

Mary Erdmans

“Transnational Identities and Behaviors among Solidarity Refugees in the US”

ABSTRACT

This presentation outlines the political transnational activities and identities of Solidarity refugees in the United States (mainly Chicago and California) during the late 1980s. First, I define and enumerate Solidarity refugees (as distinct from the “Solidarity emigration”), and then argue that political refugees are different from voluntary migrants in significant ways that influence contact with the homeland. Second, I discuss the relation between the opposition movement in Poland and the transnational activities and identities of these refugees focusing on moral dilemmas, identity construction, and networks for political transnationalism. Finally, I discuss my current oral history project on return Solidarity refugees (that is, those who re-migrated to Poland after 1989) and present some preliminary findings on factors influencing their return as well as social remittances.

BIO

Case Western Reserve University Mary Patrice Erdmans is a Professor of Sociology at Case Western Reserve University. Her areas of interest are immigration and ethnicity (with a research focus on Poles and Polish Americans), the intersection of gender, class, and race (where her research has included studies of white working-class women and adolescent mothers), and narrative research methods. She is a former president of the Polish American Historical Association. Her monographs include: *Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 1976-1990*; *The Grasiński Girls: The Choices They Had and the Choices They Made*; and *On Becoming a Teen Mom: Life Before Pregnancy*. Her articles have appeared in various journals including the *Journal of American Ethnic History*, *Sociological Quarterly*, *Studia Migracyjne -- Przegląd Polonijny*; *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, and *Polish American Studies*. Her current research project is an oral history of return Solidarity refugees. She is currently a Fulbright scholar in Poland affiliated with the University of Gdansk.

