

## Migration and Citizenship in a Globalizing World

EXPERTS HAVE LABELED THE last few decades the “age of migration.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, according to the United Nations, the total number of international migrants, defined as those living in a country different from the one in which they were born, more than doubled between 1970 and 2009 and stands at 200 million persons.<sup>2</sup> In Europe and North America, the arrival of large numbers of immigrants since the 1960s has generated significant controversy. In the twenty-first century, the twin issues of migration and integration present governments and societies on both sides of the Atlantic with pressing political, social, and security challenges. Fundamental questions are being asked regarding the value of immigration and the desirability of integrating newcomers into the national community. Do immigrants contribute to the common good or, given their “foreign ways,” undermine national cultures and drain the public purse? In what ways does state policy promote or hinder integration? How can immigrants empower themselves in a culturally foreign environment? Why do certain immigrant groups appear to be permanently locked into a “ghettoized” underclass status while others, at least outwardly, provide a “model” of seamless adaptation into Western society?

Finding answers to such questions is difficult. However, there are important antecedents in the history of both Europe and the United States that can aid in illuminating contemporary debates. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrialization and the consolidation of the modern nation-state launched a first global “age of migration” that lasted into the early 1920s. By the beginning of the twentieth century, immigration in the United States reached levels that have been surpassed only

in the last few years.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, during the same period, many countries of Western Europe were also affected by large inflows of “foreign” populations, a development that foreshadowed the movements of later generations of postwar immigrants. The arrival and settlement of large numbers of migrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced significant social tensions whose historical legacy continues to inform present social attitudes and government policies toward immigration.<sup>4</sup>

My study seeks to better understand this earlier wave of migration and its long-term effects on European and American societies by examining migrant Polish integration patterns in the Ruhr Valley of Germany and northeastern Pennsylvania. Approximately 300,000 Poles migrated to the Ruhr and 160,000 settled in northeastern Pennsylvania between 1870 and 1914. The origins, outlooks, occupational employment, and community organization patterns of Poles in both regions were in many ways similar. Poles arriving in each region were largely unskilled and hailed from predominately agricultural backgrounds. They entered two major industrial environments where Polish men worked overwhelmingly in the coal-mining industry. On settlement, Poles relied on the Catholic Church and numerous associations to help bind the ethnic community together. Most also remained in frequent contact with the homeland. Nevertheless, the development of these two Polish communities did diverge in reaction to experiences within the political, economic, and cultural environment of their host societies. After World War I, this divergence was reflected by dramatically different integration trajectories. The vast majority of Poles in northeastern Pennsylvania opted by the mid-1920s to accommodate themselves to American society, although full integration would remain another generation away. By contrast, two-thirds of the Polish community in the Ruhr immigrated to France or returned to Poland. The third of the community that remained subsequently integrated comparatively quickly into German society during the interwar period. By exploring why these differing adaptation patterns emerged, I seek to broaden our understanding of the role of government, the marketplace, and civil society in defining identities of citizenship and belonging within democratic states as well as the efforts of excluded actors to redefine the parameters of inclusion, or what I term “the borders of integration,” over time.

Examining the historical Polish migrant experience is particularly useful for illuminating debates regarding issues of globalization and mass migration. Historically, Poles were one of the first ethnic groups whose migration

occurred within the context of a rising global economy, the solidification of the democratic nation-state, and the emergence of modern mass cultures. In Germany, Poles constituted the largest ethnic minority during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while in the United States they constituted one of the largest groups of “new” migrants arriving between 1870 and 1914. In both countries, Poles were an internal “other”; similar in many respects to colonial subjects, the contact between these migrants and their German or American “hosts” served to solidify national understandings of self on both sides of the ethnic divide. In this regard, it is essential to emphasize that Poles were active agents in this process of identity formation, contesting attempts to impose an identity “from above” by developing their own counterhegemonic identity “from below.” To be Polish in the Ruhr and northeastern Pennsylvania meant not only fulfilling “objective” criteria based on heritage, language, and Catholicism; subjective factors were equally important. Being Polish meant subscribing to a general historical mythos grounded not just in ethnicity, but also in shared experiences derived from the migratory process, an existence as members of an industrial underclass, and for Polish male mine workers, the idea of being producers, protectors of the family, and bedrocks of the social order. Overall, the Polish acculturation process was complex and offers important insights into current debates about migration and integration.

### Defining Integration: Transatlantic Considerations

The field of migration studies has experienced important transformations over the last two decades, both in the United States, *the* immigrant society, and in Europe. Most notably, there is a growing recognition that the two major schools of thought about migration inadequately account for the diverse ways migrant populations actually integrate into Western societies.<sup>5</sup> The traditional Chicago School “assimilationist” models of immigrant incorporation stressed the absorption of immigrants into a singular core national community, and the contrasting “reactive ethnicity” approaches emphasized the maintenance of difference within a pluralistic and multiethnic society. In place of these paradigms, a “neo-assimilationist” model has gained ascendancy. This model defines assimilation as a process in which immigrants become similar in some, though not necessarily all, respects to a reference population that itself is in a constant state of change. Such a conceptual definition, which my book embraces, stresses that there are multiple modalities

of assimilation, as well as nonassimilation, which are not predetermined and which change over time and place. In discussing the varied aspects of Polish incorporation in the Ruhr and northeastern Pennsylvania, I prefer the term *integration* because it emphasizes an ongoing, multidimensional process that is not predetermined and does not result in sameness in the way assimilation has been traditionally interpreted. This is especially true in Europe, where the two concepts are readily seen as synonymous with each other.<sup>6</sup>

In the United States, there is growing consensus that integration is a process, not just an end, involving multilayered cultural and socioeconomic negotiations between immigrants and their receiving societies; such attitudes in Europe are less prominent. The primary cause for this disparity can be found in the continued reticence of many European countries to acknowledge that they are countries of immigration, and historical ones at that. Since the 1970s, government policies across Europe have focused on ways to limit the inflow of migrants, particularly from non-European regions. Yet these policies have largely failed due to a lack of political will to recognize immigration as a historical phenomenon and the role migration has played in the development of their own national identities.<sup>7</sup> In Germany, the issue of immigration is at the forefront of contemporary politics. However, as Ulrich Herbert once noted, debates over “foreign” workers and the desirability of their integration into German society continue to be discussed “without any sense of history,” betraying a rich, if troubled, past of foreign labor that dates to the beginnings of the modern German state.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, governmental claims and popular perceptions that Germany “ist kein Einwanderungsland” (is no land of immigration) are only now slowly beginning to change in the wake of the new reforms in citizenship law that were passed in 1999 and 2005 as well as recognition that over 14 percent of the present German population was not born within the country’s present borders.<sup>9</sup> A similar situation prevails in France. The rise (and fall) of Le Pen in 2002, the building of a Museum of Immigration, the 2005 riots, and the restrictions on and continuing debates over wearing religious garb—all have brought new public attention to the immigrant question, sparking heated debates over the meaning of French republican values of inclusion. However, as Gérard Noiriel argued in the 1990s, although one in five persons in France has a grandparent of immigrant origin, “the role played by immigration in the constitution of collective memory of the French remains completely repressed in their national identity.”<sup>10</sup>

Academics have not been immune from this inability to acknowledge the reality of immigration. Though European migration scholarship still lags

behind that of the United States, important inroads have been made. Pioneers such as Noiriel in France, Klaus Bade and Dirk Hoerder in Germany, Colin Holmes in Britain, and many others have made notable strides in broadening our understanding of both historical and contemporary migration within Europe.<sup>11</sup> A special note should also be accorded to Polish scholars, who have maintained an active engagement in understanding the effects of migration and return migration since the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> However, Bade's prediction in 1980 that the German experience of hiring *Gastarbeiter* (guest-workers) and the formation of permanent minority communities would encourage a "new interest in the historical development of transnational migration" has yet to fully come to fruition.<sup>13</sup> One clear reason for this is the sense that historical migration offers few lessons for dealing with the supposedly qualitatively different migrants of today, a belief that is shared by many on both sides of the Atlantic.

### Old versus New Migration

Although migration scholars across disciplines have worked together to significantly refine views of integration, this cooperation belies a key division within the field. Specifically, a contentious debate exists among historians and social scientists over whether parallels can be drawn between the mass migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those since the 1960s. In its basic outline, various sociologists and others studying contemporary migration argue that there are qualitative differences between the experiences of white European migrants a hundred years ago and predominately Asian, African, and Latin American migrants today, and that the disparities preclude any useful comparison between the two migration waves.<sup>14</sup> In particular, "discontinuity scholars" contend that present-day migrants suffer from racial discrimination on a par with African Americans and have less opportunity for occupational and social mobility due to a split labor market that segments many migrants into low-wage service-sector positions. Further, post-1960s immigrants are more likely to possess transnational networks marked by frequent migration and remigration. This "recycling" constantly infuses fresh blood into immigrant ethnic communities, encouraging continued affinity to the homeland while inhibiting identification with American or European society. Assimilation, if it occurs, is highly segmented and stands in stark contrast to the integration patterns of earlier white ethnic Europeans.<sup>15</sup> Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut

have best summarized this argument by noting that “contemporary immigration features a bewildering variety of origins, return patterns and modes of adaptation . . . although pre–World War I European immigration was by no means homogenous, the differences . . . pale by comparison with the current diversity.”<sup>16</sup>

In response, other historians and sociologists argue that discontinuity proponents all too readily assume the seamless assimilation of earlier migrants while overemphasizing the limited integration prospects of contemporary migrants, largely because of race.<sup>17</sup> Yet, as whiteness studies that emerged in the 1990s argue, racial categories in the past were fluid and open to renegotiation, just as they are today.<sup>18</sup> Further, many contemporary discontinuity proponents appear to fall into the trap of meekly accepting Chicago School notions of assimilation for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migrants. Little attention is paid to the fact that many, if not all, earlier migrants “transplanted” elements of their ethnic culture from the homeland and were subjected to multigenerational occupational segmentation.<sup>19</sup> European migrant groups from this earlier period, especially Italians, Poles, and Slovaks, exhibited high levels of circularity in their migration patterns, maintained transnational ties, and were often engaged in homeland politics.<sup>20</sup>

The points raised by discontinuity studies are important. Exact parallels between past and present can never be drawn. Poles in the Ruhr were Prussian citizens and possessed rights that most present-day migrants to that country do not have. Moreover, the lack of physical differences such as skin color gave Poles a potential advantage, by no means inconsequential, in their ability to integrate. Nevertheless, Poles in both regions experienced occupational segmentation well into the second and even third generations. They were cast as an “other,” categorized in racialized terms, and exposed to widespread discrimination and ridicule. Poles were targets of organized “Germanization” or “Americanization” campaigns designed to destroy their ethnic culture and inhibit their participation in the body politic. Overall, the Polish experience was different, but not altogether dissimilar, from that of contemporary migrants. Reacting to the various threats to their economic, political, and cultural interests, Poles mobilized to defend their rights within their adopted communities. They joined trade unions, participated in elections, and organized countless ethnic institutions. While politically active in American and German life, Poles also endeavored to maintain strong bonds with the homeland. Remittances, the continuous exchange of information through letters and newspapers, and frequent patterns

of return migration all ensured that connections to people and places in Poland remained durable. This existence of living between two worlds is highly analogous to the situation faced by many contemporary immigrants, making the Polish experience especially valuable for shedding light on the nature of immigrant transnationalism.

### Transnationalism and Migrant Identity

In recent years, transnationalism has acquired increasing saliency as a conceptual tool for understanding migrant acculturation and outlook. Since the 1990s, scholars such as Nina Glick Schiller, Alejandro Portes, Peter Smith, Luis Guarnizo, and Peter Kivisto have contributed to developing this concept, and Thomas Faist provides the most fully elaborated definition of transnationalism as it pertains to migrants.<sup>21</sup> For Faist, transnationalism involves the creation by migrants of a distinct social space crossing traditional nation-state borders in which migrants maintain complex political, economic, and cultural networks linking them to their country of origin. Living between two (or more) worlds, migrants construct a hybrid identity based on mutual affinities to their homeland and adopted society in the emigration; while not fully part of either, migrants are actively engaged in both.<sup>22</sup> Key factors that influence the development of transnational social spaces include the existence of advanced transportation and communication technologies, troubled nation-state formation, contentious minority policies in the country of origin, socioeconomic discrimination within sending or receiving societies, and political opportunities to promote multicultural rights within the countries of immigration.<sup>23</sup>

This general definition provides a useful starting point for discussion. However, many elements of transnationalism remain nebulous; scholars in various disciplines often talk past each other; and the need for more empirical studies into this issue is great.<sup>24</sup> Numerous questions remain unresolved. What types of migrants can be considered transnational? Do transnational identities promote or hinder integration? Is transnationalism solely a recent phenomenon? Or can the concept be applied historically? What role does the state play in fostering transnationalism? Finally, what are the limits of transnational social spaces?

In considering these questions, my study argues that by the late nineteenth century, global levels of mobility and communication were sufficiently high to enable the emergence of transnational social spaces not only among

mobile elites such as businessmen and intellectuals but also certain ethnic migrant labor groups as well.<sup>25</sup> For instance, steamship companies engaged in periodic fare wars, similar to airlines today, that could bring down the cost of a one-way passage in steerage on “the Atlantic highway” from approximately thirty-five dollars (\$870 in 2009) to as little as ten dollars (\$250); this latter sum represented a little more than a week’s wages for the average Polish mineworker in northeastern Pennsylvania.<sup>26</sup> The transnational identities created within these newly emerging immigrant social spaces could, depending on the circumstances, aid the integration process, since they did not automatically prevent migrants from developing close affinities with their host societies.<sup>27</sup> In the case of Poles, my study finds that the transnational social space created by immigrants in northeastern Pennsylvania was better able to promote integration over the long term than that which existed in the Ruhr. This development highlights another key aspect to transnationalism, namely any attempt at analysis must account for the role played by sovereign states in determining the parameters of immigrant transnational social spaces.<sup>28</sup>

To better illustrate these points, a brief synopsis of the migrant memoir of Walek, which helped ignite my interest in undertaking this comparative study, is illuminating.

In 1872, Walek was born into a Polish farming family living along the German-Russian frontier in the Prussian province of Posen (Poznań), and at the age of sixteen left his village to work in Saxony. By 1892, unemployment forced Walek to move elsewhere, and, after returning home briefly, he decided to seek his fortune in America, settling in 1893 in Scranton, the industrial center of the coal-producing regions of northeastern Pennsylvania. In Scranton, Walek was able to find work as both a miner and an ironworker and saved money to send home to relatives. Outside of work, Walek was active in the local Polish ethnic community, joining several Polish associations, campaigning for Polish candidates in elections, and agitating for Polish rights within the local Catholic Church.

Recession in Scranton forced Walek to leave by 1895 and return home to Poznań. Within a few weeks of returning, he decided to leave for the Ruhr Valley and once there, found work as a miner and steelworker. In the workplace, Walek was a popular figure. He was physically strong, spoke German, and willingly defended the rights of fellow male workers, be they Polish or German. Outside of work, Walek participated in the vibrant ethnic life of the Polish community, joining a variety of Polish ethnic organizations, participating in political activities, and promoting demands for better spiritual care from local Catholic bishops.

Eventually, Walek married a woman from the homeland and by 1906 returned home with enough money to buy land. Upon returning, Walek found that his experiences abroad aroused suspicion. Local village leaders, particularly priests, were generally upset by returning Poles' penchant for challenging their traditional authority, leading priests to warn compatriots about the corrupt ways of these westernized Poles. For his part, Walek defended the rights of returnees to make their voices heard, noting that returning migrants possessed broader, more modern outlooks than those who had stayed in the village all of their life. He himself soon became active in local political affairs well into the 1920s.<sup>29</sup>

As one can see from this vignette, Walek existed for many years in a social space that was not fully Polish, American, or German and moved through all three worlds due to the existence of extensive ethnic networks. While in northeastern Pennsylvania and in the Ruhr, he maintained physical and economic links to the homeland and engaged in political and cultural activities designed to preserve and promote ethnic identity. Confrontation and collaboration with inhabitants of the local community nevertheless brought Walek closer to his host society by drawing him out of a homogeneous subculture and into the public sphere where, as a politically engaged actor, he defended his ethnic, class, religious, and gendered interests.

In pursuing a multifaceted political engagement, Walek adopted forms and practices familiar to natives within the host society that over time made him appear less "foreign," such as participation in clubs and elections as well as petitioning the Catholic Church. Such activity also changed Walek's identity, as can be seen when on his return to Poland he felt himself to possess a more modern, superior outlook than those who had never migrated. He defended other returnees from the attacks of traditional authority figures and became active in politics, something that would have been unheard of in earlier years given Walek's heritage and previous social standing. Overall, Walek's life story highlights how transnational identities can aid the integration process by encouraging greater immigrant participation in local community life. By themselves, however, such identities are insufficient for promoting full integration. Walek eventually did return to the homeland. This is because transnational social spaces are historically contingent; their existence is primarily dependent on the willingness of sovereign democratic states and societies to tolerate them. The identities formed therein, by their nature, lack stability.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, a key to determining whether migrants are able to integrate is the extent to which they can use transnational

social spaces to mobilize and attain permanent identities grounded in broadly conceived understandings of citizenship.

### Citizenship and Immigrant Integration

T. H. Marshall, the proverbial grandfather of citizenship studies, provides a useful starting point for considering issues of citizenship and Polish integration in the Ruhr and northeastern Pennsylvania. In 1950 Marshall defined citizenship as “a status that is bestowed on those who are full members of the community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.”<sup>31</sup> The “rights” of citizenship included a trinity of civil, political, and social protections. Civil rights were defined as guarantees of liberty provided most generally by the courts, including the right to free assembly. Political rights encompassed the right to participate in the exercise of political power, that is, to vote and be represented in a democratic assembly. These civil and political rights are intimately tied to the state. Social rights, however, were conceived along the lines of what today we would label fundamental human rights. These included the rights necessary to live as a “civilized being,” such as the right to education and free association, a degree of economic welfare, and security derived from inclusion within a shared cultural community.<sup>32</sup> Reinhard Bendix has written in a similar vein.<sup>33</sup> By explicitly emphasizing the community, as opposed to the state, scholars such as Marshall and Bendix encourage us to conceive of citizenship in broad terms, including types of citizenship grounded not only in national but also in local, industrial, gendered, transnational, and other forms of collective belonging.<sup>34</sup> My examination embraces this approach, emphasizing that Poles fought for and gained multiple forms of citizenship within the societies of both the Ruhr and northeastern Pennsylvania.

Marshall’s critics are correct in pointing out that citizenship is as much about exclusion as inclusion, since each redefinition of citizenship rights brings with it new duties and expectations as well as new designations conferring differing degrees of insider and outsider status. As a result, identities of citizenship become more, not less, bounded, contributing to the emergence of a “citizenship continuum” of full, partial, and noncitizens within which the divides of ethnicity, race, and gender matter enormously.<sup>35</sup> As gender scholars have shown, discourses on citizenship have been constructed, since the French Revolution, to exclude women from becoming

full citizens by limiting their ability to enter the public sphere on the basis of their role as protectors of the home and progenitors of the nation.<sup>36</sup> Even more apparent has been the historical utilization of citizenship as a tool of exclusion in relation to immigrants and ethnic minorities, producing egregious examples of discrimination in all Western societies.

Since the 1970s, the language and practice of citizenship have changed. A traditional emphasis on assimilation within a closed national community has given way to a discourse accentuating multiculturalism, equality of cultures, and, above all, the rights of ethnic minority groups to self-representation. However, such apparent advances in the treatment of immigrants can prove a double-edged sword, unintentionally reinforcing exclusionary tendencies and limiting the basis on which immigrants can participate in the larger body politic as full citizens. Legally, this can be seen in the growth of various semicitizenship or “denizenship” categories within European and American jurisprudence that grant migrants certain legal and social protections while continuing to deny them significant political rights.<sup>37</sup> In general, the discourse of multiculturalism poses the danger of essentializing newcomer difference, especially when it privileges certain “traditional” authorities and customs within a given migrant community as being representative of the whole. This can lead to the suppression of alternate voices and individual rights within the migrant group while serving to undermine a sense of commonality, based on shared values and experiences, between migrants and members of the host society.<sup>38</sup>

Altogether, the process of becoming “full,” or at least fuller, citizens involves a complex renegotiation of the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion as well as a balance between group and individual rights.<sup>39</sup> This comparative examination of the experience of migrant Poles elaborates on this view by stressing what Jürgen Habermas has described as the power of “self-transformation.” Specifically, Polish integration was dependent on Polish willingness to engage in social conflicts within the boundaries of civil society, defined broadly as that sphere which is public, political, and independent of the state, not only as members of a group, but also as individuals. Over time, this “exchange with the other” produced by conflict could gradually help integrate Poles politically as participatory citizens in their adopted communities.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, the extent to which Poles could become active as citizens in the public sphere was heavily influenced by the state and the socioeconomic environment within which they lived.

## Challenging Existing Frameworks of Citizenship

In the United States, scholars have made notable strides since the 1960s in highlighting the difficulties immigrants and minorities faced in attempting to acculturate and become citizens within society. Nevertheless, the melting-pot myth still enjoys widespread acceptance both in American popular culture and parts of the academy.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the horrors of National Socialism in Germany have too often overshadowed an effective understanding of that country's rich, if troubled, multicultural past. In particular, the esteem accorded to the *Sonderweg* (special path) thesis, which posits that Nazism is rooted in conservative, authoritarian, and illiberal German "traditions" dating to at least the late nineteenth century, has encouraged a widespread view of Germany as a historically ethnocultural, or worse "racial," nation closed to non-German integration.<sup>42</sup> By conducting this comparative study, I seek to move beyond simple representations, if not caricatures, of German and American societies and provide a more in-depth, nuanced account of why immigrant acculturation differed between these two multiethnic states. Important to understand are the varied ways Poles could become citizens, in the broad Marshallian sense of the word, within the receiving societies in which they lived.

By far the most influential book framing recent discussions of citizenship in Europe and the United States remains Rogers Brubaker's *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, in which the inclusive French territorial *jus soli* tradition of citizenship is contrasted with the historically exclusive German *jus sanguis* model based on bloodline descent within a closed ethnocultural community. Penetrating and insightful, Brubaker's analysis is significant for helping us understand how formulations of modern citizenship law were influenced by historic self-understandings of the nation that became crystallized under the increasing pressure of nationalism and immigration in the late nineteenth century.

There are weaknesses to Brubaker's book. The emphasis on the role of nationhood traditions is deterministic. On the one hand, Brubaker adopts a neo-Sonderweg approach emphasizing the historically nonintegrationist and ethnically exclusive character of German society, evidenced most notably by the passage of the infamous 1913 Citizenship Law that first codified the *jus sanguis* citizenship regime that has existed in Germany for nearly a century.<sup>43</sup> However, as many German historians such as Dieter Gosewinkel argue, it is vital to remember that an "ethno-cultural conception of German citizenship was not determined by a specific conception of the nation, but

rather managed to assert itself because of political decisions” made within a specific historical context.<sup>44</sup> In essence, political circumstance, not tradition, dictates the nature of citizenship regimes. This point was borne out by the 1999 and 2005 reforms to German citizenship law that introduced elements of *jus soli*, reversing decades-old policies regarding immigrant naturalization. Although Brubaker could not have predicted them, these changes highlight the fact that self-understandings of the nation in Germany are less ingrained than one might suppose.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, Brubaker generally views France, and by extension other Atlantic rim democracies such as Great Britain and the United States where territorial citizenship traditions exist, as models of inclusion par excellence, failing to adequately recognize that ethnocultural and even “racialist” thinking managed to assert itself for long periods in the citizenship policies of these countries. In the case of the United States, the most obvious examples of the desire to preserve citizenship as a right strictly reserved for white, Anglo-Saxon Americans were the various immigration restriction acts, ranging from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the National Origins Act of 1924.<sup>46</sup> Overall, the endurance of *jus soli* citizenship policies among the Atlantic rim democracies was never and is currently not an inevitable certainty.<sup>47</sup>

A second limitation is the inadequate analysis of the experience of two and a half million Poles, as well as other minority groups in Germany, who as Prussian subjects always possessed German citizenship and continued to do so even after 1913. Brubaker, as others before him, is correct to point out that the relationship between Poles and Germans in Imperial Germany was marked by ethnic conflicts and a “struggle for land” in the Prussian eastern provinces of Posen, West and East Prussia, and the district of Upper Silesia.<sup>48</sup> The Prussian state took an active part in this conflict, enacting *Polenpolitik* measures (anti-Polish political legislation) that among other things restricted expressions of Polish culture in public, banned the use of Polish in schools, and limited the ability of Poles to acquire land in the eastern provinces. Polish activities were also subject to constant police supervision. However, precisely because Poles were citizens, they possessed important political and civil rights, which they actively exercised. Poles voted and were represented in local, regional, and national assemblies. Within these various bodies, Poles made numerous alliances with German political parties, most notably the Catholic Center Party and Social Democrats. They were also often able to make successful use of the German courts to protect their interests, much to

the repeated dismay of German nationalists. This contrasts with the state of affairs in the United States where African Americans and others were denied fundamental civil and political rights despite the provisions of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Minority policy in Wilhelmine Germany was repugnant; yet, for the period it was not anomalous, especially given the exclusionary policies that existed in other Western countries.

In German society, the position of Poles was never predetermined. Even in the nationalist political climate of the late Wilhelmine period, integration on the local level was occurring. My examination of the Polish migrant population in the Ruhr, which by 1914 constituted approximately 15 percent of the total number of Prussian Poles in the Empire, emphasizes precisely this point.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, the third drawback to Brubaker's analysis is that the focus on the legal statutes and administrative attitudes toward immigration neglects the diverse ways immigrants actually became citizens in the communities in which they lived. As Yasemin Soysal observed in her analysis of post-1945 immigrants, exclusionary citizenship laws do not necessarily preclude immigrants from attaining a level of social integration in their host society, a point borne out, albeit in a much different context, by my research.<sup>50</sup> As Prussian citizens, Poles in the Ruhr possessed significantly more civil, political, and economic rights than the often unnaturalized Polish immigrants of northeastern Pennsylvania. Polish integration nonetheless proved more extensive in the latter region. This highlights the need to move beyond the "thin" analysis of citizenship as a legal status grounded exclusively in the relationship of the individual or group to the state in favor of a "thick" investigation that explores the contestation of citizenship between and among groups within society.<sup>51</sup> Clearly, the state matters since it most often helps define the parameters of citizenship by enacting and enforcing laws regarding civil and voting rights, economic liberties, and, since the rise of the welfare state, levels of social entitlements. However, citizenship is multidimensional. In the case of Poles, levels of integration were ultimately dependent on the extent to which they could actively fight for their rights within the public spheres of their host societies and stake claims to various forms of social and cultural citizenship.

## Poles in the Ruhr and Northeastern Pennsylvania

Among scholars who have examined the individual Polish communities in the Ruhr and northeastern Pennsylvania, disagreement exists over levels of

Polish integration, with two general schools of thought competing to explain the Polish relationship with the surrounding community. The first emphasizes how competing ethnic antagonisms, driven by nationalist sentiment, economic competition, and cultural difference, limited integration prospects over the long term. As a consequence, Polish communities remained, on the whole, segregated within German and American societies, forming distinct subcultures, or parallel societies, that were isolated from the mainstream. The second argues that although Poles faced significant obstacles to their integration, many did become integral members of the societies in which they lived by embracing a hybrid identity that, as one historian noted, both “united [Poles] with and separated them from” their German or American neighbors. In essence, the majority of Poles were well socialized within their adopted environments, at least before World War I.<sup>52</sup> Such interpretive differences reinforce the usefulness of a comparative study for better fleshing out the changes in Polish identity and levels of integration over time.

In building on earlier analyses, I focus on investigating how multilayered Polish identities developed as a result of inter- and intraethnic conflicts in the workplace and local society, where disputes over wages and jobs, religious and associational activity, family and citizens’ rights continually reformulated Polish outlooks. I also explore how lived experiences in Poland and the imagined concept of “homeland” within the two migrant communities affected Polish workers’ attitudes within their host society. Drawing from a rich array of historical materials available from archives and libraries in Germany, Poland, and the United States, I argue that integration was dependent on Poles engaging in social conflicts within the boundaries of civil society, first as members of a group and then as individuals. Group conflict brought Poles out of an initially homogeneous subculture and encouraged them to engage in a multidimensional form of politics in order to defend varied interests based not only on ethnicity but also on class, religion, gender, transnational sensibilities, and ideas of citizenship. In pursuing a multifaceted political engagement, Poles adopted native forms and practices, which over time began to change the discursive construction of the “Pole” within the native mind-set, making them appear less “foreign.” Such politics also transformed Polish identities, contributing to greater self-reflection and conflict over goals and desires within the ethnic group. The subsequent decline in ethnic unity, together with changes in native attitudes, eventually enabled Poles to become, as individuals, more equal and

active citizens within their adopted societies. In the Ruhr and northeastern Pennsylvania, the emergence and resolution of specific conflicts within civil society did create a basis for integrating at least part of the Polish ethnic community in both regions. This is an important finding given the continued tendency to view pre-1945 German society as essentially “racialist” and closed to minority inclusion. Nevertheless, differences in the organization of industry and markets, the levels of government intervention in economic and cultural matters, and the strength of civil society meant that the ability of Polish immigrants to integrate was, over the long term, comparatively greater in northeastern Pennsylvania than in the Ruhr.