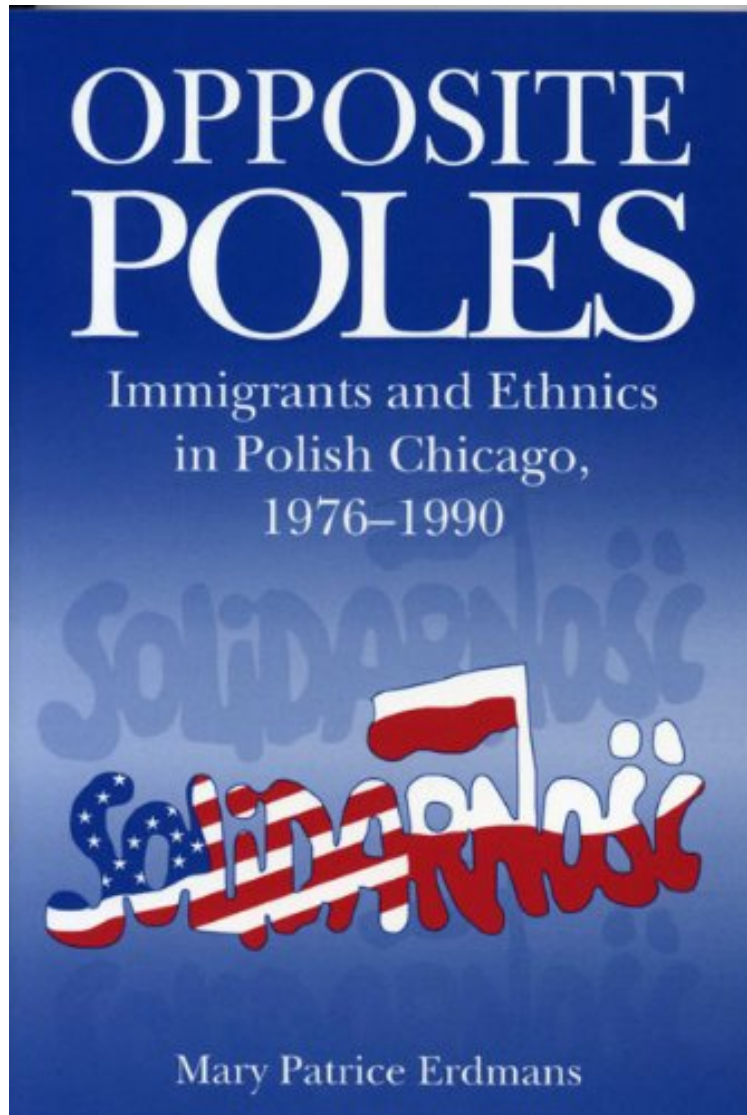


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Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 19761990

Mary Patrice Erdmans
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Mary Patrice Erdmans : Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 19761990 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 19761990:

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Opposite Poles presents a fascinating and complex portrait of ethnic life in America. The focus is Chicago Polonia, the largest Polish community outside of Warsaw. During the 1980s a new cohort of Polish immigrants from communist Poland, including many refugees from the Solidarity movement, joined the Polish American ethnics already settled in Chicago. The two groups shared an ancestral homeland, social space in Chicago, and the common goal of wanting to see Poland become an independent noncommunist nation. These common factors made the groups believe they ought to work together and help each other; but they were more often at opposite poles. The specious solidarity led to contentious conflicts as the groups competed for political and cultural ownership of the community. Erdmans's dramatic account of intracommunity conflict demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between immigrants and ethnics in American ethnic studies. Drawing upon interviews, participant observation in the field, surveys and Polish community press accounts, she describes the social differences between the two groups that frustrated unified collective action. We often think of ethnic and racial communities as monolithic, but the heterogeneity within Polish Chicago is by no means unique. Today in the United States new Chinese, Israeli, Haitian, Caribbean, and Mexican immigrants negotiate their identities within the context of the established identities of Asians, Jews, Blacks, and Chicanos. Opposite Poles shows that while common ancestral heritage creates the potential for ethnic allegiance, it is not a sufficient condition for collective action.

Mary Erdmans has produced the most interesting and original analysis of contemporary Polonia. In the process, she brings insight and refinement to our understanding of immigrants and ethnics. For those seeking a more fundamental understanding of America's cultural pluralism, her book will be most welcome. Stanislaus Blejwas, Central Connecticut State University
Erdmans work is the most comprehensive insightful and balanced account of the relationship between post-World War II Polish Immigrants and the Old Polonia yet published. James S. Pula, Contemporary Sociology
About the Author Mary Patrice Erdmans is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro.