Portraits of Emigration: Sour Milk and Honey in the Promised Land

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This article analyzes the moral tones of public emigration stories through an exploratory analysis of newspaper stories published between 1990 and 1993 in a region in Poland with a century-old tradition of out-migration. Media stories are fertile ground for examining values and myths because they negotiate between the micro-level process of individuals constructing meanings and the macro-level process of political economies producing meanings. I identified two sets of contradictory stories: (1) stories about the sending country cast emigrants as either home builders or home wreckers, and (2) stories about the receiving country depicted America as either Horatio Alger’s land of possibility or a morally degenerate place where greed corrupts the soul. To explain these contradictions, I compare the institution of migration to (post)modern culture and note that both contribute to social diversity and structural differentiation which lead to value inconsistencies.

An article titled “The bitter taste of America,” published in the Tygodnik Podhalański in Poland, opens with a description of an aging elegant woman dressed in fading American clothes carefully counting her change as she does her daily shopping in Zakopane, a town in the mountainous Podhale region in southeastern Poland (Sowa 1991). The husband of this impoverished woman had emigrated to the United States in the 1970s, leaving her and their three children behind on the family land. He never returned, yet neither did he sever ties with the family. Over the years he sent them money and presents from Chicago, and eventually each of his children joined him there. The mother “lost hope that those in America would return” and finally decided to join them in Chicago. She sold the family property, kissed the ground good-bye, and left for good. When she arrived at O’Hare airport in Chicago, however, no one was there to meet her. She tried calling the only number she had but the person who answered the phone did not speak Polish. She called again and screamed frantically “Józef, Polska, żona, Józef” [Joseph, Polish, wife, Joseph], but the person on the other end just hung up the receiver. The woman, frightened and fatigued, sat down and cried. Finally someone at the airport who spoke Polish became her translator, and after speaking with the person on the other end of the phone, this complete stranger informed the woman that her whole family had been killed three days prior in an automobile accident. The woman fainted and woke up in a hospital.
Her husband's estate covered her medical bills, but she had no money left. A Polish nurse gave her temporary shelter and helped her find a job taking care of a sick elderly woman. She worked there for a year, but when her client died the American family cheated her out of some of her pay. She got another job and eventually saved enough money to return to Poland, but not enough money to buy back her property. So once again she is living in Zakopane, but this time without a home, with little money, and with only the memory of her family.

There are several messages in this story: (1) One person emigrating sets in motion the potential for the rest of the family to leave. The emigration of her children diminished this mother's attachment to her property in Poland. She was less eager to stay after they left, and she emigrated reluctantly in order to be close to her children. The story also contains the message that it is more difficult to hold on to the role of "mother" when your children are living thousands of miles away in a foreign country. (2) Emigration is a thief that robs one of attachment to and position in the homeland. This woman sold her inherited family property and was not able to recover it upon her return. She now lives on the fringe of a society of which she was once a vibrant member (i.e., the story casts her as an outsider who "eats her lunch at the bus station"). The images of her kissing the ground when she is leaving (departing from a cherished place) and her not being able to communicate in the airport in which she arrives both serve to underscore that an immigrant is estranged from the homeland and the host country—migration is a transient limbo, a betwixt-and-between world. (3) America is a hostile place. Her family was killed on American highways, and an American employer swindled her. She is not even compensated for this brutality with dollars. This woman worked years just to earn enough for a ticket back to Poland. The overall message from this story is that emigration can be a bitter experience.

People emigrate voluntarily because they believe that life will be better in the other place (e.g., better jobs, higher wages, expanded political, religious, or social freedoms; the opportunity to be near relatives). Counterpoised to these benefits are the potential costs of emigration (e.g., loss of connection to family and friends, devaluation of human capital, feelings of alienation). The costs and benefits of emigration are constructed and reflected in public and private discussions. In this article I analyze public discourses of emigration in the sending country in order to understand the myths of migration, that is, the moral messages that help people make sense of the social reality within which they live. In the region of study, Zakopane, Poland, heavy out-migration has existed for over one hundred years, and as a result a patterned set of expected beliefs and values accompany this behavior, making migration an institution in this region. This article examines the public moral messages that give direction to those acting within this institution.
The study of international migration is dominated by structural analyses. Researchers have most frequently and successfully explained how economic transformations and social network maturation precipitate and maintain the flow of people across borders. Many scholars agree that the voluntary movement of people is driven in large part by labor needs. “Most theorizing about international migration has focused on the origins, uses and effects of labor flows,” and when discussing the origins of labor migration scholars usually address push-pull factors with economic explanations that include such things as wage differentials, labor supply, and labor recruitment (Portes and Bach 1985, p. 3-5). Aristide Zolberg (1989) argues that international migration is explained most acceptably by a world systems perspective that understands migration as labor movement between two unequal regions or countries that are not isolated from each other but are connected within the same global economic system. In addition to these economic theories, migration scholars also recognize the role of social networks in maintaining migration flows. Portes and Bach (1985) as well as Massey, Alarcon, Durand, and Gonzalez (1987) found that even when the onset of migration is linked to economic factors (e.g., labor supply and demand and wage differentials), the migration wave is maintained by social relations and webs of affiliation that, over time, thicken and become transnational. Migration itself transforms the sending country so that the reasons for emigrating are different from one generation to the next.

Migration begins because of structural changes in sending and receiving countries, which generate unequal access to productive wealth in the former and strong demand for skilled labor in the latter, stimulating the international movement of workers. Once begun, however, international migration unfolds according to an internal logic that reflects its inherently social nature. (1987, pp. 312-13)

These structural theories—both the economic and network analyses—explain something about who migrates and why they migrate, but they do not help us understand how people assign meaning and value to this behavior. That is, they do not and can not explain the cultural foundations of migration. By culture I mean a system of shared symbols, beliefs, values, and norms. Structure creates opportunities and possibilities—it tells us what we “could” do; it is in the realm of culture, however, that the “ought” is found. Culture is our tool for interpreting and understanding behavior; it supplies meaning to our symbols and meaning to our identities.

When migration waves become entrenched over time—that is, when people have been migrating out of one region and into another region for decades and even centuries—then the migration flow becomes an institution. As an institution it houses routinized beliefs, values, and behaviors. While the institution of migration is certainly and undoubtedly linked to structural factors, in particular the
political and economic situations and sustaining social networks, it is also supported by a cultural foundation of accepted beliefs and values and expected behaviors. Thomas and Znaniecki recognized this when they compared individual migration to mass migration. They argued that when enough people went abroad to the same destination in the same time period, then the migration became a social movement, and the attitudes of the community toward migration changed so that the community became more accepting of the migration (1958, pp. 1489–94). This acceptance, in turn, led to more people actually going abroad. Continuous migration not only alters economic and social structures, but also beliefs and values.

This focus on the cultural realm of beliefs and values is a much less explored area in the field of international migration. We know a lot about why people migrate, but less about how people make sense of migration (from the point of view of both the people who migrate and those who stay behind). One way we can understand how people make sense of their worlds is to listen to their stories.

This paper is based on data from emigration stories. I examine the stories in two unique ways. First, this study looks at the moral undertones of the stories. Emigration stories provide information. We already know that information is important in shaping and maintaining migration waves; for example, chain migration is dependent on earlier immigrants telling the later immigrants where to go and how to get there. But scholars often narrowly conceive of migration networks as simple conduits of information used by immigrants to help find jobs, resettle, and socially integrate themselves (e.g., Massey et al. 1987; Lowell 1992). There is more to information than factual content. When we communicate, words carry with them tone and flavor, acceptance or rejection, value judgments and persuasion. We use words to construct definitions of the situation—to give an impression, a message, a directive. So networks not only pass along information, they also pass along advice. Borrowing from Gary Fine, I refer to this advice as the “moral” message. Fine defined the moral order as that part of the story “designed to persuade or convince that some action should be performed or should be avoided” (1992, p. 30). Implicit in my argument is that information has a value component—it not only tells readers what they could do, but also what they should do. These “should” messages provide information about the values woven into the institution of migration and thereby help us understand the cultural foundations of migration.

Second, information can come from private sources (e.g., letters from family members or friends who are living abroad) or public sources (e.g., television programs or newspaper articles). Social scientists have well documented the private flow of information through letters (e.g., Thomas and Znaniecki 1958; Erickson 1972; Kula, Kula, Assorodobraj-Kula, and Wtulich 1986; Kamphoefner, ...
Helbich and Sommer 1991; Brinks 1995) or word of mouth though circular or return migration (e.g., Massey et al. 1987; Walaszek 1992a, 1992b; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). In contrast, this article concentrates on public narratives, in particular, newspaper accounts.

Public narratives are important because they are more representative of collective sentiments of a society than are private narratives. I state this cautiously, fully aware that media stories are products of the industry (including its technology, production process, and for-profit intentions) as well as dominant cultural discourse (Hall 1980; Kellner 1995; Roberts 1997). Yet it is precisely because “media stories are products of institutions strategically situated within a dominant (though not uncontested) political, economic, and ideological order” that they can be used as a hunting ground for locating the values and beliefs that support or challenge the institution (Roberts 1997, p. 268). These media portrayals represent discourses—conceptual frameworks that help people label behavior as good/bad, appropriate/inappropriate, desirable/undesirable.

Media shape ideas, provide images, and supply meaning to events in everyday social realities. Douglas Kellner (1995) argues that media culture helps us construct our identities—it helps us make sense out of the world by defining roles, values, and norms. For example, in the emigration stories there are two images of the parent: the parent as provider of material goods (which is the migrating parent) and the parent as responsible for the everyday socialization of the child (which is the nonmigrating parent).

Media culture negotiates between the micro-level process of individuals constructing meanings and the macro-level process of political economies producing meanings. Media representations not only reflect public opinion but help to construct definitions of the public world by framing events in negative or positive manners and providing cues through which the audience is led to interpret events (Tuchman 1978; Bennet 1982; Kellner 1995). And whether guided by the invisible hand of the market or the visible hand of the cultural and political elite, it is precisely because media culture presents an image about how things “should be” that I feel confident using these newspaper articles to explore values and beliefs. Whether they reflect or construct realities, these public stories provide data on the perceptions of these realities.

Social Context and Data Sources

The emigration stories were published between 1990 and 1993 in two newspapers in southeastern Poland. I am not attempting an exhaustive analysis of all public accounts of emigration from Poland, but instead I focus on a particular region in Poland and a particular news source. I will begin with a brief structural analysis of emigration from this region.
The Economic Characteristics of the Region of Study

The study focuses on a region in southeastern Poland that has experienced heavy out-migration for over a century. Southeastern Poland was part of a larger region known as Galicia when it was under the administration of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the nineteenth century, and the term Galicia is still used colloquially to refer to this Polish region. Included in this region is the province of Nowy Sacz, and within this province is the town of Zakopane, where the two newspaper sources for this study are published. This province also includes a small mountainous region known as the Podhale (roughly 25 by 30 miles), and the predominant Polish ethnic group in this region is the górale podhalanczy (in English translations this group is referred to variably as the Podhale mountaineers, highlanders, or górale, the term that I will use).

The górale have long looked for work outside their region. Famous as hay mowers in the nineteenth century, they traveled to nearby estates in the central part of Poland and then south into Hungary and Slovakia. Migration to America began in the 1870s and initially was not considered permanent. The goal was to work a few years and return home. Even so, many remained in America, and when they could afford it they sent for their wives and children. In the late nineteenth century, emigration from this region surged as a result of population growth, lack of industrialization, and inefficient agricultural arrangements, all of which contributed to impoverished living conditions (Golab 1977; Pilch 1975; Zubrzycki 1953; Greene 1961). A survey conducted in 1907 in Galicia found that the largest rates of out-migration were from the Podhale region (Kumor 1982, pp. 94–95). America was the most popular destination for Poles emigrating from Galicia—by World War I, almost 500,000 Poles had left this region for the U.S. (Pilch 1975, p. 86). The górale settled mostly in Chicago, on the south side of the city. While Chicago is second only to Warsaw as the city with the most Poles, Chicago has more górale than even the Podhale region itself (Gromada 1982, p. 109).

In the late twentieth century Poles continue to emigrate from this region, looking for higher wages in more industrialized countries such as the United States, Germany, and Canada. Conditions in this region are not as desperate as they were a hundred years ago, but the economy is still weak. Industry in this region remains underdeveloped when compared to Poland’s national averages. In the early 1990s in the Nowy Sacz province, only 15% of employed people worked in industry, while over 47% worked in agriculture; this compares to a national average of 25% employed in industry and 29.5% employed in agriculture (Rocznik Statystyczny 1992, p. LII). The entire region is still largely rural: in 1991, 62% of the total population in Poland lived in urban areas, but in Nowy Sacz 64% of the population lived in villages (Rocznik Statystyczny 1992, p. 56).
In this region the main products are grain, white beets, cattle, and sheep (Rocznik Statystyczny 1992, p. LVI). Another important industry is tourism. The Tatry and Beskidy mountain ranges are popular vacation spots for Polish tourists and an increasing number of foreign tourists. In addition to the jobs created by the hotel and restaurant industries, another important but informal source of family income is renting rooms to tourists.

Between 1950 and the late 1980s, roughly 1.5 million Poles left Poland (Korcelli 1992, p. 293). The desire to go abroad declined somewhat after 1989 (after the collapse of the communist state) as opportunities for new ventures improved during the period of economic restructuring (Kolarska-Bobinska 1993, p. 108). According to official statistics, more Poles were returning to Poland after 1989 than before, and fewer Poles were leaving (Rocznik Statystyczny 1989, p. 187; 1992, p. 58). Still, farmers were one of the social groups most threatened by the economic transformations (Lipinski-Wnuk 1993), so material conditions continued to propel migration from these rural areas. In addition, in the Podhale region temporary work abroad was still one of the main means of acquiring the lump sum of money needed to get into the tourist industry. For example, American dollars and deutsche marks were used to buy taxis or materials to build large multilevel houses used to let rooms to tourists.

Given these structural conditions, it should be obvious that economic calculations influence the decision to emigrate. While this paper focuses on the moral undertones and cultural messages of emigration narratives, I also recognize that present day economic conditions, as well as the history of emigration between the sending and receiving regions go a long way in explaining the continued migration flow. Much of the temporary and permanent emigration from this region is labor movement, and the flow of labor is supported by strong social networks. Structural forces do matter. But there is more. And that is what I explore in the analysis of these narratives.

The Social and Political Context in the Early 1990s

Since the articles were published between 1990 and 1993, it is important to note any particular trends occurring during this period. As mentioned, Poland became politically liberated from the Communist bloc in 1989, and this initiated the transformation from a state-owned to a free-market economy. This introduction of capitalism was greeted with mostly “bravos” in Poland because it created opportunities for entrepreneurial activities, it stocked the store shelves with much-needed staples as well as luxuries, and it offered workers a chance to have wages commensurate with labor expended. The negative side effects of a capitalist economy, however, quickly became apparent: rates of homelessness, unemployment, and crime all rose. In addition, the state greatly reduced subsidies for
housing, medicine, and food, and as a result prices for these commodities increased substantially. Unfortunately, most wages did not increase at the same rate, especially in the public sector. Thus the move to a capitalist economy was experienced for many as an increase in goods on store shelves and economic opportunities, but a decrease in purchasing power and material security. The transformation was felt differently by various groups in Poland. The young, the college-educated, and the urban dwellers were more optimistic and in better positions to take advantage of the changes; the old, the less-educated, and those living in rural areas had fewer opportunities and were more likely to experience the uncertainty and poverty inevitable in a capitalist economy. This period of transformation was the most significant event influencing the social situation in Poland in the early 1990s. By 1993 the inequalities of the system were more apparent, but so were the successes.

Another important context involves national attitudes toward emigration. The moral discussion about whether one should emigrate takes place within the contexts of the needs of the homeland. Emigration has often been perceived as a collective ill for Poland. In the nineteenth century emigration was frowned upon by the church (which lost paying, believing parishioners), by opposition parties (which lost revolutionaries), by large landowners (which lost cheap laborers), and by the state (who lost educated professionals) (Galos and Wajda 1975, p. 55; Kumor 1982; Pilch 1975, p. 80–81). A hundred years later, emigration was still frowned upon by authorities in Poland. The church and opposition groups in the 1980s urged alienated and disgruntled citizens not to emigrate but instead to stay and help bring about larger societal change in Poland. Pope John Paul II, a Polish native, referred to emigration as “an escape” from the moral duties one had to the nation and “appealed to Polish youth that they not surrender to hopelessness and that they not leave the country” (Perth-Grabowski 1987, p. 45). In 1990 Poland embarked on yet another phase in its history. After Solidarity candidates were elected to office, Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity, called on Poles abroad to return to their homeland and help rebuild the nation. In the national context emigration was seen as a neglect of political duties. Poland was becoming an independent nation, and its best and brightest were asked to stay home or return home. Moreover, with the collapse of the communist state, emigrants lost their political reasons for emigrating and consequently more rawly exposed their material motives. Since Poles now had political, social, and intellectual freedoms in Poland, the only thing America could provide was a new Ford Ranger or a satellite dish. And even this goal became less attainable, because foreign currency lost its black-market value after the economic transformation in Poland. The American dollar or deutsche mark did not buy as much in Poland in the 1990s as it did in the 1980s.
A Description of the Data Sources

I reviewed two newspapers in the Podhale region between 1990 and 1993—the Tygodnik Podhalanski [Podhale Weekly] and the Hale I Dziedziny: Miest"ecznik Ziem Górskich [Meadows and Fields: The Highlander Monthly]. Both newspapers were first issued in 1990 after the collapse of the Polish communist state. Both are Polish-language papers, and I did the translations of the articles.

I recorded all of the articles in both newspapers that made any mention of emigration, immigration, Poles living abroad, going abroad, or returning from abroad, or general issues about life in the receiving countries (e.g., the United States, Canada, and England). I examined eighty-nine issues (98%) of the Tygodnik Podhalanski (from 20 October 1991 to 25 July 1993) and found forty-four articles about one of the topics mentioned above (see Table 1). I reviewed twenty-three issues (92%) of Hale I Dziedziny (from December 1990 to July 1993) and found twenty-four articles about these topics.

In the early 1990s the Tygodnik Podhalanski was a small local newspaper about sixteen pages in length, and a third of the paper was devoted to classified ads. Most of the articles were about local people, places, and things, with a few articles about national events (e.g., elections, economy, and sports). In 1993 the Tygodnik Podhalanski had a readership of about 6,500, and it was widely

Table 1
Articles on Migration in Local Newspapers, 1990–1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Issues Reviewed*</th>
<th>No. of Issues with Articles about Migration</th>
<th>% of Issues with Articles about Migration</th>
<th>Total no. of Articles about Migration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hale I Dziedziny</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>December 1990–July 1993</td>
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<td>Tygodnik Podhalanski</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>October 20, 1991–July 25, 1993</td>
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*This represents 92% of all issues of Hale I Dziedziny in that period and 98% of the issues of Tygodnik Podhalanski. The issues not reviewed (two from Hale I Dziedziny and two from Tygodnik Podhalanski) were missing from the archives. Although the Hale I Dziedziny was a monthly magazine, it did not come out every month: there were ten issues in 1991, nine in 1992, and five in the first seven months of 1993. The Tygodnik Podhalanski was published 52 times a year.
distributed throughout the Podhale region (population estimated at 80,000). The weekly also had 90 overseas subscriptions to Poles living in the United States, Finland, Great Britain, and Canada. Some of its columnists (e.g., Stefan Tyszkiewicz) were living in the United States.

The Hale I Dziedziny was a monthly publication. In the early 1990s it was usually sixteen to twenty-three pages long, printed on glossy magazine-style paper, with colorful pictures and headings. In July of 1993 it had roughly 3,000 readers, and it was published out of the office of the Związek Podhalaniski, a góral cultural and social organization. This organization had about 4,500 members in 1993. The monthly was devoted to regional and cultural news; there was no classified section. The monthly featured mostly stories about the history of the Podhale region, famous górale at home and abroad, interesting places to visit in the region, and cultural news about the Związek Podhalanski groups in the region. Many of the articles about emigration focused on góral culture and organizations in America.

Emigration Stories

Two sets of competing themes were found in these articles. The first set referred to the effects of emigration on the sending country. In this set, the emigrant is characterized sometimes as a home builder and other times as a home wrecker. The second set refers to life in America for the immigrant. In this set America is portrayed, on the one hand, as a rich multicultural land of opportunity and, on the other hand, as a society morally and culturally bankrupt by materialism. The themes were not represented equally in the sample of all the articles, nor in the two newspapers. In some cases only a few articles carried one of the themes, while in other cases there were a dozen examples. The sample is too small for statistical significance testing, and this is not my intention. I do not predict anything, but rather examine the articles for the purpose of identifying the moral messages implicit in these public emigration narratives.

Home Builder versus Home Wrecker

The first set of competing images relates specifically to temporary migration. The “Plan” for the temporary migrant is to go abroad for a few years, make thousands of dollars, return home, and buy a car, a house, a new business, more cows, a taxi, or some other means to raise one’s status in the home country. This Plan was conceptually described by Michael Piore in Birds of Passage (1979). The home builder is the one who works the Plan successfully; the home wrecker is the person who stays abroad too long or does not come home at all.
When the Plan Works

Cousin Stanislaus was born and educated in America, and he has his own small business. He has never refused to help his family from the country of his grandfather; he even sent an invitation to his aunt and her children. He invited them, but what was really strange was that he helped them and gave them work and accommodations. He looked after those who came from the old country, and after a few years they could return to Poland with their not-so-bad earnings, settle down, and continue on with their lives. (Sowa 1993, p. 6)

This is how the system is supposed to work. One goes abroad, gets help from relatives already abroad, makes some money, and returns home with the “green.” Since the worker goes abroad temporarily, it does not matter if conditions in America are bad; the migrant can sweat it out if the payoff is adequate. At the conclusion of an article about the grueling nature of factory work, the authors ask and answer: “O co chodzi?—Bucks” [And why did they come? For the bucks] (Letowski and Tyszkiewicz 1993, p. 9).

The main reward for working long hours is counted in dollars. The articles gave accurate salary estimates—usually $5 to $7 per hour—and did not imply that the wages would make the average person rich. They did suggest, however, that the money earned and saved would make it possible to build houses and buy foreign cars.

It would not be exaggerating to say that several thousand houses and as many cars in Podhale, Tarnow, Krakow and tens of other places are a result of this cleaning business [in Chicago] . . . Iwona, a young Polish wife and school teacher from Nowy Targ, bought her Toyota with the money she earned cleaning floors, porches, and restrooms. (Tyszkiewicz 1993c, p. 7)

Sowa writes, “He has a large fireplace in the salon for which he spent several lovely years across the water” (1993, p. 8).

The moral message in these articles is that Poles can improve their living conditions by working abroad or “across the water.” The advice given, however, is that the Plan only works when the temporary migrants, referred to as wakacjusze [vacationers], return: “Those ‘Vacationers’ who return to Poland take profit from the money they have earned, relax, and begin to live like people” (Walczak 1992, p. 1). The advice given is “Go abroad, save your dollars, but come back to Poland to spend them.”

When the Plan Fails

In contrast to these idyllic vignettes, other articles dramatized the problems that could result when the Plan did not work. The Plan most often failed when the temporary migrant did not return home or did not make enough money to offset the costs of emigration. There were more negative narratives than positive
narratives, but given the scope and intent of my analysis, I can not comment on whether this implies that the Plan fails more often than it works. It could be that sensational negative accounts sell more newspapers; it could be that people who had bad experiences are more likely to write about those experiences. These are questions that merit further study. In this article, however, I merely want to point out the moral tones underlying these negative public accounts of emigration.

When the migrant stays too long or does not return home it is the family left behind in Poland who suffers. Emigration is then portrayed as a process that disrupts family life and contributes to social problems. In one story, "Returning Home," Maria, a twenty-nine-year-old from the Podhale region went to the United States to work and stayed longer than the six months she originally planned (Populicki 1992). When she finally did return home, she found her husband in an embrace with her best friend. The "friend" was pregnant with her husband's child, and the friend demanded $10,000 dollars to leave them alone. The husband demanded that the wife give her "friend" the money. She refused. They argued violently. The husband "punched his wife in the face and then grabbed the knife lying on the kitchen table and stabbed her four times in the stomach and the chest." The wife died, the friend miscarried the baby, and the husband was sent to prison. The message here: emigration is linked to adultery, illegitimate pregnancies, miscarriage, and malicious criminal behavior. In another example, Helcia, "an attractive young wife left when her son Piotr was three years old. She returned after four years, but she was different, and her husband was not the same and also not alone. Things heated up, they got a divorce, and she left again" (Tyszkiewicz 1993d, p. 9). The moral statement made in these articles is that a wife risks her marriage when she goes abroad and stays too long.

Parents who stayed abroad too long were blamed for the delinquency and criminal behavior of their children. In one story, a mother went abroad to earn money to build a house in Poland and left her young son to the care of his grandmother and father.

He [the son] longed for her [the mother] from the beginning. Virtually from the time he could remember, there was only one sentiment in his life and that was yearning—for her, for her warmth, for her care. Of course she constantly wrote and continuously sent packages—toys, clothes, money. (B.B. 1993, p. 6)

She sent money back home, and eventually the house was finished. Yet she did not return. She sent more packages and money. "His clothes and toys were envied by his classmates. He looked at them in astonishment and did not understand why someone would envy him: he had no mama." Then he started hanging out with a bad crowd, drinking beer, robbing stores. He got caught by the police. The mother sent money for a lawyer. He spent the next years unemployed, in and out of jail. "His life consisted of vodka, crime, and prison," and the son blamed
the mother for his behavior: “it is her fault.” In this story the absent mother is publicly held responsible for the delinquency of her son. The moral is that emigration can be defined as abandonment when parents leave their children behind to earn money abroad.

Another article was a compilation of letters from a father working in America to his son in Poland. The letters implied that the son’s mental instability, violence, and alcoholism were a result of the father not being there to give him guidance (Sowa 1992b). The father went abroad, overstayed his planned visit, obtained permanent residency, and promised to send for the wife and children but never did. The father sent money and gifts, but the children and their mother wanted him to come back to Poland. In the meantime, the children grew up without the guidance of a father. The father’s absence was especially hard on the son, who got into the most trouble. The son eventually attacked the mother, raped a girl, committed various assaults, was charged with eighteen burglaries, and was sent to jail. This article and the previous one imply that money is not a good substitute for parental guidance, and the parent who emigrates (rather than the one who is left behind to care for the children) is held responsible for their children’s delinquency.

The articles present a variety of parental roles, and given Poland’s position in the world system these roles compete with each other. On the one hand the parent is seen as a provider (they work abroad to earn money to build a house or to buy consumer goods), but the parent is also expected to be a nurturer. The absent spouse or parent tries to substitute expensive toys and presents for care and guidance, but it does not work. “The children, who have modern electronic toys, told their father that instead of buying them wonderful presents for $200 to $500 dollars, he should return” (Sowa 1992b, p. 87). We see conflicting messages for parents in Poland—if you want your child to have the best of everything materially, go abroad to work; if you go abroad to work, you abandon your child and are unable to care for his or her psycho-social needs.

One dominant message is that length of time abroad rather than the trip itself causes the most problems. The Plan does not work if the temporary migrant stays too long. Going abroad for six months is not the problem; it is when the parent or spouse is absent for years. “Their visas have long expired and their spouses and children hope for the return of their husbands and wives, mothers and fathers” (Tyszkiewicz 1993b, p. 9).

Other writers imply that the trip itself may actually be the problem. Milosz Sowa shows how the migrants’ intentions are altered once they are abroad. In particular, what is deemed an appropriate nest egg keeps changing the longer one is in America. He describes one family in which the migrant father kept postponing his return because he didn’t think he had made enough yet. “They have been waiting eight years already. Later he phoned and said that, after calculating
his savings, he postponed his trip from Christmas to Easter” (1992b, p. 87). The suggestion is that the continual extending of the stay is a product of the stay itself. After procuring some goods the migrant is not satisfied and wants more. This American-manufactured greed expresses itself in the migrant becoming too concerned with money and material. The message that America corrupts one’s values is addressed more fully in the next section.

Not only does the migrant need to return home for the Plan to work, but she or he must also return home with sufficient funds. Migration should pay for itself. Several articles challenged the feasibility of this plan—especially after 1989, when inflation in Poland skyrocketed shortly after the introduction of a free-market system. “Their dollars are not all that much. Once, when ‘the green’ was cosmically high in Poland, one could earn a fortune across the ocean. Today it is still more than across the Vistula—four, five, and sometimes even six times more—but it is not like it was before” (Walczak 1992, p. 1). In the 1980s the average monthly Polish salary was about $20, and at that time a nest egg of $3,000 was significant. After 1989 the monthly salaries began to climb to roughly $150 to $200 per month in the early 1990s. More importantly, inflation was extremely high after the collapse of communism, and Poles saw the value of their dollars erode almost over night.

When the material gains are not sufficient, emigration becomes a losing proposition. Milosz Sowa (1992a), in an article titled “Escape from the Promised Land,” presents a series of emigration vignettes that carry the moral message that emigration is not always worth the physical and psychological costs. One vignette described Anna, who went to the United States at age 22. After returning to Poland, “the 29-year-old Anna, who looks forty years old” still lives “in a crumbling wooden cottage” because her “fortune” of $2,000 is not worth much today (p. 8). Another woman did not earn enough money in the United States to pay off the price of her plane ticket. In America she worked for a “sick woman all day, whom she could not understand, and she had only two hours a week to go to church, and she began to fear that she herself was going crazy” (p. 8). She returned to Poland with significant financial and psychological debts.

These articles reflect an awareness of the economic conditions in America. In particular, authors noted the recession and the difficulty earning enough money given the types of jobs temporary migrants find. Authors also reminded readers about the living expenses in America that make it difficult to save even a few thousand dollars.

The cost of living in New York is high. You pay a lot to rent an apartment and for transportation in the city. In the meantime, there has been a recession for several months and it is hard to find work. It has happened that, after having stayed for several months, Poles have returned home without any money. Others often postpone their return forever because the resources they managed to save are too meager. Many of those who came to the United States to make
two or three thousand dollars have felt like kicking themselves. They cannot believe that they had been so foolish. It will take them many months to save the three thousand. (Walczak 1992, p. 1)

And unemployment and sickness can smash the nest egg:

Across the ocean it is not hard to lose all your savings—suffice it to have an unexpected accident, sickness, or a stay in the hospital which is very costly. Also, a long period of unemployment, which can always happen, will quickly deplete one's scant resources. (Walczak 1992, p. 1)

The message is that not everyone gets rich in America, and the costs to physical and mental health may not be worth the meager "fortune" saved.

The key theme underlying these articles is that the Plan does not always work—the migrant does not always go home in the time frame originally proposed, the migrant does not always make enough money, the migrant does not always return to a better life. While the migrant is abroad, the spouse may be unfaithful, and the children might get in trouble, and in fact the articles implied that going abroad and staying too long caused the unfaithfulness and the delinquency. While abroad the migrant might get sick or be unable to find work. Even worse, the migrant may find work, but the pay may be too meager to compensate for the mentally and physically exhausting costs of the job. The authors advised people to think twice before going abroad. Sometimes this message was not so subtle, but stated emphatically, as in the title of one article "Don't Go to America!" (Walczak 1992).

Horatio Alger versus the Capitalist Pig

The first set of paradoxical images of the migrant as home wrecker/home builder referred to the effects of emigration in the sending country. The second set of contradictory images described life in America for the immigrant and differed in emotional tones. The optimistic articles painted an appealing picture of America as a place where hard work was rewarded, migrants enjoyed a rich ethnic culture, and connections to family and compatriots were maintained. The pessimistic articles painted a gloomy portrait of America as a place where only the lucky few got ahead, materialism consumed the soul, physically difficult work sucked the life out of laborers, and immigrants were foreigners exploited, estranged, and unwelcomed.

The Immigrant Success Story

Reading some of these articles, I found myself writing "Marlboro Man" and "Horatio Alger" in the margins. These articles did not underreport the strenuous nature of the immigrants' labor, but they also did not ignore the relaxing weekend that is a result of having money to spend on boats, vacation, and booze. Like the Marlboro Man enjoying his evening smoke after riding the range all day, the
immigrant was depicted as enjoying the fruits of the Monday-through-Friday grind by settling back on his porch with a beer on the weekend (e.g., Tyszkiewicz 1993c).

In all articles that discussed jobs in America, the authors emphasized that the migrant should expect to find only low-level positions (secondary labor market positions) marked by long hours, low wages, and little prestige. These positions were interpreted as stepping stones to a better life. Stefan Tyszkiewicz wrote a series of articles describing the types of jobs available: caretakers for children and the elderly, janitors and maids, truck drivers, factory and construction workers. In some articles he gave concrete information about finding jobs and listed the names and phone numbers of companies (Tyszkiewicz 1993c, p. 8). He also mentioned the requirements for certain positions: English language skills for babysitting, permanent residency card for truck drivers (Letowski and Tyszkiewicz 1993). This information was factual in content and quite accurate.

These articles, however, also carried value judgments. Tyszkiewicz argued that Poles should not be embarrassed to push mops, change diapers, and empty wastebins. In fact, he defined these unskilled positions as noble. “Cleaning, which is janitoring, is a sought-after and worthwhile occupation for many who have gone abroad . . . America has seen everything, there is no disgraceful work” (1993c, p. 7). Tyszkiewicz dismissed the low status of such positions by pointing out that their ancestors took just such positions with pride, and today Poles had a choice: “either become dependent and eventually detested by their families or sweep the foreign corners in order to keep their dignity and pride” (1993c, p. 7–8). Tyszkiewicz stressed the “life is difficult” and “only the hardy will survive” themes, but his articles also implied that Poles were hardy and that many successfully worked the system. He noted that, in spite of the Polish jokes, Polish workers were respected for their industriousness, pleasant personalities, and skills (1993b, p. 9). The moral message was that in order to get ahead in America, Poles should swallow their pride, roll up their sleeves, get down on their knees, and scrub the floor—there is no shame in making an honest dollar.

There were a few real success stories. For example, one article was about Austrian Fred Rossmeissl who founded a small firm in Los Angeles and made a million dollars (Walczak 1993). Another Horatio Alger was Stanley Socharz, who came to Chicago after World War I.

He was strongly independent. He was a welder. As a young man he was powerful, and he busied himself with the affairs of men. When his firm was liquidated, he looked for something easier or lighter but not for less money. He came upon a wonderful fact—to clean it was only necessary to be able—and it was not long afterwards that he became a janitor at the Millard firm. (Tyszkiewicz 1993c, 8)

Socharz eventually moved up to the position of manager in this cleaning company where 80 percent of the workers were Poles. A further success was that he
became the Millard choir director in Chicago and often conducted concerts dressed in góral folk costume.

Part of the success of the immigrant story is not only that the immigrant can find a place in America's labor force, but also that the immigrant can find a place in American society. These positive images depicted America as a land culturally welcoming of foreigners. Part of Socharz's success was that he conducted a multi-ethnic choir, and the choir represented America's open-arms cultural policy:

The choir was made up of representatives from several nations. Of course we were represented. . . . [T]he songs are sung in many languages, they are usually patriotic or religious songs, and Christmas carols, for among the listeners there are often tears shed, as they sing the songs first in one language and then in the second language. For example, an old American hymn, written in 1933, “My Country 'Tis of Thee” is sung to the melody of an English hymn 700 years old. . . . There were a number of concerts for Solidarność, especially during the period of Martial Law. Many of the singers came dressed in the national costumes of their country. (1993c, p. 8)

The message here is that American culture is rich in the traditions of Europe. European cultures (“of course we were represented”) form the base of American culture (an American hymn is sung to the tune of an English hymn). The implication is that new immigrants can participate in and contribute to this richness. America is as an inviting place for newcomers because of its inclusive culture.

Articles written in this vein downplayed one of the potential costs of emigration, that is, the feeling of alienation as a result of disconnection from the homeland and failure to reconnect in the new land. Articles which describe the vibrant góral community in Chicago sent the message that the newcomer would feel at home in America and remain connected to Polish culture through the Polish ethnic group in America. In America ethnicity not only survived, but thrived. There were numerous such articles about the general Polish ethnic group and the more specific góral community in Chicago who often gathered at the Dom Podhale [Podhale House] for “dancing and generally a good time” (Tyszkiewicz 1993e, 9). The reporting of góral social activities was most evident in the Hale I Dziedziny. Articles under the banner “News from Across the Ocean” (Wiadomości zza oceanu) were written by Henryk Janik, president of the Związek Podhale w Ameryce (an organizational American cousin to the Związek Podhale in Poland). These articles had colorful pictures and told of the social and cultural activities of the organization: annual picnics and parades (Janik 1991b, 1992 and 1993b); the crowning of the Podhale queen in Chicago (Janik 1991c and 1993a); and visits from Chicago górale (Janik 1993b; Kowalczyk 1993). Other articles showcasing góral culture were about the góral choral group in Chicago (Mikulec 1992), a musical presentation at the Dom Podhale of a famous Polish play “Witów” (Zurowiak 1992), Podhale architecture in the
United States (Mikulec 1991a and 1991b), the meeting between górale in Chicago and the Polish Cardinal Józef Glemp (Janik 1991d), the history of the górale in the United States (Sokołowski 1990; Hale i Dziedziny, February 1991; Tyszkiewicz 1993a), and the future of the górale in the United States (Janik 1991a). These articles stressed the continuation of this Polish regional culture in America. The implication was that górale would not necessarily be divorced from their culture when they came to America, but instead would find themselves at home among their góral compatriots. Some articles even painted the picture that parts of America (e.g., the Wisconsin Dell) were reminiscent of the Podhale region in geography and climate (Tyszkiewicz 1993e). The moral message in these narratives was that emigration did not represent discontinuation of the social, cultural, or even geographic context of life in Poland. Emigration was not exile.

Another theme that countered the notion that emigration represented a severing of ties to the homeland is found in the articles that emphasized the connections between Chicago and Podhale. In one story a cousin from Chicago visited Zakopane, fell in love with a village girl, and brought her back to Chicago with him (Sowa 1993). The circle between Chicago and Zakopane remained intact. Another article described a man from Nowy Targ who got help for his sick mother by contacting his oldest brother who had lived in Chicago for over six years. The brother found a Polish doctor living in Chicago who had ties to Nowy Targ and who was working in a large hospital run by Polish nuns, the Resurrection Sisters (Dar Polonii 1992, p. 3). The Chicago hospital gave the Nowy Targ hospital medical equipment worth over $120,000. Informal connections were maintained through family ties and at times with the help of ethnic and voluntary organizations. More formal connections were maintained by the linkage between the Związek Podhale organizations in Poland and the United States.

This connection between the Podhale region and Chicago represented a conduit through which resources flow. Those in Poland were helped by the resources they received from America in the form of charitable contributions and migrant dollars; migrants themselves were helped by the resources they received from their compatriots—for example, help finding jobs, housing, good places to eat, and cheap places to buy jeans. The existence of these conduits provided a potential for help and created an obligation to help. The moral message was that when Poles go abroad they have obligations to their kinfolk, community, and friends both back home and in the migrant community abroad. Nationality created ties of obligation, and a good Pole helped other Poles.

In sum, the moral messages in these optimistic articles were that the trip across the ocean did not necessarily strip the immigrant of ties to the homeland, nor did it lead to abandonment of Polish góral culture. Góral culture was alive at
the Dom Podhale and through the Polish organizations. In part these articles were making a claim that America was an extension of Poland—migration was not a big leap but a small step. The immigrant was not a “foreigner” apart from heart and home and friends, but was a part of the large family of Poles living abroad with their festivals, choirs, and organizations. They came home to America, a country made by them and for them.

**Capitalist Pig: Bad, Bad America**

In contrast to this “milk-and-honey” image of America, a second set of articles defined America as a dark and foreboding place, the experience of going abroad as alienating, and the immigrant as a foreigner cast adrift. Rather than the rosy scenery of compatriots helping compatriots, these articles reminded the readers that once abroad the philosophy of every man and woman for themselves took hold. In an article describing the United States’s new visa program, the author writes that for “the Podhale, America is taken to be the land where milk and honey flow,” but in reality, “a hard struggle for life awaits them. . . . For many who travel to America it is rather a shot in the dark, even if they have family there.” The article referred to the migrant as a “foreigner” estranged not only from Americans but from their compatriots. “With many cousins and other relatives, the blood ties to their country are quickly cut. They think that, ‘when I came here no one helped me, why I should I help someone else’” (Amerykańska Loteria 1992, p. 3). The key message was that crossing the ocean severed ties with the homeland. Emigration represented disconnection from the homeland (“never see Poland again”) and from the family (“blood ties are quickly cut”). America was a brutal place (“hard struggle”), and other Poles could not be counted on to help. There was an implicit moral tone persuading Poles not to go, and if they did, to be prepared to sever ties to the home country.

This message was more explicitly stated in Sylwester Walczak’s article entitled “Don’t Go to America!” He depicted a horrible image of America as “dirty, neglected, and dangerous” and the conditions of Poles working in America as gloomy and depressing (1992, p. 1). “The work was unusually hard, and the hourly rates were less than I had anticipated.” He described the types of low-status positions most Poles occupied as the “meanest work in the States.” He mentioned the language barrier as a handicap and suggested that Poles lowered themselves by taking these positions: “many splendid, intelligent young women clean, cook, and take care of babies—and it’s idiotic that they do not return.” Moreover, the emphasis on work and earning money made immigrants materialistic and boorish.

The tempo of work is high and you do not have time for cultural activities; and so as these needs disappear the people become flat and primitive. They are able only to count their
dollars. . . . Of course, they have a car and savings in the bank. However, they do not have any time to spend this money because they spend all their time working.

His Faustian moral message was that when Poles sell their souls for money they become culturally barren, and the money they earn is not worth this price. Walczak implied that both the greed for dollars as well as the neglect of the higher arts depressed the souls of immigrants.

This message that in America people become barbaric in their pursuit of the dollar came through in a few other articles. The last line of one article read “Life is hard. Money, money, money, money, money, money—again” (Piton-Kubow 1992, p. 11). Even Tyszkiewicz, the author of so many positive articles about working abroad, at one point called America a “serious contagious disease” (1993a, p. 8). The disease was basically excessive consumerism. Because of the importance placed on money in America, immigrants catch the disease of “not enough” and end up working overtime and weekends to satisfy wants they did not initially have when they arrived. The immigrant stayed abroad in order to work in order to buy. Values changed, and the change was only described in negative terms. (That is, not one article described someone who went abroad and became a “better” person.) One man described a migrant who after returning from America managed a discotheque in Poland and supervised her workers “in a ruthless American way, firing them for the least infractions of their duties”; and Stanislaus, who opened a private prosperous business in Chicago, later developed ulcers and eventually became “ruthless and greedy. . . . His stomach ulcer does not trouble him too much when he gets into his Mercedes. He complains only that he can not drink vodka; he turns his friends into clients, takes their money, and says “tenkju”” (Sowa 1992a, p. 8). The message is that time spent in “money-grubbing” capitalist America can befoul human character. These articles advised Poles not to emigrate by judging virtues to be more valuable than material possessions.

Another message that served to discourage Poles from emigrating was that work in America literally kills immigrants. Milosz Sowa wrote about a woman with two children who receives alimony from a national fund because her husband was killed at the airport in New York; a thirty-five-year-old man for whom emigration certainly had no net benefit—he returned home in a metal casket, and the “cost of sending the corpse of this man, who had worked in the black market remodeling buildings and fell from seventh floor of the building, was several times the amount that he had in his savings account”; and a young man who worked removing asbestos in the United States: “He earned, he returned, and he settled down with his wife. In the end, the doctor told him that he had skin cancer. He spent the last of his savings on medicine and treatment” (1992a, p. 8).

And finally, even Tyszkiewicz’s pieces admitted that in America life was not equally good for everyone. “It is only the owners of these companies that have
the Mercedes” (Letowski and Tyszkiewicz 1993, p. 8). “Few people have a palace and a limousine like DeNiro” (Tyszkiewicz 1993a, p. 8). The inequality in capitalist America was also noted in residential and occupational arenas by several authors. Immigrants lived in the poorer, more dangerous neighborhoods. “Greenpoint [where many Poles live] is a poor area, not very clean . . . [and] during the nights passers-by are assaulted there” (Walczak 1992, p. 1). This stratification was also recognized between foreign- and native-born workers: “Jasiek must work twice as hard to make the same amount of money as Johnny. And he is thankful that he has the work” (Letowski and Tyszkiewicz 1993, p. 8). Another wrote that “immigrants take the heaviest and dirtiest jobs which Americans do not want. They are paid less than the acceptable rates for this work” (Mroz 1993, p. 4). He urged Poles to stay home: “If you worked as long and as hard in Poland as the immigrants do in America you could have the same life without the stress, the humiliation, and the costs to your health. I appeal to my countrymen: find work at home!” (1993, p. 4).

These articles presented the moral message that America was a stratified society with immigrants on the lower rungs being exploited and doing undesirable and dangerous work, and those who stuck it out became mean-spirited. Moreover, considering the rising inflation in Poland that devalued American dollars, the risks to health and sanity, and the meager wages and grueling work, America could not really promise much. In addition, emigration was depicted as a process that ruptured ties to the homeland, and what America had to offer in replacement (a consumer culture and unrelenting work ethic) was not worth the cost. Despite the material gains, the costs to one’s social, cultural, and physical self led ultimately to calculating emigration as a net loss. The general message was, “You should not emigrate.”

Dynamic, enterprising, educated people, in general, should not look to the States for success. If you really desire, today in Poland one can do more and live better than over there—and work in a civilized manner and live like people. By leaving, you waste not only time and your health, but you will also have to work at difficult, dirty, humiliating, and mindless jobs—and the miserable bottom line is money. (Walczak 1992, p. 1)

Conclusion: The Migrant as a (Post)modern Self

This collection of articles is quite schizophrenic in nature representing the migrant as both home wrecker and home builder and depicting America as a country with streets paved of gold and blood. On the one hand, stories depict Horatio Algerski living in America enjoying a rich ethnic lifestyle or returning home with a fistful of dollars to build a new house. On the other hand, dark and mean America exploits immigrants stuck in the dirtiest jobs and most dangerous neighborhoods, while their families at home are torn apart by the spouse’s and/or parent’s absence. Some articles portrayed the migrants as culturally cut adrift
in a barren consumer American wasteland; others spoke of migrants as connected to their homeland and culture through informal networks and formal ethnic organizations. Emigration represented in a positive light is a way of building a new life; in a negative light it is a way of tearing down an old life. Connection and disconnection, familiar faces and strange places, honorable work and dirty work—migration is all of this. What explains these contradictory messages?

First, there are a variety of migrant careers. Not every migrant follows the same path, and so outcomes differ according to the migrant career. Some migrants successfully disengage themselves from their homeland and set up new roots, others return to the home country, and still others live physically abroad leaving their heart behind in the homeland. I have not analyzed why some migrants had positive trajectories and others had negative ones. Someone else needs to do that work, and it most likely will require a structural analysis. However, by examining the moral content of these articles we can draw from them some patterns of advice. First, length of time abroad is an important variable and appears to influence experiences, especially those of the temporary migrant. Much unhappiness comes from overstaying visits; moreover, the longer migrants stay in America, the more susceptible they are to becoming sucked into a system that produces greedy consumers. Second, maintaining connections to the homeland is important. The positive articles show kinfolk helping each other, and the two communities—Podhale and Chicago—are connected. The negative portrayals focus on disconnection from country and compatriots. Finally, the advice grounds expectations in reality—expect to work at shitty jobs, expect to live in poor neighborhoods. These factors—length of stay, strength of connections, and accurate information—all have an impact on the trajectory.

Second, the information presented in these articles is not just factual information, but contains moral messages. Some of these messages encouraged migration, others emphatically stated, “Stay Home! Don’t Emigrate!” These media images are not simply reflective of public opinion, but as I argued earlier, they are influenced by both the characteristics of the media industry and by the dominant culture. These media stories as collective representations are reflections of larger cultural values and beliefs regarding the institution of migration. Migration is a decision, and in most structural analyses this decision is understood from a cost-benefit analysis calculated according to material net gains or losses—almost exclusively in monetary terms (see Asch 1994). I believe that including cultural factors gives us a more complete cost-benefit analysis of migration: while migration may pay off in material terms, it has substantial costs in sociopsychological terms. The moral messages that advise against going reflect the costs of migration; the messages describing jobs, listing employer addresses, and providing salary estimates represent factual information related to the material benefits of migration.
Third, is there something in the culture itself that produces these contradictory messages? One characteristic of (post)modern society is in fact a profusion of diverse and often contradictory images, messages, and rules (Kellner 1995). Kenneth Allan (1998) argues that in modern cultures, structural differentiation, communication and transportation technologies, and even ideologies like democracy, create value inconsistencies, normative contradictions, and cultural (identity) diversity. He writes that structural differentiation produces "particularized cultures—social diversity—which, in turn, serves to create value inconsistencies and conflicts over meanings and histories (myths) in a society, thus lowering the legitimacy of an institutional structure" (1998, p. 150). Fragmentation reflects a culture disconnected from its traditions through a breakdown in "legitimizing myths—histories and stories that produce a sense of tradition, rightness, and reality through the perception of long lengths of time and large numbers of people" (1998, p. 149). Myths are torn asunder when people are pulled out of their normal patterns of interaction; the old myths then become less applicable and simply make less sense.

The institution of migration mimics (post)modern society in this respect. Migration disrupts people's normal patterns of behavior, loosens familial and friendship networks, and culturally displaces and transplants people. For the migrant, the old ways of doing things, the old language, the old symbols are no longer applicable to the new situation. In this respect the traditional migrant is a very modern character. Moreover, migration inherently creates social diversity, as people from one culture move and resettle in another culture. Migration has these characteristics not because it is a part of the (post)modern world; these characteristics are reflective of the very nature of migration. Thus, we would expect that the contradictions identified in the emigration stories from modern-day Poland would be found in other cultures and in other time periods. A comparative study is one direction for further research; a longitudinal study is another. There is some evidence already that migration narratives from Poland at the turn of the century contained contradictory messages (see the immigrant letters in the Thomas and Znaniecki volumes), however, a more systematic study of public narratives needs to be done.

The fragmentary nature of migration resembles (but does not reflect) the fragmentary nature of modern society. A wonderful example of how the product of migration is similar to the product of modern society can be seen in Eva Hoffman's work _Lost in Translation_. A Polish Jew, her family left Poland in 1959 and resettled in Canada. Hoffman attended college in Texas during the 1960s and writes about her difficulties trying to fit into a shifting and continuously dividing modern American identity:

1) Instead of a central ethos, I have been given the blessings and terrors of multiplicity. Once I step off that airplane in Houston, I step into a culture that splinters, fragments, and reforms itself as if it were a jigsaw puzzle dancing in a quantum space. If I want to assimilate into my
generation, my time, I have to assimilate the multiple perspectives and their constant shifting.
(1989, p. 164)

She finds her fit by drawing upon her migration experience, the experience of being an outsider, a foreigner, betwixt and between, lost in transition: “perhaps it is in my misfittings that I fit. Perhaps a successful immigrant is an exaggerated version of the native” (1989, p. 164, italics added). The modern “native” experiences what immigrants have always experienced, the necessity of having to “assimilate the multiple perspectives.”

The immigrant is the embodiment of the (post)modern self. Hoffman elegantly explains how the immigrant is constantly reinventing herself and reinterpreting what she sees. The rupture of departure leaves holes in the migrant’s vision and thus an absence of wholeness to her sight: “I walk through the streets [of Vancouver] not seeing anything clearly. . . I miss the signals that say ‘city’ to me” (p. 135). In reference to language she writes: “the problem is that the signifier has become segmented from the signified. The words I learn now don’t stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue” (p. 106). Migration has the same rhythm, the same fragmented, disconnected flavor as postmodern society. Neither the migrant nor the postmodern person can trust unquestioningly the symbols of their institutions; for both the migrant and the postmodern self myths no longer work to explain and legitimate social reality.

The contradictions I identified in these newspaper articles do not reflect specifically (post)modern culture nor specifically Polish culture. The contradictions represent migration culture. Migration contributes to structural differentiation and social diversity. To restate Allan’s words with a new lead-in, the institution of migration “produces particularized cultures—social diversity—which, in turn serve to create value inconsistencies and conflicts over meanings and histories and myths.” The process of migration creates contradictory messages because of its nature; it is an act of uprooting and resettling, of ripping apart old-world seams and sizing them to fit into new-world needs, of disconnecting and reconnecting. The institution of migration itself is paradoxical. The contradictory nature of the emigration stories reflects the contradictions built into the institution of migration. Migration does wreck old homes, but at the same time it builds new ones.

ENDNOTES

1 In this article, I use the term emigration to emphasize the departure context or home country (Poland) and immigration to emphasize the arrival context or host country (America). So, for example, the title refers to “emigration” stories because the newspaper stories were published in Poland. Migration includes both the process of departure and arrival, and I use the term to refer to the gen-
eral process of movement, such as the "institution of migration." I also use the term migration to refer to more temporary movements and the term immigration to refer to lengthier and more permanent movements.

2 It should also be noted that when migrants work in America illegally and overstay visa limits they may keep extending the stay because they believe that, because of these law-breaking behaviors, once they leave they will not be allowed to return.

3 I write the term (post)modern this way to reflect the fact that there is still a lot of disagreement as to whether postmodern culture is distinct enough from modern culture to warrant a separate term, and that in fact we are living in "a transitional world between the modern and postmodern which requires us to draw on both modern and postmodern strategies and theories" (Kellner 1995, p. 9).

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