetoric*. In this book, Fleming explores the relationship between rhetoric and space through case studies of areas in and around Chicago, highlighting, among other points, the ways in which the socio-economically divided spaces of everyday American life point to “an insistent ‘privatism’,” causing children to believe that “people who disagree with each other inhabit different parts of the landscape” (14). His larger argument is that these contemporary American spaces—in their designs, forms, and planned attributes—hinder possibilities for democratic rhetorics. For him, the way out of this situation is to build a new “sociospatial environment” in which people of different backgrounds can come together to “talk about what belongs to all of us and render and resolve the differences that so easily divide us” (197-98). Essentially, he is arguing that we should change the nature of space itself if we want to change our rhetorical, and political, possibilities.

If the ideas of Fleming and others suggest that spaces shape rhetoric, there is another obvious direction, as well. That is, we might also say that rhetoric shapes space;
or, somewhat differently, it may be that rhetorical phenomena precede spatial phenomena. This would be one way of applying Lefebvre’s core observation that space is a product of social configurations and that “what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production” (44). For rhetorical theory this might mean that rhetorics can only “achieve consistency,” or perhaps, do their work of persuasion, by “intervening” into the nature and production of space. Cezar Ornatowski offers an analysis along these lines in his description of the ways that rhetoric, architecture, and political ideology all intersected to produce the built world of post-World War II Warsaw. One of his basic points is that the “spatial arrangements” that were realized in communist Poland can be understood as explicit efforts to embody a set of ideological principles, and that, to this end, these spaces were the material results of certain rhetorics. To highlight the rhetorical dimension, Ornatowski looks at an influential 1949 address by the first leader of the People’s Republic of Poland, Bolesław Bierut, called “The 6-Year Plan for the Reconstruction of Warsaw.” In the speech, Bierut outlined the principles by which the Polish capital, much of which had been razed by Nazis, should be rebuilt. Included in his vision were calls for a “new content and new external form and architectural expression clear and understandable to the broad masses of workers and peasants in Poland,” and for a model city that would “lay the foundations for the transformation of life on socialist principles” (qtd. in Ornatowski “Rhetoric and Space” 215). For Ornatowski, the importance of Beirut’s address is the way that it “figures forth” a new social world by way of a “triple thrust”: 1) it “bodies forth … a brick-and-mortar world for people to inhabit”; 2) it “endows it with ideological content
and renders it ideologically legible”; 3) it makes the new urban form a “figure” of the state (“Rhetoric and Space” 215). In effect, the situation seems to offer a powerful example of how a specific rhetorical event—or, a specific moment of “figuring,” in Ornatowski’s language—can contribute to the production of a specific space.

But for Ornatowski the point is not only that rhetorics produce spaces, or, in the case of Warsaw, that the carefully planned urban spaces of communist Poland should be understood as architectural monuments to a set of political beliefs. Rather, the spaces themselves constituted another rhetoric that also “figured forth” the world of socialist Poland. As he describes it, reconstructed Warsaw was a prominent symbol of “the new socialist, collective identity,” serving as “a showcase space to which children and workers were brought from around the country; a place about which songs were sung and that (according to a popular slogan) the ‘entire nation [was] engaged in building’” (“Rhetoric and Space” 216). Thus, the space of post-World War II Warsaw emerged as a result of the rhetorics of a new politics, and then the space itself became a powerful rhetoric for that same politics.

This analysis points to a third conceptualization of rhetoric and space, namely the idea that space itself is a rhetoric—and not only because planning and design constitute symbolic activity (they do), but, more precisely, because we experience space as a series of embodied arguments that help structure everyday life. This is a key idea behind Greg Dickinson’s rhetorical analysis of the planning and design of Old Pasadena, California. For Dickinson, Old Pasadena, which was rebuilt and reconstructed to look like a small American downtown from the past, presents itself as a “legendary place,” where visitors
can retreat from the fragmented, postmodern spaces of nearby Los Angeles to access a stabilized sense of identity by way of “nostalgic invocations” (7), including literal and figurative signs from the past. The example of Old Pasadena illustrates, in Dickinson’s view, how memory can be “encoded into landscapes for rhetorical purposes” (20), specifically, in this case, for the purposes of producing feelings of identity and consumerism. The perspective offered here is, on the one hand, a rhetoric of space; but, more than that, it is an effort to describe a complex and multilayered interaction of space, rhetoric, culture, and socioeconomics. For Dickinson, the story of Old Pasadena seems to offer a way of exploring how all of these forces collide to help create the experience of everyday life, or, more specifically, to create the experience of identity.

There are other possible directions for thinking about rhetoric and space, but I will leave the discussion there in order to develop my own perspective, as it emerges from my fieldwork in Polish Chicagoland. Most generally, the position I want to propose and develop is that we fill space with our rhetorics and ideologies. In more rhetorical terms, I would put it this way: space functions metonymically, in the Burkean sense of operating as a “reduction” that conveys “some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible” (*Grammar of Motives* 506), because we assign certain ideological significance to space and then we deploy that space discursively as a “metaphorical extension,” in Burke’s language. Part of my idea here is that we give space meaning, or as geographers and urban planners might put it, that we transform “space” into “place” (Cresswell 10). But by calling space metonymic, I also want to highlight the way in which spaces do not just take on meanings, as places, but that spaces also actively
participate in our rhetorical worlds via their assigned meanings; or, as John Ackerman puts it, that spaces function as “signs within discourses” (86). With this in mind, I would situate my own perspective amidst the ideas reviewed above in the following way: I do not conceptualize space as only a backdrop for rhetoric; nor do I see it as primarily a set of material arrangements that shape our ways of talking about the world. Rather, the perspective I want to explore here is that space is, above all, both a rhetorical production and a rhetorical participant. In this sense, my way of thinking is most closely connected to those of Ornatowski and Dickinson, although my development of these ideas may be somewhat different.

It is important to note that by highlighting the rhetoricity of space, and the spatiality of rhetoric, I am privileging one perspective on space over others. In particular, my narrative of the spaces of Polish Chicago is less about the ways that structural forces—including economics, urban politics, and racial tensions—have foregrounded Polish patterns of inhabiting and conceptualizing space, and more about how certain spatial ideologies seem to have taken hold within the community. To some extent, the perspective I offer may be complementary to those others. For example, one of Lefebvre’s key insights is that various “production[s] of space” always result from specific modes of production, and in his analysis, the history of space has involved an evolution from “absolute space” (consecrated, natural space), to “historical space” (defined by accumulation of wealth and resources), to “abstract space” (brought about by the detachment of labor from production) (48-50). This perspective easily applies to the larger story of urban-to-suburban movement in which the immigrants of my fieldwork
participate. That is, as modes of production have changed, and as we have moved into a period of “post-industrialization,” the traditional urban center is no longer the locus of economic activity or jobs, especially in countries like the U.S., where the service and high-tech industries have become leading economic sectors. As geographer Wei Li describes it, these shifts have brought on a process of “vertical disintegration,” by which large companies have begun subcontracting out some of their former production activities to entrepreneurs, who may be located in larger metropolitan areas but outside of city centers (31). Indeed, the diffuse suburbs of U.S. cities, and of cities around the world, easily accommodate technological industries (creating, in some cases, what historian Joshua Fishman calls “technoburbs”), and employees follow these jobs. Unquestionably, this helps explain why many Polish immigrants now live in suburban areas. Whether they themselves have these kinds of post-industrial jobs or are serving others who do, their residential desires reflect these larger economic shifts. Likewise, in terms of racial tensions, the specific movements of Poles within the city of Chicago itself—from neighborhood to neighborhood—correspond directly to the actions of other ethnic groups. In particular, as more Latinos have arrived in Chicago in recent decades, and have become a dominant population group in certain neighborhoods, other ethnic communities have moved out of those neighborhoods. This has certainly been the case, and continues to be the case, in some key city areas of Polish settlement in Chicago, including the ones that I will focus on in this chapter. Nonetheless, I have not based my analyses on these perspectives, partly because I have had to limit my scope, but also because I think those stories can be told much better by urban planners, geographers,
sociologists. As I described in the introductory chapter, my commitment has been to presenting the word of Polish Chicago as it emerges through my own ethnographic encounters with everyday discourses.

C. The Spaces of Polish Chicagoland

The historical and present-day spaces of Polish Chicago offer numerous sites for exploring the ideas about space and rhetoric that I outlined above. I will look at only a few of those spaces, drawing on textual, visual, and ethnographic data to describe and analyze the sites. Specifically, I have categorized three spaces, or kinds of spaces, according to their metonymic operations: 1) Stanisławowo-Trójcowo: Space as Community; 2) Jackowo: Space as the Horizon of Immigrant Life; 3) Polish Suburbia: Space as Success. These categories are not as simple as the divisions suggest, but they do provide a basic heuristic for talking about the relationship between rhetoric and space within the context of Polish Chicagoland. In some ways, each space carries a unique story, but all of the spaces participate in the larger narrative of the movement of Poles out from the central neighborhoods of Chicago to further neighborhoods, and eventually to the suburbs. Interestingly, many of these moves have followed the line of Milwaukee Avenue, one of the primary corridors out from the center of Chicago and into the neighborhoods of the city’s northwest side. As historical settlement maps show, the largest concentration of Chicago Poles has followed more or less right along the path of this street (Fig. 3). Poles have also inhabited numerous other parts of the city, as the maps make clear, including areas on the west and southwest sides, the latter of which still
Figure 3. These City of Chicago “Settlement Maps” show the movements of several ethnic groups. I have highlighted the Polish settlement areas in black. (On the original maps, the areas that appear as various shades of gray here are multiple colors, designating different ethnic groups.) I have also darkened the northwest corridor of Milwaukee Avenue to emphasize the relationship between that street and Polish settlement.
has large numbers of Polish immigrants and descendants of Polish immigrants (and particularly Polish “Highlanders” from the country’s southern regions). But Milwaukee Avenue holds special status for Chicago’s Polonia. The reasons for this are probably both economic and cultural: Polish stores and business have occupied street-level retail spaces on various parts of that street for more than a century, and in order to stay within walking distance of these establishments, Poles decided to live in the area. More rhetorically, the name “Milwaukee Avenue” functions as a kind of topos for Chicago Poles—carrying both negative and positive connotations, as I will demonstrate with some specific examples.

1. **Stanisławowo-Trójcowo: Space as Community**

   The idea that we can use space metonymically to reduce the category of community should not be controversial. For example, in Chicago, as in other cities, this process functions at the level of neighborhoods and their names, which often operate metonymically for ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic groups. We can talk about the Pilsen or Little Village neighborhoods in reference to the Mexican immigrant community; the South Side or the West Side means the African-American community; and Humboldt Park refers to Puerto Ricans. There are also similar reductions that can encompass socioeconomic and other groups (e.g., Streeterville and the Gold Coast mean the most affluent residents of Chicago). However, this naming procedure is only one visible aspect.

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18 I am simplifying here by glossing over other ways that these same names can function metonymically. Pilsen is actually inhabited by increasingly fewer Mexican immigrants, as it is being gentrified. So, “Pilsen” can also point to the very fact of gentrification in Chicago, and perhaps even more to the way in which gentrification often brings on intense struggles between long-time residents and newcomers. The
manifestation of a complex and generative intersection of space and rhetoric. What I will do in this section is look primarily at one specific area of Chicago, known historically by Poles as Stanisławowo, or Stanisławowo-Trójcowo, and in present times as Polski Trójkąt (the Polish Triangle), where Polish immigrants first set up a community in the 19th century and remained dominant for more than half a century. What I see in the story of this area is an example of how urban space can be rhetoricized as community, and how the material productions of this space participate actively in this discourse on community solidarity.

According to multiple accounts, the first Polish immigrant to Chicago was Captain John Napieralski, who arrived in 1837. However, another Polish immigrant, Anthony Smarzewski-Schermann, is credited as the founder of the Chicago Polish community. After arriving to the U.S. with his family in 1850, Smarzewski-Schermann quit his job as a carpenter and opened a grocery store on Noble and Bradley streets, a few miles northwest of Chicago’s downtown Loop (Parot 19). He changed his name to Schermann in order to do business with Germans in the area (Parot 20), but he remained most closely connected to the Polish community. Along with other Poles, he formed the Society of St. Stanislaus Kostka in 1864, which would prove his most important and lasting contribution to Polish Chicago. In 1881, this organization accomplished its goal of building a grand church, the St. Stanislaus Kostka cathedral (Kościół św. Stanisława Kostki), which was the largest Polish church in America for many years (Parot 23), and

same goes for “Humboldt Park,” which is also experiencing gentrification and is a site of intense controversy. The names “the South Side” and “the West Side” also seem to function, at least among Chicago whites, as metonyms for urban crime and violence.
reportedly, by 1893, one of the largest Catholic parishes in the world (Kantowicz 31) (Fig. 4). The neighborhood around the church came to be known by Poles as Stanisławowo, due to the church’s name, and it remained the center of Polish Chicago for many decades, eventually taking on other names, such as “Polish Downtown” and

“Little Poland” (Kantowicz 15). The area is part of Chicago’s official West Town community area (or more colloquially, Noble Square), but it is known today by many Poles as Polski Trójkąt (the Polish Triangle), a reference to the nearby intersection of Ashland, Milwaukee, and Division streets, and their resulting triangular concrete island (Fig. 5). What started as a Polish “urban village” in the 1860s (Parot 14), thanks to an

Figure 5. The triangular concrete island that is formed by Ashland Ave., Division St., and Milwaukee Ave. Photograph by the author.

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19 I will use the term “neighborhood” throughout the chapter in a way that is more or less aligned with the definition offered by New Urbanist planners Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, who say urban neighborhoods are like villages, in that they have a defined center and include spaces that address a balance of needs, including residential buildings, stores, schools, and places of work, worship, and recreation. For them, the neighborhood is different than “the district” or “the corridor” (193-196). I will also refer to Chicago’s “community areas” on a few occasions. This is the nomenclature that the city uses to designate 77 parts of the city, which are not the same as the city’s 50 political wards. In some cases, the community area names overlap with popular ways of referring to certain parts of the city; in other cases, the official names have limited currency in everyday talk.
“immigrant pipeline” that led directly to the neighborhood, later became one of the busiest commercial districts in all of Chicago (Parot 101), filled with grocers, meat markets, delicatessens, creameries, dairy stores, confectionaries, bakeries, and sausage makers (Granacki 81) (Figs. 6 and 7). Depending on the exact block, the residents might have been 90-95% Polish (Kantowicz 23), and densities in the area reached 50,000 people per square mile during certain periods (Parot 101). This was where more than half of Chicago Poles lived from the 19th century and well into the 20th century (Granacki 7), and by World War I, and in the years following, the area was “the capital of Polish America” (Pacyga 126), where “nearly all Polish undertakings of any consequence in the United States” began (Granacki 7).

If the St. Stanislaus cathedral receives special distinction in histories of Polish Chicago as the city’s first major Polish church and the cornerstone of Polish Downtown, a second church merits almost equal attention. The Holy Trinity cathedral (Kościół Świętej Trójcy, or Trójcowo as it is known by Poles), was built only a few blocks away from the St. Stanislaus church, as a direct ideological challenge (Fig. 8). The group behind Holy Trinity was the Gmina Polska (the “Polish Commune”), which was formed shortly after the St. Stanislaus Kostka Society in order to offer an alternative, more nationally oriented community than the one promoted by the strongly clerical group behind the Kostka Society (Parot 28-29). The rivalry between these Catholic and nationalist factions carried on for several decades, until after WWII by some accounts (Parot 32), and the Stanislawowo area came to be known as Stanislawowo-Trójcowo to account for both parishes (and, implicitly, both ideologies). For the purposes of what I
Figure 6. Photograph by Władysław M. Rozanski, “Kilinski’s Ice Cream Parlor,” 1911. From the Collection of the Polish Museum of America. Photography © Polish Museum of America. Reprinted in Granacki (83).

Figure 7. “Sausage Factory,” 1902. From the Collection of the Polish Museum of America. Photography © Polish Museum of America. Reprinted in Granacki (85).
want to say about rhetoric and space in Polish Chicago, this clerical-nationalist feud is most relevant for one reason: the ideological struggle resulted in intense organizing on both sides, through the formation of competing societies and groups, and one of the ways these groups displayed their power was by building imposing structures in the Stanisławowo-Trójcowo area. The churches themselves are the best examples of this. The St. Stanislaus cathedral is larger and is accompanied by a complex of buildings, including a rectory and a school. Before a 1906 fire, a convent and a large auditorium were also under construction (Granacki 11), and a nearby building once served as the home of the St. Stanislaus College (Granacki 26). In one assessment, the church was specifically designed to “dominate” the neighborhood skyline as “a testament to the dominance of the clerical party” (Parot 65). But the Holy Trinity cathedral is also impressive, with its own two spires and four massive columns that rise above the front stairs. It is adjoined by a large elementary school building, which once hosted 3,000 pupils and was the largest school in the archdiocese of Chicago (Granacki 17).

The two churches are the most obvious examples of how the competing groups used building as a medium for displaying prominence, but there are other examples, as well. Most notably, the backers of both churches formed their own fraternal organizations, the Polish Roman Catholic Union (formed by the clerical group in 1874) and the Polish National Alliance (formed by the nationalists in 1880), and these groups constructed large edifices for their headquarters (see Figs. 9 and 10). Additionally, each

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20 The Polish Roman Catholic Union, which continues to function as a fraternal order, still occupies half of the same building. The other half is home to the Polish Museum of America and its first-floor library, where I carried out some of the research for this chapter.
group supported daily newspapers and other publications, all of which were housed in structures no more than a few blocks from the churches (Fig. 11). In all, the space of Stanisławowo-Trójcowo became a site of ideological discourses, and the forms of the built environment themselves were active participants in these discourses. To borrow Ornatowski’s language from the story of post-war Warsaw, all of these structures “figured forth” particular ideological-rhetorical worlds in ways that, presumably, would have made sense to the Polish inhabitants of Stanisławowo-Trójcowo.

This is one way of analyzing the rhetorical work of these structures, as participants in a divisive intra-group discourse. However, collectively, the two grand churches, along with their accompanying organizational, educational, and press buildings—in addition to the many other nearby structures put up by Poles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including hospitals, monuments, social service buildings run by nuns, and commercial buildings—made a broader argument for the solidarity of the Polish community within multi-ethnic Chicago. During the years when most of these buildings went up, between 1880 and 1920, about 2.5 million immigrants came to Chicago, primarily from southern and eastern Europe (Spinney 123). In the case of Polish immigrants, there were 2,000 in 1870, 24,000 by 1890, and 138,000 by 1920 (Spinney 124-126). This kind of growth was not unique to Poles: during the 1890-1920 period, the number of immigrants from Bohemia doubled from 25,000 to 50,000; the
Figure 9. “Photograph of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America Building,” 1930s. From the Collection of the Polish Museum of America. Photography © Polish Museum of America. Reprinted in Granacki (46).

Figure 10. Photograph by Jan Zawilinski, “Polish National Alliance (PNA) Building on Division,” 1901. From the Collection of the Polish Museum of America. Photography © Polish Museum of America. Reprinted in Granacki (55).
number of Russians increased almost 13 fold, from 8,000 to 102,000; and the Italian immigrant population grew ten times, from 6,000 to 59,000 (Spinney 126). While some of these communities formed ties with other groups in order to build broad political power, Poles reportedly refused to bargain with others, favoring in-group alliances. One effect of this behavior was that Poles had limited political success, because their
candidates could never garner broad support (Spinney 129); however, another result was an exceptional degree of community solidarity and organizing. As mentioned, the two major churches had their own fraternal organizations, but in addition to these groups, there were several other large Polish organizations in the area by the end of the 19th century (Kantowicz 35). Also, in addition to the St. Stanislaus and Holy Trinity churches, which had a combined congregation of 60,000 by the early 1900s, there were three other churches within a one-mile radius that served another 40,000 parishioners (Granacki 7-9). In all, the architectural manifestations of Poles’ organizing functioned as highly visible symbols of this community solidarity.

This was the spatial discourse of Polish Downtown in its historical context, in any case. At the present moment, the rhetoric seems less clear. While the area’s impressive buildings still make an argument for the Polish presence in Chicago—the St. Stanislaus and Holy Trinity churches rise proudly alongside the Kennedy Expressway, and the Polish flag flies daily over the Polish Roman Catholic Union headquarters—it now seems to be a historical argument. This is partly a question of demographics. According to census data, the number of Poles in the West Town community area has decreased steadily since 1930, when there were almost 37,000 foreign-born Poles (which accounted for 54% of all immigrants in the area and about 15% of the whole population) (Wirth and Bernert “West Town”); to 1970, when there were fewer than 8,000 Poles (Community Area Data Book); on up to 2000, when fewer than 3,000 Polish immigrants remained (The Polish Community). As one observer in the 1970s put it, the Polish Triangle at that time was already considered by many to be “the old ghetto hub” (Emmons 95). But
beyond demographics, the argument made by the built world of Polish Downtown is historical because it stands in for, or “reduces,” an ideological construction that probably no one would claim exists today—that of a spatially defined community of Polish immigrants. Despite the existence of a few distinctly Polish areas in the city today—one of which I will talk about in the next section—Polish immigrants are now widely dispersed throughout the city and suburbs, such that no one neighborhood could reasonably be called “the capital of Polish America.”

2. *Jackowo: Space as the Horizon of Immigrant Life*

If the space of the Polish Triangle once served as a metonym for community solidarity, then the area of Chicago that I want to describe in this section—*Jackowo*—seems to mean something like what I am calling “the horizon of immigrant life.” How this “horizon” functions discursively, and what it might suggest about the socio-ideological structure of Polish Chicago will be my primary concerns here. In short, what this neighborhood, as a rhetoric, illuminates for me is the way that urban space can be invested with paradoxical meanings of sociocultural belonging and socioeconomic limitation. As demographer Audrey Singer has described urban “enclaves,” they have both “positive” and “negative” connotations: they offer new immigrants “support, familiarity, and linguistic and cultural ease,” but they are also typically thought of as “isolated areas” that “restrict the incorporation of immigrants into the mainstream” (5). In my analysis, *Jackowo* clearly share aspects of these meanings for Poles.
The northwest side neighborhood that Poles call *Jackowo*—which means “St. Jack’s,” due to the local St. Hyacinth Basilica (the name “Jack,” or the Polish “Jacek,” has the same root as “Hyacinth”)—is actually part of the official Avondale community area.\(^{21}\) As Poles have defined it for me, and as my own experiences in the neighborhood suggest, *Jackowo* is centered around the intersection of Milwaukee and Belmont Avenues, and expands out from that point for a few blocks in every direction. The area already had its first Polish inhabitants by the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century, when small groups of Poles had begun moving west from the Polish Triangle area. Indeed, the St. Hyacinth Basilica was actually founded in 1894 by Poles from the St. Stanislaus Kostka cathedral group (Parot 235).\(^{22}\) By World War I, *Jackowo* was part of a “Polish Corridor” along Milwaukee Avenue, which connected the original 1860s settlement to neighborhoods further out from the Loop (Parot 75); and according to 1930 and 1940 census data, Poles constituted the top group of foreign-born inhabitants in the area during those years (Wirth and Bernert “Avondale”). From about the 1970s through the 1990s, *Jackowo* was a locus for Polish immigrant life, even if its status never rivaled the historical status of the Polish

\(^{21}\) *Jackowo* is pronounced *yäts-ko-vo*.

\(^{22}\) The story of Poles’ dispersal out from the original areas of settlement near the Polish Triangle is closely intertwined with the story of Poles’ zeal for building new churches in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As had been the case in *Stanislawowo-Trójcowo*, one of the first organizing activities of newly situated Poles was building a community parish (Kantowicz 15). This church always had a broad role, serving as “community center” (Kantowicz 30) and as the “social, economic, and often political center of the neighborhood,” much like the village church in 19\(^{th}\)-century rural Poland (Pacyga 126-127). As one Polish Chicago priest of the time put it, “The Polish Catholic who doesn’t belong to any parish is homeless—without support, religious or national, he is a social bankrupt, a bandit on the open highway, and sooner or later he must perish because without support he will not be able to meet the test” (qtd. in Bigott 111). In their famous 1930s study of Polish immigrants, Chicago School sociologist William Thomas and colleague Florian Znaniecki made a similar observation, noting that the Polish community was “too loose socially and territorially to do without an organ” (114), so the parish became essential, opening up “new fields of social activity, widen[ing] the sphere of interests, and call[ing] for more and better social cooperation” (117).
Triangle. When sociologist Mary Patrice Erdmans surveyed 183 businesses on Milwaukee Avenue between Belmont and Diversey Avenues in 1989, she found that 40% of the owners were Polish immigrants and 22% were Polish-Americans. Furthermore, 90% of the customers were Polish immigrants or Polish-Americans (78). As many Poles have reported to me, the name Jackowo itself had strong currency in Poland during the communist years and even into the 1990s, serving as a metonym for Polish life in Chicago, or perhaps even for Polish life in the U.S. (The only other rival for that status might be the Brooklyn neighborhood of Greenpoint, which also had a very high Polish immigrant population during those years.) Despite on-going demographic changes in the area, as large numbers of Latinos have moved in and some Poles have moved out, the blocks around Milwaukee and Belmont are still populated by Polish immigrants. In many cases, these are new arrivals who can find cheap housing in Jackowo, sometimes in shared rooms with other Poles who are also new to Chicago, and perhaps even in ground-floor apartments. These particular apartments are known among Chicago Poles as bejsmenty—a loan-word from “basements”—which functions as a popular metaphor for the dismal material conditions that often constitute the first years of immigrant life. Polish shops, delis, restaurants, and bakeries also dot the area, amidst similar Latino establishments (Fig. 12).

What seems to emerge from these aspects of the space of Jackowo is, on the one hand, a clear spatial rhetoric of Polish community, not unlike that which I described in the case of the historical Polish Downtown. It is a place where Polish immigrants can experience a comfortable life by buying familiar products (imported from Poland),
Figure 12. The top left picture shows the Czerwone Jabłuszko Restaurant (“The Red Apple”), a long-standing Jackowo institution that offers an all-you-can-eat buffet of Polish fare. It is attached to a laundromat that is labeled in English, Polish, and Spanish. The top right picture shows the aging storefront of Zosia Kwiaty (“Zosia Flowers”), although the Z is almost gone. The bottom picture shows the Polski Sklep (“The Polish Store,” or perhaps “Little Poland’s Dollar Plus Store” as the sign above the door would have it). Inside one can buy numerous products with Poland’s colors (white and red) and the Polish white eagle insignia. The store also sells telephone cards, cigarettes, and stamps. All photographs by the author.
encountering Poles in public spaces, and, most importantly for many, comfortably
carrying out their daily lives in Polish. For example, a woman who lived with her family
in Jackowo for the first years of her immigration in the mid 1990s described it to me this
way: “For people like us who had just arrived, it was good because everything was in
Polish… There were Polish stores, a Polish church, Polish businesses…. I think for new
arrivals who don’t speak English it’s a great place to live—where you really feel like
you’re in your own kind of comfortable place…. Like in Poland.” In the context of a
rhetoric like this, the “horizon of immigrant life” suggested metonymically by Jackowo
can be positive, in that it circumscribes a space of sociocultural comfort and belonging,
where a Polish immigrant can live in Chicago “like in Poland”—which is also how writer
Henryk Sienkiewicz described his first moments in Chicago in the 1870s, as quoted in the
epigraph for this chapter.

But Jackowo’s rhetorical “horizon” is also a limiting factor to socioeconomic
mobility. As noted, the area is in many cases a “first-stop” neighborhood for Polish
immigrants. I have talked to more than a few Poles who have lived in the Chicago-area
for several years who either resided or worked in Jackowo for the initial period of
immigration. But they moved out with time either because they wanted to escape the
perceived negative features of the area—including, in the narrative of at least one
woman, the influx of Latinos—or because they desired the more expansive spaces
offered by the suburbs (which is the focus of the last section of this chapter). One
particular feature of the space of Jackowo that seems to concretize this metonymic
“horizon” of socioeconomic mobility is the sidewalk in front of a gas station at the corner
of Milwaukee and Belmont Avenues, which is the epicenter of Jackowo itself. This is the site where male immigrant day-laborers stand in the mornings waiting to be picked up by contractors and others who need short-term employees. Polish men wait together with men from other post-communist countries, as well as with Latinos and other immigrants. These kind of day-laborer pick-up spots are a familiar feature of immigrant life all over the U.S. (see Valenzuela, and Valenzuela et al), but this seems to be the main such location in Chicago. Standing on the corner waiting for work is seen by many Poles with whom I have spoken as a kind of bottom rung of socioeconomic existence. This is not because manual labor is perceived negatively—it isn’t, as many Poles I know carry out manual labor now, and almost all have done so at some point or another during their immigrant experience—but rather because of the demeaning and insecure nature of standing on a street corner waiting for work. To this extent, then, the presence of the day laborers on the sidewalk seems to perfectly encapsulate Jackowo’s socioeconomic “horizon” in the larger discursive world of Polish Chicago. As a successful Chicago-Polish businessman, Jacek Cholodeckim, put it in a 2009 interview for Polityka, a news magazine from Poland, “Jackowo is our Ellis Island. … Polish Milwaukee in Chicago is a transitional camp [obóz przejściowy], continually strengthened by new escapees from Poland. Many get out as soon as they become independent” (“PGR Jackowo”).

In spatial and urban planning theories, the interconnection of social differentiation and spatial arrangement have long been issues of focus. In writing about space and exclusion, urban planner Ali Madanipour describes various historical attempts to “despatialize” social exclusion through planning practices, including Baron Haussmann’s
efforts in the 19th century to build wide boulevards through poor Parisian neighborhoods, later slum clearance programs, and various kinds of housing management in the 20th century (161). But, as he points out through the contemporary example of homelessness, exclusion always seems to become spatialized again, despite such attempts. David Harvey offers a historical-materialist account of what planners call “residential differentiation”—that is, why people live close to people who are similar—by outlining how the specific practices of real estate brokers, land speculators, and government financial institutions in large urban centers of the U.S. and Britain in the 1850s interacted to produce current patterns of residential differentiation. His focus is on the way that individuals’ choices about where to live are largely produced by overarching socioeconomic structures, such that individuals have to “adapt their preferences” about where to live (Urban Experience 121). In his final analysis, however, spatially reproduced social differentiation is not only “the passive product of a preference system based in social relationships,” because space itself is also “an integral mediating influence in the processes whereby class relationships and social differentiations are produced and sustained” (123-124). This is not unlike my own rhetorical interpretation of the “horizon” of Jackowo: it delineates the outer limit of both community inclusion and socioeconomic possibility, but this double meaning not only reflects the socioeconomic structure of Chicago Polish society; rather, it actively (re-)figures that structure as a powerful metonymic participant—by way of the very name Jackowo—in the discourses themselves.
It is important to note that *Jackowo* is not the only Polish neighborhood in the city of Chicago today, nor is it the most Polish. The area of Portage Park, where other members of CPP and I meet in the church basement for our weekly meetings, actually is the home of the most Chicago Poles right now, followed by nearby northwest side neighborhoods and a few areas on the southwest side. These neighborhoods also offer a kind of “horizon of immigrant life,” like *Jackowo*, although they don’t seem to be perceived quite as negatively as that area. In all cases, however, the Chicago Polish neighborhoods seem to be looked at as “urban enclaves,” and, generally speaking, Polish immigrants seem to believe that a move to the suburbs is a move towards “success.”

3. **Polish Suburbia: Space as Success**

There are now many more Polish immigrants in Chicago’s suburbs than in the city itself. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey estimates for 2009, which I referenced in the introductory chapter, there are thought to be about 96,000 Polish immigrants in the suburbs and 46,000 in Chicago itself. This is a dramatic change since even 2000, when there were 70,000 Polish immigrants in the city and 69,000 in the suburbs (Fig. 13). Although this recent shift is especially notable, Poles have in fact been moving to Chicago-area suburbs for more than a century. For example, during the final decades of the 19th century, when some groups of Poles were setting up communities in city neighborhoods a few miles north and west of the Polish Triangle, others were moving outside the city limits altogether to suburbs including
Lemont, South Chicago, Cicero, and West Hammond (Bigott 113). In the case of West Hammond, 234 Polish families settled in a development called Sobieski Park between 1891 and 1900. This area was marketed specifically to Poles, and a community parish was included as part of the original planning (Biggott 149-157). Like other areas outside the city, Sobieski Park offered multiple types of residences, which contrasted with the housing in run-down inner-city neighborhoods (145). This pattern of immigrant groups’

Figure 13. This map, from the Polish-American Association’s *The Polish Community in Metro Chicago* (cover image), an analysis of 2000 Census data, uses gradations of shading to show concentrations of Poles. (Cook and DuPage are the names of counties.) At that time, the largest communities were already in the city’s northwest corner, and beyond the city limits in both the northwest and southwest suburbs. As I have noted, recent Census Bureau estimates suggest that many more Polish immigrants have settled in the suburbs since 2000.
living first in city neighborhoods and then later in suburban areas is not unique to Poles; indeed, this model has defined immigrant habitation patterns for many decades, as immigrants, like all other groups, have historically moved out to the suburbs as they have become more affluent (Bruegmann 29). There is evidence now, however, that this trend is shifting, as some of the most recent immigrants are bypassing the city altogether and settling directly in the suburbs, due both to established social networks and to the global restructuring of the economy, which has caused more job opportunities to move to suburban areas. Indeed, by 2005, almost twice as many immigrants were living in American suburbs as in cities, compared to a nearly equal number in both places in 1990 (Singer 15). These numbers are partly a reflection of the fact that immigrants are now arriving in metropolitan areas that were not traditionally hubs for new immigrants—such as Phoenix, Atlanta, Charlotte, and Austin—and many of these areas are “loosely bounded, lower density, sprawling, automobile-dependent metropolitan areas” where the large majority of residents—immigrants or not—live outside the city limits (Singer 15). But the same phenomenon is also occurring in cities that have long histories of immigration, including Chicago. In the case of Chicago’s northern suburbs, for example, where many Poles live, a recent report by the Voorhees Center at UIC estimates that as many as 35,000 new immigrants have moved directly to those areas since 2000 (Open to All? i). One result of these changes is the development of what geographer Wei Li calls “ethnoburbs,” which she describes as “multiracial/multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, and often multinational communities, in which one ethnic minority group has significant concentration, but does not necessarily comprise the majority” (29). As
she understands them, ethnoburbs share certain features with traditional urban enclaves—including a strong presence of ethnic stores, businesses, social networks, and religious groups—and they typically co-exist with urban enclaves, but they are different in at least a few key ways, including the following: 1) they have more “diversified economic activities” (42); 2) they are “more open to the mainstream society” (47); and 3) they allow members of the ethnic group to “integrate into the mainstream society through economic activities, political involvement, and community life” (4). Undoubtedly, Li’s description of ethnoburbs seems to capture the situation that exists for Poles in certain Chicago suburbs, including Elmwood Park, Des Plaines, and Niles. These are areas where substantial numbers of Polish immigrants live, and where it is quite easy to find Polish stores and businesses, as well as Catholic churches that offer Polish masses; but they are also multi-ethnic areas where the large majority of residents are not Polish. One apparent effect of the ethnoburb, then, as I understand it, is that the urban enclave is becoming less essential for those who desire some of the traditional amenities—including the stores, businesses, and churches—but who also want to inhabit suburban space. Thus, to borrow the language of the woman who told me she had enjoyed living in Jackowo during her first years of immigration because she and her family could like “like in Poland,” it now seems to be the case that a Pole can also live “like in Poland” in several areas outside the city limits. This is, in any case, one particular interpretation of this evolving set of sociological and demographic facts. What interests me here, however, is the question of how, specifically, “the suburbs” play an active role in Polish community discourses. Or, to put it differently, what is the rhetorical dimension of
Poles’ attraction to the ethnoburbs, and how does this re-figure the socio-spatial map of Polish Chicagoland?

On the one hand, Poles’ motivations for moving outside the city may be fairly unexceptional. In his famous critique of the rise of American suburbs, *Crabgrass Frontier*, Kenneth Jackson posits that the original desire for suburban lifestyles was rooted partly in shifting ideologies of home and privacy in the 18th and 19th centuries. As he explains it, during this time “the zone of private life began to expand, and the family came to be a personal bastion against society, a place of refuge, free from outside control” (47). One effect of this was that families and individuals began to want more private spaces, and the new suburban floor plans made this possible (48). Another critic of American suburbanization, J. John Palen, describes suburbs as much more than simply “a geographical location,” or “various collections of certain types of residences,” or “the abodes of certain types of people”; rather the suburbs are “an idea” (68). In his analysis, this “idea” draws on Jeffersonian agrarianism and 19th-century British romanticism, and in its post-WWII evolution, it melded together with ideologies of “the American Dream” and the possibility of “new forms of community” (68-92). These broad depictions of the suburban imaginary might also help explain Polish immigrants’ suburban desires, because the popularly understood Polish-immigrant “American Dream” also includes a single-family home, privately owned outside space, and family cars in the driveway. Indeed, the mythic photograph that a Polish-American immigrant sends back to family in the homeland is a proud portrait in front of a car and a detached house. As I understand it, however, the lure of the suburbs for Chicago Poles also arises out of two more specific
factors: 1) the desire to achieve upward mobility by distancing oneself from the traditional urban enclaves, and 2) the historical experience of space in communist and post-communist Poland.

As described earlier, *Jackowo*, in particular, and Portage Park and other city neighborhoods to a lesser degree, function as “horizons” of socioeconomic possibility. In the rhetorics of one man from my fieldwork who lived in *Jackowo* for his first years of immigration in the 1990s, the physical space of the neighborhood itself seemed to convey a kind of limitation. He described his first days in Chicago in this way: “[T]he first impression you get when you come to the city, you see how Chicago looks, the ugliness knocks you over. Downtown is fucking awesome, it’s fantastic, but when you’re just functioning normally, you’re going up Milwaukee [Avenue], it’s the fall, and so on, and you look at those buildings, how they look, there’s something oppressive, dangerous, negative.” He went on to talk about the “cheap, dirty” look of the businesses in *Jackowo* as especially offensive: “There was something about it that made it so it was unusually difficult to like this place.” Polish journalist Cezary Łazarewicz offers an equally negative description when he says that *Jackowo*’s buildings are reminiscent of two Warsaw suburbs, Wołomin and Ząbki, which are sometimes understood to be economically depressed areas that haven’t quite made it into the present era. These are particular aesthetic ways of figuring the undesirability of *Jackowo*. But there is also a social dimension to the Polish urban neighborhood that seems to circulate as a commonplace among Chicago Poles—albeit one that people have rarely articulated to me.

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23 In fairness to Wołomin and Ząbki, I have never been to either place. But a research participant has told me that this is what these place references seem to mean in this journalist’s description of *Jackowo*.
explicitly. In the case of Jackowo, the perceptions that many of the residents are newer arrivals who may be living with compatriots in basement rental units, who may stand on the street corner waiting for work, and who may not speak English well, all help to construct the area as socially undesirable—at least for those who have the possibility of living elsewhere. In contrast to this social milieu, the suburbs, and specifically some of the Polish ethnoburbs on the north and northwest sides of Chicago, offer a chance to live among middle-class Americans and immigrants from other countries, and to somehow be, or at least feel, “American.” In a sense, a Polish immigrant living in an ethnoburb experiences his or her own Polishness selectively. That is, if one wants to go to a Polish store or business, attend Polish mass, or simply interact with other Poles, the options are always there; on the other hand, if one wants to inhabit “American” spaces and interact with Americans, or members of other immigrant groups, those options are there, too.

One suburban Pole described a version of this to me when she talked about her limited relations with other Polish immigrants who live in the same condominium complex: she has heard parents calling out to playing children; she has passed by groups of Poles speaking to one another; and once she even helped an older Polish woman carrying grocery bags in the ice and snow—but she has no intimate contact with any of these people, and as far as she’s concerned, this is not a problem. As she put it, “[t]he thing is that there’s just no time to meet together and talk…. It seems like if the chance comes up, we’ll talk. That’s it. But I’m not going to go around and knock on doors, and say ‘Oh, you’re a Pole? I’m a Pole, too.’” She did tell me, however, that she has Polish friends in the suburbs, and she has a Polish church not far away; and she also noted that
at her mother’s condominium complex—in a different Polish ethnoburb—there is a community pool where Poles do seem to congregate and strike up new friendships. Thus, she seems to enjoy the freedom to be, or not be, Polish, according to her personal wishes. This is a stark contrast to living in an area like Jackowo or Portage Park, where it is nearly impossible to escape the omnipresence of “Polishness.”

But this woman’s description of living in a Polish ethnoburb also highlights a difference between the experiences of public space in an American suburb and in communist Poland. In her case, she says part of the reason she’s been able to maintain distance from Polish neighbors is because they don’t share any spaces: “It’s not like we’re riding the same bus to work because everyone has their own car. It’s not like we see each other in the line to buy meat because there are no lines to buy meat.” The two specific examples she gives here are actually quite telling. It was not easy to own a car in communist Poland, and the experience of waiting in line to buy meat—or to buy any groceries—was a dominant aspect of everyday life in the People’s Republic of Poland, especially in the late 1970s and early 80s, when meat and other products were sold on ration cards, and when one sometimes had to wait in line for several hours to make such purchases. Thus, whereas the political and economic circumstances in communist Poland seemed to force social interaction—or at least social proximity—the reality of the
American suburb almost precludes such unplanned encounters with strangers. With regard to this woman’s specific examples, the situation is certainly very different in post-communist Poland, where there are no more long lines to buy meat, and where exponentially more people own cars than they did in the 1980s when she was a child. However, if the experience of public space in post-communist Poland has changed a great deal since the 1989 political transformations, the experience of private space, and more specifically of residential space, has changed much less.

The residential buildings that went up in communist Poland, like in all other parts of communist Europe, were mostly concrete-slab towers, typically organized into communities of several such buildings called osiedle, which are located on the outskirts of both large and small cities throughout Poland. According to architectural historian Andrzej Basista, more than 4 million apartments were built in the People’s Republic of Poland, and most of them were in such multi-unit buildings, or “blocks” (bloki); furthermore, he estimates that in 2000 more than 20% of Poles were living in osiedle developments, with the percentage reaching 65% in cities such as Krakow, Poznań, and Gdańsk, and going even higher in cities that were largely destroyed during WWII, such as Warsaw and Szczecin (120). Despite the utopian visions of community life that drove the planning of osiedle—with their requisite playgrounds, benches, and open spaces, and

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24 This is a typical critique of the way that suburban space creates social isolation. As described by geographer Paul Knox, the themes of “conformity, shallowness, isolation, and the separation of the public and private spheres of life” dominated social science writing about the suburbs in the 1950s and 60s, and these themes continue today in popular publications on contemporary American life, including Robert Putnam’s Bowling Alone and James Howard Kunstler’s The Geography of Nowhere (33). My own sense is that the picture may be more nuanced and complex than such representations suggest, but my point here is simply that the public spaces of suburban American are unquestionably different than the public spaces that the Polish immigrants from my fieldwork experienced in communist Poland.
the ample presence of small shops and providers of everyday services—these developments had, and continue to have, multiple problems, and are typically considered the least desirable places to live for Poles. Not least of all, they are a kind of aesthetic blight on the country, and most noticeably on the cities; also, more practically, the concrete-slab towers are often in disrepair.\textsuperscript{25} In more recent years, \textit{osiedle} developments in the large cities have gained notoriety in the popular imagination as centers of youth criminal activity, resulting in the coinage of the term \textit{blokersi}, which describes disaffected teenage trouble-makers as “block kids.” More than all of this, however, most Poles’ primary complaint about life in block towers is the limited living space. As geographer David Crowley describes the situation in post-war Warsaw, plans for the building of private residential spaces were always secondary to large projects that would enter the “public’s gaze,” and, as a result, the newly developed apartments had “awkward” designs and included a “parsimonious allocation of floor space” (181). According to Crowley, over the history of the People’s Republic of Poland, even though architectural styles changed—from Socialist Realism to modernism—the size of apartments stayed almost the same, because, as he puts it, “[s]pace was a resource to be apportioned like any other in the command economy” (202). Indeed, the average square footage of publicly built apartments in Polish urban areas increased only about 12% between 1950 and 1984, from 517 sq. feet to 581 sq. feet (Basista Annex 4, Table 8).

\textsuperscript{25} I spent three of the four years I lived in Poland in precisely such buildings, and the infrastructure problems came to be a standard part of everyday life. From the sometimes intimate, and unwelcome, awareness of neighbors through the thin concrete walls; to the frequent elevator break-downs (I lived on the eighth floor for two years); to the wooden window frames that need to be thoroughly packed with cotton before each winter; to, in my particular case, an incessantly squealing pipe that it took me several months to get someone to come out from central management to fix, life in a “block” can be uncomfortable.
Furthermore, according to 1971 statistics comparing average apartment sizes of 23 countries in Eastern and Western Europe, the overall average size of a Polish apartment—603 sq. feet—was among the most “parsimonious”; smaller average apartment sizes could be found only in Romania (510 sq. feet) and the Soviet Union (504 sq. feet) (Basista Annex 4, Table 13).

Thus, against the backdrop of this historical experience—which is precisely the one that the Polish immigrants of my fieldwork knew—and against the rhetorical backdrop of powerful *topoi* about the modest residential spaces of Polish life, the expansive floor plans of American suburban apartments and houses certainly seem inviting. Metonymically, then, the suburban terrain seems to function as a “reduction” that expresses “some incorporeal or intangible state”—which would be, in this case, “success,” or even “freedom”—in terms of the “corporeal or tangible,” to use Burke’s language again. One Pole set up this distinction for me directly when he compared the apartment he and his wife had owned in the southeastern city of Rzeszów to their condo in the suburbs. Their place in Poland was over a busy, noisy, smelly street, and the limited space—about 500 sq. feet—was divided into four small rooms. They had family in a village not far away, but the standard of living there was much lower, as there were no sewers, so “if you wanted to take a shit there was a hole in the ground and a wooden building, and that was it.” For him, the defining feature of American life is freedom of movement: “the possibility of—the freedom to move around, of transportation. The fact that you can have a car, and that gasoline is affordable changes a lot.” In his case, it allows him to live in a condo where it’s quiet, where he can see trees out the back
window, and where the neighbors are agreeable. As I understand it, these aspects of living in the suburbs all outline this particular man’s notion of his own immigrant “success.”

D. Space, Time, and Community

I opened the chapter with the two map scenes from the basement of a church in Portage Park. To close, I want to offer another map scene, one that provides a move beyond the spaces of Polish Chicago and into world spaces, which are a key focus in the next chapter. This scene actually takes us back to Józef’s condo in suburban Chicago, but it demonstrates how communication technologies can link that very specific location to places much further a field. In my original telling of Józef’s story, I left out his experience of living and working on a small farm in England in the summer of 1997, before he moved permanently to the U.S. As he talked me about the farm that day at his home, he decided to look for the website to show me some pictures. In the process, he discovered that he could view the whole farm in precise detail on Google Earth. As we looked at the buildings and hop fields, at a bridge and a windmill, at the old farm house where the owner lived, and at the dirt road where a friend of Józef had once lost control of his bike and went flying through the air “like Adam Małysz,” the famous Polish ski jumper, Józef’s sense of awe was palpable: “Incredible… This is just unbelievable… Holy shit…” As we talked on, he told me about how much he’d enjoyed living on the farm and about the beauty of the rural landscape itself, which on foggy moonlit nights “looked like it was from a different world.” All of these musings led into the
conversations that I related in the previous chapter, many of which centered on Józef’s on-going frustrations as an undocumented person. Thus, as I understand them, these spaces of the English farm, which exist now for Józef by way of a digital discourse, have deep currency in his own rhetorical world. In terms of metonymy, which has been my key figure throughout this chapter, the spaces seem to signify how Józef’s life once was, and perhaps could one day be, very different than it is now.

But the rhetoric of Google Earth also points to a much larger shift in our overall perceptions of time and space, and, I would also say, community. The phrase “time-space compression” is often used to describe how our sense of space and time has changed dramatically as a result of new communication and transportation technologies. David Harvey uses the term in The Condition of Postmodernity to describe “processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves” (240). He goes on to connect time-space compression to global phenomena in the following way: “As space appears to shrink to a ‘global village’ of telecommunications and a ‘spaceship earth’ of economic and ecological interdependencies… and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is… so we have to learn how to cope with an overwhelming sense of compression of our spatial and temporal worlds” (240).

Geographer Tim Cresswell links this thinking to the idea of “place” by noting that there is a common perception that time-space compression, and more generally “globalization,” have brought about “an erosion of place” (53). As he explains it, two interrelated factors that have influenced this apparent “erosion” are the mobility of capital
and a resulting “homogenization,” as the same national and global chains now sell their wares in widely scattered locations (54). In light of these developments, it may have become increasingly difficult to believe that any place is truly “unique” (54). However, at the same time, people seem to be comfortable with this state of affairs in terms of their needs and expectations. As I understand it, the overall cultural and spatial movements that I have been describing for Chicago Poles point to this trend. That is, despite the distances and resulting car dependence that typify suburban life, and the proliferation of “placeless” chains and businesses, many Poles—like millions of others in the U.S. and around the world—are quite comfortable with the suburbs as “places.” To me, Józef’s traversing of time and space via Google Earth represents one more extension of this change: just as our geographical places begin to feel much closer and more similar to places all over the world, our rhetorical “places” can now be instantaneously collapsed into our present experience of spatio-temporal reality.

A different question, though, is what all of this might mean for the category of “community,” and for the pervasive practice of linking specific places to specific groups of people, which has been central to my explorations in this chapter. Cresswell outlines two directions of thought among spatial theorists on this issue, as represented by Harvey and Doreen Massey. In short, Harvey’s position is that “place,” and the desire for unique places that have “discursive/symbolic meaning[s],” can sometimes serve as a kind of “resistance” to “any simple capitalist (or modernist) logic of place construction” (qtd. in Cresswell 56-61). At the same time, however, Harvey complicates this perspective by rejecting the idea that “a place can unproblematically stand for the memory and identity
of a particular group of people,” as Cresswell explains it (62). Rather, for Harvey, the conflicting desires of people to maintain traditional places of meaning and capital’s desire to transcend those places both work to transform places into “unstable” sites of “political contestation and struggle” (qtd. in Cresswell 62). As I see it, this perspective helps explain some of the phenomena that I have been describing for Chicago’s Polonia. In the early years of the community’s development, there was a clear desire to claim city spaces as Polish “places,” as the grand buildings of the Polish Triangle demonstrate, and this continues today for some Poles, who appreciate the very literal proximity to “Polishness” offered by an urban neighborhood like Jackowo. However, as jobs move to the suburbs, and as Poles ascend the socioeconomic ladder, these traditional community places are challenged by the time-space compression and its apparent “placelessness.” For Doreen Massey, these developments open up the possibility of a newly “progressive” spatial thinking—one that moves beyond the ideas that “place” offers “fixity” and “security of identity,” and that communities and places indeed have some shared identity (qtd. in Cresswell 66-68). As she sees it, “…communities can exist without being in the same place—from networks of friends with life interests, to major religions, ethnic or political communities” (qtd. in Cresswell 68). Thus, for her, a sense of place that is compatible with the time-space compression would recognize that places are always linked to “places beyond” (qtd. in Cresswell 71). For me, this offers an apt description of the ideology that seems to be driving rhetorics of many suburban Poles, and a perfect summary of what Google Earth allowed me and Józef to do at his home that day: our immediate surroundings function as only one particular dimension of a very expansive—perhaps
even endless—spatial map that is defined by “places beyond.” To this extent, then, a
diverse ethnoburb can be every bit as “Polish” as a city neighborhood, because Chicago
“Polishness” itself is a “network,” as Massey puts it.

In the next chapter I will take up the “places beyond,” both in terms of theoretical
discourses—in particular, discourses of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-
state”—and in terms of the very “grounded” phenomenon of transnational human
movement. I will also look at how three specific Polish immigrants are looking for
satisfying ways to re-figure these forces in their everyday rhetorics of citizenship, home,
and belonging.
IV. “ALL I WANTED TO HEAR WAS ‘WELCOME HOME’”

AA: You live here in this country, you eat, you drink, you walk on the streets, just like all of the people here. So why don’t you want to learn the language? You could find a better job.

XX: These aren’t people.

AA: They aren’t?

XX: No. There aren’t any people here.

AA: And where are they in your opinion?

XX: Back home, in Poland.

—Two Polish immigrant characters, AA and XX, in Sławomir Mrożek’s 1975 play The Émigrés (115)

Democracy is rule by the people, but someone must first decide who “the people” are.

—Bill Jordan and Franck Düvell, Migration: The Boundaries of Equality and Justice (17)

A. Introduction

It’s a Friday night and I’m at a bar on Chicago’s northwest side called Rawhide, attending a “Welcome to America” party. The host is Magda, a pro-immigrant activist and one of my CPP colleagues. Magda took the oath of U.S. citizenship just yesterday, and now about a dozen of us are gathered around a table celebrating the end of her “immigrant journey,” as she put it in an email to friends. In her invitation to the party, she told us we would honor the event by drinking Budweiser and eating hot dogs—and it seems she must have chosen Rawhide deliberately for the occasion, since they claim to be a true “classic corner saloon,” serving an extensive range of whiskeys and “some of the best BBQ in the city.” As it turns out, there are no hot dogs or BBQ on the table—only chicken wings, quesadillas and pita bread with hummus—and the drink of choice seems to be imported beer. Magda’s friends are of various age, race, and citizenship
status, but many of them are engaged in political activism, and in several cases, in the movement for immigration reform. Each time a new guest arrives and congratulates Magda, the table explodes in a boisterous round of “U.S.A.! U.S.A.!” Magda chants along animatedly, but announces more than once that after this week she won’t be chanting like that anymore. She also adds at one point that she didn’t become “an American” at the swearing ceremony the day before—she became “a U.S. citizen.”

This isn’t the first time I’ve heard Magda make this distinction. She told me the same thing a few weeks before the party, when she was reflecting on the big ceremony ahead. On that day, a Sunday afternoon, she and I, along with other CPP activists, were carrying out a door-knocking campaign to promote an upcoming forum of state senate candidates. Magda and I worked as a pair, stopping at all of the houses for a couple blocks, leaving fliers and talking to people who answered the doors, many of whom were Polish immigrants since this was in a heavily Polish area. As we stood on the front porch of one house waiting for someone to answer the door, she told me about her upcoming citizenship ceremony, expressing her apprehension about the swearing in. Particularly, she wasn’t even sure if she could even repeat the part of the citizenship oath that says that she will renounce “all allegiances and fidelity” to other states. Having attended one of these ceremonies at the federal building in Chicago, I told her that dozens of people are naturalized simultaneously, so no one would know or care if she actually said it. She was aware of that; it was for her own conscience. She then told me that some of her friends had been teasing her about how she was going to be “a real American” now. And she
reported to me with pride that she had told them she wasn’t becoming “an American,” she was becoming “a U.S. citizen.”

On that day, and later at the “Welcome to America” party, I took note of the comment, because I think it reveals a lot about Magda’s attitude towards her own situation as an immigrant, as well as about Polish immigrant topoi, and probably about the topoi among other immigrant groups in the U.S. today. As I understand it, Magda’s distinction between the “American” and the “U.S. citizen” constructs a particular notion of citizenship and belonging, by which members of the national community can have various types of affiliation, including political affiliation (the “U.S. citizen”) and socio-cultural affiliation (the “American”); and presumably native-born citizens and some naturalized citizens can have both of these affiliations simultaneously. Also implicit in this map of belonging is some form of non-citizenship, or non-belonging, since Magda herself lived in the U.S. for many years as both a “non-resident alien” and “resident alien,” and she knows that many other non-citizen immigrants—millions of them undocumented—live within U.S. borders and occupy some place or another on the American landscape. This is, in any case, one interpretation of Magda’s distinction between the “American” and the “U.S. citizen”: it is an attempt to invent a multi-layered understanding of belonging and community. Or, perhaps more to the point, it is one immigrant’s effort to invent a rhetorical place for herself within a particular national community. The broader issue I want to take up here is how Magda’s ways of talk, and the ways of talk I’ve encountered among other Poles from my fieldwork, may tell us something about both rhetorical “perfection” and “coherence,” and the power of “place”
as a motive for invention. Because as I understand them, Magda’s and others’ discourses are, at their core, efforts to reconcile a certain notion of “perfection”—one that is premised on the possibility of belonging to a place—with the decidedly “imperfect,” and perhaps even “placeless,” experience of transnational migration. To reach back to Scott Consigny’s description of rhetorical situations, which I referred to in Chapter II, I would say that these Polish rhetors’ inventions are a kind of “art” by which they interact with “an indeterminate context marked by troublesome disorder” (62). But these ways of talk emerge within the context of other, overarching discourses that help shape the rhetorical and material situations of everyday immigrant life, including the discourses of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state.” In my analysis, these theoretical discourses are very different from everyday immigrant talk, because they propose distinctly coherent world visions—whether it is a vision of “the global village,” “the market,” or “the national community.” In contrast, the everyday talk of Magda and other Poles are premised on the very impossibility of coherence—or, differently, on the impossibility of ever achieving their proposed “perfections.” How these different discourses interact with one another is one of the key questions I want to pursue in this chapter. In the end, my argument here is that the tension between the notions of “place” and “placelessness” forms a central axis along which various ideologies of immigration, citizenship, and belonging stake their claims, and serves as a motive for immigrants’ rhetorical inventions.

To develop all of these ideas, I will divide the chapter into three sections. First, I will outline Kenneth Burke’s “principle of perfection” and my own term, “coherence,”
and use them as a basis for analyzing the rhetorics of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state,” specifically as they relate to questions of immigration. This theoretical section will be broad, but my goal is to build up a robust set of heuristics through which to interpret the discourses of my fieldwork. Second, I will look at the languages of Magda and two other individuals—a man I call Radek and a woman I refer to as Pani Nela—in order to outline at least a few of the ways that Polish immigrants in Chicago seem to be inventing what I will describe as “tentative” or “makeshift” rhetorics, all of which aim to reconcile the desire for a “perfect” union of person and place with the decidedly “imperfect” and “incoherent” experience of transnational existence. Third, I will draw on both these theoretical and ethnographic discussions to speculate on how the tension between “place” and “placelessness” seems to illuminate a range of ideologies around the issues of immigration, citizenship, and belonging in the world today.

B. Inventing Coherence: Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the Nation-State

Before examining “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state,” and their connections to immigration, I want to outline briefly Kenneth Burke’s idea of “the principle of perfection,” which is the guiding concept for my analysis here. In his essay, “Definition of Man,” Burke offers a series of “clauses” through which he articulates his conceptualization of the human as “the symbol-using animal.” One such clause is “the principle of perfection.” For Burke, “perfection” is inscribed in language, because the “mere desire to name something by its ‘proper’ name, or to speak a language in its distinctive ways is intrinsically ‘perfectionist’” (Language as Symbolic Action 16).
Elsewhere, he says that the “symbolicity, for all its imperfection, contains in itself a
principle of perfection by which the symbol-using animals are always being driven, or
rather, towards which they are always striving…” (Rhetoric of Religion 298). Burke’s
idea of “perfection” is not necessarily positive; as he explains, there can be “perfect
fools,” “perfect villains,” and “perfect enemies” (Language 18). Along the same lines, he
says that “[e]ven the most misguided absolutism is perfectionist” (Rhetoric of Religion
298). He goes on to claim that “symbolism is unthinkable” without the principle of
perfection (Rhetoric of Religion 298). This idea of “perfection” seems to overlap with
some of Burke’s other terminology, including the words “order,” “purity,”
“transcendence,” and “god-term.” He uses each of these concepts in unique ways, and in
unique contexts, but they all seem to postulate that language is always pointing to
something beyond the everyday, or as he puts it in one particular discussion, “…when we
use symbols for things, such symbols are not merely reflections of the things symbolized,
or signs for them; they are to a degree a transcending of the things symbolized” (Rhetoric
of Motives 192). This “transcendence,” and more to the point, the foundational desire to
gesture towards “transcendence,” is the primary dimension of “the principle of
perfection” that interests me here.

For my work in this chapter, I would like to introduce another term that seems to
highlight one more dimension of Burke’s line of thought—“coherence.” As I will use it,
“coherence” is similar to “perfection,” to the extent that it too describes the idealized
structures towards which language aspires. But if “perfection” is a motive for rhetoric—
and even a “tendency” to try to carry out the implications of language (Language as
Symbol Action 19)—then “coherence” is a particular meaning that can emerge from rhetorical activity. In conjunction, both “perfection” and “coherence” offer insights on the rhetorical work of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state.” First, however, I should make clear that when I use the terms “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state,” I am referring to them both as more or less convincing descriptions of material phenomena and as discourses—thus the scare quotes, which I will use throughout the chapter. On the one hand, they tell us a great deal about how the world seems to work; on the other hand, they construct our very perception of how the world works. This is the same tension between the material and linguistic realms that I have been investigating in previous chapters—and as I explained earlier, I see rhetorical analysis, and in particular rhetorical ethnography, as opening up this tension as a generative site of inquiry. Thus, in my case, I am granting the notions of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state” a certain descriptive truth value, because they allow me to build a framework for rhetorical analysis; at the same time, however, I want to problematize the way in which these discourses function as normative arguments. In the case of “globalization,” for example, the argument seems to be that the world is being reorganized by some ubiquitous force whose goal is the creation of a “global village,” as a popular figure would have it. The effects of this reorganization can be understood positively (typically by those on the political right, who point out how the new interconnectedness has improved the lives of people all over the world) or negatively (by those on the left, who emphasize the inequities that seem to be resulting from globalization); in either case, though, the globalizing project is “coherent,” to the extent
that it is omnipresent and limitless. This is certainly what emerges from sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer’s description of “globalization” as having at least seven aspects, including markets, financial institutions, political alliances, law, military interventions, communications, culture, and identity (6). Probably the list could be expanded, but already these seven dimensions cover an expansive, nearly unlimited range of human experience. Similarly, in the case of “neoliberalism,” when geographers Dennis Conway and Nik Heynen define the term as “globalization’s most powerful ideological persuasion,” one that “subordinates collective, communal rights to the dominant power of market exchange, which favors individualistic accumulation of wealth, selfishness, greed, and even underwrites justification for excessive militarism and war-mongering” (20), a kind of coherence emerges—that of “market exchange” or simply “the market,” which rationalizes all aspects of life under the unitary principle of economic self-interest. While the versions of coherence offered by “globalization” and “neoliberalism” are different—and certainly the terms themselves have different meanings and can be used in various ways—both discourses seem to share a particular vision of “perfection,” one in which free economic and cultural exchange flourish beyond the reach of governments and other institutions.

The “perfection” of “the nation-state,” on the other hand, consists of something quite different. That is, if “globalization” and “neoliberalism” figure an interconnected world that is typified by limitlessness, then “the nation-state” is premised precisely on the imposition of limits—limits of membership, limits of space, limits of shared human qualities and experiences. Whether the basis for those limits is linguistic (as Benedict
Anderson posits), political (as Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm both theorize), or ethnic (as most popular nationalist rhetorics would have it), the driving motive is always a “perfect” unity of some sort or another. At the same time, however, the discourse of “the nation-state” is very similar to the discourses of “globalization” and “neoliberalism,” to the extent that it too offers a decidedly coherent world vision, one in which people and space can be neatly organized according to the apparently self-evident, and perhaps even “natural,” categories of “nation-states.” This coherence has had a profound reach for several centuries now, as “the nation-state” has been the key ideological apparatus for world organization since at least the end of the 18th century. Indeed, as Anderson suggests, at this point it may be difficult to imagine political organization outside the nation-state structure (135).

However, in the case of all three rhetorics—“globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state”—the proposed coherences are inherently illusory. This is partly because the discourses are, at their core, ideological arguments that emerge vis-à-vis other arguments; that is, like all instances of language, these three rhetorics enact what Burke calls “a striking of attitudes” (Rhetoric of Religion 289). In the case of “globalization,” as noted, the term can be used to bolster both left and right political positions, depending on whether one sees this particular set of phenomena as effecting positive or negative changes. In either case, however, the coherence is challenged by rhetorics of the “local” and the “national.”26 The argument of “neoliberalism” may be

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26 Whether or not we can neatly divide the “local” from the “global” is a separate question. For me, Saskia Sassen’s argument that the “global” may be contained within the “local” is a convincing way to figure this relationship. As she puts it, “the national, including the national state, is one of the strategic institutional locations for the global” (“Making Membership” 7). Nonetheless, arguments that “local” and “national”
more distinctly left-oriented, as this is a *topos* that politically left rhetors employ to mobilize a critique of economic deregulation, capital accumulation, and growing economic inequality (see David Harvey *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* and Neil Smith for good examples of such rhetorics). Thus, the ideological response to “neoliberalism” comes from the libertarian right, which argues that “the free market”—the term these rhetors typically use to describe the same set of economic conditions—offers, at its core, an unprecedented degree of individual human freedom that is beneficial for all. As free-marketer Johan Norberg describes it, the emerging world economic order consists of “entrepreneurs,” the “everyday actions” of individuals, and a new range of choices by which “the poor and powerless find their well-being vastly improved” (12-13). In the case of “the nation-state” and its proposed coherence, the strong historical challenge to this claim has always been the impossibility of actually dividing people into satisfying “national” groups and territories. Furthermore, the new kinds of interconnectedness that “globalization” describes are challenging any visions of self-evident peoples and territories.

This is one reason why these rhetorical coherences are unconvincing, because there are always countervailing ideological positions. Beyond that, however, it seems that any vision of coherence, or “perfection,” is illusory, simply because the world is an inherently “messy” place. Indeed, this is part of Burke’s point with “the principle of perfection”: people have a desire for “perfection,” and language always operates according to this desire, but, as he puts it, “on earth, the ‘logic of perfection,’ however

concerns are distinctly separate from “global” interests are ubiquitous. Thus, for my point here, this seems to be evidence enough that there is an oppositional claim to the supposed coherence of “globalization.”
insistent, can prevail but relatively” (*Rhetoric of Religion* 303). In the case of the particular coherences I am interrogating here—“globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state”—transnational migration itself, and the reality of mobile human labor, introduces a kind of “messy” disruption.27

On the one hand, the changing socio-economic conditions described by “globalization” and “neoliberalism” (or “the free market”) have prompted unprecedented levels of transnational movement.28 As the gap between the rich and poor increases, both within individual countries and on a global scale—as Harvey and others have convincingly argued (*A Brief History of Neoliberalism* 18-19)—more and more low-wage workers from “periphery” countries seem willing to move to prosperous “core” nations in search of a better future. Also, as Saskia Sassen describes, growing interconnectedness of financial and other transnational institutions has caused more high-earning professional workers to migrate to global economic centers (“Global Migrations” 56-57). In the cases of both groups, these types of migrations aren’t new; large numbers of people have willingly sought better opportunities abroad for centuries. But as Sassen points out, today’s increased levels of migration result from the “radically different” speed of such movements and a corresponding “expansion of space within which actual and possible linkages can happen” (“Globalization” 101). The question of speed is a result of

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27 Certainly many rhetors of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state” would themselves acknowledge the world is an inherently “messy” place, and that the respective coherences of their arguments are never imagined to be “real.” However, we see very “real” examples all the time of efforts to enact these rhetorical coherences, including economic policies, political decisions, and, in the most extreme cases, acts of violence. To this extent, then, the illusion of coherence is not just a kind of rhetorical flair.

28 I noted some of the numbers that correspond to this observation in the introductory chapter. However, as I also discussed, the recent international financial crisis has clearly caused a downturn in immigration numbers.
transportation technology, but Sassen’s notion of expanding space seems to describe a fundamental shift in the global imaginary, which is part of what I outlined in the last chapter in terms of the space-time compression. If people’s conceptualizations of familiar space were once circumscribed by geographic and political borders, then a search for better life conditions may have entailed a move to a large urban center or other prosperous area that was within those boundaries—and certainly these kinds of migrations still account for the large majority of human movements. However, if the world is conceptualized as one gigantic market, or one temporally compressed, interconnected space—which is the “perfect” vision behind both “globalization” and “neoliberalism”—then those who seek better economic opportunity may be more willing to undertake a long-range move to pursue this goal. To this extent, transnational migrants embody the discourses of “globalization” and “neoliberalism” like no one else: moving around the world in search of better economic opportunities, they embrace free, interconnected space and the “neoliberal” desire for mobile labor.

On the other hand, the reality of an increasingly “borderless” world has opened up new political challenges that bear down directly on the lives of immigrants. As states grow economically interdependent, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to enforce traditional sovereignty, which includes, in the words of political theorist Seyla Benhabib, a “dominant and unified political authority whose jurisdiction over a clearly marked piece of territory is supreme” (*Rights of Others* 4). There is no question that governments still have expansive political powers over “clearly marked” pieces of territory, but these powers are increasingly mitigated by economic and cultural interdependence. Indeed, for
some theorists, globalization signals an “erosion” or “withering away” of the nation-state (Bauman 56-57), or perhaps less dramatically, the dawn of a “post-national” era. From a rhetorical perspective, this change might be understood as a shift in coherences: the historical coherence of “the nation-state” is giving way to the coherences of “globalization” and “neoliberalism”; or, as Burke might see it, the particular rhetorics are changing, but the underlying motive of “perfection” remains the same. For Sassen, economic changes have “reconfigured the intersection of territoriality as it has been constituted over the last century”; the result is that nation-state sovereignty is “transforming” in ways that are “partial, selective, and above all strategic” (Losing Control 30). Anthropologist Aihwa Ong offers a similar perspective, describing what she sees as new forms of governmental assertions of power, which she terms “graduated sovereignty,” by which state governments take “an active role in refashioning sovereignty to meet the challenges of global markets and supranational organizations” (215).

Political scientist Kathleen R. Arnold goes further, arguing that global interconnectedness is in fact increasing the power of state sovereignty, in the case of the U.S. in particular; but she acknowledges that the nature of this power is taking on new shapes, as other “transnational areas and identities” develop alongside the state (5-6). Although these are only a few positions, political and social theorists seem to agree that traditional exercise of state sovereignty, as such, is becoming difficult, if not impossible, amidst current global developments.

The specter of “borderless” labor, then, and particularly unauthorized immigration, is a very material site at which these changes to state sovereignty come into
stark relief. In Sassen’s analysis, “the mere existence” of undocumented immigrants challenges traditional state sovereignty (*Losing Control* 60). This point is, on the one hand, paradoxical, because freely moving labor conforms perfectly to the “neoliberal” principle of “the market.” Indeed, as economist George Hanson describes the U.S. situation, allowing undocumented workers to remain within the borders makes sound economic sense, because this group of workers “responds to market forces… [and] provides U.S. businesses with the types of workers they want, when they want them, and where they want them” (5). This is certainly one way to interpret the apparent willingness of the U.S. state to allow millions of undocumented workers to remain within its borders but not extend the possibility of legal inclusion: it is in the country’s economic interest. However, as immigration rates have risen in recent years, there has been a clear trend towards resisting unauthorized transnational moves through the imposition of stricter border policies. In the case of the United States, this shift began in the mid-1990s, when efforts to control southern border crossings came into effect, under names such as “Operation Gatekeeper,” “Operation Hold-the-Line,” and “Operation Safeguard.” Then in 1996, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act was passed, which systematically put into place the legal apparatus for unprecedented numbers of detentions and deportations, most notably of Mexicans. More recently, on-going fears about terrorism and specifically “narco-terrorism” have been used to justify the increased militarization of the southern border (Arnold 53-55). As of now, there are numerous sections of wall along the U.S.-Mexican border that span almost 2,000 miles, and more sections are either being built or planned. In terms of the state’s response to
undocumented immigrants who already reside within U.S. borders, the number of deportations has been increasing steadily since the late 2000s. As I noted in the introductory chapter, the Obama administration removed almost 400,000 immigrants from October 2010 through September 2011, breaking the record that it had set during the previous fiscal year (Bennett). These developments are mirrored around the world, as anthropologists Nathalie Peutz and Nicholas De Genova describe in their analysis of an emerging international “deportation regime,” by which states increasingly employ deportation as “the apparently singular and presumably natural” strategy to control migration (1). Thus, despite the envisioned “perfection” of “globalization” and “neoliberalism”—that is, a world of seamlessly interconnected space—efforts to re-assert state sovereignty, and “the nation-state,” are increasing.

Social theorist Etienne Balibar analyzes these tensions between border policies and international human movement in the context of the European Union—an institution that can be understood as one particular attempt to invent a supranational form of governance and order. Drawing on two classical Greek notions of community—ethnos, or “the ‘people’ as an imagined community of membership and filiation,” and demos, or “the ‘people’ as the collective subject of representation, decision making, and rights”—Balibar argues that one of the key challenges in the E.U. today is finding “a new image of the relation between membership in historical communities (ethnos) and the continued creation of citizenship (demos)…” (We the People 8-9). For Balibar, however, “the nation-state” resists such a challenge, because it is premised on a “structural violence” that is rooted in the need for exclusion: “Exclusion—or at least unequal (‘preferential’)}
access to particular goods and rights depending on whether one is a national or a foreigner, or belongs to a community or not—is thus the very essence of the nation-form. As a structure, the nation-form produces and perpetuates a differentiation that it must defend” (We the People 23). Elsewhere, he describes borders themselves as a kind of Foucaultian technology by which states administer territories through population control (“Europe as Borderland” 192) and “produce” foreigners or strangers as “a social type” (“Europe as Borderland” 204). Rhetorician Robert DeChaine’s analysis of U.S.-Mexico border policy dovetails with Balibar’s idea that national borders entail a social production of outsiders. For him, nation-state “bordering” is a fundamentally discursive activity that “produces and enforces spaces of identity and difference, defining terms of identification and exclusion” (46). One obvious effect of this activity is the “alienatization” and othering of outsiders (often racially defined), but another outcome is the production of a hegemonic and xenophobic national discourse of belonging that “influences a community’s ways of seeing and experiencing itself” (46). For DeChaine, this is a “terministic” activity (48), in Burke’s sense, because it reflects and deflects insiders’ “experiential reality” of community. Furthermore, he argues that the rhetorical production of aliens “illustrates the collective desire for purity, perfection, and order” (52)—or, in other words, the desire for a community defined strictly by perfect ethos affiliation.

Discourses of the ethos community, then, work to mobilize one particular vision of “the nation-state”—one in which outsiders have no place due to some set of distinctive features, including race, language, and culture. Discourses of demos, however, also
promote their own kind of “perfection,” by way of citizenship regimes and the law. Indeed, this is one of the key political challenges that mass immigration poses for immigrant-receiving countries: How does the state reconcile the reality of an increasingly interconnected world, in which more people than ever are moving around, with the domestic imperative to impose order by regulating access to community membership? In the case of liberal democracies, which many immigrant-receiving countries are, this problem is often described as the “paradox of liberal democracy.” Sociologists Bill Jordan and Franck Düvell offer a very succinct statement of this paradox: “[D]emocracy is rule by the people, but someone must first decide who ‘the people’ are” (17). Like others, they frame this dilemma in terms of at least two core assumptions of liberal democracy: 1) all people are morally equal, and 2) all people have freedom to choose their own “good life,” which implies free movement (91). However, these two notions are irreconcilable in a world of states and borders, to the extent that there will never be true equality between those on the inside and those on the outside. Or, as Jordan and Düvell put it, “Either principles of equality and justice are not universal, but apply only to members of bounded communities, and not beyond borders; or they are universal, and demand open borders” (92). But, of course, there are not open borders; thus, borders themselves, and the law, become rhetorical and material efforts to enact a “perfect” national community. These efforts, however, always run up against the reality of undocumented immigrants, whose very presence within the community creates a direct challenge to the political and social assumptions behind that very conceptualization of “the nation-state.”
This is, in any case, one way to analyze “bordering”—as an effort to protect “nation-state” coherence. What this analysis may miss, however, is the economic pressure that foregrounds the huge majority of transnational moves, since most immigrants leave their native countries in search of better job opportunities. Likewise, in the case of the U.S. at least, economic anxieties provide a driving motive for a great deal of anti-immigrant sentiment, as citizen rhetors express frustration at the possibility that undocumented immigrants are “stealing” jobs and getting “free” government services. In their analysis of the rhetorics of self-described “anti-illegal-immigration activists” from the Illinois Minutemen Project and the Paul Revere Riders, David Bleeden, Caroline Gottschalk-Druschke, and Ralph Cintrón pinpoint “the taxpayer” and “the free rider” as driving *topoi* in these activists’ discourses: “The figure of the ordinary taxpayer functions as a kind ‘authentic citizen’—the person who most deserves to belong to the nation,” in contrast to “the free rider” (186). Legislation has been driven by the same economic rationale, including the federal Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which was passed in 1996 and included a list of “Restrictions of Benefits for Aliens” that codified the federal services that non-citizen immigrants would no longer be allowed to receive. Similarly, more recent state-specific anti-immigration laws—including those in Arizona, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina—have all tried to limit undocumented immigrants’ and their family members’ access to state resources, including, in the case of Alabama’s “Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act,” public education. From one perspective, all of these economic motives—both on the part of immigrants and anti-immigrant forces—result from “neoliberal” economic policies, which have caused a
dramatic redistribution of wealth. For sociologist and historian Margaret Somers, this economic reconfiguration has directly affected citizenship, by creating “a radically unbalanced power dynamic” between market, state, and civil society (2), such that there has been a decline of any sense of “the common good,” a demise of powerful non-market institutions (such as universities and the media) (41), and, in the end, an effective dismantling of the possibility of an inclusive citizenship regime. She goes on to claim that citizens have become “quantities and qualities of human capital” (41), and many *de jure* citizens—including some anti-government, militia activists and the “stateless” victims of the 2005 Katrina hurricane—have “no meaningful membership in civil society—that which confers recognizable human identity” (134). Although Somers does not focus on transnational migrants, her analysis can be applied to the situation of undocumented immigrants, too: the “neoliberal” state does not want to extend citizenship rights, or access to services, to immigrants because it is not in its own economic interest. However, at the same time, Somers’ critique of economically driven citizenship regimes may not fully account for the possibility that immigrants are easily understood as beneficiaries of the particular “freedoms” that “neoliberalism” and “globalization” provide. As fortunes dry up at home, it is precisely the coherence of “the market” that makes it possible for individuals to pack up and seek new opportunities abroad.

There could be more dimensions to this theoretical discussion, but already an overarching picture of the relationship between transnational human movement and the discourses of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state” emerges: as these macro-level arguments work to impose their particular versions of coherence on the
world, the phenomenon of transnational migration—or more to the point, everyday immigrant practices and rhetorics—inevitably calls into question the possibility of coherence. In the cases of “neoliberalism” and “globalization,” for example, coherence cannot be realized amidst on-going human movement, because even though immigrant laborers are mobile and ready to work, they are, of course, not only laborers; they are people, and their human desires always surface, typically in the form of political grievances and claims for access to resources. Thus, the proposition that immigrants might serve as a “borderless” workforce that responds to “the market” always gets disrupted by immigrants’ demands for various types of inclusion. In the case of “the nation-state,” whether the guiding ideology is *ethnos* or *demos*, a sense of a “perfect” national community is inherently incompatible with uncontrolled transnational moves. Simply put, there can be no possibility of “nation-state” coherence if the law cannot successfully regulate access to the community. This point is not lost on anti-immigration activists in the U.S., many of whom frame their efforts to tighten up the borders with claims about “defending” the nation and upholding the “rule of law.”

This is, in any case, part of the picture that emerges from this discussion. However, it would be a mistake to assume that transnational migration is some kind of “incoherent” or “imperfect” force that counteracts these larger structures and arguments. Indeed, if Burke is correct that “the principle of perfection” motivates all symbolic activity, then immigrant rhetorics are just as “perfection”-driven as those of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state.” The relationship between immigrant rhetorics and these discourses may not be, then, adversarial; rather immigrant
rhetorics may simply occupy some parallel space on an expansive rhetorical map. However, what I want to argue here—drawing on the discourses of three research participants, Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela—is that everyday immigrant talk is qualitatively different than “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state,” at least in terms of its relationship with “perfection” and coherence. That is, if those overarching rhetorics suggest that their particular “perfections” might indeed be attainable, then the everyday immigrant talk I know seems to accept the very impossibility of “perfection,” due to limiting factors of transnational existence. What the everyday rhetorics of my fieldwork begin to look like, then, are what I call “tentative,” or perhaps even “makeshift,” efforts to reconcile the underlying desire for “perfection” with a decidedly “imperfect” and “incoherent” set of life circumstances. Or, differently, the discourses of Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela offer examples of how everyday Polish immigrant talk may defer and deflect “perfection” as a strategy for coping with the pressures of immigrant life.

C. Belonging to a Place: From Poland to America

Before getting into the specific discourses of Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela, I want to briefly outline my own interpretation of at least one central motive for these three immigrants’ rhetorical inventions. If there is some shared, driving “perfection” in their ways of talk, and in the ways of talk of many other Polish immigrants from my fieldwork, it seems to be a belief in the possibility of belonging to a place. This belief is not unique to Poles—and in the last section of the paper I want to theorize more broadly on how the
tensions between the notions of place and something like “placelessness” provide a driving force for many discourses around immigration and citizenship—but it does seem to be strong among Polish rhetors. The explanations for this could be myriad, and it is not my purpose to definitively postulate the reasons here. But I will say that some of Poland’s specific historical experiences—including the experiences of statelessness and colonization from 1791 to 1919, of horrific violence and destruction during World War II, of Soviet-sponsored communist oppression from 1945-1989, and of intense national resistance against foreign domination during all of these periods—have undoubtedly shaped the ways that Poles understand what it means to belong to a place. On the one hand, this understanding is intertwined with familiar discourses of “the nation-state,” to the extent that nationalist rhetorics also posit a primal relationship between people and territory. However, there is an additional dimension to the ideology I am trying to describe, because it makes the more personal assertion that every individual person can belong to an individual place. In some sense, this may be a synecdoche for national affiliation, as most individual Poles would presumably belong to Poland, or to some specific place within Poland. But as some of the discourses from my fieldwork suggest, this is not necessarily the case. Even though the underlying person-place “perfection” still operates as rhetorical motive, individuals may imagine belonging to places outside their native nation-states.

This is the heuristic I want to apply to the discourses of Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela. To situate it in relation to the discussion earlier about “the principle of perfection,” coherence, and the rhetorics of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state,”
my argument is this: the individual desire to belong to a place is a motive for discursive “perfection,” just like the ideas of a seamlessly interconnected world (“globalization” and “neoliberalism”) and unity of people and place (“the nation-state”); likewise, it suggests a certain kind of coherence. However, the rhetors of my fieldwork are different than familiar rhetors of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state,” in that they are faced with the impossibility of successfully belonging to a place. Thus, rather than trying to invent persuasive, if illusory, coherences—such as “the global village,” “the market,” or “the national community”—that might bring them closer to “perfection,” they are faced with the challenge of inventing ideological structures that allow them to reconcile their particular notion of “perfection” with “impossible” life circumstances. This is, as I understand it, their shared rhetorical challenge, but their individual approaches to it are different.

1. **Magda: The Dissatisfied Dual Citizen**

   In the introduction I described Magda as a pro-immigrant activist, because this is the role that has come to define her professional and personal existence over the last several years. Before that, she lived a quieter, more typical Polish immigrant life, working whatever jobs she could find to pay the bills. Among the highlights from those years was a job driving carriages for tourists in downtown Chicago, which she enjoyed a great deal because she got to re-visit her childhood love of horse-riding—although she sometimes had trouble communicating with tourists who wanted information about buildings and other sites. Later, she worked as a waitress at a fine-dining restaurant.
frequented by Chicago Symphony Orchestra patrons, with whom she learned how to carry on passable conversations about the performances they had just seen, even though she herself had little interest in classical music. During those years, Magda was also trying to improve her English and learn about the U.S. She had a few Polish friends with whom she spent time, but she tried to avoid the Polish immigrant community generally—like many Poles I have met who immigrated to the U.S. alone in their 20s—because she wanted to separate herself from everything she had known and expand her identity. One way of doing this was travel. She visited the East and West Coasts, and she and her friends camped out in several national parks in the western states. She also became a devoted fan of the television show *The West Wing*, which she claims was her original education about the workings of U.S. politics and government.

As she narrates it, though, her life changed one day in the spring of 2006 when she was walking to work in Chicago’s downtown Loop and happened upon a massive immigration march: “Downtown was just flooded with people. I was like, this is just unbelievable. And all of a sudden I saw all of those different signs. ... I saw a bunch of those Latino organizations—people were handing out flyers. So, literally, I started just collecting flyers from people. ... And all of a sudden this hit me.” Soon afterwards she started trying to volunteer for various social services groups—some Polish, some not—and before long she had a full-time job at a non-profit neighborhood organization on the northwest side in a mostly Latino area (where she now has a condo). She got involved in a range of local issues there, including fair housing and community safety, but the struggle to improve the lives of immigrants remained her primary interest, because of her
own experiences and those of other Poles, including her mother, who had been living in Chicago for several years without papers. This is part of what motivated her and a few Polish friends to start meeting in bars and cafes in 2006 to figure out how to mobilize the community around the push for federal immigration reform. This was the beginning of the Chicago Polish Project, which remains Magda’s central obsession and commitment. Within a few years, the group had built up renown among Polish immigrants in Chicago as the only group that works to organize the community around political issues. Also, in 2009, Magda got a job with the largest immigrant rights organization in Illinois, with whom she has participated in and led several projects, including a massive push to register immigrant voters who will go to the polls in support of pro-immigrant politicians.

This is all background for the scene I described earlier from Magda’s “Welcome to America” party, when she reluctantly chanted along with the shouts of “U.S.A.! U.S.A.!” then announced that she was becoming a “U.S. citizen,” not an “American.” At that moment, she seemed intent on inventing her own map of citizenship and belonging that would allow her take on new political privileges as the “U.S. citizen” while still holding on to her core identity as the “Pole,” and not the “American.” To me, the phrase “dual citizen” describes these aspirations well, because it captures both Magda’s double legal affiliation and, more importantly, her desire to maintain pluralistic allegiances. Anthropologist Aihwa Ong points to something similar in her work on transnational Chinese migrants when she talks about the modern-day figure of the “multiple-passport holder” who “embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets” (2).
Shortly after her party, however, Magda decided that “the dual citizen” wasn’t satisfying. When I asked her some months later to talk to me about the “American” and the “U.S. citizen,” she sighed, “So, I was joking back then, but when I became a citizen I think I was like, OK, let’s be serious about it—I will try to be American.” She said she went to a baseball game with a friend not long after her swearing-in ceremony and heard the “Star-Spangled Banner.” She felt moved to put her hand over her heart and sing along: “…because this is my country now, right? So let’s try to be an American.” She went on to describe her feelings of affiliation with the United States in this way: “…so I’m an American, even though I wasn’t born here, I’ve been here long enough. I know a little bit of history—maybe I should know more—but I feel like this is my place. This is where I live. And I belong here and this is my home. I devoted my work time here, I have my personal life, I have my home, my first home, and this is my place.” Beyond these explanations, Magda didn’t delve deeper into the exact motivation behind her desire to invent a more singular model of belonging. My own interpretation, however, is rooted in the ideology of person and place that I have been describing. As I understand it, the “dual citizen” is incompatible with the “perfection” of belonging to a place. Indeed, if an intimate person-place connection is the rhetorical ideal, then the prospect of having to live with a “split between state-imposed identity and personal identity” (2), as Ong describes it, would be deeply unsatisfying. Even more specifically, some of the words that Magda used to describe her change of heart—including “place,” “home,” and “history”—all seem to tap into her particular experience of belonging to a place. In the case of her childhood in the People’s Republic of Poland, citizens were necessarily bound
to the national “place,” since very few were able to travel abroad; also, “home” was the modest private realm in which one could experience some refuge from state oppression. The notion of “history” seems to have had a kind of special currency then, too, since it explained Poles’ dismal contemporary situation, and it served as a reminder of the nation’s historical suffering and heroic resistance.

Nonetheless, Magda’s decision to “try to be an American”—or to really belong to a place, as I am interpreting it—was thwarted one summer day in 2010 when she was crossing the U.S.-Canadian border on her way back to Chicago from an international conference of young Polish activists. She told me the story this way: “I went to Canada and I was coming back, and all of those dudes at the Homeland Security where asking me all of those questions—Where did you go? What did you do in Canada? Who do you work for? Who’s paying your salary? Who’s Josiah Barlett? It was so disheartening. All I wanted to hear was ‘Welcome home.’”29 For the first time I was using my American passport and I was coming back and I wanted to hear ‘Welcome home.’ And I didn’t get that. So, if they’re doing this for everyone else, too bad, because they make a lot of people really angry. And now I’m not surprised that everyone hates America.” Later, she went on to say that this experience had prompted her to “scrap” her “stupid notion of trying to be an American.” As I understand it, this event made it impossible for Magda to realize her new fantasy of being both a “U.S. citizen” and an “American”—or of really belonging to what she described as “my place.” After all, how could she belong to the same place as the border guards, who clearly considered her an outsider worthy of

29 Josiah Barlett is the name of the U.S.-president character on The West Wing. The border guards were asking Magda about it because she has a bumper sticker on her car that says “Josiah Barlett for President.”
suspicion? This experience proved to be, in fact, Magda’s second failed effort to invent some kind of “makeshift” coherence for herself as an immigrant: she had been unhappy as “the dual citizen,” and now she felt that she could never be accepted as an “American.” This is why I refer to Magda as the “Dissatisfied Dual Citizen.” Despite her complete legal citizenship in both Poland and the U.S., she still struggles to invent a story that satisfies her desire to belong to a place.

2. **Radek: The “Neoliberal” Nationalist**

In some ways, Radek’s situation is very different than Magda’s, because he has no legal status in the United States, despite having lived in and around Chicago with his wife Marta for nearly ten years. Thus, as an undocumented immigrant, he cannot undertake Magda’s citizenship experiments, because until there is federal immigration reform, he has no prospect of legally becoming a “U.S. citizen,” an “American,” or a “dual citizen.” For these reasons, Radek’s drive towards some kind of “perfect” unity of person and place takes on a different form than Magda’s. Rather than trying to imagine how he might belong to the U.S., his rhetorics affirm his on-going sense of belonging to Poland. However, at the same time, he has to invent a narrative that explains his particular experience of “un-belonging” as an undocumented immigrant. In his case, this is a story of following “dollars.”

For example, when Radek told me about his and Marta’s first visit to the U.S., the desire to make money was central. In fact, they had put in applications for tourists visas in 2000 at the U.S. consulate in Krakow on a whim. They were at a café one day with
another couple and all of them decided to try for the visas, even though they knew there was little chance of their getting them, since the U.S. denied tourist visas to many Poles in those years. Nonetheless, Marta had to attend a university class that afternoon not far from the consulate, so she said she’d stop by and pick up the applications. In the end, they all received the visas—they still don’t understand why—which were valid for ten years, and by spring of 2001, Radek was living in New Jersey with a school friend who had said he could help him make some money. After working on construction sites in Atlantic City for a few months, Marta joined him in the summer and found a job cleaning houses. As Radek explains it, their only goal was to save up enough money for an apartment in their hometown of Nowa Huta, outside Krakow: “We didn’t buy anything. We saved everything we made. … There were no adventures, nothing weird—just go there, make some money, and escape.” And that’s exactly what they did, returning to Poland by the fall, which was within the six-month entry/exit window allowed on their visas.

Within a year, however, Marta had finished college and couldn’t find work because the economic situation in Poland was still fairly bad, with the unemployment rate hovering above 15%. They had little money and still wanted to buy an apartment in Nowa Huta. Since their visas were still good, they decided to try their luck again—this time in the Chicago-area suburb of Joliet, where one of Marta’s sisters was living, working to complete her residency as a physician. They stayed there for a while, but moved away before long—to get out of the sister’s hair—and started renting a place in Chicago with other Poles. Marta found jobs cleaning houses and taking care of the
elderly, work she describes as “like a prison.” Radek got hired as a driver in a limousine service, where he still works today. Their plan to return to Poland got put on hold as they settled into American life, which allowed them more material comforts than they had ever known, including the ability to take numerous trips with friends to state parks and other recreation areas around Chicago, as well as occasional cross-country road trips to national parks in California and other states. This also meant they had overstayed their visas and were now residing in the U.S. without authorization. Even today, they still see themselves returning to Nowa Huta, where they now own two apartments—one that they managed to pay off with money they earned in Chicago and another that they inherited from Marta’s family. Clearly, in their own conceptualization, they still belong to that place, even though Radek isn’t eager to go back any time soon. As he puts it, “I have a good life here. I’ve gotten used to it and I feel good, even though I don’t have papers.”

The fact that he loves his job as a limo driver is part of this satisfaction. He is respected at work and has a strong reputation with his employers, who he says are “100% American.” In all, he describes the work as “very cool.” He gets to meet interesting people, some of whom are riding a limo for business purposes, others of whom are going out to parties on the weekend, and a few of whom are traveling to important places because they are “pretty well-known” people. Also, the fact that the job allows him to work as many hours as he wants suits his desire to earn money. For this reason, he and Marta rent an apartment near O’Hare airport, so he can take short breaks at home between fares. Indeed, one day when I was at their place he had just returned home from dropping off a fare and had enough time to change out of his driver’s suit and sit down
for coffee. He kept his Blackberry on the table in front of him the whole time, constantly checking to see where he was in the drivers’ queue. After about two hours, his name got pulled from the list because he had been assigned to do a special pick-up—as he showed me on the Blackberry—so he donned his black suit again for a fare in the western suburbs. This kind of off-and-on work schedule can go on for 12 hours or more, and Radek often works six days a week. But I have never heard him express dissatisfaction, because he likes making money. When I once asked him about his thoughts on possibly gaining legal status, he put it this way: “I always emphasize this—I’m only going to be—to put it crudely—fully behind this country, someone who takes part in this country, if they let me live here. Until they let me live here, I’m only interested in dollars. Just like most people.” In my understanding, this kind of statement conforms to the supposed coherence of “neoliberalism,” according to which all aspects of the world, including immigrants’ choices of where to live, are organized around the logic of “the market.” In Radek’s case, he is even willing to accept political and social exclusion, as long it earns him “dollars.” In my experience, this is not an uncommon attitude among undocumented Chicago Poles, and I would assume that similar attitudes circulate among other immigrant groups.

But this is only one dimension of Radek’s invented narrative, and it only makes sense in the context of other comments he has made to me, specifically about being a self-proclaimed Polish “nationalist.” He once described his feelings of Polish identity in this way: “I was and still am very connected to Poland. I’m the nationalist type. Just like Americans draw attention to their flag at every step—you see it all the time with
Americans, how they say ‘I’m an American, I have my flag,’ and all the rest—I’m exactly the same, except for me it’s the Polish flag. I relate to Polish symbols...” He went on to connect this attitude to his situation as an undocumented person in the U.S.: “Even if I get legal status here, sooner or later I’ll go back to Poland. I’d like to live here, work here, and all that, but I’ll never sever ties to my country. And when I get old, just like most people, I’d probably go back.” This is, as I understand it, an unwavering allegiance to the Polish nation-state ideology of belonging to a place as I described it earlier. Without wanting to push the interpretation too far, I would also say that Radek’s profession that he relates to Polish flags and other symbols can be read as a gesture towards some of the historical narratives of Polish suffering and bravery to which I already alluded. It may be that this kind of “nationalist” talk is an effort to deflect the proposed coherences of “globalization” and “neoliberalism.” As social theorist Manuel Castells has speculated, the “age of globalization is also the age of national resurgence, expressed both in the challenge to established nation-states and in the widespread (re)construction of identity on the basis of nationality, always affirmed against the alien” (27). Similarly, sociologist Alain Touraine interprets a rise in communitarian ideologies as a direct response to the global economy: “Cultural nationalism would not be as powerful as it is, had it not been seen as a response to globalization” (164). Whether or not that is the case, however, may be secondary to my analysis. The point I want to make is that, in my understanding, Radek’s “neoliberal” story of being “only interested in dollars” is a rhetorical strategy by which he mitigates the impossibility of achieving his desired “perfection,” which is to be Polish in Poland, or, in my terms, to belong to a
place. In this way, he is able to construct a kind of “tentative” rhetoric that makes sense for now, and which he imagines will be resolved one day when he and Marta move back to Poland—or when there is federal immigration reform that might give him a chance to try out his own version of Magda’s citizenship experiments.

3. **Pani Nela: The Double Émigré**

I met Pani Nela through a contact and then arranged to interview her and her husband, Pan Szczepan, in their home one Sunday afternoon. After parking on a quiet side street in their suburb adjacent to Chicago, I easily found their two-story brick condo building, which was part of a collection of two or three other buildings that looked as though they had been built in the 1970s. They welcomed me into their unit with great warmth, immediately offering me a seat on the big sofa and pointing out a plate of cakes and pastries on the table. Their home was elegantly decorated, with furniture and adornments suggesting an 18th century European palace. I knew that they were from a small town in eastern Poland about 50 miles from my wife’s home village, so I was planning to use that as a conversation piece to build up rapport. As it turned out, however, I didn’t have a chance. In her outgoing, loquacious way, Pani Nela immediately launched into the story of their immigration, which began in the early 1990s when they won green cards through the U.S. State Department’s random lottery. She exclaimed excitedly, “Listen, it’s very interesting. It’s hard for anyone to believe that

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30 Pani Nela is like “Ms. Nela.” This combination of “pan” or “pani” plus a first name is the typical Polish manner of referring to someone you know but with whom you are not on intimate relations. It is also used to show respect for someone older, which is why I use it here.
this could even happen…” And I understood exactly what she meant, because a few years after the fall of communism, she, Pan Szczepan, and their two young sons had been offered what anyone would have considered a miraculous chance to leave rural Poland and move to the United States. She recalls vividly how she got a call at work one day from her 11-year-old son, who announced, “Mama, we’re going to America!” She replied, “What are you talking about, child?” He reassured her, “Really, Mama. We got a big white envelope and we’re going to America!”

This may be the first ideology of place and belonging that emerges from Pani Nela’s talk—that of “America,” where opportunity abounds and all things are superior. In this case, it was not Pani Nela’s own place, but it was a place whose rhetorical power had been profound in the world of communist Poland, where “America” served as a metonym for freedom, success, and material luxury—and, for sure, those beliefs had plenty of truth to them in relation to everyday life in the People’s Republic of Poland. Thus, the mere thought of belonging to “America” had incredible persuasive force—such that Pani Nela was willing to leave her position as a nurse, and Pan Szczepan’s job as a welder, and their small town where they had always lived and had many family members, in order to pursue the chance of better economic horizons in the United States. In some sense, this might be understood as a willingness to at least entertain the possibility of belonging to a new place. However, in the summer of 1994, shortly after arriving in Chicago, the pressures of everyday immigrant life tempered this enthusiasm. She found work cleaning office buildings downtown from 10 p.m.-6 a.m., but she describes the job as “horrible,” not least of all because she sometimes got lost downtown and felt scared.
cleaning alone at night in a high-rise. She worked as hard as she could, though, because she had been told that she had to “try hard, do it very fast,” and prove her skills. When her young sons’ first day of school in the U.S. arrived in September, she made them go alone, because she was afraid to ask for a day off work.

As the years went on, she started working double shifts as a cleaner and nursing home attendant—both jobs for around minimum wage. This meant she would get home from the night shift just in time to get the kids get ready for school, then go off to her second job. She slept a few hours every afternoon. Pan Szczepan was out of the house working construction from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, with shorter shifts on Saturdays. As a result, the kids had to be at home alone quite often. This oppressive schedule went on for years and years—and this lifestyle is not at all exceptional among Polish immigrants with whom I have spoken. In the first years, Pani Nela seemed to accept suffering as a necessary part of achieving success in the U.S. and offering her children a better life. And she clearly still values the fact that they were able to buy a condo in the suburbs after only a few years in the U.S., rather than continuing to rent in a heavily Polish neighborhood of Chicago, where she wasn’t happy with the schools. Also, she is satisfied that they helped put their sons through college and buy them their own homes. However, now that her sons are facing financial struggles of their own, the logic of suffering seems to have broken down for her, and she is ambivalent about whether she and Pan Sczepan made the right choice when they moved to the U.S.: “Our kids came when they were 10 and 13, and even though we weren’t rich we gave them things. And now I don’t know if we should have spent that money on them, because they’re having
such a hard time now. … We came here to make it better for our kids, but I don’t know if it’s really better for them. … It’s hard to say if it happened a second time, I don’t know if I’d do what we did. I don’t know if I would have come here. On the one hand, yes—on the other hand, no. Because of all of the stress…” She also expressed a belief that her sons haven’t been able to achieve financial success because they were born in Poland and didn’t get to start from “the higher shelf” in the U.S. She is now convinced that only the American-born generation, her grandchildren, have any chance of really making it—or, as I understand it, any chance of truly belonging to the United States.

In relation to the ways of talk I described with Magda and Radek, Pani Nela’s particular “makeshift” immigrant rhetoric may be this: like Magda, who has been trying, so far unsuccessfully, to realize a new “perfection” of belonging to the U.S., Pani Nela also tried to build up some kind of belonging for either herself or her children in the U.S., but she became increasingly disillusioned as her incredible hard labor did not allow her to realize the success she had once imagined. But also, like Radek, she maintained a strong sense of belonging to the place of Poland, as she and Pan Szczepan still own a house in their hometown village. However, unlike Radek, whose tentative story of “non-belonging” in the U.S. is premised on his status as an undocumented person, Pani Nela, who is a naturalized U.S. citizen, cannot invent such a rhetoric. Thus, she is left with a regretful narrative of something like “placelessness.” Indeed, as she put it to me, she has no clear sense right now of whether her home is in Poland or the U.S: “You know what, I don’t know where our home is. And that’s just it—that—it’s hard to say—where is our homeland? It should be that the beautiful young years, we got married there [in Poland],
we went to school there, I gave birth to our children there, we began our life there…”
But she’s not convinced right now if she still belongs to that place.

As it turns out, she and Pan Szczepan are planning to return to Poland within the
next two years, but not because they want to go back in search of belonging and
coherence, as Radek dreams he will do one day; rather, their motives are financial. Pan
Szczepan suffered a heart attack not long ago, so he had to quit working construction.
They have private health insurance together, but it costs them over $700 a month and
doesn’t include drug coverage, which is a major shortcoming since Pan Szczepan’s
prescriptions amount to more than $400 a month (he currently pays an acquaintance in
Poland to send them to him). With their only income now coming from Pani Nela’s work
as a private house cleaner, and five more years until Pan Szczepan will be eligible for
Medicare, their financial situation is overwhelming. Nonetheless, they wish they could
stay in their suburb of Chicago, primarily to be close to their children and grandchildren.
As she put it, “We don’t want to leave our kids here. But if we stay and we don’t have
insurance, we’re just going to be a burden. … We have no choice.” Thus, just as in the
mid-1990s, they will soon be undertaking a tenuous transnational move, which is why I
call Pani Nela the “Double Émigré.” Interestingly, their reasons for leaving the U.S. in
the 2010s are the same as their reasons for leaving Poland in the early 1990s—to find a
better economic situation. Also, like that earlier move, this one will entail an experiment
in belonging to a different place.
D. **Place + Placelessness = Immigrant Rhetorics**

I have explored several issues here so far: Burke’s “principle of perfection” and the idea of coherence as heuristics for analyzing the rhetorics of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state”; the realities of transnational human movement and its interaction with those larger discourses and arguments; and the desire to belong to a place as a key motive for the everyday rhetorical inventions of people like Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela. What I would like to do in this final section is bring these various investigations together in order to theorize more broadly about some of the foundational motives behind rhetorics of immigration and citizenship. More specifically, I want to argue that conflicting desires for place and what I have been calling “placelessness” produce a powerful tension—one which both defines competing ideologies and, in the end, forms the basis for immigrant rhetorics.

I mentioned earlier that Burke has a range of terms that are closely related to “the principle of perfection,” including the words “order,” “purity,” “transcendence,” and “god-term.” It is these last two terms, in particular, that interest me here, because the notion of belonging to a place that I have been describing has a deeply “transcendent” quality to it, in that it points to something far beyond “reality” or “things symbolized”; or, differently, it is a “god-term” that organizes other terms hierarchically and, through this hierarchal organization, enacts persuasion (*Rhetoric of Motives* 276). This seems easily applicable to the rhetorics of Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela, all of which garner their persuasive force by gesturing towards the possibility of a “perfect” union between person
and place, even though none of the three has managed to achieve this union so far as immigrants. Discourses of “the nation-state” also function in the same way, if on a larger scale: the people-territory connection constitutes a “transcendence” that organizes an extensive ideological framework of beliefs and actions. What may be less evident, however, is the way in which “place” always implies the inversely transcendent term of “placelessness.” Thus, if “place” is the god-term for the kinds of everyday immigrant talk I have been describing, and for discourses of “the nation-state,” then the notion of “placelessness” may offer the same transcendence to the discourses of “globalization” and “neoliberalism,” among others.

As I described earlier, the shared “perfection” of “globalization” and “neoliberalism” seems to be a world in which free economic and cultural exchange flourish beyond the reach of governments and other institutions. If this is correct, then these discourses do seem to operate according to the logic of “placelessness.” For example, as “the nation-state” aims to maintain its “dominant and unified political authority” over “a clearly marked piece of territory,” as Benhabib puts it, the forces of “globalization” work to dismantle this authority, precisely by interconnecting, or perhaps superseding, states through a process of “deterritorialization” (Wiley 86; Hardt and Negri xii), which, in turn produces “displaced peoples” for whom “...there is no going ‘home’ again” (Hall 362). This is precisely the motive of “placelessness” in the discourse of

31 Connecting “nation-state” discourses to “transcendence,” and more explicitly religion, is fairly common. In the case of some national rhetorics, “the nation-state” is inextricably linked to religion, as with the example of the Polish nation and Catholicism. Beyond these instances, theorists have linked nation and religion in various ways: Manuel Castells considers nation, religion, and territory to be the three key sources of contemporary identity (65); Benedict Anderson says the nation is an “anthropological category,” just like “kinship” or “religion” (4); Eric Hobsbawm cites religion as one of the possible forces of “proto-nationalism” (66-70).
“globalization.” Likewise, “neoliberalism” is premised on the idea that capital is mobile or even “placeless,” which allows for what Harvey calls “capital flow” (A Brief History of Neoliberalism 92). He also says that “the free mobility of capital between sectors, regions, and countries” is absolutely “crucial” to “neoliberalism,” and that “[a]ll barriers to that free movement… have to be removed” (A Brief History of Neoliberalism 66).

So, on the one hand, the tension between a desire for place and “placelessness” defines competing claims about how the world is organized, which can occupy a range of intersecting and overlapping ideological positions.32 But, perhaps more interestingly, this tension seems to provide a driving force for immigrants’ everyday rhetorical inventions. That is, while rhetors like Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela—along with many other Polish rhetors I have met—seem deeply motivated by the ideology of belonging to a place, as I have described and illustrated here, there is a deep irony to this motivation. Indeed, all three of their lives, like the lives of most all immigrants, embody and embrace these competing desires—the desire to be in a place and the desire to leave a place; or, perhaps differently, the desire for place and the desire for “placelessness.” In this configuration, then, it is the tension itself between these forces—an inherent tension that always accompanies the choice to stretch one’s life across transnational spaces—that drives their particular rhetorics. Thus, their everyday ways of talk may not quite be “tentative” or

32 Indeed, there seem to be no inherent ideological orientations for claims of place or placelessness. For example, the “free market” (or “neoliberalism”), which is grounded in “placelessness,” is typically understood as a politically right configuration of economic conditions. However, while the left’s responses to “neoliberalism” sometimes take the form of place-based arguments—for more “local” or “national” control over economic activity, including labor laws—they also sometimes promote decidedly “placeless” solutions, such as “human rights,” which are encoded in “international law,” which is to be enforced by supranational institutions. Likewise, the “placeless” argument of “globalization” is countered by claims for “the local” by both the left (as described above) and the right (“nationalism”). Also, “globalization” easily becomes a place-based argument in the form of “the global village,” which can be used to serve either right or left interests through the mitigation of anxieties of “placelessness.”
“makeshift” efforts to invent satisfying narratives of citizenship and belonging that allow them to somehow mitigate the pressures of their “imperfect” life situations—even though they can certainly look and feel this way. Rather, their rhetorics may be very lucid articulations of the very impossibility of belonging—for immigrants, for sure, and perhaps for everyone else, as well.33

The paradoxical tension that I am describing here mirrors a pervasive topos in immigration literature. Whether it appears as “biculturality” in the famous “borderland” musings of Gloria Anzaldúa and others, or as “disjuncture” or “hybridity,” respectively, in the cultural theorizations of Arjun Appadurai and Homi Bhabha, or as “fracturing” in Susan Coutin’s critique of how exclusive citizenship regimes force the undocumented to “to exist in multiple yet incompatible worlds” (“Prohibited Realities and Fractured Persons” 4-5), the topos of doubleness, or duality, dominates discussions of immigration. My point, however, is neither to celebrate nor critique this kind of paradoxical tension, but rather, above all, to describe it as one generative source of immigrants’ everyday rhetorical inventions—and, more to the point, to posit that it is an irresolvable tension that is inherent to being an immigrant—and perhaps to being a human being.

To add one more rhetorical layer to my analysis here, it’s important to keep in mind that “place” and “placelessness” themselves, as well as the “tension” that I posit between them, are only figures that suggest certain explanations for why people do what

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33 I might speculate that this tension between desires for place and “placelessness” also links up to my discussion in the last chapter about changing understandings of space and the time-space compression—to the extent that this particular tension could be a direct result of our evolving experience of space. Also, it could be that the suburban trend that I described among Poles—but which is much, much broader—is a reflection of the way that people are learning to inhabit spaces that simultaneously contain “place” and “placelessness.”
they do and say what they say. If we imagine them in this way, then it may be that these particular *topoi* help my immigrant rhetors work out very different sets of desires and discontents—such as the seemingly insurmountable distances between their expectations about life in “America” and their everyday experiences as immigrants today. Just as David Harvey figures literal places as “unstable” sites of “political contestation and struggle” (qtd. in Cresswell 62), it may be that these rhetorical “places” (*topoi*) function in the same way.

E. **Magda Revisted: A Place of Politics**

I started with the scene of Magda’s “Welcome to America” party, and her comment about becoming a “U.S. citizen,” and now I would like to end by briefly sharing how things have changed for her since that night at Rawhide, and since her unfortunate experience at the U.S.-Canadian border. When I talked to her recently about her feelings of belonging and place in Chicago—that is, more than a year and a half after some of our earlier conversations—she said that she was at a particularly volatile moment then. As she put it, the experience at the border made it easy for her to return to her “earlier views” about being a “U.S. citizen” but not an “American.” Now, she says she has “calmed down” and describes her attitude in this way: “I’m not looking for a label anymore. … I’ll always be an immigrant. For Americans I’ll always be a foreigner as soon as I open my mouth. … [But] when people ask about my accent, I tell them my status doesn’t mean anything.” She went on to describe how she was losing contact with Poland all the time, and to that extent it seemed clear to me that she was feeling even more convinced that
Chicago is her “place.” However, there is another side to her story, because she and her mother have recently been taking steps to buy out other family members on inheritance rights to the family house in rural Poland—the house in which Magda spent the first 18 years of her life. This is clearly extremely important to her, and she feels “sure” she will return to Poland one day. She admits that she doesn’t know what the world will be like then—or what she’ll be like—but she has no children, and she says it might be better to spend her older years in the family home than in a nursing home in the U.S.

For me, this extension of Magda’s story seems to offer an interesting expansion of the possibilities for immigrant rhetorics. Clearly, her desire for the “place” of Poland and her sense of belonging there has not waned; she imagines that Poland, and specifically her childhood home in the country, will always be her place—just like Radek and Pani Nela, who also own property in Poland. But Magda seems to have developed a more satisfying way of narrating her presence in the U.S., such that she can have a “place” here, feel at “home” here, and maintain her desire for that Polish place. Thus, without wanting to draw too easy of a conclusion, I would say that she has become very comfortable with her transnational experience of “place” and “placelessness.” (And certainly, many immigrants do the same with time, according to their own figurations.) In her telling, one particular experience that has allowed her to do this is political activism. By knowing that she can vote, that people will “listen to” her, and that she can contribute positively to the U.S. and “change things” by political engagement, she feels that she is deeply connected to this place. As I understand it, she seems to have invented a rhetoric by which political engagement becomes the pathway to belonging.
The question of immigrant politics is the focus of the next chapter, in which Magda also plays a key role. More specifically, I want to return to the figure of “movement” and explore how the pro-immigrant political “movement,” as I have experienced it in my work with the Chicago Polish Project, is working rhetorically to invent political possibility. Although none of the other Polish activists I know has articulated it to me in the same way, I think that Magda’s notion that political engagement can lead to feelings of belonging is a powerful figure for describing the motives behind a wide range of pro-immigrant actions.
V. INVENTING POLITICAL MOVEMENT: IMMIGRANT ACTION AND THE NATION-STATE

Rhetoric is communication that attempts to coordinate social action. For this reason, rhetorical communication is explicitly pragmatic. Its goal is to influence human choices on specific matters that require immediate attention.

—Gerard Hauser, Introduction to Rhetorical Theory (2-3)

Polak potrafi.
A Pole can get it done.

—colloquial Polish proverb

A. Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I have explored some of the rhetorical and material dimensions of “movement” at different points along a scale—from the case of one man’s narratives of his own desire for movement, to the literal and socioeconomic movements of the whole Chicago Polonia community over more than a century, to the present-day global movements of workers and capital, to the individual efforts of three Polish immigrants to invent “places” for themselves amidst the movements that have come to define their lives. In this chapter, I want to enter the realm of the pro-immigrant political “movement,” specifically as I have learned about it through working with the Chicago Polish Project. The question that guides my inquiry here is the following: How does one invent movement in a place of stasis? This is a question about rhetoric, because stasis is a term from ancient rhetorical theory that notes the “place” where opposing rhetors
“come to rest,” or decide that they must “agree to disagree,” as Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee put it in their description of the concept (56). They go on to connect stasis to “movement” by noting that “…this resting place [the place of stasis] is temporary, suspended as it is between conflicting movements” (56; my emphasis). To this extent, then, saying that a debate is in a place of stasis is not necessarily a negative observation, because stasis is “temporary.” Differently, every debate must achieve a place of stasis if it is to move forward, because when opposing rhetors cannot agree on the central issues, then there are no grounds for conversation. This is why ancient rhetoricicians, and perhaps most famously Hermagoras (as summarized later by Quintilian and Cicero) articulated stasis theory as a means of rhetorical invention, or a “systematic method for identifying the crucial point of controversy … and thus for discovering the most appropriate and persuasive arguments available in a dispute” (Walker 61). In the case of U.S. immigration debates, my point is the following: stasis has been reached, because both parties seem to agree on the core issues, which include questions of how we should define notions such as “citizenship,” “community,” “inclusion,” and “belonging.” However, interested rhetors from both sides are not “discovering the most appropriate and persuasive arguments” by which to push through these points of stasis; rather they are standing their ideological grounds. In my interpretation, this is at least part of the reason that there have been no large-scale political advancements on immigration for many years. The most recent overarching change in federal immigration law was the

34 Crowley and Hawhee use the U.S. abortion debates as an example of a disagreement that has not achieved stasis, because the two sides cannot agree on the issues themselves. As they describe it, the main proposition of the “pro-choice” side is that “[w]omen have a right to control their reproductive practices,” and the main proposition of the “pro-life” side is that “[a]bortion is murder” (58). Thus, there is no chance for “moving” forward because there is no shared issue around which to start a debate.
Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which circumscribed the situations of both documented and undocumented immigrants in several ways. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act was the last piece of legislation that improved the lives of undocumented immigrants, by balancing new “controls” with a path to citizenship. Despite repeated attempts to advance reform bills during the last 16 years, nothing has happened, and there does not even seem to be a constructive conversation. Rather, what seems to be happening is that both sides are looking for their own legal and political strategies by which to sidestep debate and further their own interests.

In earlier chapters, I outlined some of the new local anti-immigrant laws that are being passed in a growing number of states. In this chapter, I will look more closely at some of the rhetorics that accompany those efforts. My main focus, however, will be on the rhetorics of pro-immigrant political forces, who are trying to invent “movement” for millions of undocumented immigrants in the U.S., and on some of the more specific rhetorics through which undocumented Chicago Poles try to invent “movement” in their individual lives. As I have learned from my fieldwork, the discourse of “rights,” and specifically “immigrant rights,” is a pervasive topos of mainstream pro-immigrant rhetorics. In the case of Polish immigrants, there is a dominant discourse that I will call the discourse of kombinowanie, which is a colloquial term that refers to cultural and rhetorical practices by which people try to “game the system,” or perhaps “work within the system.” These two rhetorics—“immigrant rights” and kombinowanie—are different
in important ways, which I will explore in detail, but both seem to offer certain ways of positioning oneself vis-à-vis state power.

In these ways, I want to explore the rhetorical *stasis* around immigration. But these concerns are inseparable from the kinds of material “stasis”—that is, less technically, a “standing still”—that constitute the lives of many immigrants, and especially the undocumented. Józef’s case offered one example of how an immigrant can struggle to move past the “standing still” that results from living in the U.S. “without papers,” and Radek’s story offered another example. For these two men, and millions like them, “stasis” embodies a powerful nexus of social, economic, and legal forces that shape the horizons of everyday experience. Thus, just as I have been claiming throughout the dissertation that rhetoric is always inextricably linked with its situations, I want to apply that same perspective to the idea that rhetorical *stasis* is always intertwined with material stasis—and that, accordingly, any analysis of rhetors’ attempts to move through rhetorical *stasis* demands a consideration of their desires to move through material stasis.

These are all theoretical considerations, but in my view, they provide a foundation for the practical argument about immigration politics that I put forth in the introductory chapter—namely, that pro-immigrant rhetors should abandon some of their most popular *topoi*—including “rights,” “freedom,” and “equality”—and develop more pragmatic arguments through which to build support among a range of interested audiences, including politicians, the mainstream U.S. electorate, and immigrants themselves. My goal in this chapter is not to develop an alternative set of *topoi* that I believe will have a
better chance of “inventing political movement” on the question of federal immigration reform; however, I do want to use theoretical analysis as a method for opening up perspectives that might indeed have practical value, to the extent that they suggest certain ways of thinking about the invention of new pro-immigrant rhetorics. In this way, my work here is squarely grounded in the traditional understanding of rhetoric as a pragmatic activity, which is what Gerard Hauser has in mind when he says the goal of rhetoric is “to influence human choices on specific matters that require immediate attention” (2-3).

As a way into all of these issues, I will begin with an ethnographic scene that includes both the literal movements of people, as my CPP activist colleagues and I take to the streets of Chicago to participate in a pro-immigrant march, and the figurative movements of language, as public rhetors perform a range of discourses, all of which aim to break through *stasis/stasis*.

**B. May 1, 2011: Marching for Immigration**

By 3:00 p.m., nine of us have gathered on the grass, waiting for the march to begin—seven active members, one mother of an active member, and a friend of the mother. We stand together loosely, talking in Polish, somewhat removed from the makeshift stage in the corner of Union Park on Chicago’s west side, where several hundred people are amassing in preparation for the annual march. Someone calls out through the loudspeakers in Spanish, presumably trying to get the crowd excited about worker issues, immigrant issues, or any of the other issues around which this year’s march has been organized. The May 1 marches in Chicago of previous years focused
more exclusively on immigration, and the crowds were much, much larger—peaking at an estimated 400,000 in 2006 (this would have been the march that changed Magda’s life by opening her eyes to the pro-immigrant movement). The mere hundreds gathered today is partly a result of the fact that some of the biggest pro-immigrant organizations decided to stay away this year. After several recent legislative defeats, including two in 2010, when neither comprehensive immigration reform nor the DREAM Act passed in Washington, and after the passage of Arizona’s infamous SB 1070 and the rapid expansion of the Department of Homeland Security’s “Secure Communities” program across the country, many groups seem to have decided that taking to the streets does not make sense at a moment when there is no real chance of federal immigration reform. Or there could be other explanations for the small turnout. In any case, there are nine of us here from CPP, and we have brought along three flags: one white-and-red Polish flag and two white flags emblazoned with the familiar red logo—Solidarność—from the 1980s Solidarity movement (Fig. 14). Most of us are also wearing our white, red, and black t-shirts that bear the CPP name and logo, but it’s in the 50s, cloudy, and there’s a breeze off the lake, so we have our jackets zipped up all the way.

By about 3:10, the crowd starts moving south on Ashland Avenue, so we fall in order. Observers and photographers line the sidewalks, and policemen are everywhere, including one who follows alongside us on an ATV. Familiar chants ring out continually, such as “¡Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha!” and “¡Sí se puede!” We join in sometimes—and for a moment someone in our group even tries to get “Tak możemy!” (“Yes we can!”) going in Polish—but it seems like none of us is particularly energized
today, not like we were at the march last year. When the Chi-Lites’ 1971 funk tune “(For God’s Sake) Give More Power to the People” blasts out from a set of speakers mounted on a bicycle, we get a little pumped, but that passes quickly. I am talking on and off to Michalina, who is expecting a baby in a few months. We talk about leave from work, her health, the birth, and the strategies that my wife and I are using to raise our daughters bilingually. Another couple, Weronika and Mariusz, who would like to have a baby sometime later, want to talk about all of this, too. In between these and other
conversations, I scan the signs and banners to get a sense of the groups that are taking part in the march this year. I see at least one of the big socialist organizations waving their black-and-red flags and carrying signs denouncing capitalism; there is a small group of marchers with rainbow-colored posters that say “LGBT 4 Workers’ and Immigrants’ Rights”; a handful of communists is parked on a street corner, where a woman barks vehemently into a microphone, but I can’t understand a word she’s saying; I catch a glimpse somewhere ahead of a handmade sign that says something about an Iraq veteran who is for peace and human rights; there is a group called the Liga por el Partido Revolucionario, whose signs read “Democrats & Republicans: Two Parties of Racism, Antiworker Attacks, & Imperialist War!” (Fig. 15); another group carries posters that say they are teachers united for immigrants, but I can’t find any specific information about the name of a teachers’ union or other organization. These are just a few of the groups and rhetorics that color today’s march. There are many more.

As 4:00 approaches, we enter the South Side neighborhood of Pilsen, one of the central neighborhoods for Chicago’s Mexican immigrant community and the site of today’s rally. As we make our way down 18th Street, on-lookers line the sidewalks. Patrons have filed out of cafes and bars to observe; a young man hangs off a fire escape, filming with a large camera; we get supportive honks from passing cars. When we have almost reached the intersection where the rally will take place, we pass by a large mural on the side of a building titled “Declaration of Immigration,” which has a list of slogans,
By 4:15, we are at the rallying point. Dozens of policemen herd us closer to the stage that is set up at the intersection of Blue Island Avenue and Loomis Street. We in CPP follow their orders but remain towards the back of the crowd. A few of the women
from our group have stepped away to use the bathroom at an adjacent McDonald’s. As the rest of us stand together, somebody suggests we go for burritos and cerveza; someone else seconds the idea. I say I want to go up closer to the stage first to hear what they’re talking about. I make my way through some people, but I quickly find that there’s nothing of interest to me there. A man and woman are asking playfully in Spanish and

Figure 16. The “Declaration of Immigration” mural. Photograph by the author.
English where the leader is today. They finally say the leader isn’t coming because there is no leader, but then they wonder aloud if this is a problem. They ask who will lead, and after a little work, they elicit the prescribed response: “The people!” I head back to my colleagues. Arguably, the movement does have strong leaders, even though they have decided to stay away today. Whether or not their strategies and rhetorics are effectively advancing the goal of federal immigration reform is, however, another question.

After the women return from the bathroom, we get someone to snap a group photo, then we head back down 18th Street, where we passed some taquerias. As we walk, I joke to Magda that the Poles got bored today—people are giving speeches and we’re going out to eat. She smiles, but doesn’t comment, and I don’t pursue it further for now. Although I wonder what she thinks of the slogans and ideologies that have surrounded us today. She’s the member of our group who has expressed to me the strongest, most unambiguous identification with leftist rhetorics, but today’s messages don’t seem to have moved her.

We finally see an informal, family-style restaurant and go inside to eat. The food is wonderful; the room is jammed with people; there is more talk of babies and whatever else comes up; the TV on the wall already has a Spanish-language report from the march. After that, there is coverage from the beatification ceremony of Pope John Paul II, which finished a few hours earlier at the Vatican. I think of the Solidarność flags that are rolled up under the table, and John Paul II’s role in the rise of Solidarity and the eventual fall of communism—events that made it possible for all of my friends at the table to leave Poland and make their way to the U.S.—and I sense a beautiful little life-circle at work,
as we, members of CPP, sit together in Chicago, talking in Polish and eating Mexican food after marching for immigration.

That would be, in any case, one way to conclude this scene of the 2011 immigration march in Chicago—we marched, we celebrated, and all of it entailed a wonderfully satisfying intersection of history, politics, place, and togetherness. However, as I described before, the events of that day suggest much more to me, especially in relation to the question I put forth: How does one invent movement in a place of \textit{stasis}? In my reading, the pervasive discourses of “immigrant rights,” and other “rights,” at the march, and my Polish colleagues’ disinterested response to these discourses—or, rather, what I see as the ideological and rhetorical motives underlying that response—suggest two distinct ways of answering the question. First, I will explore the answer of “rights” in an effort to analyze its underlying assumptions. Then I will turn to the everyday Polish discourse of \textit{kombinowanie} to offer an alternative version of how this question is being addressed.

\section*{C. Human Movement vs. the Nation-State}

In her 1959 essay “On Humanity in Dark Times,” Hannah Arendt writes that freedom of movement is the oldest and most “elementary” human liberty. She goes on to say that “[b]eing able to depart for where we will is the prototypical gesture of being free, as limitation of freedom of movement has from time immemorial been the precondition of enslavement” (9). The context for these observations was the “dark time” that the world had just experienced and Arendt’s critique of how many in the post-war West were
exercising their freedom to retreat from public spaces and into the private realm.

Anthropologist Nicholas De Genova draws on Arendt’s comments about free movement in his essay “The Deportation Regime” to address the “ever more comprehensive and draconian” (34) regimes of border control that are emerging around the world today. His specific interest is the increasing use of deportation by nation-states as a strategy for resisting transnational human flows. Indeed, as he sees it, we are now witnessing a global “deportation regime,” which constitutes a concerted biopolitical reaction on the part of states to the liberalization of world space. For De Genova, the problem posed by deportation (or rather the mere specter of “deportability”) is ontological, to the extent that he, like Arendt, sees human movement as essential to “any serious reflection on or practice of liberty” (33) and calls it the “figure par excellence of life, indeed life in its barest essential condition” (39). Although certain types of free movement are codified as rights in various documents, including in Article 13 of the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, De Genova rejects any understanding of movement that is “stipulated, circumscribed, and domesticated within the orbit of state power” (39), because in these contexts movement is almost always “encumbered with the pertinent qualifications, limitations, and restrictions” (33). In this way, De Genova’s argument revolves around an assumption that there is an inherently antagonistic relationship between immigrants’ “fundamental” desire to move about and “creatively transform [their] objective circumstances” (39) and the nation-state’s desire to enforce territorial and political sovereignty.
This position enters into my discussions of space from the last two chapters in an interesting way. That is, some left-oriented critics of “neoliberalism” figure free movement as a fundamental desire of global capital, and, conversely, they describe the desire for bounded “places” as potentially “resistant” responses to what Harvey calls the “capitalist (or modernist) logic of place construction” (qtd. in Cresswell 61). De Genova, on the other hand, takes an ideologically left framework to figure the situation quite differently: in his analysis, immigrants (and more broadly humans) are inherently motivated by the desire to move—a desire that is stymied by the restrictive structures of the nation-state. For me, neither of these interpretations of “movement” is more accurate than the other, but rather that they both highlight the ideological ambiguity of “movement” as a figure (which is part of what emerged from my discussion of Madga, Radek, and Pani Nela, and their engagements with place and “placelessness”). In the case of many pro-immigrant discourses, including the pervasive language of “immigrant rights,” it is De Genova’s assumption about the basic desire of people to move around the world that is central. Indeed, as a general observation, the topos of “rights” gains its rhetorical force by assuming that there are fundamental human needs that pre-exist and supersede political structures. In my experience, this kind of “rights” topos—whether it’s “immigrant rights,” “human rights,” or some other, less evident kinds of rights, such as what I would call “rights of the family”—drives pro-immigrant discourses, both in institutional languages (coming from national and local pro-immigrant organizations) and “on the ground” (at the march). As I noted, this particular May 1 march was not attended
by some of the most powerful pro-immigrant organizations in Chicago, but the discourses I described were not at all exceptional for the movement as a whole.

Some of the slogans I noted from the “Declaration of Immigration” mural in Pilsen seem to draw on the notion of rights to create various kinds of movement. For example, the phrase “No Wall” is an explicit response to the United States’ material denial of free movement—a wall stretching almost 2,000 miles along the U.S.-Mexican border. Similarly, the claim “No person is illegal,” which is probably the most popular slogan of the pro-immigrant movement, builds its argument through the following series of premises: the nation-state labels individuals as “illegal,” but that labeling does not change these individuals’ fact of humanness, and humanness entails certain rights, including the right to free movement, regardless of national borders. Perhaps a less direct version of a rights claim from the march would be an example that was reported in the Chicago Tribune the next day: a Michigan woman was pushing her daughter in a stroller bearing the sign “Immigration Stole My Daddy,” in honor of the girl’s deported father (Rhodes). The argument here appeals to something like “rights of the family,” which are understood as taking precedence over the rights of the state to control human movement; or, more metaphorically, the sign on the stroller critiques the state’s supreme denial of movement, deportation, by figuring the state as a thief who robs families through immigration policy. In this and the other cases noted above, the rights arguments of pro-immigrant rhetors all seem to share the assumptions that free movement is fundamental to being human and that nation-state politics obstruct the exercise of this freedom.
However, it is important to know that “rights,” like “movement,” is an ideologically ambiguous topos—and, furthermore, that “rights” is not always figured as functioning against or outside of political structures. More specifically, anti-immigration rhetors also appeal to “rights,” but as they pertain to state sovereignty and bounded communities. For example, after the Arizona Legislature passed SB 1070 in 2010, the law became caught up in legal battles. As it stands for now, a federal judge has granted a preliminary injunction against some of the law’s provisions, partly because they would interfere with the federal government’s constitutionally mandated control over matters of immigration (Richey). The response to the injunction from Arizona state Sen. Russell Pearce, who wrote the law, went like this: “My message to the judge is uphold the Constitution. Uphold state’s rights. … This is the states versus the central government” (qtd. in “Legal Battles Loom”). Arizona Governor Jan Brewer’s language has followed a similar line, as when she claims that “decades of federal inaction and misguided policy” left her and the Arizona Legislature with “no choice but to stand up for the rule of law and the citizens of this great country” (“Statement by Gov. Jan Brewer”). In both arguments, the central assumption is that the state of Arizona has a right to pursue certain immigration policies if the federal government is not willing to do so. In a constitutional context, this may be an argument for “states’ rights,” but more fundamentally, it is an argument for something like the “right” of the state to “self-governance” or even “self-defense.” These anti-immigration rhetorics can also be understood as efforts to create rhetorical movement away from the place of stasis at the level of federal policy, albeit from a different ideological perspective.
What the above examples of “rights”—from both sides of the debate—illustrate for me is the way in which immigration arguments often stake their power on strong claims about the nature of the human, including the following: people have a natural desire to move; families should be together; and nation-states have an imperative to control space. All of these rhetorics are what I might call “foundational,” to the extent that they challenge the structure of the world as we know it and prescribe alternative, perhaps even utopian, visions of how the world should be. A vision of national borders that neatly divide humanity into ethnic, linguistic, social, or any other kinds of groups is just as utopian as a vision in which humans move about unencumbered by legal and political affiliations. Both draw on something beyond the everyday to challenge the reigning political and social orders. However, in my perspective, it is precisely the ontological nature of these discourses that creates the rhetorical stasis I have been describing. That is, if the debate centers on conflicting interpretations of the human, then it seems inevitable that the two sides have no choice but to “agree to disagree,” as Crowley and Hawhee put it. Only an argument that somehow reaches beyond these ontological positions has a chance of moving through stasis (and stasis). This is why I am skeptical of the political potential of “rights” rhetorics, and that is why I am arguing that more pragmatic arguments are needed to appeal to American politicians and mainstream American voters.

If “immigrant rights” represents one particular effort to invent “movement” in response immigration law, then the world of Polish Chicago offers an alternative approach to accomplishing the same goal. What I will describe in the next section is the
Polish rhetoric of *kombinowanie*. Unlike “rights,” this discourse does not make ontological claims about the human; on the contrary, it has a decidedly pragmatic orientation. However, as I will also explain, I am skeptical of its potential to create political movement.

D. Working within the System

In my description of the May 1 march, I may have portrayed my Chicago Polish Project colleagues and me somewhat negatively: we were aloof and marginal; we were only half-heartedly engaged in the day’s activities; at worst, we may have even come across as detached and insular. However, this shouldn’t be misconstrued as a description of the group generally, or as an indication of our level of involvement in the cause of immigration. On the contrary, CPP is intensely committed, and several of its members (including Magda and Michalina) have devoted the last few years of their lives to trying to improve the situations of Polish immigrants. Nonetheless, our experience on May 1, 2011 was very much as I described it, because we just couldn’t seem to get excited about the march. When I brought up the issue at our next organizational meeting, asking what people had thought of the May 1 activities, I got the following response from Michalina: “Communists, socialists, anarchists—” she shrugged her shoulders. Gabriel, who hadn’t been at the march, responded with bemusement, “You mean it was like a real May Day march?” There was laughter. Everyone in the room, except me, had memories of May Day marches and public celebrations when they were growing up in the People’s Republic of Poland. Magda, however, offered a different explanation of the march’s low
turnout, saying that people were fed up with the fact that there had been no political progress at the federal level, so activists were turning towards local issues. And she was clearly on to something, because just before this conversation we had been celebrating the events that had unfolded a few hours earlier at the state Capitol in Springfield (where Magda had spent the day): the Illinois Senate passed Illinois’ own DREAM Act, and Governor Pat Quinn officially declared that he was withdrawing all Illinois counties from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s “Secure Communities” program, due to mounting evidence that ICE was using the program to deport large numbers of undocumented immigrants who had no serious criminal convictions. We knew these developments were a direct result of the lobbying and organizing that we and many, many other grassroots immigrant rights groups in Illinois had been carrying out for the last several months.

Nonetheless, the exchange between Michalina and Gabriel gets closer to my own rhetorically oriented interpretation of what was happening with CPP at the May 1 march. Discourses that revolve around strong foundational claims and offer utopian visions of the world, such as rights discourses, and, I would say, particularly rights discourses from the political left, are decidedly unpersuasive for many Poles. Simply put, most Polish immigrants seem to feel as though they heard enough of that language in communist Poland, and they have no faith in efforts to constitute a new world. I have observed this phenomenon again and again in my fieldwork. Indeed, Magda—who, as I mentioned earlier, is the CPP member who generally seems most comfortable with rhetorics of the left—articulated something like this to me once, when she was describing why it’s hard
to get other Polish immigrants engaged in the struggle for immigration reform: “When you read Marx and Engels—the kind of the rhetoric we’re using, it’s straight from there. … You know, ‘people power.’ Poles hear that and think, ‘Whoa, where’s that coming from?’”

Thus, if “immigrant rights” is a “foundational” argument that seems to be unconvincing for many Poles due at least partly to its utopian suggestions, then the rhetoric of *kombinowanie* might be understood as a deeply “situated,” or pragmatic, argument that tries to “invent movement” by looking for ways either to circumvent the structures of the nation-state or to appropriate their claims to power. The term *kombinowanie* itself has widespread everyday usage both in Poland and among Polish immigrants. It might be translated as “gaming the system,” or perhaps “working within the system,” but those renderings don’t do the term justice, because they miss its rich historical implications. What I want to do first is situate the term in its historical context and then demonstrate how it gets used by Chicago Polish rhetors to articulate a particular response to the life stasis that affects many immigrants.35

Basically, *kombinowanie* describes how individuals work within, or perhaps around, a “system” in shady, and sometimes even illegal, ways to achieve personal advantage. In the historical context of the People’s Republic of Poland, it described how people did whatever they could to improve their own situations—or perhaps just survive—under oppressive political and economic conditions. For this reason, the word can have a positive connotation, because it indicates that someone is smart enough to find

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35 The word *kombinowanie* is pronounced kōm-bē-nō-vă-nyē. I will use it, rather than an approximate translation of it, because its meaning is so closely bound to Polish culture and history.
ways around the limiting factors of a system. However, some Poles are also very critical of *kombinowanie* as a cultural practice that persists among Poles long after the fall of communism and its unique political restrictions. Either way, most Poles who experienced communist Poland have stories of the kinds of *kombinowanie* that they themselves, family members, or other engaged in during those years, and they often exchange them as a way of reflecting humorously (and perhaps even nostalgically) on their shared history. One such story comes from Magda. In the late 1970s and early 80s, when Magda was a girl, there was a limited supply of toilet paper in Poland, and in order to get any of it one had to participate in a kind of forced recycling, by which a small number of toilet paper rolls would be sold to you in exchange for old newspapers, magazines, and other recyclables. Even still, there wasn’t enough toilet paper to go around. So Magda’s parents made use of an uncle who lived across the country, and who, for reasons that she can’t remember, was able to procure unlimited amounts of toilet paper. This was a “great connection,” as Magda put it, but actually getting the paper from the uncle’s house to their own house was no small feat. They didn’t have a car, so a few times a year they would take a train for 24 hours to the uncle's house, which was about 500 kilometers away, and then do the same to get back home. They kept the toilet paper stashed away in the attic of their house, which ended up being a wise choice since Magda’s parents were Solidarity activists and the house was once searched by the secret police. The police found and confiscated an illegal animal skin, but the toilet paper (and a box of Solidarity paraphernalia) went undiscovered.
That is a very small example of *kombinowanie* as it functioned in communist Poland. To situate the term in present-day Chicago, I want to draw on the story of a woman I’ll call Maja, a Polish immigrant and naturalized U.S. citizen. Maja is in her late 20s, bright, and has a professional job in downtown Chicago. The last time I talked to her, she was deciding whether or not she wanted to apply for law school in the U.S. (she already has a law degree from Poland). Some years ago, however, her situation was very different. She was undocumented, taking whatever work she could find and struggling to make ends meet. In her various jobs she faced challenges, including sexual harassment by a store boss, physical strain from working as a cleaner, and, on a particular night when she was working as a bartender in a rough neighborhood, the vandalization of her car by a drug dealer for whom she refused to extend last call. Her situation changed for the better, however, when she decided to enter a marriage with an American acquaintance “for one reason and no other,” as she told me, “‘for papers,’ to put it nicely.” When I asked her how, exactly, she came to that decision, she put it this way: “It was like this. With my boyfriend earlier [not her current fiancé], I told him either we’re going to Canada or something, or we’re going back to Poland, because I’m not going to stay here in the situation we’re in now. All roads were closed to me, and I didn’t have any way out of being undocumented. I had a Social Security number and a driver’s license, so I could do what I wanted, but I couldn’t get a job.” Within six months of getting married and filing the immigration applications, she had a temporary green card, which allowed her to work legally and to leave the U.S. without the fear of not being permitted re-entry. She immediately went to Poland to take care of some business related to the completion of
her law degree, and then she came back to Chicago and enrolled in college, earning her bachelor’s in two and a half years. When I asked her if she was ever afraid when she was in the marriage arrangement, she said only as it related to her then-boyfriend:

Above all, I was afraid that if I get married—I didn’t think about the consequences, like I’ll be deported or something like that, because it really wasn’t so important to me to stay in the States. I did it for my ex-boyfriend. To stay with him. He had this vision that I’ll get married to the guy, and then after I get citizenship he’ll get married to me. And we would live happily ever after—and have a bunch of kids and all of it. When I was thinking about it, I didn’t think about the legal consequences, but rather that if I would actually be married with this guy, it would mess up my relationship.

Maja went on to tell me that as U.S. immigration law stands now, there’s no legal way for an undocumented immigrant to find a path to citizenship. Instead, as she put it, there are only various types of *kombinowanie*, such as entering such a marriage, continually renewing a student visa (which she sees as a kind of *kombinowanie* that is “to a large degree legal”), and trying to secure a work visa. But, as she knows from her previous job in the office of an immigration lawyer, getting an H-1 work visa is nearly impossible through *kombinowanie*, because it requires substantial money and extensive paperwork on the part of an employer to prove that a U.S. citizen could not be hired to fill the position.

I relate Maja’s story because I find it particularly illustrative, but I have heard other stories from Chicago Poles about the kinds of *kombinowanie* they have engaged in
to improve their situations as immigrants—sometimes with success, sometimes in failure. What I see in these experiences is a powerful Polish *topos* that offers a certain understanding of the U.S. immigration system, and more broadly, a particular ideological-rhetorical map for overcoming life challenges. Namely, from the points of view of many people I have met in my fieldwork, including Maja, immigration law is, above all, an obstacle to free movement—whether that means literal movement (the ability to travel back and forth between Poland and the U.S.), socioeconomic movement (the chance at a better job), personal movement (such as Maja’s desire to be with her boyfriend), or, in most cases, some combination of all of these. The question of whether the system itself is right or wrong is secondary—and in this regard, this kind of rhetoric differs dramatically from “immigrant rights.” Talking about rights aims to challenge basic assumptions about how the world is organized; talking about *kombinowanie* accepts certain structural parameters of “the system,” but then looks for ways to circumvent those parameters to create personal movement. This was how *kombinowanie* worked in communist Poland, where the possibility of actually changing the system seemed completely impossible to most. If you wanted to get something done, you simply figured out how to do it. Magda once explained it to me this way: “You know, back in the day Poles were really quiet, you weren’t voicing your opinion, you were doing what the government was telling you. If you were doing something under the table, you knew how to get stuff done quietly without anyone noticing. If you were skilled, you could do it, but you had to work within the system.” The point here isn’t that Poles thought the communist system was legitimate—by the 1980s almost no one in Poland did. Rather,
the point is that despite widespread disdain for the system, people knew that questioning
the political order didn’t create any movement in your everyday life, whereas
*kombinowanie* did. Similarly, even though many Chicago Poles I know seem to agree
that the U.S. immigration system is “broken,” they don’t seem to believe that talking
about that—or talking about who has a “right” to do what to whom when it comes to
borders and human movement—will do them much good; they want to talk about how
they can find paths by which their own lives might be improved. For some this may
mean entering into a marriage “for papers,” as Maja did. For others, it may mean
figuring out where an undocumented person can get the best medical services, or
deciding where to rent an apartment based on whether or not local law enforcement is
allowed to ask you about immigration status. In both cases, however, the rhetorical map
is defined by very pragmatic goals, and ontological claims play no part in achieving those
goals.

E. **Figuring State Power: Symbolicity and Incoherence**

I have set up a dichotomy between the discourses of “immigrant rights” and
*kombinowanie*, by which the first is “foundational” and the second is “situated,” or
“pragmatic.” For me, this division helps explain both why there is on-going rhetorical
*stasis* around immigration debates—too many ontological arguments—and why Poles
may be unresponsive to pervasive pro-immigrant discourses that aim to re-define the
human. But, despite these differences, the two discourses are very similar in one of their
core rhetorical motives—which is, as I see it, a desire to figure a relationship between
people and the state. Their figurations of this relationship are different—and they both have their own ironies and ambiguities, as I will explain—but, together, they offer interesting insights about state power, which may, in turn, suggest possible avenues for “movement” away from the immigration *stasis*.

As I described earlier, “immigrant rights” seems to be grounded in the ontological assumption that nation-state politics, and more particularly national borders, obstruct a fundamental human desire to move around the world. More rhetorically, I see this discourse as a constructing a certain understanding of the relationship between the symbolic and material realms—which is the central “tension” that I have been trying to explore in all of the chapters of this dissertation. In this particular case, I want to borrow Kenneth Burke’s terms “action” and “motion” to parse this relationship. Most simply, for Burke, “action” is the realm of human “symbolicity,” while “motion” is the “sheer physicality” or “sheer matter” (*Rhetoric of Religion* 16) that constitutes both the natural world and the biological operations of humans (including, for example, the brain impulses that are required for speech). Burke’s way of reconciling these two realms is to figure them in a symbiotic relationship, such that humans have a “duality of realm” that is “implicit in our definition of man as the symbol-using animal” (*Rhetoric of Religion* 16). In another context, he puts it this way: “If man is a symbol-using animal, some motives must derive from his animality, some from his symbolicity, and some from mixtures of the two” (*Language as Symbolic Action* 63). In writing about Burke’s understanding of motion and action, Debra Hawhee highlights this idea that the two are constitutively intertwined, responding to what she perceives as a common misconception that Burke has
“allegiances on the side of symbolic action” (*Moving Bodies* 157). As she puts it, “Burke’s work in and around symbolic action often takes him to the edges of language and into the realm of motion, for the two categories overlap and intersect as often as they pull apart” (158). Hawhee’s language of “overlapping” and “intersecting” dovetails with some of the terminology I have been using in my various efforts to describe the symbolic/material relationship, including the words “interlocking,” “inseparable,” and “mutually constitutive.” For me, Burke’s language of “action” and “motion” helps illuminate the rhetoric of “immigrant rights” in the following way: within the logic of “immigrant rights,” free movement is posited as a natural human endowment, and to this extent this movement falls within the realm of “motion,” or “sheer physicality.” Immigration laws, on the other hand, are understood as symbolic constructions, or examples of Burke’s “action,” which according to “immigrant rights” occupy a secondary status. To some extent, then, “immigrant rights” can be understood as a call for the nation-state to revise its symbolic order so that it better conforms to the facts of the physical realm; or, differently, it is a call for a more transparent symbolic order, in which symbols (and, more specifically, immigration laws) correspond to the material world (freely moving humans).

To this extent, “immigrant rights” constructs state power as artifice, or perhaps in Burke’s language, as pure “symbolicity.” There is an interesting echo of this logic in Poles’ own history, as anti-communist rhetors were making similar arguments about state power in the Eastern Bloc. For example, in his 1978 essay “The Power of the Powerless,” Czech dissident (and later president) Václav Havel described the regimes of
the Soviet bloc as “post-totalitarian,” in an effort to differentiate their specific exercise of oppression from more traditional forms of oppression. At the core of his argument is the idea that communist power, and its accompanying ideology, had become completely divorced from reality. As he puts it, “Under totalitarianism… there is nothing to prevent ideology from becoming more and more removed from reality, gradually turning into what it has already become in the post-totalitarian world: a world of appearances, a mere ritual, a formalized language deprived of semantic contact with reality and transformed into a system of ritual signs that replace reality with pseudo-reality” (32). A similar critique also came out of the more specific context of the People’s Republic of Poland. When Pope John Paul II made his first visit back to Poland in 1979, he mobilized a related argument. According to Cezar Ornatowski’s analysis of the Pope’s rhetorics during that visit, John Paul II employed subtle, enthymemic arguments to emphasize the contrast between “the sweep of centuries,” which had made up Polish history, and the relatively short existence of communism (“Rhetoric of Pope John Paul II’s Visits to Poland” 112-113). As Ornatowski describes it, the Pope used “[t]he ancient cathedrals, castles, and oaks amid which he spoke” to help invoke this sense of historic time: “In these terms, the 35 years of communism, the Iron Curtain, the Soviet block, food lines, and the drabness of daily existence shrunk to insignificant proportions, mere shadows on the vast stage of history, incidents in the proud history of the nation and of Christianity… that the Pope invoked” (“Rhetoric of Pope John Paul II’s Visits to Poland” 112). Like Havel’s claims about the “appearances” and “rituals” of communism, Pope John Paul II’s arguments draw a sharp line between the ephemeral nature of state oppression and
something much more profound and visceral, which was, for him, a combination of Polish history and Christianity. Both arguments seem to echo the way that “immigrant rights” figures the nation-state as consisting of a series of “formalized” claims that are completely divorced from the more substantial realm of human motion. Examples of this “formalized” language include, perhaps most notably, distinctions between “legal” and “illegal” humans. As described earlier, the popular pro-immigrant claim “No person is illegal” functions precisely according to the logic that state symbols do not accurately represent human life. Similarly, the notion that the U.S. government (or any other government) is actually capable of controlling the flow of transnational migrants constructs a kind of “pseudo-reality,” since global movement continues, despite increasingly aggressive regimes of border enforcement. Indeed, even the building of a wall at the Mexican-U.S. border, which might be understood as a desperate attempt to materialize the rhetorics of nation-state sovereignty, proves to be, in the end, symbolic as well, to the extent that it does little to actually stem the tide of migrants.

However, there is something deeply ironic about the “immigrant rights” claim that the state’s symbols do not fairly represent human life—or even that the symbolic and material realms can be neatly split. After all, even if one accepts “rights” and human movement as having ontological status, as De Genova seems to—although I am not

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36 I am reaching back to the late 1970s for these echoes, because they draw an interesting link to the case of European communism. But the “naturalization” or “ontologization” of human freedom reaches back much further, at least to the Enlightenment. These contemporary rights discourses are squarely in this tradition.

37 It may be the case that there are fewer crossings on the southern border than there were a few years ago. Barack Obama claimed in a 2011 speech that border apprehensions were down by 40% from two years earlier (“Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform in El Paso”). However, as I have described in previous chapters, it is widely understood that recent economic conditions have brought down immigration rates in the U.S. and around the world. Thus, there is no clear indication that increased border control in itself actually reduces transnational migration.
convinced that all “immigrant rights” rhetors necessarily do—then there is no denying that “rights” itself is grounded in state language, especially in the case of the U.S. After all, “immigrant rights” is a direct appeal to the state’s own symbolic apparatus, by which subjects can lodge grievances when specific entitlements, as outlined in the state’s own foundational discourses, are denied. This has been the great rhetorical power of “rights” in social movements throughout American history, including “women’s rights,” “civil rights,” and “gay rights”: disenfranchised groups point to the state’s professed ideologies and obligations to improve their own status. Similarly, this has been the force of the “human rights” argument in international contexts, in which the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights can serve as a kind of stand-in for inclusive nation-state discourses when they are absent. In the case of immigration, however, the situation may be more complicated, because the large majority of “rights” claimants—undocumented immigrants—constitute a group of subjects who have limited standing within the legal framework of the U.S. nation-state.\footnote{As I described briefly in the introductory chapter, the undocumented \textit{do} have many rights, since the Constitution often grants rights to persons who are present within the U.S. territory (Bosniak 55). However, the undocumented do not have key political and economic rights, including, perhaps most importantly, the right to vote and the right to work.} To this extent, the present-day undocumented may be similar to the interwar European “stateless,” about whom Hannah Arendt writes in \textit{The Origins of Totalitarianism}. Her sobering conclusion is that rights exist only \textit{within} political structures: “Man, it turns out, can lose all so-called Rights of Man without losing his essential quality as man, his human dignity. Only the loss of a polity itself expels him from humanity” (297). She goes on to claim that the mere existence of the “stateless” challenges the “human artifice” of organized, political life (302). More recently,
historian and sociologist Margaret Somers has extended Arendt’s point to the realm of citizenship, arguing that rights are grounded in “the recognition that comes only from attachments and inclusion” (7). As she puts it, “[i]f we want to advance the cause of actual (rather than metaphysical) human rights, we must embrace them as being anything but natural” (7). From this perspective, the central irony of “immigrant rights” lies in its assumption that the symbols of the nation-state, including the distinction of “illegal,” and visceral human experience can somehow be separated. As Burke posits in his discussion of “action” and “motion”—and as I have been trying to explain in my various analyses of the symbolic and material realms—the two are essentially indivisible, as part of what Burke calls the human “duality of realm.”

Nonetheless, “immigrant rights” does seem to offer a powerful insight about the symbolic nature of state power. This point, for example, opens up a valuable analysis of deportation. On the one hand, deportation is the absolute material expression of state sovereignty in reaction to unauthorized immigration. This is why the rise in deportations has become a focal point for pro-immigrant activists, who understand the pain and suffering that deportation wreaks on families. However, it may be that “deportation,” as a symbol of the nation-state’s potential for disciplining the undocumented, is more powerful than the act of deportation itself. This is part of De Genova’s point, when he observes that the mere specter of “deportability,” and not necessarily the material act of deportation itself, “has historically rendered undocumented migrant labor a distinctly disposable commodity” (“Migrant Illegality” 438). My fieldwork in Chicago certainly supports this point, as the very discourse of “deportation” motivates an oppressive fear
among undocumented immigrants and determines a range of short- and long-term
decisions. (Józef’s rhetorics from Chapter II offer a prime example of this.)

If the insight of “immigrant rights,” then, is that power is deeply symbolic—and
that an engagement with power may entail, at least in part, challenging the adequacy of
the state’s symbols—then the insight of kombinowanie is quite different. Unlike
“immigrant rights,” kombinowanie makes no ontological claims about free movement or
the nature of the human; similarly, it constructs no conflict between the symbolic and
material realms. Rather, in this mode of thought, movement exists only within the
overarching symbolic (political) structures of the nation-state, and it is understood that
efforts to create movement must happen within that framework. To draw on Burke’s
terms of “action” and “motion” again, these Polish discourses accept human movement
as thoroughly tied up in the realm of symbolic, state-controlled “action.” Following this
premise, then, the work of kombinowanie is to enact an informed navigation of the state’s
symbols—or, more to the point, to find specific points of incoherence in state power
through which the law might be circumvented. Maja’s decision to enter a marriage “for
papers” offers an example of this. She understood that the only path to achieving her
goal of a more stable life in the U.S. with her then-fiancé was through legalization, and
she understood that marriage to a citizen was virtually the only way for an undocumented
person to achieve this. Thus, she looked for an incoherence, which turned out to be the
state’s inability to enforce a certain definition of “marriage,” due to the impossibility of
effectively monitoring and controlling agreements between individuals. This incoherence
allowed her to manipulate the state’s symbols of belonging—including the symbols of the
“green card” and the “certificate of citizenship”—in a way that proved very effective, to the extent that she achieved her goal of gaining legal status in the U.S. Another example of such symbolic navigation is the undocumented Pole who decides to relocate from one of the many Chicago suburbs where police officers may use a routine traffic stop to inquire about immigration status, to the “sanctuary city” of Chicago, where police officers are forbidden from making such inquiries. He or she understands that free movement is symbolically controlled by the state, but there is also an understanding that state power is incoherent across jurisdictions; thus, one must figure out how to take an action that will allow for movement within the realm of the state’s symbols, both literally and figuratively.

However, like “immigrant rights,” kombinowanie is inherently ironic, especially as a possible effort to “invent movement” in response to the nation-state structure. Despite the kinds of personal successes that Maja and others have been able to achieve through kombinowanie, this discourse arguably entails complicity with state power, to the extent that there is never a challenge to the structure or nature of the law itself. No matter how much “movement” one can manage to create in his or her own life, the overarching power apparatus remains intact. To this extent, it may even be that the practice of kombinowanie is inherent to state power. This is one way of interpreting the case in communist Poland, where myriad acts of everyday kombinowanie, including the cross-country train rides by Magda and her family to get toilet paper, did nothing to affect the rule of one-party politics. On the contrary, they may have even propelled and expanded state oppression by establishing an “underworld” of activity that was dependent upon the
existence of that very state. It was the explicitly moral challenges to power lodged by people like Václav Havel, Pope John Paul II, and countless others—along with an economic implosion by the 1980s—that led to the fall of European communism.

Likewise, it is hard to imagine that the situation would be any different in the case of the U.S. state, which presumably is not going to relax immigration laws in response to continual efforts to “game the system” on the part of Poles and other immigrants; indeed, these kinds of “moves,” or “tactics” as De Certeau might say, are implicit in state power. Furthermore, the state seems to engage in its own forms of kombinowanie. An example of this would be the U.S. government’s new “Alien Transfer Exit Program,” which has altered the way the state deals with people who are caught crossing the southern border.

Whereas it used to be standard policy to deport someone caught crossing the southern border back to Mexico at the same location, the Alien Transfer Exit Program now prescribes that such individuals should be deported to locations in Mexico as far 1,200 miles away—including to violent border cities where organized crime groups have been known to kidnap and murder immigrants (Marosi). A spokesman for ICE calls the procedure “another tool in our toolbox that helps deter people,” but, in my analysis, it qualifies as a case of cleverly “working within the system” to achieve certain ends.

Nonetheless, despite these ironies and political short-comings, the discourse of kombinowanie offers a key insight about state power—that it is both incoherent and limited. As I discussed in the last chapter, the incoherence of larger rhetorics and structures is inescapable—whether it’s “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” or in this case “the nation-state.” But in the case of kombinowanie, this observation becomes the basis
for pragmatic action. Interestingly, the U.S. state itself sometimes points to the incoherence and limitations of its own immigration laws. For example, in a series of well-known memos from 2010 and 2011, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton outlines new considerations that are meant to guide how ICE offices and employees carry out their duties of the “apprehension, detention, and removal of aliens” (“Memorandum” June 30, 2010). As he states in a 2011 memo, a core responsibility of ICE is “to enforce the nation’s civil immigration laws,” but as he then explains, it is impossible to actually carry out such a task due to “limited resources” (“Memorandum” June 17, 2011). In a different memo, he specifically states that ICE has funding to remove only about 400,000 undocumented immigrants a year, or “less than 4 percent of the estimated illegal population in the United States” (“Memorandum” June 30, 2010). He goes on to construct a hierarchy of “aliens,” according to which ICE employees should decide whom to deport, with those who “pose a danger to national security or risk to public safety,” at the top of the list. Elsewhere, he highlights that certain “positive factors” should “prompt particular care and consideration” in the cases of some individuals, including veterans, minors and the elderly, pregnant or nursing women, and those with serious health conditions (“Memorandum” June 17, 2011). As I understand them, these memos confess to the incoherence of immigration law, to the extent that actually enacting such law is impossible. Indeed, President Obama himself acknowledged something similar in a 2010 speech on immigration reform, in which he admitted that “our borders have been porous for decades” and “…the system is broken. And everybody knows it” (“Remarks on Comprehensive Immigration Reform”). Such
official proclamations do not undercut the state’s expansive efforts to enforce the law as thoroughly as possible—400,000 deportations constitute a profound extent of family despair and suffering—but they serve as a reminder that the law is, in the end, a kind of idealized script for material action.

The insight that state power is incoherent and limited offers a basis for individual acts of *kombinowanie*, but it has also been used recently by both pro- and anti-immigrant forces to achieve political ends. For example, I alluded earlier to the passage of the Illinois DREAM Act, which was the result of many months of lobbying by numerous grassroots organizations, including the Chicago Polish Project. Although the Illinois DREAM Act does not grant all that a federal DREAM Act would—including, most importantly, a path to legalization for college students who were brought to the U.S. as children without papers—it does offer privately funded scholarships for such students, and it promotes training for high school and college counselors on how to better advise undocumented youth about their options. To a large extent, the Illinois DREAM Act is premised on the incoherence of state power. Despite the generally accepted interpretation that the Constitution gives the Congress full authority over immigration issues, the incoherence in the practice of this law has been used to create local legislation that addresses immigration. Whether or not the Illinois DREAM Act indeed legislates immigration through the introduction of a private scholarship fund for undocumented students is doubtful, but it is clearly a local effort to intervene in immigration matters where the federal government has not managed to do so. This same logic has guided the recent passage of decidedly anti-immigration laws on the part of an increasing number of
states. As noted, the State Department has challenged many of these laws precisely on the grounds that they attempt to supersede the federal government’s authority on matters of immigration. This might be understood, on the one hand, as a conflict between state and federal jurisdictions, but it is also a struggle over how to deal with the limitations of state power. The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on the Arizona law this June will help outline precisely how far states may go in their efforts create immigration legislation—whether the laws are aimed at including or excluding immigrants.

F. Immigrant Action: Time to Move

Before concluding, I want to clarify a couple points. First, I do not want to be misread as suggesting that the people I have met in my fieldwork (including Maja) do not believe in or care about notions like “rights,” “free movement,” or the nature of “the human.” Indeed, my conversations with people—especially with my CPP activist colleagues—make clear that many Poles do have strong convictions about such issues, just as Poles in communist Poland had strong convictions about the nature of the system under which they were living. However, the assumption seems to be that talking about those concerns will not do much good, or, differently, will not create much movement. Second, I am not claiming that Chicago Poles’ ways of talking about and interacting with U.S. immigration policy are necessarily unique to this group. Indeed, I think much of the world—and particularly the post-communist world—operates according to the principles of kombinowanie (or being able to “get things done,” as the popular Polish saying in the epigraph would have it), and I am sure that other immigrant groups in the U.S. employ
similar logics. But Polish rhetorics are what I study and know well, and since I am invested in a phenomenological ethnographic perspective, I limit myself to this discursive and cultural terrain.

Returning to the question I posed at the beginning of this chapter—How does one invent movement in a place of *stasis*?—the answer that emerges from my analyses here may be the following: rhetorical movement away from *stasis* can occur only when rhetors abandon ontological or ideological claims in favor of pragmatic considerations around which there might be a possibility for constructive debate. For me, “immigrant rights,” and all of the other “rights” I have discussed, do not offer such a possibility. At the same time, even though *kombinowanie* is a decidedly pragmatic form of engagement, it offers no grounds for a politically effective rhetoric, because it is premised on an antagonistic relationship with the state. What, then, might be a pragmatic, pro-immigrant rhetoric that has the potential for offering some movement through both *stasis* and stasis? I don’t know for sure, and I certainly don’t have any language that is ready to be painted on signs for the next immigration march. However, it seems to me that arguments that focus on something like economic benefit and shared social well-being might merit consideration. That is, if mainstream American voters and politicians could become convinced that a “path to citizenship” and more liberal immigration policies have a chance of improving everyone’s economic and social experiences, then there might be some beginnings of debate. Differently, if the *topos* of something like “the collective” could be mobilized

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39 I have been told by Latino colleagues who are familiar with the world of Mexican immigrants that similar practices operate in this community. From these conversations, it seems that the dynamics are different, and certainly the political and discursive histories are different, but there is, apparently, a rhetoric of “getting things done.”
effectively, perhaps political possibilities might open up. Admittedly, this *topos* is not always effective in American discourse—and in my view it is becoming even more difficult to argue for “the collective” in this moment of economic hardship, which has been characterized by a proliferation of libertarian rhetorics, such as those of the “Tea Party” movement—but it has a long, venerable history, and it is always there for the taking.

To generalize my observations here some, I am trying to reach back to the ancient tradition by which rhetoric is understood as a way to “influence human choices on specific matters that require immediate attention,” to borrow Gerard Hauser’s language again (2-3). Rhetorician Jeffrey Walker traces a few moments of this attitude in rhetorical history: Hermagoras saw the goal of rhetoric as solving a “political question or public issue”; a central treatise of Roman rhetoric, the *Ad Herennium*, described the orator as the one who could “‘speak on those matters that custom and law have constituted for civil use, and to bring [the] audience to agreement as far as possible’”; and Cicero defined rhetoric as “an art belonging to ‘civil science’ and having the goal of speaking ‘in a manner suited to persuade an audience’” (60). These are not necessarily the theoretical attitudes that have driven my analysis of “immigrant rights” and *kombinowanie*, but they may be the ones that offer the best chance of “inventing movement” through the *stasis* (and related stasis) that seems to characterize U.S. immigration debates today.
VI. CONCLUSION: FROM ETHNOGRAPHY TO IMMIGRATION REFORM

[R]hetoric is not an all or nothing proposition but rather a proposition of countless
discursive attempts with uncertain outcomes.

John Poulakos, *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece* (xiii)

[O]ne’s morality as a specialist cannot be allowed to do duty for one’s morality as a citizen.

—Kenneth Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* (28)

The various analyses and investigations that I have offered in this dissertation may seem, in some ways, disjointed and independent, because they do not follow the linear path of a single argument. In Chapter II, I looked at the rhetorics of one man, Józef, as a way to build up a theory of “rhetorical ethnography”; in Chapter III, I explored the spaces of Polish Chicagoland as sites for articulating a conceptualization of the relationship between rhetoric and space, and for describing the ways that Chicago Poles have invested space with a range of meanings; in Chapter IV, I took up the overarching discourses of “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” and “the nation-state” in order to speculate on the kinds of “perfection” and “coherence” that drive all rhetorical activity, and I drew on the unique inventions of Magda, Radek, and Pani Nela as a way to demonstrate how these larger geotectonic shifts are getting worked on in everyday talk; and in Chapter V, I analyzed some of the discourses of the pro-immigrant movement (“immigrant rights”) and the Polish immigrant community (*kombinowanie*) as a means of
commenting on the nature of state power and the current state of the immigration debates. However, even though each of these analyses addresses a unique issue, I see them as working together as “variations on themes,” as I put in the introductory chapter. Above all, I think that they contribute to a broader understanding of rhetorical invention as a profoundly situated activity, and to the work of rhetorical analysis as the work of radical contextualization. In terms of rhetorical theory, this may be the primary lesson that I have taken away from nearly two years of fieldwork with Chicago Poles—that the symbolic and materials realms are interdependent and mutually constitutive in ways that we cannot fully understand or articulate, and that engagement with rhetoric “on the ground” entails, perhaps above all, trying to pinpoint some of the “tensions” that produce rhetorical invention. This work does not lead to “all or nothing propositions,” as John Poulakos puts it, but rather to an on-going process of trying to refigure and reformulate the way we think about rhetoric in the world. To this extent, I see this dissertation as a worthwhile contribution to the field of rhetorical studies, and also, I would like to think, as a modest contribution to the areas of immigration and citizenship studies.

In terms of immigration politics, I have taken away a different lesson from my fieldwork with Chicago’s *Polonia*—one that I have not addressed very extensively in the dissertation (except in the preceding chapter), but which I believe has found its way into my own rhetorics, however implicitly. Through my fieldwork, I have participated in new activities and had new experiences; I have also spent a great deal of time talking to Chicago Poles in depth about their ideas, their lives, and their worldviews. Indeed, it wasn’t until I began carrying out the work of this project that I truly entered into the
world of Polish Chicago in a direct and substantial way. All of these aspects of my ethnographic experience have enriched me personally, but they have also given me a much more grounded perspective on the politics of immigration. That is, while I have always considered myself “pro-immigrant,” that conviction was based more on my general ideological orientation towards pluralism and openness, and on my deep feelings of sympathy for immigrants—due to my many years of living among and working with immigrants (as a friend, a family member, and a teacher of English as a Second Language), and due to my own experiences of living abroad. Now, I have begun to see how arguments for pro-immigrant politics might be built from the ground up. These would not be, for me, arguments about “rights,” “freedom,” or the nature of the human, but rather much more pragmatic arguments about the ways that everyday immigrant life intersects with and contributes to American society. I believe there is a great deal of rhetorical work to be done here, which has not been the focus of this dissertation, but it is an area to which I would like to devote more attention moving forward. I have not used Kenneth Burke’s notion of “identification” in any of my investigations here—even though it is sometimes considered the most central feature of his rhetorical theory—but I think it would be the guiding principle in any attempt to develop more effective pro-immigrant rhetorics. More specifically, I have come to believe that the obstacle to immigration reform is not any particular group of politicians in Washington (i.e., Republicans, or more recently Barack Obama), but rather it is the mainstream American electorate. Thus, the rhetorical task that I see right now is persuading “middle America” that the creation of legal roads into the social, economic, and political dimensions of life
in this country is a net benefit for everyone. Or differently, pro-immigrant forces need to persuade a broad range of Americans to identify with immigrants, and particularly the undocumented. As I mentioned before, this may be an argument that utilizes the topos of “the collective,” which is a very difficult “place” to go right now in American politics. But I am convinced there must be a way there, and one method for finding that way is to take the insights of rhetorical theory—like the ones that emerge in this dissertation—and try to figure out how they might translate into political possibility. This isn’t typically the work of contemporary rhetorical scholarship, but it is precisely the kind of pragmatic activity that constituted “rhetoric” for many centuries. For me, a commitment to figuring out how to do things with language in the world—or how to use words to make things happen in the world—is one of our greatest inheritances as rhetoricians.
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APPENDIX

April 2, 2012

Jason Schneider, MA
English
601 S Mrogan St English Dept
M/C 162
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (773) 230-8012

RE: Protocol # 2010-0465
“Immigration, Citizenship, and Rhetorics of Polish Chicago”

Dear Mr. Schneider:

Your Continuing Review application was reviewed and approved by the Expedited review process on April 2, 2012. You may now continue your research.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

**Protocol Approval Period:** April 17, 2012 - April 16, 2013

**Approved Subject Enrollment #:** 45 (limited to data analysis for 12 enrolled subjects)

**Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors:** These determinations have not been made for this study since it has not been approved for enrollment of minors.

**Performance Sites:** UIC, European Centre for Modern Languages

**Sponsor:** None
Research Protocol:
a) Immigration, Citizenship, and Rhetorics of Polish Chicago, Version 1, May 17, 2010

Recruitment Material:
a) N/A – research limited to data analysis only

Informed Consent:
a) N/A – research limited to data analysis only

Your research continues to meet the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes,

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

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Please remember to:

➤ Use your research protocol number (2010-0465) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

➤ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure, "UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.
We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-2014. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Sandra Costello
Assistant Director, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosures:

1. UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects
2. Data Security Enclosure

cc: Mark Canuel, English, M/C 162
    Ralph Cintron (faculty advisor), English, M/C 162
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Education

Degrees
University of Illinois at Chicago 2007-2012
Ph.D. English Studies (Rhetoric and Composition) (projected)

University of California, Davis 2002-2004
M.A., Applied Linguistics

Emory University 1993-1997
B.A., English

Study Abroad
Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland 2000-2001
Center for Polish Language and Culture in the World

King’s College, University of London Fall 1995

Teaching and Research Expertise
Rhetorical theory; composition theory; composition (developmental, multi-genre, research, and ESL); ethnographic/qualitative research methods; community rhetorics; rhetorics of immigration, globalization, and transnationalism; second-language acquisition and pedagogy; general linguistics and sociolinguistics; English grammar.

Publications and Research

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Other Journal Articles


Other Publications
**Selected Conference Presentations**


“Re-Thinking the Writing Process in TESOL.” Tutorium in Intensive English Lecturer In-Service Day, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2008.

“Sociopolitical Concerns in the Classroom: How Far is Too Far?” California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, State Conference, Long Beach, CA, 2005.


**Teaching Experience**

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

*English Department, Lecturer 2007-present*

Courses taught:
- English 160, Academic Writing I (two sections)
- English 161, Academic Writing II (six sections)
- English 122, Understanding Rhetoric (two sections)
- Linguistics 160, Language & Society (two sections)

*Tutorium in Intensive English (ESL), Lecturer 2006-present*

More than 20 courses taught in academic reading, writing, listening, and speaking for international students at beginner to advanced levels; duties also include contributing to curriculum and materials development at the course and program levels, directing a team of teachers each semester, and mentoring applied linguistics graduate student interns.

**DePaul University, Chicago, IL**

*English Language Academy, ESL Instructor, Fall 2005*

Two courses taught in writing and grammar for international students.

**Columbia College Chicago**

*English Department, Lecturer, Fall 2005*

Course taught: Composition I, First-Year Writing for International Students
Writing Center Tutor, Fall 2005
Specialization in ESL tutoring.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago
ESL Tutor, Fall 2005
Tutoring sessions for international graduate students.

University of California, Davis
Linguistics Department, Teaching Assistant, 2002-2004, Lecturer 2004-2005
Courses taught:
Linguistics 1, Introduction to Linguistics (two sections as main instructor, three sections as TA)
Linguistics 23, Advanced Undergraduate ESL Composition (one section)
Linguistics 25, English for ESL/International Graduate Students (three sections)
Linguistics 26, Advanced Writing for ESL/International Graduate Students (two sections)
Linguistics 391, Oral English for ESL/International Graduate Students (one section)

Intensive English Program, Lecturer, 2004-2005
Seven courses taught in writing, speaking, listening, and research skills for international students and visiting scholars.

Woodland Community College, Woodland, CA
English Instructor, 2004-2005
Courses taught:
English 51, Preparatory Composition and Reading (two sections)
English 1C, Critical Thinking/Advanced Composition (two sections)

International Language Institute, Cairo, Egypt
ESL Instructor, Summer 1998
Courses in English for children and adults.

International House Language School, Krakow, Poland
ESL Instructor, 1997-2001
More than 20 courses taught for teenagers, university students, and adults.

Administrative Experience
Assistant Director, First-Year Writing Program, University of Illinois at Chicago, Jan. 2011-May 2012. Participated in a team that carries out the day-to-day operations of the composition program, including reviewing all instructor syllabi, observing and mentoring new teaching assistants, providing help and advice to composition instructors, organizing professional development conferences and workshops, and designing and implementing new curricula. Special assignments included improving placement testing procedures and helping evaluate curriculum of developmental composition courses.

Member-at-Large, Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2006-2007
Participated in board meetings and assisted in committee work; helped plan and organize a local workshop and a state conference.
Selected Honors and Awards

University of Illinois at Chicago First-Year Writing Program “In Contest” Award, 2009
Shared with first-year composition student Jaime Gamboa for his cover letter, which was published in the 2009 UIC edition of In Context: Reading and Writing in Cultural Conversations by Feldman, Downs and McManus.

Steven Lapointe Award, University of California, Davis, Linguistics Department, 2004
Awarded for outstanding contribution to a national conference by a linguistics graduate student.

Study in Poland Scholarship, The Kosciuszko Foundation, 2000-2001
Funding for studying Polish language and culture at the Jagiellonian University.

Artistine Mann Award in Fiction Writing, Emory University, English Department, 1995, 1996
Competition open to all undergraduates; judged by visiting writers.

Professional Affiliations
Rhetoric Society of America (RSA)
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