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Polish Organizations and Chicago's Polonia, 1880-1930

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Despite a large, growing amount of literature on the Polish community in Chicago, there remains a lack of information about organizations in the Polish communities. Organizations in the Polish community are generally spoken about in one of two ways. Either one organization is spoken about in great depth or organizations are barely touched upon. This work seeks to bridge both of those types of work by focusing both on small organizations and large organizations and connecting them through the Poles who were members.

The Oral History of Chicago's Polonia project, 1880-1930, is used in this work to limit the number of organizations that are discussed and to focus on how Polish immigrants were affected by multiple organizations. How organizations helped shape and were shaped by Chicago's Polish community is a focal point of this work. This work explores how the shifting of Polish identity affected how organizations were developed and how they changed. It finds that Polish tradition and Polish Americanization played a role in organizations' development, which in turn influenced the development of Polonia.

To my partner MacK,

who helped push me forward,

supported me in the good and bad times,

and made this possible

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PNA	Polish National Alliance
PWA	Polish Women's Alliance
PRCU	Polish Roman Catholic Union
PAC	Polish American Congress

Introduction

In English, za chlebem means "for bread", but when it comes to Polish history, za chlebem means much more. Za chlebem in Polish immigration history means the search for money, for a livelihood, for food, for stability. It was a search for a better life in America that the Polish village could not provide. It seems nearly every Polish immigration story during the turn of the twentieth century starts with za chlebem. Therefore, it seems appropriate that this history also starts with za chlebem.

The 1870s signaled the start of the Polish immigration boom in the United States. There are many reasons that Polish people immigrated. The reasons behind the migration have and are mostly beyond the scope of this study. Yet, it is important to understand how Poles came to America and how they came to Chicago. Therefore, a quick, barebones summary of how Polish immigrants came to America and Chicago is necessary.[1]

Between 1772 and 1795 Poland was divided and partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Poland ceased to exist as a fully formed nation after 1795 and would not become a nation again until after WWI. Because of this division, Polish immigration history was also divided with some overlap. Yet, each group of Polish immigrants, regardless of which partitioned country they were part of, largely left for the same reason— za chlebem.

All three partitioned areas of Poland experienced economic transformations in the nineteenth century. These transformations included the end to Polish serfdom, an increase of international competition, the ending of the monopoly for the liquor trade, and agricultural

1. As discussed, the full history is beyond the scope of this narrative. However, there are many different books that discuss the beginning of mass Polish migration including: John J. Bukowczyk, *A History of the Polish Americans* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008); Dominic A. Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

tariffs. To the modern eye, these transformations seem like much needed advancement. However, for the agricultural peasants, this transformation of the Polish economy led to a disaster that would help pave the way for Polish immigration to America.

The sweeping reforms in partitioned Poland led to a market economy and commercial agriculture. This, in turn, led to the isolation and instability of the countryside, pushing Polish peasants off their land. Yet, the industrial cities could not absorb the excess surplus of labor. Therefore, the majority of Polish peasants migrated to help preserve their families. They migrated to areas that needed laborers, which often meant cities in the United States. Most often, Polish migrated intending to go back to Poland, not to stay in America. Poles migrated to ensure their survival until conditions got better in Poland or until they earned enough money to keep their family thriving. For many, there was not an intention to stay; they saw the migration to the U.S. in the same way they say seasonal migration work to Germany— a necessity. To put it simply, Polish immigrants left to search za chlebem— for bread.

As Polish people settled in America, they often settled via chain migration. According to John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Chain migration can be defined as that movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous."[2] Sometimes, like in the case of Polish immigrants, this meant that when one person moved a whole village or community moved alongside them, usually gradually over years. Polish immigrants chain migrated, creating large communities of Polish

2. John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Chain Migration Ethnic Neighborhood Formation and Social Networks," *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1964): 82.

called Polonia. Polonia is a Polish-American community living outside of Poland, and Chicago's became one of the largest in the early twentieth century.

High demand for labor during the turn of the twentieth century transformed Chicago's Polonia into one of the largest Polish communities in the world. Chicago's Polonia is generally considered to be located near the intersection of Milwaukee, Ashland, and North Avenues on the city's Northwest Side as well as in the Lower West Side (Pilsen) area, and below the south branch of the Chicago River in community areas near the Union Stockyards such as Bridgeport, McKinly Park, and Back of the Yards. The size of the Chicago Polish community is the reason why Chicago is a focal point in many histories.[3]

When Polish immigrants arrived in the United States, they spread across the country and a large percentage went straight to Chicago. What started as simple pocket communities that were small with little infrastructure developed into a large, complex ethnic community with a variety of infrastructure over time. Over time, many Polish migrants, even some migrants that intended to return to Poland, became Polish-Americans, often by their own determination. The evolution of Polish neighborhoods happened gradually.

Organizations play an important role in the evolution of ethnic communities. Looking at the organizations that developed within the neighborhood to accommodate the wants and needs of Polonia helps historians fully understand the evolution of Polish neighborhoods. Organizations play a significant role in the building of ethnic neighborhoods. Organizations reflect the needs and wants of ethnic communities.

3. Dominic A. Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2.

A large variety of organizations emerged in Chicago's Polonia due to different needs, classes, occupations, and ideals that existed in the community. Class differences and occupation can influence how a community develops. Therefore, it is necessary to have a range of occupations and classes within this study. However, given the size of Chicago's Polonia and the number of associations, it is necessary to limit the number of organizations in some fashion. This history will limit itself based on the individuals, organizations, and events discussed within the transcripts of the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project.

This thesis is limited by the organizations provided by the oral histories, allowing some of the smaller, specific organizations to be observed and shine through. These organizations may tell historians something more about the development of Polonia that larger national organizations cannot. Yet, larger organizations also cannot be overlooked given their influence and scope within Polonia. Limiting the sample of people to the specific group of individuals interviewed in the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project allows larger organizations to be observed at a more personal level, not just through the eyes of the organization and its senior members. This allows historians to understand how these larger organizations may have impacted individuals which can allow for a more specific understanding of how larger organizations impacted the community.

Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project Origins

The 1970s experienced a period of ethnic revival. In some ways, the American ethnic revival was in response to the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights movement brought about black nationalism. Black nationalism seeks to develop and maintain an identity for people

of black ancestry. It was considered an alternative to being assimilated by the American nation, which is predominantly white. Black nationalists looked to maintain and promote their separate identity as a people of black ancestry.[4] Black Nationalism and the emergence of national culturalism brought the rhetoric and tools that allowed white Americans to identify themselves as more than just "American" and "white."

Before the ethnic revival, many Americans rejected their ethnic past to be accepted by the white majority. Instead, they sought to differentiate themselves among the now-grouped-together whites.[5] The key elements of the ethnical revival included: "the emergent ethnics are white without actually *feeling* white; they are alienated from other whites and are beginning to identify the reasons why they feel treated as nonwhites, and are increasingly angry at white elites who deem their protests less 'legitimate' than those of other whites."[6] The 1970s ethnic revival was a complex event that combined "ideological strands of anti-modernism, anti-elitism, cultural conservatism, and a vaguely articulated class-based grievances."[7] Out of the Civil Rights movement, other ethnicities including white ethnics began receiving more attention, producing more work, and commissioning new research. Some of this new research included funded projects seeking to differentiate each white ethnic group as its own separate identity. These identities already existed as separate identities. However, now, each separate white identities

4. Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 72

5. Matthew Frye Jacobson*, Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post–Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 55-58.

6. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 276.

7. Ibid., 276.

wanted to differentiate themselves from other white ethnics instead of being part of the white majority without an ethnic identity.

In 1973, as a response to the newly revived interest in ethnic history, the United States Congress passed the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act. The Ethnic Heritage Studies Act "authorizes the Commissioner of Education to arrange through grants to public and private nonprofit educational agencies and organizations for the establishment and operation of a number of ethnic heritage studies projects."[8] The Ethnic Heritage Studies program funded the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project through the Chicago Historical Society, Loyola University, and the Polish American Congress. The Polish American Congress is an umbrella organization that encompasses nearly all organizations in the United States including the Polish Roman Catholic Union, Polish Falcons, Polish Women's Alliance, and the Polish National Alliance. According to their website in 2020, "The PAC promotes civic, educational and cultural programs designed to further not only the knowledge of Polish history, language and culture, but to stimulate Polish American involvement and accomplishments."[9]

The Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project included 140 oral history interviews from 1976-1977 and focused on individuals' lives between 1880-1930. Because these oral histories take central focus in this work, this thesis will be limited to the specific time frame of the oral histories, 1880-1930.

These oral interviews had six topics the interviewers were instructed to ask about. One of these topics was organizations. Of the 140 individuals interviewed, 65 interviewees discussed in

8. "H.R.994 - 93rd Congress (1973-1974): Ethnic Heritage Studies Act,"Congress.gov, January 3, 1973. https://www.congress.gov/bill/93rd-congress/house-bill/994.

9. "About Us," *Polish American Congress,* Accessed March 26, 2020, http://www.pac1944.org/about-us/.

English the events of their lives, including organizations they were a part of during the 1880-1930 time period.[10] How the 140 individuals were chosen is unclear. However, the interviewers imply during the interviews that many participants knew each other. This means that some may have been part of the same organizations given their familiarity with each other.

The Importance of Identity in Polonia

One of the most important influences in Polonia was the rapidly changing identity of Polish immigrants. These changes in identity, in turn, changed the face of organizations and change Polonia. To understand these changes means to understand identity.

To properly address the idea of identity, identity must first be defined. Identity is always a tricky subject. Identity can be subjective. What is and is not American is an opinion. People can self-identify, but this self-identification is not always acknowledged by historians, sociologists, or even by governments and countrymen. Identity is often vaguely defined, making it difficult to study. Some may see identity as being filtered down by language, religion, or even name. Others may see identity strictly as how people identify themselves. The idea of identity as clear cut is a fabrication. It is tricky, and it is complex.

This complexity seems especially true for "white ethnic" immigrants of the early twentieth century. Matthew Frye Jacobson and David Roediger both cover this topic extensively in *Whiteness of a Different Color* and *Working Toward Whiteness* respectively. Jacobson's and Roediger's books explore how ethnic immigrants, including Poles, evolved from non-white

10. Transcripts of Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, Box 1-11, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

Others to white Caucasians through cultural and political events that have shaped America. These works follow the complex history of how historic events have changed how white ethnics were viewed not just by other Americans but also by the U.S. government. They challenge the idea that race and ethnicity are born, arguing that it was made by culture and politics. Jacobson and Roediger's arguments push this work to consider what it means to be Polish in the United States when cultural and political events transform identity and how Polish people are perceived both by Polonia and outside sources. These cultural and political characteristics, in turn, seem to correlate with the development of the Polish organizations this work will explore and examine. Many Polish organizations push their own political and cultural agenda to match the shifts in the country at the time. Some organizations may align their political and cultural agendas with larger umbrella organizations while some smaller clubs may seek to act more as social and hobby clubs with little political agendas.

Jacobson's and Roediger's books have helped to color this work's understanding of identity and history of ethnicity. Jacobson writes, "race is not just a conception; it is also a perception."[11] For white Americans in this time period, their perception of white identity is colored by what is perceived as different: different languages, religions, and other cultural characteristics. These characteristics helped to define what was white for Americans, but it also helped Poles define what Polishness was.

Language, religion, and other cultural characteristics are especially important to Polish immigrants, whose language was considered particularly foreign to Americans and who had yet to accept Roman Catholicism as a "white religion." These aspects of Polishness were especially

11. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race, 9.*

important to Poles, who hung onto them tightly during a period that Poland did not exist. They saw their language and religion as core parts of their Polishness.

Many different Poles were coming to the United States around the turn of the twentieth century. Most of the Poles who came to the United States in this time frame were peasant farmers. However, their similar economic status did not mean their Polish identity was understood the same by all peasant farmers. Polish identity, culture, and even language were not necessarily cohesive throughout the areas that were considered Polish. Many Polish people's identity formed around regional identities. Identity in Poland and how it showed itself was often influenced by the three countries that partitioned Poland in 1795: Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary.

Because of the lack of a fully defined nation and even a fully defined definition of Polishness, many Polish relied on cultural establishments and characteristics to define their Polishness. Without a nation, Polish people relied heavily on cultural communities, shared experiences, and "imagined communities" to define Poland and Polishness.[12] Polish identity development during the partitioned period mainly focused on language, religion, and other cultural traditions. Although many Poles identified with regions, language and religion, despite had variations, were two broad enough characteristics that it was true to those who identified as Polish.

The Polish language largely remained in homes despite attempts to eradicate it. Additionally, it remained a Polish tradition to practice Roman Catholicism. Polish identity would

12. For more on imagined communities: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (place: Verso books, 2006). For more on imagined communities in regards to Poland: Agnieszka Barbara Nance, *Literary and Cultural Images of a Nation Without a State: the Case of Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 5-10.

further rely on organizations and cultural aspects more than many ethnicities. For example, Polish villages were often centered around churches that dealt with disputes and often served as town halls and community centers. The experience Polish peasants had in the village would later help form their political identity in the United States.

Identity within this thesis will sometimes discuss the topics of Americanization and assimilation. Americanization and assimilation are often interchangeable to authors. The largest difference being that assimilation can happen across all cultures, but Americanization focuses strictly on ethnic identities becoming white American. As pointed out by Roediger in *Working toward Whiteness*, the idea of being American and therefore being Americanized often came down to "whiteness," and whiteness itself remains a complicated term informed by the culture and politics of the time. Whiteness became a term that would be used in politics to help inform which immigrants would be allowed citizenship under the phrasing "free whites." It was a constantly contested term both culturally and politically. It constantly evolved to suit the needs of the courts and society.[13]

Assimilation and Americanization are often terms that are considered antiquated. However, in the early nineteenth century, assimilability, as argued by Jacobson in *Whiteness of a Different Color*, was used as a measure for immigrants' acceptance into the country. For example, in the 1890s *The North American View* discussed the Chinese and how they would be "very difficult to assimilate." Since assimilation is still a broad term, this work uses Russell Kazal's open definition of assimilation. Kazal's definition reflects the desire of the U.S. government in this time period. According to Kazal assimilation is "processes that result in

13. David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2005), 59.

greater homogeneity within a society."[14] It is, as Jacobson and Roediger point out, especially important that when speaking of assimilating within this thesis that it is clear Polish immigrants are assimilating into white American culture, not just American culture.

Americanization, within this work, will be used more broadly than assimilation. It will be used when discussing the shift of Polish identity from one that is considered foreign, non-white during the time period to one uniformed, white, and "American." This may take the traits of religion (from Roman Catholic to Protestant), language (Polish to English), or other "American" characteristics (sports and hobby preference, leisure activities, etc.). Assimilation will be used more rarely. When discussing actual law, government, and outsider views, assimilation is an appropriate term.

Historiography

The topic of organizations in Chicago's Polonia has only been covered briefly by historians. Organizations are not often discussed in the context of immigrants' lives. In the few cases that organizations are discussed in history, the Polonia organizations are part of other broad topics. For example, Dominic Pacyga is one of the most prominent authors in Polish immigration history during the turn of the century. Within *Chicago: A Biography* and *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922*, Pacyga discusses the life of workers in Chicago's Polonia. He goes into detail about working conditions, living conditions, and leisurely activities as well as the formation of Chicago's working class and the formation of

14. Russell A. Kazal, "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 438.

Polonia. These details and discussions are all important pieces of Polonia organization history, but he does not discuss organizations beyond bare-bones descriptions. Pacyga describes the formation of organizations as a way for the lower-class to not only establish a social life like that in the homeland but a way for them to fulfill basic needs. Pacyga does not spend too much time on organizations because it is outside the scope of his research.[15] This work seeks to build on works like Pacyga's by focusing more on the complexity of each organization and their relation to each other and going beyond the obvious surface purposes of organizations to analyze the need Polonia has for each organization.

William J. Galush also discusses organizations but in a narrower focus than Pacyga. In Galush's article, "Purity and Power: Chicago Polonian Feminists, 1880-1914," Galush goes into detail about the evolution of women's organizations from the beginning pious organizations to the eventual formation of some of the first women's fraternal associations to the eventual formation of hobby and professional clubs. Galush uses women's organizations to discuss women's own power and role within the community to show the evolution that happened over time. This thesis also seeks to explore Polonia's evolution. However, Galush does this in "Purity and Power" through the eyes and evolution of Polish women, while this work attempts to look through the eyes of Oral History of Chicago's Polonia participants to have a better understanding of all Polish Chicagoans.[16]

15. Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009) and Dominic A. Pacyga*, Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on the South Side, 1880-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

16 .William J. Galush, "Purity and Power: Chicago Polonian Feminists, 1880-1914,"*Polish American Studies* 47 (1990): 5-24

In another Galush article, “City Societies and Commercial Clubs: Embourgeoisement,” Galush uses organizations to discuss class differences. Galush breaks down how different classes and the rise of a middle class indicate assimilation within Polonia. Additionally, a rise of the middle class among Polish-Americans led to the formation of city and commercial societies as more Polish wanted to be distinguished by occupation and profession.[17]

In some ways, Pacyga and Galush are two sides of the same coin. Pacyga looks at organizations within a much broader scope but does not look at them at a smaller scope, and Galush looks at them through a much narrower scope but does not look at them in a larger scope.[18] Many scholars fall under one of these two categories, not considering that both the smaller and broader scope can be looked at together if put in the right context.

Galush’s use of small groups is a characteristic mimicked in this work. This work seeks to address the smaller groups with as much effort as the larger groups. Galush’s work with women’s groups and professional organizations provided context for some of the smaller organizations.

John Bukowczyk, in *History of the Polish Americans*, is another scholar who dives into the history of Polish Americans. Bukowczyk takes a broad overview of Polonia in the United States with a focus on the period of mass Polish migration to the United States. Bukowczyk discusses organizations’ bigger roles but only in the context of specific historical events and not in the context of Polonia and Polish development in the United States. For example, he writes

17. "City Societies and Commercial Clubs: Embourgeoisement among Second Generation Polish Americans,” *Polish American Studies* 56, no. 2 (1999): 5-18.

18. William J. Galush, "Purity and Power: Chicago Polonian Feminists, 1880-1914,”*Polish American Studies* 47, (1990): 5-24; and William Galush, "City Societies and Commercial Clubs: Embourgeoisement among Second Generation Polish Americans,” *Polish American Studies* 56, no. 2 (1999): 5-18.

that Polish clubs and organizations rallied around the community during strikes. Bukowczyk uses organizations as examples of how the community could come together in periods of strife.[19] George S. Pabis, in "The Polish Press in Chicago and American Labor Strikes: 1892 to 1912," also discusses organizations similarly to Bukowczyk, but he ties them to newspapers and unions. Although this is one role organizations have, the separate organizations' goals are not mentioned and are only discussed in terms of strikes and workers.[20]

How organizations react to the community needs and community events are a core part of this work. However, this work seeks to focus intensively on organizations instead of as examples for historical events like Pabis and Bukowczyk. Yet, their two works provide valuable content and examples for this work.

There are other examples of scholars focusing on intensely singular organizations and still failing to look at the entirety of organizations. Donald Pienkos wrote books on the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Falcons, and the Polish Women's Alliance.[21] Additionally, John Raziłowski wrote a book discussing in-depth the Polish Roman Catholic Union.[22] Individual books for these organizations are necessary as they are old, large organizations with rich histories; they had a large influence on the construction and maintenance of Polonia in Chicago. All of these organizations played prominent roles in Polonia and provide useful information to

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19. John J. Bukowczyk*, A History of the Polish Americans* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008).

20. George S. Pabis, "The Polish Press in Chicago and American Labor Strikes: 1892 to 1912,"*Polish American Studies* 48, no. 1 (1991): 7-21.

21. Donald Pienkos*, PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). Donald Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Angela and Donald Pienkos, *"In the Ideals of Women is the Strength of a Nation": A History of the Polish Women's Alliance of America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

22. John Radziłowski, *The Eagle and the Cross* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

help put interviewees' memories into context. This work seeks to add ordinary people back into these organizations, not just executive members. Additionally, less information about the exact history of the organizations will be discussed and more information about the role the organizations played among other organizations will be analyzed. These other organizations will include small, niche organizations.

The smaller organizations that existed only in Chicago were often overlooked in favor of the larger organizations that appear to have more influence. Yet, these smaller organizations can help people understand the lives of Polish people in Chicago as well as their interests. The major organizations like the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union were an important part of Polish organizations, but to ignore the others fails to consider the importance of the variety and multitude of Polish organizations that existed in this time period.

Consider the Polish Arts Club or the Polish Singing Club attended by Helen Chrzanowski, a participant of the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project. A historian may examine a smaller organization in a similar way they may examine a larger organization. Why was it formed? When was it formed? What were its goals? What was discussed during meetings? What activities took place? Who was part of the organization? However, the answers are smaller and narrower. The Polish Singing Club only had a handful of people. The smaller organizations represent small pockets of people instead of the entire community. By looking at smaller organizations, instead of gaining vast generalizations, historians can gain a more in-depth understanding of individuals within the community.

The main theme of this thesis is the development and evolution of the organizations within Polonia. However, Polish-American identity is a supporting theme of this thesis. Identity among Polish immigrants influenced organizations' goals and the development of Polonia.

Therefore, the histography of identity needs to be touched upon. Many Polish scholars have discussed and explored Polish identity in America. When discussing identity within Polonia, historians often turn to the church to dissect Polish identity. Time and time again the church becomes the epicenter to all Polish organizations and Polish identity. While it is true that the church is a well-established place of value to Polonia and does have a place in organizations' history, this work also points to smaller, individual organizations that occur within the church whether these are religious or not. Many scholars also focus intensely on the Catholic aspect of organizations in the church given the intense Catholicism of Poles. Yet, many organizations in the church were secular organizations. The church may have only served as a meeting place and means of resources. Secular groups were not only possible but common in churches. While it is true the church played a central role in the initial development of organizations, the organizations themselves, not the church, receive little attention. For example, Joseph John Parot's *Polish Catholics in Chicago, 1850-1920: A Religious History* offers an in-depth look at the immigrant churches' inner workings. Yet, it does not discuss the important role organizations in the church played in the identity of the patrons as well as the role the organizations played in maintaining the church as a community forum and meeting ground. Organizations were mentioned but rarely followed upon.[23]

Identity is often explored by looking at Polonia's outside pressure instead of exploring Polonia's internal pressures such as organizations. For example, Victor Greene explores the rising ethnic consciousness of Polish and Lithuanians. However, his focus is ethnic competition

23. Joseph John Parot, *Polish Catholics in Chicago, 1850-1920: A Religious History* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981).

both with other ethnics as well as the pressing Anglo-American majority.[24] Greene looked within organizations, but his exploration of ethnic consciousness focused around religion. Additionally, although he explored the rising of ethnic consciousness, he does not touch upon the Americanization process that was happening in Polonia. William Galush explores identity within Polonia as well. His analysis is broader than Greene's. Galush explores identity through several factors: voluntarism, religion, education, politics, and employment. Within these subsections, Galush touches upon organizations. Unlike his predecessors, he discusses the impact of church organizations including organizations that may not have been religious in nature but that had formed within the church. However, outside of the church, he barely touches upon the impact of organizations and clubs other than mentioning their existence.[25]

Questions revolving around Chicago Polish organizations and immigrant identity need to be answered. Yet previous works have not pushed the subject further to answer these questions. Can organizations demonstrate the needs of Polonia? Can organizations show the shifting and changing of Chicago's Polonia? By evolving as Polonia changes, what can organizations tell us how and why the identity of Polonia in Chicago changed? What role did class division play in the types of organizations? What role did occupation and gender play? What are the relations between organizations? What role did the organizations play in the assimilation of the populations? What role did each organization play in terms of the change experienced by the three cultural signifiers that helped to define a person as Polish: language, religion, and traditions?

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24. Victor Greene, *For God and Country* (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1975).

25. William Galush, *For More Than Bread: Community and Identity in American Polonia, 1880-1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Using the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project, these questions will be answered more thoroughly than have been answered previously. It is impossible to have a complete view of Polonia nor is it possible to make statements that apply to all Polish people. Each Polish person understands their culture and ethnicity differently, and each has a unique journey and story. However, this thesis hopes to deliver an understanding of how organizations may have helped to shape Chicago's Polonia by looking at a sample of organizations and discussing the small number of people that not only participated in the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project but also deemed it important to discuss organizations. The organizations the interviewees discussed were various. There were some large organizations such as the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Roman Catholic Union, and the Polish Women's Alliance. However, the interviewees also discussed smaller niche organizations ranging from mutual aid associations and life insurance clubs to hobby and professional clubs.

Yet, it is important to also include large organizations to understand their impact on various individuals. By looking at individuals in larger organizations, it is easier to understand organizations' actual impact instead of what organizations claim was their impact. An individual can discuss the actual presence of organizations, not the impact and presence an organization might claim. This individualistic approach is why this work will focus on organizations of participants in the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project.

Given the variety of classes, occupations, and regions of Poland hailed from, the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project gives an excellent sample of Polonia in Chicago. This work will look at the organizations that are more fleshed out within the oral histories. These organizations fall in the timeline of the oral histories' narrative, 1880-1930. This limits the number of organizations to a few dozen and focuses in on what organizations might be able to

tell about Polish immigrants around the turn of the twentieth century. This organization means information such as founding members and unrelated problems within may be glossed over if they do not tell historians about identity and impact in the community. How people viewed, remembered, and interacted with organizations is different from the narrative that organizations tell. Organizations often exaggerate their roles in the community. Many events and effects from organizations did rich all the members of organizations— only those members who played prominent roles in the organizations. Therefore, the understanding of the role each organization played in Chicago's Polonia will come from the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project and what the participants remembered and discussed about the organizations they were part of.

The chapters will be separated topically and discuss the historical context to examine the evolution of Polonia. Because of the variety and number of organizations that existed within the time period, it is easier to separate the chapters by subjects. To separate these, the chapters follow a topical order of how the groups evolved thereby strengthening the connection between the organizations' evolution and the changing of Chicago's Polonia.

Throughout this work, it will become clear that there is a natural evolution in which a new ethnic enclave's organizations evolved alongside Polonia. Within Chapter One, the evolution starts with the discovery of spaces followed by the identification of similarities and needs within Polonia. These spaces include saloons and parks in which large groups of Polish, particularly workers, gathered to discuss problems within Polonia. The identification of problems led to the formation of small organizations and mutual aid societies--often informal without names or purpose outside of life insurance. These organizations were necessary for immigrants to survive. These clubs addressed immigrants' immediate needs. Chapter One addresses the early

organizations that could only be loosely called organizations. These organizations are placed against the backdrop of the sudden surge of Polish immigrants coming to America "for bread." This surge led to poor work conditions and living conditions. This chapter includes mutual aid societies and the grouping of Poles into a community.

Chapter Two takes up fraternal benefit organizations. These organizations are like the mutual aid societies of the past. However, they are formed as more solid organizations. In some works, fraternal benefit organizations are a type of mutual aid society. However, in this work, there are key differences between the two to mark a distinction between earlier organizations and more developed organization. While mutual aid associations were often smaller organizations focused on basic life insurance, many fraternal benefit organizations had a broader purpose. They were often larger than the mutual aid societies and involved more social, political, and cultural activities outside of life insurance. These organizations still address immigrants' needs mostly through life insurance. However, they also address the immigrants' needs to maintain their sense of Polish identity and tradition. Fraternal benefit organizations would be some of the largest Polish organizations such as the Polish National Alliance.

Chapter Three focuses on church organizations. Church organizations are the bulk of Polonia organizations. These organizations are not necessarily religious but take place in a church. They did not center on religion. Rather, they used church resources to make organizations around hobbies and interests. They were necessary for the stability of Polonia and the creation of something that resembled life in the Polish village. At this stage, Polonia was becoming a stable community. Polish immigrants could work together effectively and could afford their churches to live and die in a familiar place.

The final chapter is Chapter Four: professional and hobby organizations. This includes occupational, cultural, and economic. These organizations may seem like they have nothing in common. Yet, their most common thread is their shallow bond to the Polish identity; they were often Polish in name only. Each organization will have its subheading to clearly define each type of organization. For example, professional organizations have a subheading. These organizations are particularly complicated. These organizations sometimes sought to maintain Polishness but were often labeled as having an American identity, or they may push for their members to become more American. This is an evolutionary blend of the Polish community.

Throughout, there will be some overlap of organizations in chapters. For example, each chapter will discuss the development of new clubs. However, they also discuss the evolution of old clubs. An excellent example of this is the mutual aid societies. They started as a way to help the workers. However, as time went by and churches began taking up collections to help families, the clubs developed more into a social club than a club for security. This overlap strengthens the link between the evolution of Polonia and Polish organizations.

The goal of this work is to look at organizations discussed within the Oral History of Chicago's Polonia, keeping its time frame of 1880-1930. These oral histories do not even cover half of the Polish organizations that existed within Chicago. However, with this sampling of organizations, we can see that organizations and clubs played dual roles in Polonia. They not only served the needs of the community as they developed and changed, but they also influenced the direction that Polonia turned to as the community developed and changed over time. Many of these changes revolved around Polish-American identity. It is these changes that this thesis will address. This thesis will seek to answer how organizations reflect the change in Chicago's Polish

community and how organizations influenced identity transformation— whether to pull Polonia toward assimilation or to keep them rooted in Polish identity.

Chapter One: Informal Clubs of Necessity

When Polish immigrants came to America in the 19th century, there was little for them in terms of structure and help. To understand the beginning of Polish organizations and the beginning of Polonia in America requires an understanding as to what Poles were arriving and the challenges they were facing.

As discussed in the introduction, the vast majority of Polish-Americans immigrated in the late nineteenth century. Before this time period, few Poles lived in the United States, meaning no Polish neighborhoods and few structures and institutions existed to support Polish people in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[1] Polish immigration relied primarily on chain migration with many migrants moving, "because," according to interviewee Stanley Lizmanski, "that's what people did."[2] Young Polish men often came over alone or with other men in their village. Other members of their family including women often made the trip at a later date once initial migrants settled. Chain migration helped create the first initial of Polish in the United States. It was these initial chains that formed the first loose organizations in Chicago. Within family and close acquaintances, the first mutual aid societies formed to ensure the survival of those familiar with them. Those Polish that did exist in America before the start of the first Polish immigration wave in the 1870s were typically different from most Poles that arrived in the first wave.

The first Polish resident of Chicago is reported to have been Antoni Smarzewski, who arrived in 1850. Before then, there was only a small population of Poles in the United States—the cost of which had nothing to do with Polish peasants who arrived in a tremendous boom in

1. Waclaw Kruszka, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908: The Poles in Illinois Part II,* Ed. James S. Pula, M. B. Biskupski, and Stanley Cuba, translated by Krystyna Jankowski (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 5-15.

2. Transcripts of Stanley Lizmanski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 2.

the 1870s through the 1920s. Many Polish people who were established in the United States were instead intellectuals, coming over after failed rebellions whose goal was to free the Polish state under the control of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. They were escaping political consequences. They could not be further from Polish immigrants that came over for bread. The Poles coming in droves at the turn of the century often started with very little or nothing at all. They often used the last of their money to come to Chicago.[3] The Poles coming over in the late 19th century became industrial workers to make quick money to return to Poland when they could. Yet, they still shared a language (Polish) and religion (Roman Catholic) and across the class lines, many wished to see Poland become an independent country.

Most Polish immigrants searching for bread started with virtually nothing. However, using public spaces and growing connections with other Polish immigrants, Polish immigrants went from individual immigrants to one of the largest ethnic communities in Chicago. Through these public spaces and ethnic commonalities, Polish people built up their community quickly through organizations and clubs to make it easier to live in America.

Spaces

The first step of the formation of clubs and organizations included the recognition of a common identity among Poles. Polish immigrants at the turn of the century often came to places that had a lot of available jobs. This meant they conglomerated in urban centers like Chicago. Additionally, because Polish immigrants came as chain migrants, many settled together because

3. Waclaw Kruszka, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908: The Poles in Illinois Part II,* edited by James S. Pula, M. B. Biskupski, and Stanley Cuba, translated by Krystyna Jankowski (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 10.

of relations. Language barriers and connections led many immigrants to first coming over to settle with other Polish immigrants.[4] Many Polish people roomed together as they saved money for a place of their own.

When Polish immigrants came to Chicago, they were often working among people both with vast differences and similarities. For example, Poles were well aware of the Irish, who shared Roman Catholicism, but the language was a barrier to practice in the same church and to make connections with Irish immigrants. Lilian Cwik discussed living next door to a Catholic church that had mainly Irish patrons. However, for Poles, it was preferred to go to a Polish church, not an Irish one.[5] The Cwik family traveled half a mile to another church.[6] Ukrainians may have spoken a Slavic language like Polish, but the Orthodox religion set them apart. Working in large groups of people, the differences between culture and tradition became more prominent. Polish-Americans recognized their Polishness, and like the Irish, they desired their own churches, groceries, and spaces.

Once Polish people were gathered together, many began to discover and recognize spaces that groups could form and meet in Polish neighborhoods. Spaces are a formative part of organizations and clubs. It is through these spaces that immigrants discovered similarities and difficulties. The recognition of common difficulties and problems allowed immigrants to try to discover solutions to make life easier. For Polish immigrants, spaces took many different forms: parks, saloons, workplaces, and homes. Each of these spaces allowed for interactions between

4. Victor Greene, *For God and Country* (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1975), 2-14.

5. John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries the Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 10.

6. Transcripts of Lilian Cwik, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.9.

Polish immigrants who would eventually form the loose mutual aid societies that would become the backbone of other organizations.

Chicago, for most early Polish immigrants, was a means to an end. Few immigrants saw the United States and thereby Chicago and other immigrant hubs as a permanent residence. Most Poles saw Chicago as a transitory space, not a permanent settlement. Polish immigrants almost always intended to go back to their homeland after a few years of earning money to give them a better life in Poland. This was prominent among theme among the interviewees of the oral history project.

Interviewee Helen Chrzanowski recalled her parents often discussing wanting to return to Poland, but they ended up staying in American. She recalls her parents discussing, "As soon as we would get enough money, we will all return to Poland." She further explains, "But it never happened because my father married, and then came one child and another child."[7] It became a common theme for Polish immigrants to intend to go back but never achieving that goal as they settled in Chicago.

Because of the initial view of the United States as transitory, the familiarity of Polish people, and the lack of money among immigrants arriving, many immigrants ended up lodging together for convenience. Polish immigrants often created homes that were packed from end to end with other Polish people. In many cases, these lodgings were places for workers to rest, eat, and sometimes spend leisure time. Because the early Polish immigrants often arrived with next to nothing, Polish immigrants found it necessary to carve out spaces for themselves. Often these were spaces to meet outside of the places they lived.

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7. Transcripts of Helen Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois,1.8.

Often many Polish people found themselves at Polish-run saloons, shops, and other Polish run establishments. These businesses were started by some of the earliest Polish immigrants. Although many immigrants ended up working in factories and the stockyards, many were also tailors, backers, bartenders, and grocers. It was not uncommon for Polish immigrants to dabble in small businesses. For example, Marie Czarnowski recalled a lot of Polish-owned tailoring shops.[8] Julius Kopielski's father was in the liquor business; Czeslawa Kowalewski, Sofia Kowalezyk, and Martha Leszczyk's father were tailors; and Bernice Mateja owned a candy shop with her husband until the Depression forced them to sell.[9]

It is well-known that many Polish lived together, and Polonia was located in specific sections of Chicago. Although European immigrants often lived scattered together across neighborhoods in Chicago, for some of those living in the Polish neighborhoods, non-Polish people were remembered as rarely visible even within the stores in the neighborhoods. Within the Polish neighborhoods, there were stores, tailors, and other locations often run by Polish people. Interviewers often asked participants about their thoughts on race relations in the neighborhoods and interactions with non-Polish. However, they often had very little to say on the

8. Transcripts of Marie Czarknowski interview, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.7.

9. Transcripts of Julius Kopielski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 21; Transcripts of Czesława Kowalewski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 11; Transcripts of Sofia Kowalezyk, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.1; Transcripts of Martha Leszczyk, Interviewed by David Taylor, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 12; Transcripts of Bernice Mateja, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois , 11.

matter. Albina Deptuch was adamant that most Polish people worked for other Poles.[10] Many of the interviewees recalled their parents or themselves working as tailors, butchers, bartenders, and other shop owners up until the Depression and not many recalled non-Polish shops within the neighborhood. Many interviewees did not recall any other ethnicities living in these Polish blocks or owning shops.[11] However, Deputch and other interviewees may have been incorrect given the number of works that discuss Polish immigrants working with other ethnicities.[12] Yet, the insistence of the interviewees did have merit. Despite other ethnicities being in their proximity, their recollection of only Polish shop owners within the neighborhood may have made Polish neighborhoods feel segregated from other ethnicities. Their recollection of lack of other immigrants may have also been a choice to view Polonia as similar to a Polish village with only Polish around. It also signified Polish tendency to stick closely to other Polish during their initial years in the United States. Although these ethnic blocks could not be called clubs or organizations, chain migration that helped create them could be called the building blocks to mutual aid societies that then became the building blocks for future organizations.

These ethnic communities formed due to massive amounts of chain migration. Polish immigrants moved to certain cities because of someone they knew, and this became a cycle. Chicago initially drew in Polish immigrants because of job availability and industry.[13] Polish immigrants formed communities to help survive an unfamiliar country with unfamiliar customs

10. Transcripts of Albina Deptuch, Interviewed by Margot Stein, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.22.

11. Transcripts of Albina Deptuch, Interviewed by Margot Stein, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.11.

12. Dominic A. Pacyga, "To Live amongst Others: Poles and Their Neighbors in Industrial Chicago, 1865-1930,"*Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1996, pp. 55-73.

13. Dominic Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922,* 20.

and an unfamiliar language. The creation of Polish neighborhoods in Chicago was not much different in the formation of mutual aid societies. They both were formed for the survival of Polish immigrants.

The earliest clubs and organizations were often organized around public spaces within Polish neighborhoods. This frequently included parks that often became places for young boys from the same neighborhoods as well as saloons for workers.[14] Frank Kozik's father worked as a bartender and witnessed these meetings. When neighborhood churches became too crowded to meet and even stand, the saloons became a meeting place.[15] The "Committee of Fifty" surveyed saloons at the turn of the twentieth century and came to find that, "Its hold on the community does not wholly proceed from its satisfying the thirst for drink. It also satisfies the thirst for sociability."[16] Parks in Polish neighborhoods allowed for the community to come together in makeshift townhalls that allowed for various Polish people to meet other people with similar needs, problems, and hobbies. Additionally, this was often a destination for picnics and athletics, both of which were commonplace in later clubs and organizations. Mary Kustron, for example, was part of a small club that got together in Pulaski Park for social gatherings and picnics.[17]

Saloons, meanwhile, were often the destination for workers after a long day. In the end, what public spaces such as saloons and parks provided were a way for male Polish immigrants to

14. Thomas J. Jablonsky, *Pride in the Jungle Community and Everyday Life in Back of the Yards Chicago,* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 109.

15. Transcripts of Frank Kozik, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.19.

16. Francis G. Peabody, E.R.L. Gould, and William M. Sloane, introduction to Calkins, *Substitute for the Saloon,* viii.

17. Transcripts of Mary Kustron, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.2.

gather together outside of the home. These gatherings helped create the early clubs and organizations that would lead to more developed organizations later.

Significantly though, women and children were not allowed in the saloons, which may have been one of the reasons women were frequently left out of any clubs outside of the church during the early years of organizations. Martha Leszczyk recalled women being shut out of bars and life insurance during the start of her stay in the United States.[18] Instead, women's life insurance and other club activities followed their husbands including the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union. This was still frequently the case even by World War II. The earliest female-run organizations— often insurance clubs— were formed by women coming together in churches and private homes.[19] These early organizations— both female and male- allowed for Polish people to get together and start forming groups.

When Walter Kaczmarek's family first came to Chicago, the first thing they did was look for Polish groups and areas to help them adjust to life in America.[20] Polish immigrants were aware that they would need to have their basic needs met in America. It was not an easy task for them, especially because the immigrants often saw Chicago as a temporary place to live in. Their needs were many but simple: housing, money, food, and importantly to this work, insurance. Insurance provided the ability to support themselves in case of illness or injury, pay for a proper funeral, and ensure their family survives if something was to befall them. To understand the

18. Transcripts of Martha Leszczyk, Interviewed by David Taylor, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 29.

19. William J. Galush, "Purity and Power: Chicago Polonian Feminists, 1880-1914."*Polish American Studies* 47, no. 1 (1990): 5-7.

20. Transcripts of Walter Kaczmarek, Interviewed by David Taylor, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.6.

importance of insurance in immigrants' lives means understanding the hardships that immigrants faced in their work life.

Poor Working Conditions

Many immigrants who came to Chicago were unskilled workers who were not seeking to settle down there. Polish people sought places that needed workers and would take them despite often a lack of English. This led many immigrants to work in factories in large cities. Chicago specifically was experiencing a boom in steel factories as well as stockyards. The need for workers drew many Polish people to Chicago. However, factory work, at the turn of the century, came at a cost. It was dangerous work that frequently left workers dead or maimed.

Working in the Stockyards was a common job among Polish immigrants in the early 20th century. The stockyards and meatpacking plants were not as dangerous as the mines or the steel mills common in other parts of the United States. However, the meatpacking industry did cause death and injury. In the first year that industrial accidents were recorded by the U.S. government, 1907, there were five deadly accidents and seventeen nonfatal injuries. Although this seems few, earlier in the migrant influx, there were probably more injuries because of the lack of regulations. Additionally, it is likely a fraction of injuries were not reported due to changes in laws and a fear of job insecurity.[21]

21. Dominic Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922,* 60.

By far the biggest problem was diseases.[22] Immigrants were prone to skin conditions from handling raw meat all day. This included infections that lead to skin cracked down to the bone. Additionally, lung diseases were common, including pneumonia and rheumatism due to the dust and germs in the air at meatpacking factories.[23] However, poor conditions did not occur only at work. Polish immigrants faced problems of poor conditions and disease in other aspects of their lives.

Poor Housing Conditions

When Theodozia Malinowski first came to Chicago, she hated it. She said the city stank. The buildings had no heat, no gas, and no electricity. The toilets were under the street outside of the house in makeshift outhouses. Repeated time and time as well as in Theodozia's story, immigrants complained about the wooden plank sidewalks. They were wet, damaged, moldy, and warped.[24] It mixed with the general stink of the city making it an unpleasant place to live. The idea of electricity, heat, and gas was so implausible that interviewee Marie Ardent was shocked at the question.[25]

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22. Floyd Erwin Bernard, "A Study of Industrial Diseases in the Stockyards"(M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1910), 11-16.

23. Dominic Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922*, 60.

24. Transcripts of Theodozia Malinowski interview, Interviewed by Edward Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 2.1.

25. Transcripts of Marie Ardent interview, Interviewed by Anthony Nowak and Joanne Nowak, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.

Theodozia's complaints were warranted. For Polish immigrants, the problems of death and injury were not just at work. Housing was a constant problem for Polish immigrants. Polish immigrants faced problems at home that created unsafe environments. In the Back of the Yards, Polish residents lived in such poor conditions that by some they were called pioneers.[26] Workers lived in cheaply constructed housing that had very little space and few amenities. The city had regulations, but they rarely affected anything in the neighborhoods despite poor hygiene conditions in many homes in Polonia. The regulations were enforced erratically and inefficiently.[27] Some areas in Polonia faced garbage dumps that posed health problems for residents. Some immigrant houses were not even connected to the city sewer. In addition, many houses faced pollution from nearby factories and stockyards. Railroads also ran through the neighborhoods, creating more pollution in the neighborhoods and sometimes hitting pedestrians such as children who were looking for pieces of coal to bring home.

The rest of Chicago had similar problems to the Back of the Yards. Some houses were made below street level, making it difficult to drain causing outbreaks of typhoid. Residents also faced cramped conditions. In South Chicago, despite being the lowest population density per acre, 72% of spaces were too small or the occupants in the rooms. Comparatively, 53% of spaces were too small in the Back of the Yards and 69% of spaces in the Polish Northwest side were too small.[28] Building requirements were few and often ignored when Polish immigrants arrived. Building owners built in a way that benefited them financially, leading to cramped conditions at

26. Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, "Housing Conditions, Back of the Yards," *American Journal of Sociology* 26, no. 4 (1911): 437-50.

27. Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 44-45.

28. Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, "Chicago Housing Conditions, V: South Chicago at the Gates of the Steel Mills," *American Journal of Sociology* 17 (September 1911): 145-176.

the benefit of the owner and the loss of the immigrant. Immigrants also lived in buildings that were not up to code. This led to death and injury at home as well as at work. One interviewee from the Polonia oral histories recalls her father sleeping outside when there was no room. He proceeded to fall off the balcony and died. Her mother received assistance from neighbors and family and received money to give him a proper burial.[29]

In addition to the illnesses and deaths brought to the neighborhoods by pollution, the city, not just Polish neighborhoods, also suffered epidemics that spread through the city. The Influenza of 1918 famously killed hundreds of thousands of Americans. However, Chicago also faced smaller epidemics of several diseases including diphtheria, scarlet fever, typhoid, tuberculosis, and cholera. These diseases most often affected children causing childhood and infant mortality to be quite high. Among the participants of the oral history projects, few survived the turn of the century without having lost someone in their family to disease in Chicago.

Residents faced illness and fatalities in these conditions both at work and at home. Everywhere they looked there was danger. Infant and childhood mortality was especially high; many interviewees had lost brothers, sisters, and children. In some Polish areas, mortality for children rate reached 40% before 1900.[30] Immigrants had no choice but to help themselves. They needed to do something to maintain their health and address their needs especially in a city that seemed to care very little for their immigrant populations. These smaller welfare clubs inspired

29. Transcripts of Bertha Adamik, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 2.1.

30. Charles Joseph Bushnell, *Social Problem at the Chicago Stock Yards* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902), 38.

the clubs that would go on to have insurance and welfare as their primary purposes such as the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Women's Alliance.

These loose welfare clubs existed as a way for Polish-Americans to accept assistance. Accepting assistance from neighbors and family groups that Polish immigrants paid into was considered more acceptable than charity from large organizations or the government. These pacts between neighbors provided both life and insurance and other help. These groups collected food and money for residents in need in Polonia. They were like charities but were able to be charitable in ways that Polish immigrants more readily accepted.[31]

Could these welfare pacts and get-togethers be called clubs? Admittedly, clubs and organizations are used loosely here. It is a group of people with a common goal. Helping neighbors and other Polish is mutually beneficial. Welfare clubs often met in other's houses, parks, and saloons. They did not have contracts or minutes. Welfare clubs acted as the first insurance clubs and maintained a pot of money to be used if death occurred within the group, and sometimes, the money was used to assist members during periods of unemployment.

Although an uninformed critic might look at these "clubs" and see them merely as groups, these loose societies later became the backbone of some of the largest Polish organizations in the United States. More importantly, these organizations gave Polish immigrants ways to help themselves in a foreign country. They transformed the way Polish immigrants viewed themselves in their Polishness, American-ness, and whiteness.

31. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 64-75.

Mutual Aid Associations

Mutual Aid Associations were volunteer associations that allowed immigrants to pay into benefits and in exchange were often give insurance. They were informal organizations that assured Polish immigrants of modest death benefits and sick wages.[32] The gatherings taking place in public spaces and homes eventually made way for mutual aid associations. While these clubs and associations were not large organizations, they were clubs that were considered to have a list of members and a strict purpose, unlike the loose gatherings in public spaces. These clubs were the quickest and most convenient way to assure that if workers were maimed or died while working or if they fell ill and could not work, their families were not be left without any means to survive. Members put money into a pot monthly in the same way one paid association fees in larger clubs and fraternal organizations. If one person died or became unable to work, those funds in the pot were then used to assist that person pay for funerals or pay for living wages until the worker was back on their feet. It is very similar to how large insurance companies work today.

Poles were not the first immigrant group to participate in mutual aid associations. Mutual aid societies were an extremely common practice among immigrants coming to America. It assured their family survived during times of disaster. Mutual aid associations were often the first organizations that most immigrants created when industrialization proved problematic for workers' health.

Polish life insurance clubs are the hardest of the clubs to research especially within primary sources. Few historians have touched on them and even less have discussed their role in

32 David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

depth. This is likely because many Polish immigrants did not see these activities as clubs. Immigrants were more likely to see the mutual aid associations as a convenience and a means to an end. The act of getting together and exchanging money was an attempt to ensure their well-being while also assisting family and neighbors. Some historians have theorized that mutual aid societies were the answer to the Polish village characterization of family and tight-knit communities who constantly supported each other while also assimilating to the American ideal of individualism.[33] It was a compromise between the two, born out of necessity to ensure survival in a foreign country.

Mutual aid societies have formed out of necessity in many different communities. Although not a lot of research has been done on Polish mutual aid associations, researchers have explored mutual aid societies outside of Polonia. Much like this thesis touches upon, David T. Beito's *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* explores some of the earliest mutual aid clubs and traces their formation from informal and loose organizations to their evolution into fraternal societies.[34] Additionally, Julia Leininger Pycior's book *Democratic Renewal and the Mutual Aid Legacy of US Mexicans* discusses mutual aid groups within the US Mexican community. Like Polonia, the Mexican community formed mutual aid groups out of necessity. These mutual aid groups were used especially in times of death and tragedy in an unfamiliar country. And just as David Beito and this thesis point out,

33. John Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations: Their Historical Development, Character, and Significance," *Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations in the United States: Essays and Inventories* (1981): 5-8.

34. David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

mutual aid associations within the Polish community often evolved into larger fraternal beneficial clubs.[35]

Despite mutual aid societies being discussed and researched, Polish-Chicago mutual aid societies remain a little researched topic. However, these organizations did come up in the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project. They were groups that immigrants remember being part of. Additionally, immigrants' children recall their parents participating in these informal clubs. Few stories about the injury or death of family members did not include mutual aid associations.

One interviewee, Frank Broska, recalls growing up poor, but despite that, his parents were part of a group that contributed money to a mutual assistance club to ensure insurance for the family. However, as conditions got better for immigrants, their churches and organizations developed to replace the rudimentary mutual aid association. This development leads Broska's parents to stop paying dues to informal societies.[36] For many immigrants in the oral histories, however, life insurance was a necessity no matter where you got it from— informal societies or big fraternal organizations. It was something you had even when you were broke and could not afford it. Even if you did not intend to stay long, you joined some sort of life insurance club to ensure a proper funeral, and that your family would be able to survive.

Although many mutual aid associations revolved around death and injuries, it was not out of place to see them have other roles as the associations evolved to fill the needs of the community. They started to include more areas of need. As immigrants found themselves staying

35. Julie Leininger Pycior, *Democratic Renewal and the Mutual Aid Legacy of US Mexicans* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

36. Transcripts of Frank Broska, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.8.

longer, they sought to buy their own homes instead of living in small rentals.[37] Homeownership became a status icon among immigrants. To own a home was an achievement.[38]

Additionally, many immigrants who wanted to make the United States their permanent residence desired to start their own business. Taverns and tailors were both common businesses.[39] Due to all these businesses and homes being built, it was only natural for mutual aid societies started to not only include life insurance but to also include building and loan associations. This was just a small branch of mutual aid societies. Once the community got big enough that many immigrants started buying homes, mutual aid societies evolved into fraternal benefit organizations, which will be discussed in Chapter Two. Before this evolution, many Polish people got together to try to assist each other with issues of unemployment, death, disease, and loans. They assisted each other to navigate the unfamiliar landscape of the United States. The easiest way to help each other was through finances— collecting funds to support each other and then cashing out

Polish Identity and the First Polish Organizations

Most Polish immigrants were not necessarily looking to join large societies; they were not looking to form them. Polish immigrants needed to have their needs met while they were

37. Robert G. Spinney, *City of Big Shoulders: A History of Chicago* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 123.

38. For more on the importance of home ownership to working class immigrants, see Maria Kefalas, *Working-class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

39. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 50.

abroad. Polish immigrants were seeking to form clubs of necessity. These clubs of necessity included mutual aid associations, life insurance clubs, and other clubs that met the basic needs of immigrants in Chicago.

To form these clubs of necessity, Polish immigrants created small mutual aid societies with neighbors, friends, and family. Polish immigrants often came to the United States through chain migration, so it was common for the first organizations and clubs to be small groups with mutual friends. Just as immigrants brought over family and friends via chain migration, in some ways, these immigrants also chained together to form tight-knit organizations.

At first, coming to the United States helped to create strong bonds among Poles; they were willing to help each other to ensure their survival. Mutual survival helped to create ethnic communities and helped to ensure Polish immigrants' survival. Informal mutual aid societies met at home, in parks, and saloons. These informal clubs were truly clubs of necessity with little other goals than to ensure survival and a comfortable life. There are two reasons for initially desiring small, tight-knit clubs of necessity instead of larger social clubs.

Firstly, the people who participated in these informal societies were new immigrants. There was little concern over social needs when their basic needs such as food, housing, and occupation were not met. If the security of food, housing, and life are not met, then social needs are passed over in favor of addressing more pressing needs. Between attempting to create a new home and spending long hours at work, there was not much time to create clubs for social needs. The needs of the family and the needs of survival came first.[40]

Secondly and significantly, at the time of these early organizations, some Polish immigrants may not have seen themselves as Americans. Each had a different level of ethnic

40. Saul McLeod, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," *Simply psychology* 1 (2007): 1-8.

awareness at this time. Some saw themselves as Polish or something akin to Polish, and some believed they would one day return to their homeland. The immigrants were looking to make connections with other Polish people. Coming together allowed for Poles to have more power by bringing resources such as money together. Polish immigrants were able to make Chicago by making contacts and connections with other Polish immigrants. Polish immigrants often spoke little to no English, and they often settled in ethnic blocks. Grouping together was for survival but doing so also allowed immigrants to maintain their Polish roots.

Time and time again, within the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project, immigrants and their children discuss how America was not a permanent place to settle. Chicago was a temporary place while they gained money and waited for Poland to be free. Lilian Cwik's family aspired to go back if Poland became an independent country.[41] Halina Gawronska intended for a temporary stay until WWI broke out.[42] Pauline Golembiewska's family tried to go back before deciding the United States gave them a better life.[43] These are just some testimonies to the temporary state of Chicago. Chicago was just a transitory place. At first, for some Polish, there was little desire to form permeant roots in the United States.

These clubs formed in spaces that Poles would see and meet each other. They discussed the problems and create bonds to address those problems. The groups might be family and friends of family, lodgers, workers, or friends of friends.

41. Transcripts of Lilian Cwik, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.3.

42. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 20.

43. Transcripts of Pauline Golembiewska, Interviewed by Alice B. Prus, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.9.

Yet as the immigrant population grew so did their needs. Once basic needs are met, needs that seem more trivial grow. This eventually led to the evolution of the mutual aid societies into something much more tangible: fraternal benefit societies

Chapter 2: Fraternal Societies

Organizations are a living, breathing part of any community. For newly developed ethnic communities, this is especially true. Organizations became cornerstones of ethnic communities. They assisted immigrants in fulfilling their needs and desires, and they became a safe place for immigrants to meet and socialize. As ethnic communities grew, so did their organizations. Mutual aid societies started as very small organizations designed to help small groups of people who knew each other. They turned into much larger organizations as they filled the gaps of an evolving community. If Chapter One focused on Polish immigrants coming to America, Chapter Two focuses on the emergence of the Polish ethnic neighborhoods and the building of a solid community.

Prior to WWI, there was a desire from many immigrants to return to Poland if conditions got better. There was some notion among most Polish immigrants that Chicago was just a temporary place. Many did not want to or could not return. The introduction discussed the vast majority of Polish immigrants who came looking for bread. However, this was not the only reason Polish people left their homeland. Scattered among those looking for bread were individuals who fled because of the political situation, conscription, and the general oppression of Poles under the rule of various countries.

In the German portion of Poland, Polish people were not allowed to speak their language outside of their homes. Lillian Cwik's family was one of these families who came from the German partition to the United States in search of freedom.[1] Theodozia Malinowski's family was

1. Transcripts of Lilian Cwik, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.3.

similar. Her family sought to leave German-occupied Poland to escape the forced Germanification of the area.[2]

In the Russian partition, all males at 21 were required to enter the Russian army. Polish people did not want to fight in an army that they considered an oppressive foreign power. Victor Harackiewicz and Joseph Perlinski were two participants in the oral histories who dodged the Russian draft by heading to America.[3]

In 1918, World War I hit Poland, and Poles in Chicago felt it. What happened after WWI to the communities had a lasting impact not only on the community but also on the ethnic organizations.

WWI ended with the Treaty of Versailles. However, before this, President Woodrow Wilson created his Fourteen Points. Wilson's Fourteen Points was later used as a tool for peace negotiation at the end of World War I. For Polonia, point number thirteen was significant. It made Poland a sovereign nation for the first time in over one hundred years.[4]

A new nation meant no more conscription into the Russian army; it meant no more hiding Polishness such as language, religion, and customs; and it meant a new start. A handful of families who could afford to do so went back to Poland. However, when they arrived, they found similar if not worse conditions than before. The country was a wreck. Poland was in the center of World War I, which had created massive amounts of destruction and carnage. Additionally, the

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2. Transcripts of Theodozia Malinowski, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 2.

3. Transcripts of Victor Harackiewicz, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 10; Transcripts of Joseph Perlinksi, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.24.

4. Woodrow Wilson, "Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points,"*Paris 1919* (1918): 495-6.

job situation had not changed. There were still not many jobs available, and there was not enough food to feed a starving population.[5] Just as news of the United States being a good place to live got around through word of mouth, so did information about Poland's depressive state. Going back to Poland was no longer considered an option for many Polish people who had taken up residence in Chicago.

Joseph Osalda's family experienced this first hand. Osalda tells a story in which his family came to work in the United States with every intention to move back to Poland. Once they gained more than enough money and WWI ended, the Osalda family moved back to Poland, where they were able to live off of the money they earned in the United States. They were even able to purchase a hotel with American cash. The father renounced his American citizenship, ripping up his paperwork. Joseph, however, disagreed with his father's decision, and at 14, he left to go back to America. It was not long before Joseph's family once again left Poland behind and join him in America, unable to handle the hardships in the newly reformed Poland.[6]

Like Osalda and his family, many of the immigrants who participated in the oral history project and their families had been in Chicago for over a decade. Following the end of WWI, it became clear that permanent residency in the United States had become certain for many Polish immigrants.

The evolution of the clubs of necessity— life insurance clubs, mutual aid associations, and other clubs— began as the United States transformed from a transient to a permanent home for Chicago's Polish immigrants. Polish's needs surpassed basic needs that clubs of necessity

5. Piotr Koryś,"The Window of Opportunity: Polish Lands during the Great War (1914–1921),"In *Poland from Partitions to EU Accession*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018): 195-205.

6. Transcripts of Joseph Osalada, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 20.

offered, and they were seeking to make roots, to make a home. As Polish immigrants realized they were permanent settlers in the United States, they expanded the repertoire of organizations they created and participated in.

Organizations went from loose mutual aid societies to large, coherent, solid organizations formed with thousands of members spread over several cities. These organizations served the same purposes of the mutual aid societies but with far more members, more documentation, and more roles to fill Polonia's needs. These organizations came to be called fraternal organizations— specifically fraternal benefit organizations. Fraternal benefit organizations are a type of social organization in which members join for a mutually beneficial purpose. In the case of Polish-Americans, fraternal benefit organizations existed for life insurance and socializing.[7] However, because of how large many of these organizations were, they took on more roles in Polonia. These larger organizations changed the way the Poles were viewed, but they also helped to form how Polish immigrants would view themselves. Unlike the small organizations before them, these large ethnic organizations influenced Polonia. It allowed immigrants to come together in large ethnic blocks. For Chicago as well as many other cities, the Polish National Alliance was the most prominent and influential of all Polish organizations.

7. James M. White and Michael A. Boland, "Close Cousins of Cooperatives: An Overview of Fraternal Benefit Societies," *Journal of Cooperatives 31*, (2016): 2.

Polish National Alliance

The Polish National Alliance, commonly known as the PNA, is one of the oldest and largest Polish fraternal organizations in the United States. It is also by far the most well-known.[8]

The PNA was formed in 1880 in Philadelphia and Chicago. The goals at the founding were to support the cause of Polish independence to help support those who were going back to Poland and to support the advancement of Polish culture and people into the mainstream of American society for those staying within the United States. In 1885, it established an insurance program, a program it became well-known among Polish immigrants.[9]

The Polish National Alliance aimed to achieve its goals by establishing Polish newspapers, establishing life insurance for members, and "creating a variety of programs aimed at enlightening the members of the Polish population in the United States about their heritage and their citizen rights and obligations as Americans." Additionally, the Polish National Alliance encouraged the development of social institutions such as parishes and schools. Lastly, the Polish National Alliance donated millions of dollars to the struggle for independence in Poland.[10]

These goals and contributions were all according to the Polish National Alliance, so some of the claims made by the Polish National Alliance were true but a bit stretched to over exemplify the accomplishments of the Polish National Alliance. What is truly remarkable about

8. For in-depth information on the PNA, Donald Pienkos, *PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) explores more thoroughly the history of the Polish National Alliance including the founding and other details that are treated lightly in this work.

9. "About the PNA,"PNA Polish National Alliance, accessed September 23, 2019, http://www.pna-znp.org/about.html.

10. "About the PNA,"PNA Polish National Alliance, accessed September 23, 2019, http://www.pna-znp.org/about.html.

the Polish National Alliance is the extent that it reached. Regardless of age, gender, or occupation nearly every single participant of the Chicago oral history project who discussed organizations (approximately half) is or was a member of the Polish National Alliance, as were many family members and friends that they mentioned as part of the interview. The Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project was not a product of the PNA nor was it funded by them. However, that does not mean it was completely unbiased. Many interviewees knew each other. If a family member was part of the Polish National Alliance, it would not be uncommon for other family members or friends to be part of the PNA. Therefore, it was not strange to have many Polish National Alliance members in the oral history interviews if many interviewees knew each other. However, that does not lessen the importance of the Polish National Alliance. By 1921, Illinois alone had 423 lodges.[11] By 1930, the Polish National Alliance had 284,289 members. The only organization that came close to those numbers was the Polish Roman Catholic Union with 154,622. Beyond these two organizations, no other organization reached a six-figure membership.[12] Yet despite the Polish National Alliance's declaration of goals, progress, and achievements, very few remember it as anything other than life insurance.

Repeatedly when asked what organizations the members of the Chicago Polonia oral history project were part of, they would answer with the Polish National Alliance or the PNA. When the interviewer pressed for more detail to understand the activities of the Polish National Alliance, the participants would often simply say life insurance. If pressed further to try and

11. Donald Pienkos, *PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 338

12. Donald Pienkos, *PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 332.

dissect the Polish National Alliance's activities, many participants would not have any more to say other than life insurance money that your family receives after you die.

However, those few interviewees that closely associated with the Polish National Alliance remembered the social activities and other activities the Polish National Alliance sponsored. These individuals include those in high positions such as former presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, and treasurers. They remember the Polish National Alliance's various activities outside of life insurance. Joseph Perlinkski was the recording secretary for the Polish National Alliance. He discussed endlessly the various activities of the PNA including school donations, parties, picnics, and conventions, all of which he participated in.[13] Victor Harackiewicz was a secretary for the Polish National Alliance. He, as well, remembered the regular meetings and family activities the PNA provided. He discussed the Polish National Alliance assisting with land purchases and bringing people from Poland.[14] Although interviewees did not discuss in much detail the activities of the picnics, interviewees did discuss that the picnics took place at the parks that were often the home to the first mutual aid societies. The Polish National Alliance was built from those loose organizations and could not exist without the first loose mutual aid societies. The Polish National Alliance often assisted in the community without Polish-Americans acknowledging it was the Polish National Alliance's responsibility. One example of these activities was Polish newspapers.

The Polish National Alliance website explains that they created two newspapers in Chicago, each for different reasons. The PNA states:

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13. Transcripts of Joseph Perlinksi, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 61-76.

14. Transcripts of Victor Harackiewicz, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.11-3.15.

> In 1881, the PNA set up its own newspaper, *Zgoda* [Harmony] to promote its objectives to the larger community… And from the early 1890s onward, it created a variety of programs aimed at enlightening the members of the Polish population in the United States about their heritage and their citizen rights and obligations as Americans. To further advance these aims, the PNA established its own daily newspaper in Chicago, *Dziennik Zwiazkowy*, known today as *The Polish Daily News*.[15]

These newspapers had a place in the oral histories as they were mentioned by some of the participants. However, the participants did not connect them with the Polish National Alliance.[16] This does not mean that the newspapers did not have any value. Newspapers allowed Polish Americans people to keep informed of Polish and American politics and trends. Thus, the newspapers maintained Polish roots while still allowing for growth as Americans.

Additionally, Polish immigrants who wanted to become citizens or advance their lives in lives in America, the Polish National Alliance offered education opportunities. According to the Polish National Alliance:

> Early on, the PNA granted student loans and scholarships to deserving members so they might advance their educational pursuits. In 1912 it founded its very own educational institution, Alliance College, in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania. Through its 75 years of operation, Alliance College received approximately $20 million of assistance from the PNA and graduated more than five thousand students.[17]

Most importantly, the college offered classes in Slavic languages including Polish. Having college courses that offered Polish classes was more significant than considered at the surface level. Language is one of the main components of culture and can help to form identity.

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15. "About The PNA,"PNA Polish National Alliance, accessed September 23, 2019, http://www.pna-znp.org/about.html.

16. Transcripts of Celia Blazek, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 17-20; Transcripts of Helen Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois,10.

17. "About The PNA,"PNA Polish National Alliance, accessed September 23, 2019, http://www.pna-znp.org/about.html.

Offering Polish language classes allowed for the recognition and acceptance of the Polish language. It made it easier for Americans, who saw Polish people as non-white foreigners, to digest and accept the Polish identity. In some ways, it is the first step that would allow the United States to see Poles as a "white ethnicity" thereby accepting them as equal.[18]

In addition to Polish language classes, the Polish National Alliance also offered scholarships for those interested in higher education. However, Polish members also had the option to take night classes to learn or improve their English. This, in turn, helped improve their chances of finding better jobs and opportunities in the United States.

It is important to remember the time frame and state of Poland during the beginnings of the Polish National Alliance. Poland was not a country between 1798 and 1918. Polish culture became a way to maintain Polishness during the partitioned period when Poland was not a country. Therefore, one of the strongest contributing characteristics of Polishness, as discussed in the introduction, was the Polish language. It was a characteristic that Poles had pride in. They spoke Polish at home, and they taught their children Polish. Some participants of the oral history projects expressed dissatisfaction when their grandchildren and other people in their extended family did not know Polish. They were often exceptionally proud if grandchildren spoke Polish well.[19] Hence, when Poles started to learn English, there was some aspect of Americanization. Polish immigrants were willing and eager to learn English and thereby earn citizenship. In many cases, English became the primary language for the Poles who lived in the United States.

18. David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2005), 52.

19. Transcripts of Martha Leszczyk, Interviewed by David Taylor, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 35-40.

Although interviewees discussed other social activities in the oral interviews, for the most part, the Polish National Alliance did not run most of the social events. Individuals not involved with the Polish National Alliance on a higher level such as Stanley Lizmanksi, Roman Lapkiewicz, and Julius Kopielski recall the PNA being nothing more important than life insurance.[20] Interviewees remembered most social events being run by the Polish Women's Alliance not the Polish National Alliance.

The Polish Women's Alliance

At first, the Polish National Alliance did not allow women and children into the Polish National Alliance. The PNA barred them from gaining their own life insurance and making them an even more marginalized group. According to the Polish National Alliance:

> In 1900, the PNA granted full membership rights to women interested in belonging to the Alliance. This action took place fully twenty years before the passage of the 20th amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting women the right to vote and hold public office.[21]

Despite the Polish National Alliance's insistence that women have been allowed in since 1900, Polish women began to come into the country at the same time as men and needed insurance before the PNA began allowing women in. Therefore, Polish women created their own

20. Transcripts of Stanley Lizmanki, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.25; Transcripts of Roman Lapkiewicz, Interviewed by Einar Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.11, and Transcripts of Julius Kopielski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.15.

21. About The PNA,"PNA Polish National Alliance, accessed September 23, 2019, http://www.pna-znp.org/about.html.

organization separate from the Polish National Alliance. Many women who were part of the Women's Alliance felt that Polish National Alliance did not offer women the same opportunities it did to men, and women were still only allowed in the Polish National Alliance through their husbands' memberships.[22] This made it difficult for unmarried women, widowed women, and teens who may have traveled abroad alone to receive life insurance and join the largest Polish organization. This barred many women from a significant aspect of Polish-American life. According to the Polish Women's Alliance:

> Zwiazek Polek w Ameryce, known as Polish Women's Alliance of America (PWA) in English, was founded by Stefania Chmielinska on May 22, 1898, in Chicago, Illinois. Its goal was to provide financial security to its members specifically immigrant women. Additionally, the PWA sought to preserve Polish culture and heritage. The PWA was created in response to the PNA barring women from the organization.

Women were not only excluded from leadership roles in fraternal organizations like the PNA, but they also were not able to purchase life insurance policies in their names. The PWA was founded by women for women, and it continues as one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the United States.[23]

The Polish Women's Alliance was similar in aspects to the Polish National Alliance. The main purpose was to provide life insurance to Polish women who were members. This often meant providing insurance to more marginalized groups of women such as unmarried or widowed women. The PNA also provided women with insurance who may have been blocked

22. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois was one such oral history that discussed at lengths the differences between the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Women's Alliance.

23. "About Us,"Polish Women's Alliance, Accessed September 24, 2019, http://www.pwaa.org/History.html.

from having insurance through the Polish National Alliance. Additionally, the PWA offered activities to its members such as picnics and dances.

By the time the PNA allowed women to enter the organization in the early 1900s, many women had already turned to the Polish Women's Alliance. The PWA was already well established by the time the Polish National Alliance created an auxiliary branch for women. Many women opted to remain in the PWA even when the PNA allowed women to become members.

However, too many of those involved in the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project, one of the Polish Women's Alliance's most memorable and important roles were social and cultural events. While many remembered the Polish National Alliance as simply an insurance company, the Polish Women's Alliance was remembered as doing far more for the social life of Polish immigrants. They helped to maintain Polish culture as Poles became more Americanized.

Dances and picnics were the most common events remembered by the oral history project participants. Dances were common events cited by women who were part of the Polish Women's Alliance. Dances were a significant part of Polish-American culture. They allowed Polish women to help maintain the Polish culture. Dances through the Polish Women's Alliance promoted Polish dances, Polish music, and general Polish customs.[24]

The dances were also a way for Polish youth to socialize. Dances were popular among Polish immigrants. During this period it was common for marriages to happen within a year of meeting, so these dances were often first introductions and popular meetups among Polish

24. Angela and Donald Pienkos, *"In the Ideals of Women is the Strength of a Nation": A History of the Polish Women's Alliance of America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 93.

immigrants. Because the dances were often run by the Polish Women's Alliance, women were freer to go to the dances and socialize as there were often many chaperones to keep an eye on the men and women at the dances at a time where few women were courted without a chaperone.[25]

Because marriages were often started through the Polish Women's Alliance's events, it was no surprise that among the participants of the oral history project exclusively married other Polish people within their community. Among the participants who discussed marriage, none of them married outside of Polonia. Intermarriage was not common in Polonia at the time.[26]

In addition, to the dances, the Polish Women's Alliance picnics also became frequent spots for families, couples, and singles, to meet. They, like dances, also became popular events for date nights and meetups among possible couples. However, they were far less discussed than the dances.

The Woman's Polish Alliance became one of the strongest and largest cultural organizations. Although life insurance for marginalized groups was initially the primary purpose, unlike the Polish National Alliance, among the Polish community the Woman's Polish Alliance was not usually remembered for its life insurance. Instead, even for men in the Polish communities, the Woman's Polish Alliance was remembered for its events and attempt to preserve Polish culture in a community that was rapidly becoming Americanized. Those that did recall the Woman's Polish Alliance's life insurance program were those who relied on it due to marital status. People like Halina Gawronska, who not only needed the life insurance the

25. For more on dance halls and the power of socialization of dance halls, see Maeghan Chassé, "The Role of Women in the Evolution of American Dance Hall Entertainment: A Study from 1890 to 1929,"*The Post* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1-14.

26. Ernest Poole, "A Mixing Bowl of Nations,"*Everybody's Magazine* (October 1910): 554-555.

Woman's Polish Alliance offered but who also fiercely defended the organization and saw it as a way for women to participate while men barred them from fraternal organizations.[27]

Yet, the Polish Women's Alliance also served a dual purpose when it came to Polish immigrants' identity. Without intending to, the Polish Women's Alliance rapidly Americanized its members and patrons while at the same time it maintained some Polishness through cultural aspects like the Polish language, music, dance, and customs. The PWA, for example, created a summer school for boys and girls to go to that taught children the Polish language, history, and culture. Yet, in the same year, they created this school, these women also organized a democratic election for the establishment of the president and vice-president of the PWA.[28] The women were often the head of the household within Chicago's Polonia. The maintaining of Polish culture while also blending some American culture by the Polish Women's Alliance helped to transform the Polish community in Chicago.

Additionally, it helped shape Polish women's identity in Chicago. The Polish Women's Alliance had radicalized women, who for the first time were participating in a democratic organization run and organized by women. It allowed them to have a larger say in their community by running an organization as well as be part of a democratic system. The PWA was an organization run by women. Halina Gawronska discussed how the organization allowed women to demonstrate their independence and their organization skills. The organization was so independent of other Polonia organizations (that were run by men) that organizations such as the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union were opposed to the formation of

27. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 65-70.

28. Angela and Donald Pienkos, *"In the Ideals of Women is the Strength of a Nation": A History of the Polish Women's Alliance of America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003): 43-45.

the Polish Women's Alliance. Although Gawronska did not equate the PWA to the women's movement in the United States, she said she was involved in the PWA and that's why she wasn't part of the women's movement in the United States. This statement draws parallels between the two groups.[29]

In many cultures of the time, women were expected to raise the children while the men worked to provide for the family. This frequently meant women were often the ones who taught the next generation language, culture, and customs. In Poland as well as the United States, this was generally true.[30] For Poles, the passing on of customs, language, and religion were especially important. In partitioned Poland, Poles relied on the passing down of these traits to keep the concept of being Polish alive. Often in partitioned Poland, language and other Polish culture were to be kept strictly in the house due to ruling law.[31] This meant Polish women had an even larger burden of teaching the next generation what it meant to be Polish. Particularly, this meant teaching languages, religion, and other traditions. Hence, when Polish immigrants started arriving in Chicago, it was almost natural that women still bore the status as cultural teachers in a country were many were conforming to American culture either intentionally or unintentionally.

The Polish Women's Alliance took on the role of cultural keepers within fraternal Polish organizations. While it is true that they took on the very important job of providing life insurance to marginalized women, for most participants of the oral history project, it seemed more

29. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 65-70.

30. Malgorzata Fidelis, "'Participation in the Creative Work of the Nation':" Polish Women Intellectuals in the Cultural Construction of Female Gender Roles, 1864-1890,"*Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 1 (2001): 108-113.

31. John J. Bukowczyk, *A History of the Polish Americans* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 13-15.

important that the Polish Women's Alliance did end up encouraging Polish culture.[32] This aspect of the Polish Women's Alliance became especially important to the community due to the shifting nature of women in the household.[33]

Women in the household still shared jobs like their Polish counterparts abroad. However, they also became overwhelmed. Many women often took care of more than just their families. Often, they took care of lodgers to earn extra money. They also had temporary visitors coming abroad through chain migration as well as an extended family staying together. In addition, families were still often large having large numbers of children. These children, importantly, were rapidly being exposed to American culture when outside of the home. In some ways, women were fighting against the complete Americanization of their children.[34] Many Polish women sought to teach their children Polish culture in an American environment; teaching children Polish, having them attend Catholic churches, and instilling other cultural habits in their children. However, with a crowded household full of responsibility, it was a losing battle.[35] The Polish Women's Alliance filled the gaps of cultural education for young people.

Yet, the Polish Women's Alliance filled those cultural gaps in an American way. Dances and picnics were common among Americans at the time. The Polish Women's Alliance began to

32. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 65-70.

33. William J. Galush, "Purity and Power: Chicago Polonian Feminists, 1880-1914,"*Polish American Studies* 47, no. 1 (1990): 5-7.

34. Helen Znaniecka Lopata, *Polish Americans* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 71-76.

35. William J. Galush, "Purity and Power: Chicago Polonian Feminists, 1880-1914,"*Polish American Studies* 47, no. 1 (1990): 5-24.

use English meetings. They also chose board members through elections.[36] Women ran the Polish Women's Alliance giving them a large amount of power.

John Bodnar in "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations" proposes the dual culture theory. It proposes that the ethnic fraternal benefit organizations allowed for the individualism of American life while still maintaining the community aspects found in the Polish village.[37] The Polish Women's Alliance is an example of this. Women practiced individualism allowed by American life, but they maintained tradition by hosting cultural events.

This attempt to combine characteristics of American life while also maintaining Polish life is evident in the structure of the Polish Women's Alliance. The organization was founded with life insurance for marginalized women as the foremost concern; however, to balance that ambitious, non-traditional plan, the Polish Women's Alliance also heavily took up the cause of culture and heritage preservation. At the same time, the organization was a democratic society. It ran outside of the church and often took up American causes. As will be seen in Chapter Three, women, at the time, did not often run organizations or join organizations outside of ones that their husbands belonged to or were affiliated with the church.

So, while the Polish Women's Alliance was, perhaps not intentionally, a keeper of the culture, they also helped the Americanization of Chicago's Polonia. Additionally, it brought women into a political environment and showed them they could organize on an equal footing to the men's organizations. It allowed for Polish women to have unprecedented independence.

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36 Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 65-70.

37. John Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations: Their Historical Development, Character, and Significance," *Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations in the United States: Essays and Inventories* (1981): 5-8.

Halina Gawronska, who was a prominent member of the Polish Women's Alliance starting in 1915, spoke passionately about the PWA. She recalls that at the formation of the Polish Women's Alliance some men including the Polish National Alliance gawked at the organization and pushed back. The PWA was controversial in its beginnings. She remembered this being a problem even while she was a member— nearly twenty years after its founding.[38] This just shows how radical it seemed for women at the time to be allowed their own organization that they were responsible for.

Eventually, at least among the oral history interviewees, the Polish Women's Alliance seemed to be accepted. This may be because of the nature of the Polish Women's Alliance. Many participants went to dances and picnics as well as participated in other events set up by the Polish Women's Alliance. Because the PWA took on roles that made them seem like they were protecting Polishness, it was likely easier for men to digest women forming and running their own organization as this often mirrored women's role in America and the Polish village.

Regardless of its acceptance among Polish-Americans initially, the Polish Women's Alliance seemed to have been remembered fondly among the oral history interviewees. The Polish Women's Alliance made its mark on the Polonia. Oddly enough, this mark seems not to be only Polish, but it seems to have helped the community shift from a Polish immigrant community to one that could perhaps be called Polish-American. However, the Polish Women's Alliance and the Polish National Alliance were not the only fraternal benefit organization to leave a mark on Chicago's Polonia.

38. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 65-70.

Other Fraternal Societies

Fraternal societies in the United States were a common practice. Many scholars have written about fraternal societies. Mary Ann Clawson in *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* have thoroughly defined what makes a fraternal society. She lists four attributes that are common in fraternal societies: "corporate" idiom, ritual, proprietorship, and often masculinity. They often include a vision of unity and brotherhood.[39] Although fraternal societies were not uncommon in the United States, Polish immigrants created their own and used them to suit their own needs. They had a large variety beyond the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Women's Alliance.

Polonia had a lot of overlapping organizations. The larger the organizations, more power the organization had in the community.[40] Additionally, there was factionalism that existed within the Polish community. Polish immigrants came from different regions with different rules. They had different customs and different traditions. Poles had different priorities.[41] All of these factors helped to create many different organizations to fulfill the needs of the entire community.

The Polish National Alliance and the Polish Women's alliance were two of biggest, most prominent, and most remembered of the Polish fraternal benefit organizations by interviewees. These organizations would go on to become some of the few organizations to still exist today. It

39. Mary Anna Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 6.

40. Transcripts of Stanley Olek, Interviewed by Linor Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.8.

41. Dominic A. Pacyga, *American Warsaw: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Polish Chicago*. University of Chicago Press, 2019.

cannot be denied that both organizations had a profound impact on the Chicago Polish community. However, Polonia had dozens of additional fraternal benefit organizations.

Scattered throughout the Chicago Polonia Oral History Project, interviewees name other fraternal benefit organizations by interviewees. However, there is not much known about these fraternal benefit organizations. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find much information about these smaller organizations. Many have died out or been absorbed the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Women's Alliance. What is known through the oral history project, is how small these organizations were; how they may have formed; and their primary purpose. Even these details can shed some light on the role these organizations played in Chicago's Polonia.

For the most part, these organizations were very small groups. They were organized among friends and families. Pauline Golembiewska recalls her brother forming the Stanislaw Society. Like the Polish National Alliance, this fraternal organization's primary goal was to provide life insurance to its members. Unlike the Polish National Alliance, organizations like the Stanislaw Society were small and intimate. The organizations were more about connections and bonds and less about trying to collect as many members as they could to create large communities. Pauline recalled the Stanislaw Society not only paying for funerals but also attending it and grieving the loss of a member.[42]

The Stanislaw Society was not the only small fraternal organization. Like her brother, Pauline Golembiewska recalled being part of smaller fraternal organizations. Blessed Mother of the Scapular was one organization Pauline Golembiewska was part of. It provided life insurance, but it also played an interesting role in the community. Like the Polish National Alliance,

42. Transcripts of Pauline Golembiewska, Interviewed by Alice P. Prus, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.10-5.20; 9.3-9.10.

Blessed Mother of the Scapular offered an organization for women. It proved that ideal further when absorbing the organization Young Mother's Club.[43] It was also an interesting organization that combined American and Polish characteristics in a similar way to the Polish Women's Alliance. However, from the little information that Golembiewska gives us about the Blessed Mother of the Scapular, it can be deduced that it was closer to the church and that it put less focus on Polish independence than the Polish Women's Alliance. Instead, they appeared to focus more on local members and problems.

Like the Polish Women's Alliance, the Blessed Mother of the Scapular provided dances that incorporated Polish culture. It also provided other types of parties and get-togethers. Notably, unlike the Polish Women's Alliance, it also associated itself with Polish Catholic roots by praying together and going to confession together. Interestingly, the creation of the Blessed Mother of the Scapular may have revolved around the fact that the Polish Women's Alliance formation was controversial. By aligning itself with the church, the Blessed Mother of the Scapular made itself seem more in line with the views of the early 20th century. It outwardly appeared traditional and non-offensive for the time.

However, the Blessed Mother of the Scapular also was unique in its American-ness. It embraced the drinking habits of workers providing parties with plenty to drink. Most notable, however, was that all of the organization's business was done in English.[44] This was at a time were nearly all other organizations did their business and activities in strictly Polish.[45] The

43. Transcripts of Pauline Golembiewska, Interviewed by Alice P. Prus, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.20.

44. Transcripts of Pauline Golembiewska, Interviewed by Alice P. Prus, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 10.20.

45. The paperwork including transcripts and minutes for a great majority of the clubs can be found at the Polish Museum of America in Chicago. It can be observed that nearly everything is done in Polish.

Blessed Mother of the Scapular seemed to be trying to meet its rapidly Americanizing Polish members halfway and provide them with opportunities to express both sides of their identity.

Spojni was another fraternal benefit organization like the Blessed Mother of the Scapular. It was another small fraternal organization run by women as an alternative to the Polish Women's Alliance. Bertha Adamik was at one point in time the president of the organization. She discussed the appeal Spojni had to devoted Catholics. Spojni offered life insurance to its members, but it also poured excess money into the church.[46] The organization worked together with the church as a mutually beneficial relationship.

The only other fraternal organization worth note is the Woodsmen of the World. The Woodsmen of the World is worth noting because it is a non-Polish fraternal organization. In fact, it is the only non-Polish, non-ethnic organization mentioned throughout all the oral histories. Woodsmen of the World was a fraternal society that was created in Nebraska and spread throughout the United States including into Chicago. May Fitz discussed being part of the women's circle in the Woodsmen of the World. Although she was brought in due to her husband's participation, the women had their own chapter.[47] Although it was insurance and club admission through her husband, the fact that Woodsmen of the World had a women's chapter was significant as at this time the Polish National Alliance did not. Furthermore, it was significant that a Polish couple with deep roots in Polonia had joined an organization without roots in the Polish community.

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46. Transcripts of Bertha Adamik, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.2-3.6.

47. Transcripts of May Fitz, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.40-5.50.

Interviewees mentioned other small organizations. However, the information the interviewees provided was very limited. Therefore, not much information was known about them. All that really can be said about the organizations is that they all fell under the category of fraternal benefit organizations. However, because the organizations played a big enough role in their lives that participants mentioned it during their oral interviews, it is still important to remember that there was a large number of fraternal benefit organizations outside of the two large fraternal organizations. Chicago's Polonia was never short of organizations to assist the community. The Polish Alma Mater (Maciez Polska) was one of these organizations; Celia Blazek, her husband Frank Blazek, and Stanley Lizmanki were all members.[48] Saint Theresa's was another organization women could choose instead of the Polish Women's Alliance for life insurance and small cultural activities within the Polish community; Carolina Kalisz was a member.[49]

It is amazing, even given the size of Chicago's Polonia at the turn of the twentieth century, the number of fraternal benefit organizations that existed. It would seem impossible for so many to exist in one place. Yet, one of the reasons for the abundance of fraternal benefit organizations is the ability to sign up for any number that you wanted if you could afford the dues for them. Stanley Lizmanki discussed the nature of being in multiple fraternal organization. Lizmanki was in three organizations at once. Regardless of how many organizations someone

48. Transcripts of Stanley Lizmanski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, ; AND Transcripts of Celia Blazek, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 30.

49. Transcripts of Carolina Kalisz, Interviewed by Mary Cygan, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.4.5.6.

was in, as long as they paid their dues when they died, organizations paid out life insurance to the family.[50]

But why did many Polish people often have multiple life insurance policies? It seemed excessive to carry so many when one was often enough to suffice. Instead, money and health insurance likely were not the only consideration when paying into life insurance policies. It was not that life insurance meant nothing. There was an obvious desire to ensure that family would be well off especially if the breadwinner of the family died. However, with how many organizations some Polish people were in, there must be some sort of desire not just for life insurance but also for the events that were held. The activities fraternal benefit organizations provided outside of life insurance drew Polish immigrants in. The organizations symbolized Polonia's tightness as a community and allowed Poles to not only stay together as a community but maintain Polishness in a foreign country as many people Americanized. Yet, as shown, these organizations may have maintained Polishness in an American way.

Fraternal benefit organizations had a huge role in the Chicago Polish community. Few people were not involved in any organizations and many who were involved in multiple. Life insurance did have a place in Polonia and organizations. Life insurance meant that Polish immigrants could pay for their own funerals--in their own church and a plot of their own. The Church was a central device in Polish immigrants' community at the turn of the twentieth century. It was only natural that it too became the center of organization life.

50. Transcripts of Stanley Lizmanski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 4.12.

Chapter 3: Church Organizations

In 1951, Oscar Handlin's famous book, *The Uprooted*, was published. The book describes the tragic conditions of Polish immigrants. Handlin describes how Polish immigrants were tragically uprooted from their lives in their homeland only to be thrust into a new world. Handlin did shine light onto things Polish immigrants had to leave behind when coming to America. Polish immigrants had to leave behind parts of their identity. However, even Handlin admits that Polish immigrants brought parts of their identity and culture with them to the United States. Namely, they brought and relied on religion. Handlin describes the importance religion had to immigrants coming to America:

> As his stable place in a whole universe slipped away from under him, the peasant came to America grasped convulsively at the familiar supports, pulled along with him the traditional bulwarks of his security…
> Even in the Old World, these men's thoughts had led inevitably to God. In the New, they were certain to do so. The very process of adjusting immigrant ideas to the conditions of the United States made religion paramount as a way of life. When the natural world, the former context of the peasant's idea, faded behind the transatlantic horizon, the newcomers found themselves stripped to those religious institutions they could bring along with them. Well, the trolls and fairies will stay behind, but church and priest at very least will come.
> The more thorough the separation from the other aspects of the old life, the greater was the hold of the religion that alone survived the transfer. Struggling against heavy odds to save something of the old ways, the immigrants directed into their faith the whole weight of their longing to be connected to the past.[1]

Handlin was, of course, exaggerated the immigrants' plight in the United States— as did the rest of *The Uprooted.* Yet, Handlin makes a clear point that remains true according to nearly all scholarly analysis of Polish immigrants in the late 20th to early 19th century. Polish immigrants brought some aspects of their culture with them. Specifically, Polish immigrants brought the Polish Catholic Church to America. As Handlin eloquently stated, Polish immigrants

1. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migration that Made the American People,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 105-106.

brought and built their own church in America to hold onto important aspects of Polish culture and thereby the Polish village.

It seems to be that every major work on Polish American history in Chicago inevitably leads to the building of the Polish church and the need to remake the Polish village. In this thesis, Chapters One and Two were focused on building the United States to become a place immigrants could safely live. However, Chapter Three focuses on how Polish immigrants used their Catholicism to shape the United States from a transitory space with little to offer into a home that many Polish immigrants would spend the rest of their lives in.

Polish immigrants used mutual aid societies and beneficial fraternal societies for basic needs and necessities such as food, housing, and life insurance. Therefore, it is natural that the needs and wants of Polish immigrants began to evolve as their basic needs were met. Additionally, just as large fraternal organizations evolved out of the trend of Polish permanence in the United States, churches and church organizations and clubs grew out of this same trend. Polish immigrants sought to make the Polish neighborhoods more like home. This was as true for transitory Polish as it was for permanent Polish. However, permeance made the issue more pressing.

For many Polish, it was important to build not just a Catholic Church but a Polish Catholic Church. This would be a church with Polish priests, Polish sermons, and Polish traditions including Polish holidays, parochial schools, and Polish events put on by the church.[2] Although the Catholic Church served as a place for worship, a burial place, and a place for support, it also served a much larger role in the Polish ethnic community. In the Polish village,

2. Church in Polonia is thoroughly covered in Joseph John Parot, *Polish Catholics in Chicago, 1850-1920: A Religious History* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981) .

Catholic Churches were used as community centers and places of socializing and gathering. These habits were brought over from the Polish village, and soon, Polish-Americans used the Catholic Church as a meeting place while saloons and parks became a more obsolete location for gatherings.[3] While saloons and parks still existed and were used as meeting grounds, churches became meeting grounds for well-formed organizations instead of the loose organizations and societies of the past.

Many studies and books have covered the role the Catholic Church played in Polish immigrants' lives.[4] Yet, few seek to look at the organizations within the church that had little to do with the church and more to do with the social habits and wants of the immigrants. When investigated further, it becomes evident that many organizations have nothing to do with the church. Rather Polish immigrants use the church as a place to go and a space to organize events and clubs. It became a foundation for many organizations and clubs including small niche organizations.

Within the church, there are two different categories of organizations that are important to separate in this work. There are religious and non-religious organizations. It is important to separate these two categories as each has different goals and different effects on the people who were part of these clubs and organizations.

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3. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America,* 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 1: 275-277.

4. For more information on the role of Catholic Church in Polish immigrant lives see John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries the Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Joseph John Parot, *Polish Catholics in Chicago, 1850-1920: A Religious History* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981; and John Radzilowski, "A Social History of Polish-American Catholicism," *US Catholic Historian* 27, no. 3 (2009): 21-43.

For Polish youth, the church provided clubs and activities. This is true of both the religious and non-religious organizations and clubs in the church. It allowed parents to know where their children were and that they were safe and not causing problems. This was especially important as youths were increasingly viewed as out of control and out of touch with their heritage.[5] Additionally, many organizations helped to teach children customs about Polish Roman Catholicism and Polish culture.

For women too, religious and secular organizations and clubs became popular past times. In a similar vein to the Polish Women's Alliance, in church organizations, women had more freedom than outside organizations. In religious clubs, women had the opportunity to help build institutions they cared about including the church and parochial schools. Women also had the opportunity to contribute to their community.[6] This was particularly important to the Chicago Polish as the Catholic church was the epicenter of the Polish community. The church was the hub of culture and society and Polonia relied on the church to help the community. The church helps Polish immigrants feel safe and protected via the parish.[7] The Polish language was one of the most important cultural cornerstones for Polish culture. However, for many Polish, religion was the most important cultural characteristic of Polishness.

5. Dominic A. Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 150-152.

6. John Radzilowski, "A Social History of Polish-American Catholicism," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 27, no. 3 (2009): 31-35.

7. Joseph John Parot, *Polish Catholics in Chicago, 1850-1920: A Religious History* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981), 22.

Women often entered clubs and organizations that allowed them to develop their hobbies and skills outside of the home. Some such hobbies and skills include singing and sewing.[8] At the same time, Polish women created secular clubs that made it easier for women to participate in other activities that strengthened their Polish identity through cultural activities. These clubs were often hosted by the church.

Members of religious organizations primarily had goals that revolved around the Polish Catholic Church. Members in these organizations were involved in prayers circles, funeral services, weddings, activities around masses such as choir, and other activities specifically set up to help fund the church and institutions related to it.

Non-religious organizations were involved in religious activities occasionally. However, they often see the church as a community center and a place to meet people with similar values-particularly other Polish-Americans of their neighborhoods. These organizations often included hobby organizations.

Religious Organizations and Clubs

Polish Roman Catholic Union of America

Understanding the role and history of the Roman Catholic church played and how the early church developed in Polonia is important to an overall understanding of the church's goals and role in Polonia. These goals, in turn, help to reflect on some of the organizations that were

8. Leon T. Blaszczyk, "The Polish Singers' Movement in America," *Polish American Studies* 38, no. 1 (1981): 51, and Frederick J. Augustyn, "Together and Apart: Lithuanian and Polish Immigrant Adult Literacy Programs in Chicago, 1890-1930,"*Polish American Studies* 57, no. 2 (2000): 39-40.

created in the church at the time. To understand the Polish Roman Catholic Church, it is first important to understand the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America.

Poles were not the first Roman Catholics in the United States. In Chicago, German and Irish immigrants were two of the largest Catholic groups when waves of Polish immigrants began arriving.[9] When Polish immigrants arrived in Chicago, they sought to worship under a Roman Catholic church. Since many of them came from the German side of the partition, many Polish immigrants practiced, at first, in a German Roman Catholic church. However, practicing in German churches was not the same as practicing in a Polish church. For some, it was an insult to injury as some could not practice Polish culture and traditions because of German rule in Poland. Now, they felt forced to practice their religion in a German church.[10] It was important for Polish to have liturgy in Polish not German or English.[11] Not every Polish person could speak German or English. Additionally, the church was not a Polish church without a Polish mass.

German immigrants practiced different customs in their churches. They observed different holidays and practiced different holiday traditions. Germans spoke a different language from Poles within the church. Polish immigrants looked to religion for community and solidarity, but a German church would not be enough for them.

This is where the Polish Roman Catholic Union came in. Although the Polish Roman Catholic Union was not started in Chicago, rather it was started in Detroit, it still had a big impact in Chicago. Polish-Americans looked around and saw how few Polish parishes there were

9. For a thorough history of early Catholicism in the U.S. see John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

10. Helen Znaniecka Lopata, *Polish Americans* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 59-60.

11. Joseph John Parot, *Polish Catholics in Chicago, 1850-1920: A Religious History* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981), 20-21.

and how few Polish clergy members there were in Chicago.[12] These factors led to the creation of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America. It not only grew to become one of the largest Polish organizations in the United States, but it also is considered the oldest.

When the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America was founded it had a few goals: "to build Polish churches and schools, to promote adherence to the Roman Catholic religion, and the religious and cultural traditions of Poland, to give fraternal assistance to Poles, to take care of widows and orphans, to help Poland to become an independent country again, [and] to establish 'Pilgrim' as the official organ of the organization."[13]

The Polish Roman Catholic Union is a fraternal society like those discussed in chapter two. However, at its core, it focuses much of its energy on Roman Catholicism. Therefore, it was not discussed in chapter two. Its primary objectives were the cultivating of Polish Catholicism that allowed for further assistance of the Polish community. Its relations with the church led it to be classified as a church organization within this work.

In addition, the Polish Roman Catholic Union was responsible both directly and indirectly for additional organizations inside and outside of the Church. Surprisingly, one such organization that formed from the Polish Roman Catholic Union was the Polish National Alliance. It was an organization that splintered from the Polish Roman Catholic Union, and the split was over Polish-American identity.

The Polish Roman Catholic Union saw its job as promoting Americanism while still maintaining Polish roots. They encouraged Polish traditions and culture such as language and dances the same way the Polish National Alliance did. However, the Polish Roman Catholic

12. Helen Znaniecka Lopata, *Polish Americans* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 59-60.

13. "History," Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, https://www.prcua.org/history/.

Union encouraged members of their organization to help build the Polish-American community through the construction of institutions, organizations, and other activities that helped to strengthen the future of the community. Although the Polish National Alliance helped the Polish-American community, the Polish National Alliance focused on the problems in Poland such as the reunification of Poland. When unification was achieved, the Polish National Alliance focused on the rebuilding of Poland and maintaining Polish roots.[14] In some ways, it was as if the Polish Roman Catholic Union saw its role as the merging of Polish and American identities, but the Polish National Alliance saw itself as the protector of Polish traditionalism from Americanization.

Just like the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Roman Catholic Union was frequently mentioned by oral history participants. Similarly, the Polish Roman Catholic Union reached across all occupations, class, and sex. Lilian Cwik and Carolina Kalisz were both in the Polish Roman Catholic Union mostly for insurance.[15] Nicholas Leffner joined the Polish Roman Catholic Union as soon as he arrived in Chicago.[16] Sabine Logisz joined the PRCU for a sense of belonging. There she participated in social and sports clubs.[17]

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14. John Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross: A History of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, 1873-2000* (New York: East European Monographs, 2003), pp. 69-70.

15. Transcripts of Lilian Cwik, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.11; Transcripts of Carolina Kalisz, Interviewed by Mary Cygan, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.12.

16. Transcripts of Nicholas Leffner, Interviewed by Einar Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. 1.

17. Transcripts of Sabina Logisz, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 9.

Additionally, like the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Roman Catholic Union's activities are remembered as much more limited than the organization claims. Few recalled much about the organization itself other than they were part of it via their church and that they provided insurance. Even though they were in some way rivals, many participants often spoke about the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union as nearly interchangeable organizations— often being grouped together.[18]

Unlike the Polish National Alliance, lack of remembrance may have been because of the Polish Roman Catholic Union's role in the community. The Polish Roman Catholic Union was often the builders of churches and parishes. The Polish Roman Catholic Union may not have appeared to have contributed much to Polonia outside of fundraisers and insurance. Therefore, it was not a stretch to say that many of the organizations that existed within parishes were created by and belonged to the Polish Roman Catholic Union. They may not have received any credit for the creation of organizations, clubs, and events. Many of these events, activities, and organizations may have instead been credited to the church or organizations within the church.

In addition, it is important to mention one of the biggest projects of the Polish Roman Catholic Union. The Polish Roman Catholic Union was one of the biggest sponsors and contributors to the Polish Museum of America and the connecting library and archives. The museum started as the "Museum and Archives of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America."[19] The museum celebrates Polonia through the collection of Polish art, works, and other cultural artifacts. It also spends a lot of time collecting information and works revolving

18. Multiple interviewees in Transcripts, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois

19. "History," Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, https://www.prcua.org/history/.

around the Polish-American community. This museum is still active today. It becomes important that the Polish Roman Catholic Union had a large part to play in its creation because several interviewees mentioned being part of societies that helped to establish the museum in the community. Several participants also had a direct connection with the Polish Museum of America.[20] Sabina Logisz had the most to say about the Polish Museum of America.

Logisz discussed how the museum played a role in the community housing historical associations and supporting other Polish organizations such as the Polish Arts Club discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. The Polish museum allowed for Polish immigrants to take an interest in their Polish heritage. Logisz insisted that the Polish Museum of America was funded by the Polish Roman Catholic Union.[21]

The Polish Roman Catholic Union was one of the largest Polish religious organizations in Chicago as well as in America. It encompassed numerous organizations of its own. However, there were also several religious organizations not related to the Polish Roman Catholic Union. Numerous different religious organizations were discussed by the Chicago Polonia oral history interviewees.

20. For more about the creation of the Polish Museum of America, see, Transcripts of Sabina Logisz, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

21. Transcripts of Sabina Logisz, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 9-10; 2.9-3.9.

Other Religious Organizations

Nearly every interviewee mentioned that they were part of the church, and they were closely connected with the parish. Only one interviewee rejected the idea of being part of a church and never went to church nor did he belong to a parish.[22] A substantial number of interviewees were part of some organization or club within the church to help the church whether that is through donations, events, or building the church. This section is about those organizations and clubs.

The Ladies Auxiliary is one of the largest Polish organizations that revolved around the church. For many organizations and clubs, ladies' auxiliary is a side branch of men's organizations that women could join at the time. However, for Polish interviewees, when they spoke about the "Ladies' Auxiliary," they often meant a specific separate organization usually of the Polish Roman Catholic Union. One of the prominent activities discussed by the interviewees was getting money together and creating promotions for the Polish Museum of America for the Polish Roman Catholic Union. They did this by contacting donors and holding charity events and actions. They also frequently helped to assist veterans through donations and time.[23]

The Rosary Ladies, also called the Rosary Society, was the most commonly discussed organization outside of the Polish Roman Catholic Union by participants of the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia Project. The Rosary Ladies was an organization made up of Polish

22. Transcripts of Frank Kozik, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.19-1.20.

23. Transcripts of Bertha Adamik, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.18-3.20 and Transcripts of Sofia Kania, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.18-6.4.

women. The Rosary Ladies were part of many different parishes. However, they each played similar roles in their respective parishes. Firstly, similar to men's organizations and clubs in the church, one of the main goals of the Rosary Ladies was the collection of donations and the raising of money. The money, then, went into the church to build and expand. The money also could go to programs or fund other parts of the Rosary Ladies.

The Rosary Ladies also played a more active role with church members and added to the spiritual aspects of the church. They created prayer circles for the churches' members. They also collected money for funerals that could not be paid. In addition, the Rosary Ladies would often say the rosary at funerals. That was the reason they were called the Rosary Ladies.[24]
The Rosary Ladies met at members' homes, not the church. Additionally, the meetings were often in Polish. However, their public events (such as raffles and dances to collect money for the church) were done in English.[25] This allowed the Rosary Ladies to maintain Polishness within the club. At the same time, the club was also attempting to be inclusive to all members of the community thereby earning more money for the church and its related institutions and events.

The Rosary Ladies' choice to have public events in English was an example of a language shift happening in Polonia. The language shift that was happening in Polonia was partly due to the rapid number of second-generation growing up in Chicago as well as the maturing of those who came to the United States very young. These people were exposed to English more frequently and began using it more regularly. Many more Polish people began to speak English more regularly than Polish. This change reflected in all parts of Polonia. Many

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24. Transcripts of Bertha Adamik, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.8-3.15.

25. Transcripts of Caroline Kalisz, Interviewed by Mary Cygan, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.1-5.4.

organizations started shifting their meetings to English. In addition, many newspapers also started to run some articles (and sometimes whole papers) in English to appeal to a growing group of Polish people.[26]

One of the other large religious clubs was the choir. The choir and other church "singing clubs" were common activities in Polonia. Singing in Poland, including in the church, was an important tradition that was carried on by organizations and clubs. Theodozia Malinowski discussed singing in Poland— discussing and emphasizing its importance in the Polish village she was from.[27] Choir allowed Polish immigrants to keep this Polish tradition alive, and many jumped at the chance especially women. Choir connected Polish with not only their religion and their God but also with their former homeland.

Lastly, like the fraternal organizations, there were a series of small clubs and organizations that were within the oral interviews. It remains important to discuss these small organizations and clubs as it demonstrated the variety of clubs the church had to offer and the number of organizations and clubs that Polish-Americans were part of.

Blue Ribbon Girls was one popular organization mentioned by the women of the Polonia oral history interviews but left half explained. It was common that the interviewees tied the Blue Ribbon Girls with their childhood or that of their children in Chicago. Blue Ribbon Girls was an organization that young girls often joined with some becoming leaders as they became older. Polish girls often joined Blue Ribbon Girls for communion. They often met within the church

26. Eugene Obidinski, "The Polish American Press: Survival through Adaptation," *Polish American Studies* 34, no. 2 (1977): 38-55, Accessed March 12, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/20147985.

27. Transcripts of Theodozia Malinowski, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.4.

and was reportedly part of the Polish Roman Catholic Union.[28] Blue Ribbon Girls is similar to the Girl Scouts. However, the Blue Ribbon Girls organization was affiliated with the Polish Roman Catholic Church.

Lilian Cwik recalled and discussed organizations and clubs her mother was part of. The Sunshine Ladies were among the groups mentioned. While connected with the Catholic Church in Polonia, the Sunshine Ladies were also connected with the Rosary Ladies/Societies. Membership between these two groups overlapped. The Sunshine Ladies was much smaller than the Rosary Ladies/Societies. The Rosary Ladies were at many different parishes, and the Sunshine Ladies were far more scattered. The Sunshine Ladies' primary goal was to visit the sick and assist them as much as they could. They wished to bring sunshine into the lives of the sick.[29] Hence, they were called the Sunshine Ladies.

Cwik's mother was also part of niche clubs that were not named in the interview with Cwik. One of the club's primary objective was to help nuns within the church.[30] Curiously, although Cwik discussed her mother's participation in church organizations, Lilian Cwik did not discuss her own dealings with the church whether it involved organizations or not. Instead, her focus on clubs was directed outside the church. Social activities inside the church gained momentum. The church started to gain more rigid boundaries and less and less blurred its role of religious institution and community center.

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28. Transcripts of Bertha Adamik, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.15-3.16.

29. Transcripts of Lilian Cwik, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 4.37.

30. Transcripts of Lilian Cwik, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 4.38.

Sister Mary Imelda also discussed Catholic clubs she was part of. Sister Mary Imelda recalled being most active in the Catholic Women's Club and the Holy Name Society. Sister Mary Imelda discussed her most frequent activities among these organizations as being the religious plays.[31] Holy Name Societies were reasonably popular among Poles heavily involved in the church. Alfred Abramowicz also remembers being a member.[32] Marie Ardent recalled Holy Name very fondly calling it "Holy Families."[33] The church clubs often became a home away from home. They bonded Polish immigrants as an ethnic community that would often help each other. This characteristic was heavily influenced by the Polish village, where many Polish helped each other to make the community better. It was beneficial for Polish immigrants to help each other to create a better community, as this allowed for better resources for all of Polonia, not just individuals. Helping each other to create a better community was also part of the Polish church in the Polish village.

Finally, there are a few clubs and organizations mentioned only in passing. However, these should still be mentioned, because they showcase the fact that despite all of the clubs and organizations mentioned in this work, there is still more to explore. May Fritz recalled her mother being part of a group who went to confession together.[34] Helen Chrzanowski recalled the role of the Young Women's Christian Association during WWI.

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31. Transcripts of Sister Mary Imelda (Kryger), Interviewed by Zawiszanowicz, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.19.

32. Transcripts of Most Reverend Alfred Abramowicz, Interviewed by Zawiszanowicz, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.23.

33. Transcripts of Marie Ardent, Interviewed by Joanne Nowak, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.12.

34. Transcripts of May Fritz, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.3.

Religious organizations often put their other business on hold during tumultuous times in Poland. The Young Women's Association asked for members who could, like Helen Chrzanowski, to go abroad to assist in the war efforts any way possible. Helen Chrzanowki, for example, became a translator.[35] Organizations rising to assist in the war effort was also popular in WWII with such organizations like the Catholic League for Religious Assistance to Poland, but those organizations are beyond the scope of this study.[36]

Polish religious clubs and organizations were interesting in what they meant for Polish identity. Polish-Americans wanted to maintain the image of the Polish village— a home away from home. Polish immigrants went so far as to not only build their own church and demand Polish clergy to worship in what they could consider their own church[37]. The religious organizations showed that Poles considered the church the center of their community. However, it also demonstrated how the Roman Catholic identity was integral to the Polish identity. Many Polish were part of more than one religious organization or club. They were often part of three or more allowing them to contribute to the church every way they could. When women could not find the time to participate in church events, they were still often part of a club or two within the Church. If they found they could not contribute to the church organizations or clubs, there appeared to be a sense of guilt.[38]

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35. Transcripts of Helen Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.15-1.16.

36. Organizations assisting in the war effort, particularly WWII, are beyond the scope of the study. However, there are some works dedicated to the study of the U.S.'s Polish community during WWII. These works include James S. Pula, *Polish Americans: An Ethnic Community* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995).

37. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America,* 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 1: 275-277.

38. Transcripts of Sofia Kania, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 7.6.

Yet, Polonia was both American and Polish and so were organizations and clubs within the churches in Polonia. If the religious organizations within a church represented the Polish village and Polish tradition, then non-religious organizations represented the rapidly Americanizing Polish in Chicago.

Secular Organizations

Churches were like community centers. It was not uncommon for Polish to attend clubs and organizations that met in the church and use church resources. This was especially true of women interviewees who used the church to enjoy clubs of leisure outside of the home in a time where women's roles were still often limited to home activities.

Theater groups were popular clubs within churches. Within the religious organization subsection of this chapter, the Catholic Women's Clubs and Holy Name Societies were discussed as being two such groups that put on religious plays. However, many parishes had theater groups. Victor Harakiewicz discussed being part of a theater group at the parish Blessed Virgin.[39] Sophia Kania recalled being part of a theater group in the church who called themselves the Dramatic Circle.[40] These two groups are different from the Holy Name Societies and Catholic Women's Clubs. The theater groups at the Blessed Virgin and the Dramatic Circle may have performed religious plays, especially around the holidays when religious plays had a special place in the church. However, these theater groups were dedicated to more than just religious

39. Transcripts of Victor Harakiewicz, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.27.

40. Transcripts of Sofia Kania, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.14.

plays. The theater groups existed within the church for the convenience of the location, but they were defined more as a theater group and less like an extension of the church. Members had more freedom to develop their skills, promote Polish art, and explore American art through theater.

Baseball was a common club among men in the church. Throughout the oral history of Polonia interviews, it was clear that Polish men were not as active in the church as women. The only occasion men recalled being in church groups was as part of the Polish Roman Catholic Union, usually for insurance purposes. The only other expectation was if the church club was a baseball team— with the one rare expectation of Victor Harakiewicz who was both in theater and choir.[41] Julius Kopielski and Roman Lapkiewicz both recall playing baseball at the church as their only club revolving around the church.[42]

Baseball was a common activity among Polish men and was often the chosen sport among them. Other interviewees recalled being part of a baseball team whether it was through the Polish National Alliance or through other outside clubs such as the Polish Falcons, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.[43] Baseball was never particularly popular in Poland. It was

41. Transcripts of Victor Harakiewicz, Interviewed by Nancy Skiersch, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.27.

42. Transcripts of Julius Kopielski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.7 and Transcripts of Roman Lapkiewicz, Interviewed by Linor Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 3.7.

43. Transcripts of Julius Kopielski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.7 and Transcripts of Stanley Olek, Interviewed by Linor Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.8.

always seen as an American sport.[44] Baseball over soccer is such a small preference, but it was American culture influencing Polish habits and hobbies.

Lastly, the Boy and Girl Scouts of America were remembered as running out of the church by the interviewees.[45] Men and women recall not only themselves being in Boy or Girl Scouts but also their children. The details of the Polish branch of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts are not discussed in the interviews, and it is difficult to find discussions anywhere about them. However, the over-arching Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts often emphasized morality and patriotism.[46] They leaned heavily into patriotism. This can tell two facts about the Polish community at the time. One: by the time the Boy Scouts and Girls Scotus became active in the Polonia in the 1910s, there were already institutions that were Americanizing Polish immigrants and assisting in assimilating them into American society. Two: Poles were fine with sending their children to clubs that did not focus on Polish heritage and rather American patriotism. They were not completely segregated from other communities.

Several apparent conclusions can be drawn based on the religious and non-religious organization subsections. First, the church played a vital role in all aspects of life within the Polish community. The church contributed to religious, social, and cultural life. In some cases, the church even assisted in home life for those desperate families who turned for the church in

44. Mary Patrice Erdmans, ""So They Will Know Their Heritage": A Review of Contemporary Research on Polish Americans, 1995-2015,"*Polish American Studies* 73, no. 1 (2016): 43.

45. Transcripts of Sofia Kania, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.12.

46. Alvin Townley, *Legacy of Honor: The Values and Influence of America's Eagle Scouts* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007),12.

assistance especially during the depression. Helen Chrzanowski was one of the families that needed help during the Great Depression and received help from their parish.[47]

Additionally, these subsections make it clear that the church central role had collided with its role as a community center before its role began to decline. Its role shifted as the community shifted. Polish immigrants began to see the church differently over time. No matter what Polish-Americans did, the church in America would never be the church in the Polish village. Polish people began to turn away from the church for their social activities and clubs. Poles were no longer in isolated villages. They were in vast, complex Polish communities. The church started to become just a religious institution. Over time parochial school declined; social clubs met with less frequency at church; even church worship began to change, and some Polish interviewees even acknowledged their children or grandchildren no longer attended church. The role of the church of Polish in Poland remained strong, but in the United States, that characteristic that used to define their Polishness started to weaken.

Churches became community centers only when organizations and clubs needed to thrive. Instead, the Polish Roman Catholic church's main role remained a church, a place to worship. As Chapter Four will show, clubs frequently began meeting outside of churches.

47. Transcripts of Helen Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois,7.28.

Chapter 4: Hobby and Professional Organizations

Throughout this work, each chapter had one section that focused on small groups that were half-mentioned in the Oral History of Chicago's Polonia project. Including these groups in previous chapters was necessary to demonstrate the large and growing variety of clubs and organizations that existed in Polonia. It also demonstrated the number of clubs' participants of the Oral History of Chicago's Polonia project was part of. Many of the participants in the oral history project knew each other. So, it is surprising that there were so many groups. It would be more likely for individuals to be connected to fewer clubs as friends, families, and neighbors often ended up members of the same clubs.

If a group of a few dozen Polish people was part of dozens of clubs and organizations, it does not take much of an imagination to imagine how many organizations and clubs existed in all of Polonia. It is also easy to surmise how active Polish people were in organizations. Nowhere is there more variety clearly displayed than this chapter. This chapter aims to discuss hobby and professional organizations, and it contains numerous organizations and clubs from various participants of the Oral History of Chicago's Polonia project.

Chapter Three discussed the clubs of the church. Within the secular subsection, hobby clubs and recreation clubs were touched on. Yet, many clubs would eventually meet outside of the church and have their autonomy away from the church. The church grew with the Polish mentality of making Chicago like the Polish village.[1] However, hobby and professional groups of Polonia grew because of individualism on the rise in Polonia.

1. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America,* 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 1: 275-277.

A shift to specialized professions from factory jobs was happening in Polonia. A quarter of immigrants born after 1910 went through secondary school. In turn, secondary school often led to white-collar jobs, increasing the number of professions. White-collar workers in Polonia provided a sense of competition.[2]

This individualism allowed for the rapid growth of hobbies. Polish immigrants had many different hobbies at their fingertips in Polonia. Some Polish people filled their time with clubs and organizations related to their profession. Others found hobbies that strengthened and shared their Polishness. However, some found hobbies and organizations that were completely new and unrelated to their Polish origins.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first part will discuss the two largest hobby organizations found in the oral histories: the Polish Falcons and the Polish Arts Club. The Polish Falcons was one of the largest and oldest organizations that could be considered a hobby organization. The Polish Falcons' origins are heavily tied to Polish history. However, the Polish Falcons found their own home in America focusing on their own separate goals outside of those goals of the Polish Falcons in Poland.

The Polish Arts Club was about bringing Polish art and culture both to immigrants and to other Americans. Polish immigrants struggled with being the Other when they arrive in the United States. Polish immigrants were not seen as white nor given many of the privileges white Americans were given. The contrast of Polish-Americans against white Americans as well as ethnically diverse co-workers helped the Poles define what it means to be Polish.[3] It became

2. William Galush, "City Societies and Commercial Clubs: Embourgeoisement among Second Generation Polish Americans," *Polish American Studies* 56, no. 2 (1999): 9.

3. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 55-58.

apparent to many Polish people in Chicago that few people outside of Polonia understood what being Polish meant. There was a fear that even some Polish was beginning to forget what it meant to be Polish. Polish culture in Chicago was not well known or understood by the main populace in a time when ethnic history was not deemed important and only the white majority was considered.

Because of these gaps in knowledge, some hobby clubs wished to promote Polish culture both to uneducated Americans and Polish. These clubs believed that many Polish immigrants were no longer or never exposed to what they deemed as higher forms of Polish culture such as literature, art, and music. The Polish Arts Club was one of these clubs.

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to other niche hobby clubs that had formed around this time. These clubs included baseball clubs and social clubs. There were many of them with all different names and purposes.

The last part of this chapter will discuss the workers and professional clubs. These are clubs, organizations, and associations related to the professions of the interviewees. This brings about an important discussion of competition and individualism in the community. In the end, all these different types of clubs (hobby, profession, and cultural) show the growth of interest and development in Polonia.

The Polish Falcons

The Polish Falcons had little in common with the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union, but what it did have in common was the vast number of people it attracted through all walks of life. The Polish National Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union,

and the Polish Falcons are the trifecta of Polish organizations. The Polish National Alliance was a fraternal benefits club focusing on the immediate needs of Polonia. The Polish Roman Catholic Union focused on spiritual needs. Finally, the Polish Falcons contributed to the social and physical health of Polonia through all manner of sport.

The Falcon movement in Poland was tied to the suppression of the Polish Uprising of 1863 and the influence of the Czech Falcons. The Polish Falcons first formed in 1867 in Lwow, Poland (then the capital of Galicia, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). The goal was to rejuvenate Poland through physical fitness. This movement eventually found its way to the United States through immigration. The Polish Falcons were established by a different name in 1887 in Chicago.

Given that the Polish Falcons in the United States had different problems than their Polish counterparts, the Falcons also had different goals in the United States. The Polish Falcons in the United States formed with a concentration on good health and Polish heritage. The Falcons were particularly concerned about the physical and moral health of the youth (children, teenagers, and young adults). They were one of the only organizations to focus almost solely on youth as their primary members.[4]

The sports performed by Falcon members were various. In some ways, they were like the YMCA of today. Members participated in track, swimming, dance, and parallel bars. Some members such as Adam Nowinkski were talented enough to not only gain awards but also go overseas to compete in sports competitions.[5]

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4. For a more thorough detailed history of the Polish Falcons see Donald E. Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America 1887-1987* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

5. Transcripts of Adam Nowinski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 14-16.

The Falcons' activities were often tied with its original purpose. The Falcons spent time celebrating and encouraging Polish independence; as such it is no surprise that for many Polish, the Polish Falcons' rise and fall occurred with Poland's.

Lilian Cwik worked as an instructor for the Polish Falcons. She recalled that after WWI and after Poland gained independence, membership with the Falcons declined. This was confirmed by other interviewees who many discuss participating in the Falcons. They recalled being members during WWI, but many stopped participation around 1920 once the war was over.

Overall, former members of the Falcons recalled it fondly. For female members, they recall the Falcons in two capacities. First, women often became instructors. The second purpose of the Falcons is tied to the first. Women often recalled being instructors to children. Lilian Cwik even broke down membership by numbers. She recalled she often had 50-60 children in one group to instruct and no more than 20 above the age of 14.[6] Czesława Kowalewski also worked as an instructor around the same period and confirmed these numbers.[7]

Even members outside of instructors such as Julius Kopielski and Theodozia Malinowski recall being in the Polish Falcons from a young age.[8] The Falcons were popular particularly among children before 1920. This connection to children prior to 1920 helped solidify Polonia with Poland before WWI.

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6. Transcripts of Lilian Cwik, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 13-16.

7. Transcripts of Czesława Kowalewski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 4.3-4.5.

8. Transcripts of Julius Kopielski, Interviewed by Jim Young, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 14; Transcripts of Theodozia Malinowski interview, Interviewed by Edward Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 33.

Many of the children during peak Falcon membership either came from Poland or they had parents who had come from Poland. Polish children still spoke mostly Polish, practiced Roman Catholicism, and practiced other Polish traditions. Polishness was very much alive and well. The desire to maintain a strong connection to Polish roots were still commonly found in Polonia. However, this waned.

Children became exposed to Americanisms. They spoke English and they adopted American culture. In addition, WWI, as discussed, led to Poland's independence, which in turn led many Polish to realize their permanence in Chicago. These two factors, as demonstrated by the Falcons, showed why membership declined, and it allowed a look into the shift away from Poland as the main focus of organizations. The Polish Falcons were not the only hobby organizations affected by the sudden Polish independence.

The Polish Arts Club

The Polish Arts Club was another hobby organization that was popular in Chicago's Polonia. Like the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Arts Clubs was particularly popular among women. In fact, no men in the oral histories of Chicago's Polonia project mentioned being part of the Polish Arts Clubs.

Women gravitated to the Polish Arts Club in a similar vein to the Polish Women's Alliance and Polish church organizations. The Polish Arts Club provided a cultural outlet. It allowed them to continue exploring their Polishness and pass that on onto the next generation. This status was further explored and promoted within the American environment.

One of the Polish Arts Club's primary goals was the promotion of Polish art in Chicago, often to non-Polish individuals. Halina Gawronska was vice-president of the Polish Arts Club. She described its efforts as trying to get neighbors interested in Polish art.[9]

Members of the Polish Arts Club wanted to bring Polish culture to Chicago. They did this through multiple activities that reached different groups of people. The Polish Arts Club began in 1926. It was around this time it became clear the permanence of the Chicago Polish people. However, it also became clear that the second-generation of Polish who were raised all the lives in Chicago was not getting much exposure to Polish art.

Interviewee Halina Gawronska recalled the club starting as a way for Polish people to incorporate their own culture into shows. Polish people would often go to see shows on Sunday. However, there were no Polish artists at the shows. Some people who attended these shows felt it was their job to try and incorporate Polish art into these shows or at least bring Polish art into the community where it was lacking. Thus, the Polish Arts Club was started to fill those gaps.[10]

These two changes in Polonia of Chicago affected the goals and ultimately the activities of the Polish Arts Club. Because permanence became more realistic following WWI, acceptance of Poles was wanted more than ever. One way to become accepted was by proving the Polish people's ability to assimilate. However, Polish-Americans still saw themselves as Polish. Therefore, exposing others to Polish art and culture allowed Polish Otherness to become normal, allowing them to gain some sense of American-ness while also keeping their Polishness. Therefore, one of the Polish Art Club's goals was the promotion of Polish art to other non-

9. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 54.

10. Transcripts of Halina Gawronska, Interviewed by Jane Zakrzewski, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 56-58.

Polish. One way they did this was through the Polish National Museum of America. The museum has numerous pieces of Polish are for visitors to view.

The Polish Arts Club had a strong connection with the Polish National Museum of America. Sofia Kania recalled the club donating a lot of money and time to the museum. Additionally, Kania remembers members of the Polish Arts Club performing the dedication ceremony for the museum.[11] The relationship between the Polish National Museum of America and the Polish Arts Club was mutually beneficial. The Polish Arts Club helped by donating money and time while the Polish National Museum of America gave the Polish Arts Club space to display exhibits.[12]

In addition to partnering with the Polish National Museum of America, the Polish Arts Club frequently had art shows for the community. Helena Chrzanowski recalled the many arts shows that the Polish Art Clubs ran. She recalled the shows frequently were ran at the local Talman's Bank. It was common for people to meet many popular Polish artists at the time as well as buy and view Polish art.[13]

The Polish Art Clubs had both artists and non-artists in their club. Chrzanowski did not consider herself an artist, but she described many other artists that she met in the Polish Arts Club. She even kept several paintings done by members.[14]

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11. Transcripts of Sofia Kania, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 6.1.

12. Transcripts of Sofia Kania, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 6.3.

13. Transcripts of Helena Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 7.13.

14. Transcripts of Helena Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 7.16.

The Polish Arts Club demonstrated the pride Polonia had being Polish. However, the Polish Arts Club also demonstrated a shift in Polonia. The Polish Art Club was not just about remembering Polish art and demonstrating Polish talent. The Polish Art Club was also about exposing other Americans to Polish art and talent. The club showcased their talent not just as Polish artists but often as Polish Americans. They wanted to share their art and proudly put it on display.

Additionally, the subject of the art was often nostalgic for Polish-Americans who came to the art shows. They were frequent displays of landscapes of Poland and depictions of Polish history. Chrzanowski fondly remembered the many painting of the Zapokane region of Poland. She felt so strongly about them, she bought a few paintings of the landscape.[15]

Small Hobby and Social Clubs

In addition to the Polish Falcons and the Polish Arts Club, Polish immigrants joined various hobby clubs to occupy their time. There were hobby clubs that existed within the Church in Chapter Three. However, the hobby clubs in this chapter met outside the church and did not regularly use church resources. Additionally, because these clubs were unique to each individual, no one club was spoken of among interviewees.

Polish immigrants were members of a variety of clubs. The number of different clubs shows just a small sample of hobby and social clubs in Polonia. However, because they were individually discussed, not a lot of detail can be dissected from the Oral History of Chicago's

15. Transcripts of Helena Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 7.12.

Polonia Project. Additionally, like many hobby and social groups, these groups were likely very small. Therefore, other scholars were not quick to write about them nor do additional research on them. Thus, little information about these clubs is available.

John Gapinski was part of two hobby clubs. He was a member of the Polytechnic Club and the Polish Stamp Philatelic Organization.[16] He used these clubs to help strengthen his hobbies, but perhaps more importantly, he used these clubs as a means of social interaction.

The Polytechnic Club was one of these clubs. Gapinski described the Polytechnic Club as a club dedicated to Polish men. The club was very small with only twenty men at most and five at the least. Gapinski admits that what started as a club meant to help the members study together and discuss current topics of the day turned into something more. The club became more dedicated to social gatherings.[17]

Some of these social gatherings were formal. These social gatherings also allowed non-members to attend. These activities included balls and dances that the Polytechnic Club hosted.[18] Over time, even these social gatherings fell to the wayside, leaving only gatherings among members of the Polytechnic Club. These gatherings were usually very casual events. Members still discussed the latest in politics, but they also discussed the news, the latest jobs, and gossip. It became more of a club for like-minded individuals to socialize.[19]

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16. Transcripts of John Gapinski, Interviewed by L. Preble, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 28-40.

17. Transcripts of John Gapinski, Interviewed by L. Preble, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 28.

18. Transcripts of John Gapinski, Interviewed by L. Preble, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 30.

19. Transcripts of John Gapinski, Interviewed by L. Preble, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 32.

In addition to the Polytechnic Club, John Gapinski was also a member of the Polish Stamp Philatelic Organization. Gapinski was an avid stamp collector for several decades and part of the organization for just as long. The Polish Stamp Philatelic Organization was much larger than the Polytechnic Club. It is the largest hobbyist club in this subsection at over 200 members across the entire United States. Like the Polish Arts Club, the Polish Stamp Philatelic Organization was best known for its exhibits of art. Particularly, the organization displayed stamps from around the world, including rare, sought-after stamps. Gapinski recalled the organization using local venues such as community churches to host these exhibits. In addition, the Polish Stamp Philatelic Organization provided members with the latest stamp catalog to help them grow their private collections.[20]

However, despite its central focus on stamp collecting, the Polish Stamp Philatelic Organization did have a common characteristic with the Polytechnic Club. They both acted as social clubs as well. Like the Polytechnic Club, the stamp collecting organization performed social gatherings with picnics and dances. However, the club ended up dropping these aspects in favor of more members-only, casual gatherings.[21]

Sabina Logisz was also part of a social club. She described the Sports and Social Club as being very active in her community. She recalls the club having many different activities and goals. They would often have symposiums on various topics. The topics she remembered being

20. Transcripts of John Gapinski, Interviewed by L. Preble, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 37.

21. Transcripts of John Gapinski, Interviewed by L. Preble, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 38.

presented the most were countries. Each person would present a different country for the group. Logisz also recalled the club performing plays for the community.[22]

When Logisz was asked by the interviewer if the Sports and Social Club was more Polish than American, she was quick to assure the interviewer that the group was always aware they were Polish-American, but they were not a very patriotic group nor was supporting Poland their goal. In the end, like Gapinski's clubs, the Sports and Social Club was ultimately about social gatherings and spending time with like-minded individuals.[23]

Another popular pastime among Poles was singing. Polish choirs were discussed in Chapter Three within the church. However, choruses existed outside the church. Rose Pierielka was a member of the Polish Singers Alliance. Like the Polish Stamp Philatelic Organization, the Polish Singers Alliance was rather large and extended across the United States.[24] However, unlike the other clubs in this chapter, the Polish Singers Alliance both had Polishness at its center and had its activity (singing) as its primary purpose. Its primary purpose was not social gatherings. The stated goals of the Polish Singers Alliance were to preserve Polish culture and heritage and share it with others.[25]

Lastly, it's worth mention the sports individuals played outside the Church. Sports were used as a mutual activity and a way to socialize. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Three,

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22. Transcripts of Sabina Logisz, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 10.

23. Transcripts of Sabina Logisz, Interviewed by Edward H. Pietraszek, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 14.

24. Transcripts of Rose Pierielka, Interviewed by Pierielka, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 18.

25. About, Polish Singers Alliance of America, http://www.polishsingersalliance.org/about.html.

sport choice can show the Americanization of Polonia. Instead of a sport popular in Poland, like soccer, both Stanley Olek and Joseph Ardent played baseball and basketball with groups at local parks in the area.[26]

All these small hobby and social clubs can tell a lot about Polonia and the evolution it was going through in the early 20th century. Polonia was far from the small, niche individual societies needed for survival. The organizations in Chapter One and many in Chapter Two were necessary and were often organizations that offered similar things to the community. The hobby and social organizations in this chapter were often small and intimate like mutual aid associations. However, these organizations are not necessary, and their goals and purposes varied widely. Clearly, there was a need in Polonia to have so many different clubs. Many Polish people were part of several clubs.

These clubs allowed for socializing and exchanging ideas. Furthermore, it allowed Polish-Americans a creative outlet in their community. These various outlets marked a change. People started having more time and money to commit to hobbies that they did not have when they first arrived in the United States.

The neighborhoods were no longer loose communities. Instead, they were solid ethnic neighborhoods that connected with other Polish communities to create United States Polish community. This solid foundation allowed for so many hobby and social clubs to form and allowed people to join them.

26. Transcripts of Stanley Olek, Interviewed by Linor Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.8; Transcripts of Joseph Ardent, Interviewed by Anthony Nowak, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 28.

Professional Clubs

Outside of hobby clubs, Polish people also began taking part in professional organizations. These clubs were not unions. Rather, like many hobby clubs, professional clubs served to socialize and perform many typical social gatherings with individuals with the same or similar profession.

Helena Chrzanowski was probably the best example of Polish Americans in professional organizations. Chrzanowski was a journalist and writer. She became a member of the Illinois Press Association and the National Association of Press Women. Both organizations, Chrzanowski insists, did not care what members' nationality was. They cared about members being associated with the press.[27]

The Illinois Press Association started as a fraternal organization.[28] However, over time, the organization shifted into a professional organization focused on journalism. Chrzanowski stated the organization focused on dinners and award ceremonies. She most remembered the award ceremonies for journalism as well as organization sponsored speakers. The Illinois Press Association sent members to make speeches at local colleges and universities.[29]

Stanley Lizmanski was another excellent example of an interviewee who was part of several professional clubs. Lizmanksi was a banker. He became a member of the Cook County

27. Transcripts of Helena Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 36.

28. Illinois Press Association, About Us, https://www.illinoispress.org/AboutUs.aspx.

29. Transcripts of Helena Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 37.

Banker's Association, the Illinois Banker's Association, and the Polish Merchants of Avondale. Lizmanski discussed the Polish Merchants of Avondale with the most detail.

Lizmanski was quick to remember the dances and parades the Polish Merchants of Avondale sponsored. Every year, the organization hosted the Harvest Parade in October. The parade had many floats that the Polish Merchants made.[30]

The Polish Merchants of Avondale experienced a shift in their organization during the time Lizmanski was a member. To be more inclusive and shift with the community, the Polish Merchants of Avondale changed their name to the Polish-American Merchants of Avondale.[31] This change represented not only the Americanization shift in Polonia but also the growing group of second-generation Polish.

Lastly, Joseph Ardent did not discuss the groups he was part of in much detail. However, he did say he was part of two professional organizations. He was part of both the Schoolworker's Association and the Steelworker's Association. He did describe them as very small clubs with no more than ten members. Additionally, these were diverse groups, not Polish-based groups.[32]

The professional clubs can tell us various things about Polonia's evolution. First, like the variety of hobby clubs, the variety of professional organizations is significant. The professional organizations were newer organizations than others in Polonia. It is not a stretch to claim that as Polish people integrated more into society, more jobs became available to them. Factory jobs and small business owners were no longer the only occupations available to Polish-Americans.

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30. Transcripts of Stanley Lizmanski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 9.

31. Transcripts of Stanley Lizmanski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 8.

32. Transcripts of Joseph Ardent, Interviewed by Anthony Nowak, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 8-14.

Furthermore, it seems significant that Polish people have moved beyond organizations with Polish immigrant members only. Lizmansky's Polish Merchants of Avondale changed their name to the Polish-American Merchants. Both Ardent and Chrzanowski were part of professional organizations that did not care about ethnicity. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is the solid-state of Polonia in Chicago.

Polish people were free to explore ambition and hobbies outside of clubs that focused nearly solely on Polishness and keeping Poland alive. There is less of a need to define themselves as Polish to maintain large groups. Stanley Olek had said that Polish-Americans chose to join many clubs to have an advantage in numbers.[33] However, these small clubs showed that they no longer needed many large groups. Instead, many small groups were needed to fulfill the various needs of Polonia.

33. Transcripts of Stanley Olek, Interviewed by Linor Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 22.

Conclusion

This work started with za chlebem, "for bread," so it seems appropriate to come full circle and end this work with za chlebem. When Polish immigrants left Poland, they left to seek a better life for themselves, for bread. By the 1930 census, the United States became home to over 4.2 million Poles.[1] Between 1,148,649 and 1,780,151 of those Polish immigrants came over between 1899 and 1932.[2] Thanks to a rapidly developing city that offered a surplus of job opportunities for immigrants and a large amount of chain migration, Chicago became the central hub of Polish life in the United States housing more Poles than any other city in the United States. Chicago remains one of the largest Polish communities in the world.

Yet, Polonia did not just spring into existence overnight. The search for bread did not end just by coming to the United States. When immigrants got to Chicago, their search for bread continued. Polish immigrants came with very little. It was important for them to find work immediately. Their survival depended on it. Organizations were set up to help immigrants meet their needs, to help them survive and thrive in a foreign country. Organizations were set up to search for bread.

Polish organizations' role in fulfilling Polish immigrants' needs in Chicago is a core part of this work. This entire work can be boiled down to the desire to tie organizations back into the history of Chicago's Polonia. In doing so, this work desired to connect the common Polish immigrant with organizations and in turn putting them back into Chicago's Polonia's narrative. There is a connection between the organizations and the evolution they went through throughout

1. Helena Znaniecka Lopata, "Polish Immigration to the United States of America: Problems of Estimation and Parameters," *Polish Review* 21 (1976): 105.

2. Dominic Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants & Industrial Chicago: Workers on The South Side, 1880-1922,* 17.

a handful of decades and Polonia's changes and evolution. Thinking back at this work, one of the best ways to showcase the connection between Polonia's development and organizations' development was to point to the needs organizations fulfilled. To understand the needs of the community means understanding the needs of the individual.

Chapter One laid down the conditions that Polish immigrants arrived to. It was a necessity that Polish immigrants work to secure employment and housing. Unfortunately, when these needs were met, they were met with risks to people's health. Therefore, mutual aid societies formed mainly for life insurance purposes.

It was natural for mutual aid societies to transform into large fraternal benefit societies. These organizations still provided life insurance, but they also provided various social activities for Polish immigrants. The Polish National Alliance led the way forward for these clubs.

At the same time, large fraternal benefit organizations began forming, other organizations began to pop up, allowing Polish immigrants to explore other aspects of their lives such as their spiritual and social needs. Church organizations developed. Polish immigrants used the church as a community center with both secular and religious organizations using church resources.

Finally, Polonia developed in a way that allowed Polish immigrants more time and resources to focus on leisure clubs. Sports, professional, political, and other hobby organizations began meeting outside of the church. A wide range of organizations multiplied in Chicago after the stabilization of the community following WWI.

To grow, Polonia had to fulfill its needs before it could move onto fulfilling social and leisurely needs. As Polish immigrants developed more organizations, Polonia evolved to become a more stable and more tight-knit community. Polonia's people were able to focus less on necessities and more on luxuries. Organizations existed to fulfill the needs of the community,

and if they did not, they would disappear or become absorbed by the organizations that did choose to evolve with the community.

At Polonia's core and Polonia's organizations' core, Polish immigrants were making up Polonia and Polish organizations. That was why it was necessary to use the Oral Histories of Chicago Polonia project. When discussing the organization, the common people are often ignored in favor of those who were cabinet members or in higher positions such as presidents and secretaries. Yet, the common Polish immigrants, who made up the majority of the organizations, had lasting memories of the role organizations played in the lives of individuals in Polonia. These often varied from organizations' goals and organizations' self-perception.

Stepping back, it seems odd now that more scholars do not use organizations as evidence to support their work. Many organizations left behind minutes and detailed records of their activity within Polonia. The minutes and records of many of the large organizations such as the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Women's Alliance, the Polish Roman Catholic Union are all available. The Polish Museum of America holds a great deal of organization records available to researchers.

This work does not make use of minutes and organization records left behind. Yet, if minutes and organization records were used it would open new doors for research on organization history. The organization records would be a good source to compare the records of the organization versus how people remembered organizations. This would allow a better perception of the actual impact organizations had on the common members.

Yet, even without these minutes and records, this thesis was able to draw conclusions about Polonia from oral histories and organizational secondary sources. The organizations helped

to understand the evolving nature of Polonia in the early twentieth century. Polish people made communities live, breathe, and change. Organizations also live, breathe, and change.

There are two key points that scholars can take away from this work. Firstly, the Oral Histories of Chicago Polonia project holds a wealth of information that has been underutilized by academics. It draws attention to the people who lived in the community during one of the most important times of Polish-American history. Although the number of people in the oral histories is relatively small compared to the amount of Polish people who lived in Chicago, the oral histories still maintained a fairly large range of occupations and classes for a group of 140 people. The oral histories included people who were bakers, people who were steelworkers and factory workers, and people who were chemists and journalists. The group came from different sections of Poland and had different customs. Yet, they came together to create a stable community that often supported each other through organizations.

The second point that can be taken away is that organizations are important, and they need to be discussed more. Scholars do an excellent job creating works that tell a story that builds up large organizations like the Polish National Alliance. But outside of these large organizations, organizations are often only mentioned in passing. Even these large organizations are treated like they are in a bubble. Only single organizations are discussed without bearing in mind other organizations. The real impact and memory organizations had on Polonia and Polish-Americans are rarely discussed.

Despite little scholarly attention, organizations were constant. They were everywhere. Nearly every interviewee, who was an organization member, was part of more than one organization. Some, like Helena Chrzanowki, were part of more than 10 clubs.[3]

This work attempts to add Polish organizations' history back to the narrative of Chicago's Polonia. It attempted to explore what organizations meant to Polonia and what they can tell scholars about Polonia. From this work, the conclusion can be drawn that Polonia had a huge variety and number of ethnic organizations. Polish-Americans relied on organizations for not just their basic needs but for their more complex needs such as social and professional needs. Organizations were a necessity for Polonia to develop into a well-established ethnic community with a large support network making it easier to succeed in the United States.

Additionally, organizations can tell more about class and gender roles in Polonia based on separations in class and genders within organizations. The separated gender roles and class roles in the organizations mirror the roles in Polonia. The PWA showcased the evolving role of women while professional organizations showcased the competition among white and blue collar workers.

There is a need to understand organizations through Polish-Americans, not just through those in charge of organizations. How people remember organizations and the impact they had on their lives is significant in understanding what may have been significant in their lives in a time of great change.

One of the primary questions that this work sought to answer was: can these organizations tell us how and why Polonia changed and evolved in Chicago, and if so, were

3. Transcripts of Helena Chrzanowski, Interviewed by Zoe Emas, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

organizations partly responsible for changes or were they reacting to changes? This work does its best to answer that question by using the Oral Histories of Chicago's Polonia project. In the end, given all the evidence, it is appropriate to conclude that organizations are more than capable of telling historians how Polonia changed and evolved over time in Chicago. Organizations evolved to fit the needs of Polonia, and in doing so, they ended up reflecting what was important to the Polish community in Chicago from 1880 to 1930. For many of these changes happening in Polonia, it seems that it was the natural progression for the community to start as a loose ethnic community and grow into a larger, more stable, more complex community. Additionally, it seems that the Americanization (whether by acculturation or assimilation) that occurred in the community was also a natural progression of Polish immigrants living and working in the United States.

Whether or not organizations were responsible for the changes that occurred over this time frame is a much more difficult question to answer. Based on the evidence in this paper, the answer is not so black and white. The organizations may not have been responsible for the changes, but they often perpetuated them. One of the best examples of the role organizations played in the changes in Chicago's Polonia is the increasing number of Polish people who spoke English.

On one hand, Polish organizations did not appear to be the reason that immigrants started to speak English. Yes, some like the Polish National Alliance offered night classes to their members to allow a bigger chance of success in the United States.[4] However, the shift in language cannot be attributed to one cause. It was a natural progression over time. English

4. About The PNA,"PNA Polish National Alliance, accessed September 23, 2019, http://www.pna-znp.org/about.html.

classes organizations were not likely the main reason for a shift from English to Polish. As more time was spent in the United States, many Polish learned English to help survive or by absorbing it in their environment. Additionally, as children grew up in the United States, they learned English, and it often became their primary language outside the household. On the other hand, organizations likely did have some effect on Polish immigrants' desire to learn English.

To accommodate more people and maintain membership numbers and monetary assets, many organizations began shifting many of their meetings from Polish to English.[5] As public events began to shift to English, there is a chance that this helped to accelerate the process in Polonia. Organizations shifted as the community did, and sometimes they dragged people along with it.

Nearly every single one of these organizations that was discussed throughout this work no longer exists. The only ones that managed to survive time were the large organizations, and even now, those are on a decline. The Polish National Alliance, one of the largest ethnic organizations in the United States, has been steadily declining since 1970.[6] At its peak, the Polish National Alliance had as many as 336,159 members in the 1960s. Today, the PNA boasts 230,000 members.[7] The Polish National Alliance is not the only large organization to decline. The Polish Roman Catholic Union has also been declining since the 1950s. At its peak, the

5. Transcripts of Pauline Golembiewska, Interviewed by Alice P. Prus, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 10.20; and Transcripts of Caroline Kalisz, Interviewed by Mary Cygan, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records*,* 1976-1977*,* transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.1-5.4.

6. Donald Pienkos, *PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 329.

7. About The PNA,"PNA Polish National Alliance, accessed September 23, 2019, http://www.pna-znp.org/about.html.

Polish Roman Catholic Union boasted 175,000 Polish Americans.[8] Today, they only have about 50,000 members.[9]

It is tempting then to wonder why these organizations are significant if they seem to matter so little now and if many do not exist anymore. If these organizations and clubs no longer exist, then they must be fallible. Clubs and organizations are common today, and many shrug them off or think them unimportant. Yet, that does not make Polonia clubs and organizations without value. Many people take advantage of the fact that they now have information at their fingertips online and through more community and government resources. However, when Poles first arrived in the United States, organizations were often the first place that immigrants would turn to find housing, work, and other necessities.

When Stanley Olek first arrived in the United States, a branch of the Polish National Alliance, the Fauntleroy Club, was able to find him housing and later provided him much-needed activities such as baseball and basketball.[10] When Walter Kaczmarek and his family arrived in Chicago, the first thing they did was look for Polish groups that could help them settle in the country.[11] Organizations were vital for Polish immigrants' survival, and they continued to make themselves useful even as Polish-Americans outgrew them.

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8. Joseph John Parot, *Polish Catholics in Chicago, 1850-1920: A Religious History* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981.)

9. Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, "How to Join," https://www.prcua.org/how-to-join/.

10. Transcripts of Stanley Olek, Interviewed by Linor Hanson, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 1.8.

11. Transcripts of Walter Kaczmarek, Interviewed by David Taylor, Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia (Project) records, 1976-1977, transcripts, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 5.6.

When the Illinois Press Association recognized that they were no longer needed as a fraternal organization, they shifted to change and evolve as the community did.[12] When the Polish Falcons arrived in the United States, they shifted their focus from Polish homeland pride to providing activities for a community that needed more opportunities for youth hobbies and extracurriculars. Even beyond the 1930s, the Polish organizations shifted to accommodate the changes in Polonia. During WWII, organizations shifted their attention to aiding the war efforts. During the Solidarity movement of the 1980s, many organizations turned their attention to stand with Poland.

The fact that organizations shifted with the community makes them valuable resources for scholars. There are still many questions left unanswered about organizations and their role in the community. This work was only able to briefly touch upon what organizations can show scholars about gender roles and class roles in Polonia. Additionally, it was beyond the scope of this work to study past 1930, despite the wealth of opportunity there is. Dozens more organizations have yet to even be touched upon and are just waiting to tell more about Polonia. The potential to study these topics remain in organization minutes, oral histories, and other organization papers that have yet to be properly explored.

12. Illinois Press Association, About Us, https://www.illinoispress.org/AboutUs.aspx.

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