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To cite this article: Jolanta A. Drzewiecka & Thomas K. Nakayama (1998) City sites: Postmodern urban space and the communication of identity, Southern Communication Journal, 64:1, 20-31, DOI: [10.1080/10417949809373115](https://doi.org/10.1080/10417949809373115)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10417949809373115>



Published online: 01 Apr 2009.



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City Sites: Postmodern Urban Space and the Communication of Identity

Jolanta A. Drzewiecka and Thomas K. Nakayama

“The reality that I had known no longer existed. It sufficed that Mme Swann did not appear, in the same attire and at the same moment, for the whole avenue to be altered. The places we have known do not belong only to the world of space on which we map them for our own convenience. None of them was ever more than a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time; the memory of a particular image is but regret for a particular moment; and houses, roads, avenues are as fugitive, alas, as the years” (1913/1981, p. 462).

Marcel Proust

Proust’s nostalgia for a more stable, fixed environment at the front end of the 20th century has become increasingly distant as we move toward a more fragmented, mobile world at the back end of the century. The intervening years between Proust and ourselves have witnessed profound changes in the ways we think about ourselves in relation to particular locations. Tremendous changes in the international landscape have forced scholars to rethink the relationship between identities and locations. As multinational interactions and interconnections multiply and accelerate, it is no longer possible to maintain a modernist imagery of distinct cultural identities nested within a fixed configuration of culture, nation, and space. Cultures and ethnic identities are not isomorphic with particular spaces and specific places are multiply intersected with differences (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Fredric Jameson refers to this changing social life and economic order as “postmodern” (1984). In this new framework, we face a world in which transnational capitalism, labor and the global circulation of commodities have made the negotiations of identity more visible challenging the modernist longing for a whole and ‘real’ identity anchored in a clearly defined space. Thus, enormous rhetorical battles over what it means to be an “American” are at the heart of cultural discourses today, as we witness a rapidly changing U.S. cultural and physical landscape.

These changing dynamics are playing themselves out in the urban environment more than any other. The city is often the site of postmodern discussions, as the city offers more anonymity coupled with greater capital resources than rural contexts. The postmodern city, however, is not just any city: “In this city, the old order is in disarray as material economics melt into cultural capital and the aesthetics of the suburb appear to triumph over the avant-gardeism of the city centre” (Keith & Cross, 1993, p. 9). In this new urban context, the city is not measured by the dominance and prominence of its downtown; there is no center, as the capital resources are taken to the suburbs and suburban living. Indeed, it is this urban environment that offers the anonymity and mobility for performing multiple identities, as the automobile, mass transit, and

telecommuting offer new ways of encountering and communicating. Yet, the postmodern exists on the foundations of the modern; more traditional notions of identity do not simply vanish and, everyone does not have equal access to the same intensity of fluid identities. Not only are capital and mobility important aspects of shifting identities, but in the United States—a persistently racialized society—white skin offers much more mobility than other arbitrarily and powerfully constructed skin colors.

Fragmented urban space combines elements of time and place that people use to negotiate their multiple identities. In this essay, we examine how Polish immigrants in Phoenix utilize particular locations to enact aspects of their ethnic identity. We argue that particular identity formations are articulated through configurations of space and that examination of spatial configurations gives us insights into enactment of ethnic identifications and the politics of multiple identifications. The postmodern urban environment contains fragmented—and sometimes fleeting—spaces that people seek out to communicate particular aspects of their identities.

In making our claims, this essay argues that 1) ethnic identity is bounded by and constructed through structures of space, 2) traditional social scientific approaches to identity do not capture the fluidity and dynamic nature of ethnic identifications, particularly in relationship to space and 3) some urban sites heighten the multiplicities of identity. We utilize the urban space of Phoenix as an example of this type of identity negotiation, through in-depth interviews with first generation Polish immigrants and ethnographic observations in Polish cultural spaces. Theoretically, this essay contributes to the developing body of research in communication which posits that identities are fluid, multiple and ideologically constituted in communication. We frame our analysis in a poststructuralist perspective on identity and an expanded model of situational ethnicity.

Identity and communication

Intercultural communication scholars focus on cultural and ethnic identity and its relationship to communication. Until quite recently, ethnicity in intercultural communication has been fixed by categorical ascriptions based in assumed homogeneous national and/or cultural experience and membership. The predominant implicit image of space was that of unproblematic division by national borders (Moon, 1996; Ono, 1998) and rupture and disjunction in case of immigration. Acculturation and adaptation studies conceived immigration as uprooting from specific places resulting in a rupture of cultural ties and traditions to be replaced by new ones in new spaces. Successful adaptation was seen as incompatible with maintenance of ethnic identities as evidenced in creation of ethnically based communities (Boekestijn, 1988; Kim, 1979). More recently, Kim (1995) argues that 'old' and 'new' elements are integrated in the process of evolving more flexible intercultural identity. However, Hedge (1998) argues that this approach centers the individual capabilities to cope with the environment within a model of linear identity development and does not "address the politics of the in-between, which characterizes the migrant situation" (p. 36). For example, focus on successful adaptation, does not address identity choices that migrants make in the 'new' environment.

More sophisticated understanding of the politics of identity choices is possible in a more recent approach to identity centering communication as an ongoing process of identity construction. In this view identity is never a finished product, it is dynamic and fluid and constituted in interactions (Collier and Thomas, 1988; Hecht, 1993; Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau, 1993). Hecht et al. (1993) argue that identity and ethnicity are both co-created in communication which means that ethnic identity is constantly re-created, it is flexible and evolving rather than static and fixed.

Further, communication scholars pay increasing attention to ideological struggle, economic and historical contexts, difference, representation and multiplicities in iden-

tity formation (Hedge, 1998; Houston, 1992; Lee, 1998; Louw, 1998; Nakayama, 1994; Shaver, 1998; Tanno, 1994; Tanno and González, 1997). From a critical perspective, identity is always articulated through such critical predicates as race, class, gender and nationality as well as difference—what it is not (Lee, 1998). Identity is ideologically constructed as individuals are hailed as ‘others’ by particular ideological construction (Nakayama, 1994) or as they resist and exercise choice of labels occupying a privileged location of white subjects (Martin et al, 1996). This area of communication scholarship is guided by poststructuralist perspectives.

Poststructuralist theories emphasize that identity is a social formation multiply constructed through social, cultural, and political discourses (Hall, 1996, Butler, 1995). As a social formation, identity is articulated through relations between different independent elements in a unity which is always temporary and shifting (Hall, 1980). Individuals are called into social positions through the processes of ideological hailing which impose identities on them (Althusser, 1971; Hall 1985). However, individuals also choose their identities and make considerable investments in social positions they occupy (Hall, 1996, D-C Martin, 1996). We do not suggest that individuals are free agents, rather we argue that individuals are subjects of social discourses and as subjects, they invest in positions they occupy within larger structures. Ethnic identity and discourses of ethnicity provide a framework within which individuals make choices of their ethnic identifications.

Ethnic identification

Barth (1969) understood ethnic identification as a situational phenomenon, that is ethnic groups are a form of social organization maintained by ethnic boundaries which may change in different circumstances. These boundaries are created and recreated through transaction—interactions between people. While identification occurs on the basis of cultural differences, Barth stressed that there was “no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences (p. 14). In Barth’s model, shared culture results from the processes of boundary maintenance and is variable and changing rather than fixed (Jenkins, 1997). Boundaries are permeable and transactions across the boundaries help in their maintenance and persistence of ethnic groups. As Jenkins stresses, Barth saw ethnic identity as problematic and emergent in everyday interactions and situational rather than as fixed, given, and natural.

Barth has been criticized for inadvertently reifying the notion of ethnicity and ethnic group in spite of his insistence on its transactional nature (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996; Jenkins, 1997). Critics argue against essentializing and fixing ethnicity as “something that people ‘have,’ or, indeed, to which they ‘belong’ (Jenkins, 1997, p. 14). However, Jenkins argues that in spite of these criticisms, Barth’s model is very useful in understanding ethnicity and its full potential is yet to be realized. While accepting Barth’s major claims, Jenkins argues that ethnicity should be understood as “complex repertoires which people experience, use, learn and ‘do’ in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows” (p. 14). From this instrumental perspective, ethnicity can be mobilized and manipulated in different places and spaces. While Barth was more interested in the boundaries, Jenkins argues that we need to shift attention to “what goes on *within* the boundary” (p. 107), that is “what constructs ethnic identification” (p. 76). Thus, “language, non-verbals, dress, food, the structure of space” (p. 76) can give us insights into formations of ethnic identity. In this essay, we focus on how structures of space influence processes of ethnic identification. We argue that fragmentation of urban space provides opportunities for selective enactment of different identities. In the following section, we explore relationships between identity and space.

Space and identity

de Certeau (1984) provides a useful framework for understanding structures of space and its relationship to identity by distinguishing between space and place. He defines space as “composed of intersections of mobile elements” and “the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs and contractual proximities” (p. 117). Place, on the other hand, is a location, “an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability” (p. 117). “In short,” according to de Certeau, “space is a practiced place” (p. 117). Place is understood as a specific location, whereas space refers to different experiences of places. It is our presence and practices that transform places into spaces. Places are experiences in multiple ways and thus, space “is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions” (p. 117). In the process of experiencing places, identities of both individuals and spaces are constructed (Corey, 1996). Formation of identity is a spatialized process in that identities are formed as places are transformed into spaces. This process is particularly intensified in the city.

Postmodern Urban Space

While postmodernity is the cultural condition of advanced transnational capitalism, all urban geographies have not been influenced and structured by this movement to the same degree. Postmodern geographies are always constructed on the foundations of more modernist foundations. In some cities, the modern precursor has exhibited a more profound influence than in others. For example, the development of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco reflects a stronger modernist influence with their more traditional neighborhoods that are divided by social divisions. Each of these cities has an identifiable Italian district, Chinatown, as well as gay neighborhoods. The development of the gay neighborhoods, while not historically during the apex of modernism, mimics the earlier formations of community. Jackson argues that gay neighborhoods “represent a powerful symbolic statement as well as a potentially effective electoral base” (1989, p. 121). These modernist approaches to community tend to reify one aspect of an individual’s cultural identity formation.

In contrast, Los Angeles demonstrates a quite different urban development—one that is sprawling, fragmented, and fueled by advanced capitalism. Soja writes that Los Angeles:

is difficult to grasp persuasively in a temporal narrative for it generates too many conflicting images, confounding historicization, always seeming to stretch laterally instead of unfolding sequentially. At the same time, its spatiality challenges orthodox analysis and interpretation, for it seems limitless and constantly in motion, never still enough to encompass, too filled with ‘other spaces’ to be informatively described (1989, p. 222).

The complexity and formation of postmodernity in Los Angeles is peculiar to its location. As Lyotard suggests:

L. A. shows us rather what the ancient capitals lost, one after the other, in their wish, or their destiny, to be fixed permanently in one place: that a capital is not locatable, that it has no center, that in the heart of the Empire lies the belly of a white nomad, that the survey of L.A., an unsettled basin, always has to be done again and again (1983, pp. 95-96).

Here Lyotard is able to tie the particular development of Los Angeles to the dominance of ‘white’ racial constructions. In Phoenix, as well, the privilege of white skin offers a heightened postmodern social experience through increased mobility and access to cultural sites.

THE SITES OF PHOENIX

Postmodernity is not deployed in uniform ways with the same intensities across urban spaces. Indeed, such a conceptualization of postmodernity would run counter to what postmodernism emphasizes, namely fragmentation, multiplicity and hybridity. It is in this sense that we view Phoenix as an urban geography that is strongly marked by postmodernity. While the 1990 U.S. census figures report that Phoenix is the eighth largest city in the United States—while the mayor boasts that the city is the seventh largest (Pitzl, 1995, p. A1)—its relatively small downtown belies that fact, if viewed from a modernist perspective. Phoenix displays enormous suburban-like development and a de-emphasis on a centered downtown. Despite its size, little attention has been given to Phoenix from the perspective of postmodernism. On the one hand, it lacks the enormity of Los Angeles and, on the other hand, it pales in comparison to the audacity of Las Vegas.

Phoenix sprawls over hundreds of square miles of the central Arizona desert. It is a city, but as Baudrillard notes: “I speak of the American deserts and of the cities which are not cities” (1988, p. 123). Phoenix is not a typical modernist city, nor can we claim it is paradigmatic of the postmodern city as: “there is no essential postmodern city and any search for one rapidly becomes chimeric” (Keith and Cross, 1993, p. 9). Our approach is to take a postmodern perspective on Phoenix, rather than claim that this city is essentially postmodern. That is, we are not claiming that Phoenix is a postmodern city; instead, Phoenix exhibits postmodern tendencies in its development and social life that exacerbate the problems of studying identity in more traditional, modernist ways.

The location of Phoenix alone indicates its reliance on tremendous capital investment to construct reliable sources of water for the city. The need for water is one factor contributing to its relatively late development. Another important factor that spurred the growth of Phoenix was the development and availability of air conditioning. The growth of Phoenix increased dramatically in the post-World War II period with the introduction of relatively inexpensive air conditioning for the home. Thus, while the city itself was incorporated well before the twentieth-century, Phoenix can certainly be viewed as a post-World War II city. As Keith and Cross observe: “The turmoil has a logic: it is the outcome of a diversity of contingent political, economic and cultural forces which shape both the contemporary city and the society that the city hosts” (1993, p. 1). In Phoenix, these forces have driven the rise of a post-World War II city, with a fragmented social scene. The social and commercial centers are increasingly located in strip malls spread among miles and miles of housing developments.

Very little remains of the early Phoenix. So little, in fact, that those modernist tendencies to create spatially-bound communities for differing social groups has had little residual effect for many, but not all, groups. For example, the Chinatown that existed from the late 1880s to the 1930s has had little identifiable influence on the spatial locations of Chinese Americans in the Phoenix area today. The America West Arena, home to the Phoenix Suns NBA team and the Phoenix Coyotes NHL team, now sits on that former location (Bostwick, 1995). Chinese Americans live scattered throughout the city and the suburbs; there is no identifiable ‘Chinatown’ in Phoenix today. Nor is there a district for Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Irish Americans, or even gays and lesbians. Indeed, the scattered places enable more fluid and multiple identity formations as people’s spatialized experiences are more fragmented. The connections and identifications with others are not bounded by the city districts.

We are not suggesting, of course, that there is no stratification or segregation in Phoenix. On the contrary, difference continues to be played out in the urban setting, but not necessarily in the traditional modernist ways. As David Harvey observes: “The production and reproduction of power differentiations is central to the operations of

any capitalist economy" (1993, p. 21). In Phoenix, these power differentiations are played out largely in the economic distinctions made among neighborhoods and suburbs and the continual new building at the edges of the metropolitan area.

We need to be attentive to the power of difference in new ways in the postmodern social scene that is deeply entrenched in capitalism. The recent opening of a new, 20-story city hall for Phoenix was seen as a celebration of capitalism. As architecture critic and professor Reed Kroloff wrote: "This is the headquarters of a city that sees government as business—big business. And the new City Hall says quite plainly that, since government wants to play ball with the big boys, it is going to do so in their uniform" (1994, p. H1). Capitalism is more than an economic system here: it is an ideology and way of life. Indeed, it is a defining feature of cultural life. Hence, it is advanced capitalism that drives the social scene, masking the complexities of fragmented and multiple identities that survive beneath the smooth surface of a southwestern mirage. Advanced capitalism drives enormous movements of people and commodities to and from the city.

In this new social order, the need for social control of white ethnic groups is largely waning, and with it, the need—whether by dominant forces or marginal forces—for establishing segregated neighborhoods is decreasing. Yet, the de-emphasized social control of ethnicity does not mean that ethnicity loses its significance for members of various ethnic communities. In a postmodern era of fragmentation, we read this shifting emphasis to reflect the multiplicity of identities that individuals inhabit. It is no longer adequate to categorize people based upon ethnicity alone, if we are to understand the complexities of social life.

How, then, do Phoenicians navigate the complexities of postmodern urban space with multiple identities? We suggest that people negotiate cultural identities largely through spatialization of their experiences. In other words, people are not defined by where they live as much as by how and when they move through cultural spaces. In this essay, we examine Polish immigrants as a paradigmatic case. Polish immigrants in Phoenix offer an interesting entry into the discussions on postmodern urban space due to several factors. First, they bring with them the social divisions from Poland that are replayed in this new urban space. Second, their European heritage inscribes them as 'white' in Phoenix which offers them heightened mobility and social integration. Finally, they often find themselves in Phoenix due to the changing dynamics of advanced transnational capitalism, most notably the shift from a communist economy to a transitional capitalism.

Polish Immigrants in Phoenix

In order to explore Polish identity in Phoenix, we conducted observations in a variety of cultural places and interviews with 22 Polish immigrants recruited through a snowballing technique. Although the interviewees were given the option of conducting the interviews in English or Polish, most of them chose to speak Polish. Only one chose to speak in English and two others chose to use both English and Polish. Data gathering involved driving to different places in Greater Phoenix to the homes of interviewees. There are many generations of Polish immigrants in Phoenix. In this project we focus on the most recent group of immigrants who left Poland over 15 years ago after martial law was declared in Poland and came to Arizona via one of the Western European countries (e.g., Germany, Austria, Greece, Spain) where they waited for their immigration visas as political refugees and a destination assignment.

According to Martinelli (1983) Polish families started arriving into Phoenix by the 1880s. Numbers of immigrating Poles were relatively small until late 1940 when a Polish realtor began advertising Phoenix in Polish newspapers in eastern United States. Soon after that, major Polish organizations moved in including the Pulaski Club, Polish

National Alliance, Polish American Congress, and the Arizona Chapter of the Kosciuszko Foundation. Further growth of the Polish community was marked by assignment of a Polish speaking priest who held monthly Polish mass at Brophy chapel (Martinelli, 1983). Later, the Polish community rented a space in Saint Thomas Church for a weekly mass in Polish. During that time, the community organized an intensive fundraising campaign which led to the building of a Polish church including classrooms for a Polish school and a large room used for performances and community dinners and other gatherings.

Fragmented Urban Space

There is no one place, no district, or even a part of the Phoenix area where there would be more than just single, isolated Polish homes. When selecting a place to live, Poles consider the cost and proximity to their workplaces more than proximity to other Poles. Poles come into contact with each other during visits to church which is probably the only time where over 200 Poles gather in one place, to the Polish bakery, Polish deli stores, in travel offices and social visits. Sometimes, these contacts are just casual in nature. At other times, Poles visit these places to look for friends.

The church, bakery, travel offices and deli stores are specific places, yet they are experienced differently by different people. One of the most important sites is the church. The Polish church has always played a central role in the lives of Poles who always established their communities by building a church (Lopata, 1994). Until very recently, Poles in Phoenix rented space in a church belonging to a U.S. American congregation once a week for a mass, once a week for Polish classes for children, and for special occasions, like Christmas and Easter celebrations. Usually, about a hundred Poles came to the Sunday mass; on special occasions, however, such as religious holidays or a visit from the archbishop, this number grew to over 300. The church was marked as 'Polish' for a couple of hours on Sundays. At present, Poles have their own church which they were able to built thanks to vigorous fundrasing efforts. This move might be read as a modernist effort to center the community. Indeed the building of the church was a 'coming' together of an otherwise fragmented community. However, we argue that the Polish church in Phoenix is quite different than churches in more spatially bound communities. Here, the church is not surrounded by a community. Some drive as long as 50 minutes to attend the mass. Many come on a sporadic basis and do not identify themselves as members of the community. They can enact their Polish identity selectively, when they have a need or when it is convenient. The meaning of the church as the center of a well established community has been reconstructed. Indeed the community itself is rather fragmented due to class divisions and differences in acculturation.

Information about 'Polish' events can be found in Polish stores. Polish deli stores and the bakery are very important to Poles who might not care to maintain relationships with other Poles but try to secure a source of Polish bread and meat products at least for the holidays and other special occasions. These sites also offer an opportunity to buy Polish magazines, find fliers announcing events, advertisements of Polish businesses and radio programs. In a way these stores function as centers of Polish cultural life. It is interesting that they are also sites of capitalist production. In other words, the central locations for the maintenance of cultural identity are now, in advanced capitalism, private, not public. In the bakery, one can buy not only bakery products but artifacts imported from Poland, e.g., engraved wooden boxes, religious pictures, tapes with Polish music, a type of mushrooms unavailable in supermarkets, Polish magazines. Recently, the bakery started displaying art work of a local Polish artist. Next to these "Polish" artifacts, one can also find Polish translations of Daniele Steele novels as well as Russian newspapers.

One of the leading deli stores is owned by a person described in the community as 'Yugoslavian.' In the store, one can find Polish meats processed on the spot and imported Polish goods next to products from former Yugoslavia. Both the bakery and the deli are multiply intersected by different cultural experiences. These places are experienced in a variety of different ways by consumers; some perceive as an 'ethnic' giftshop, others see it as a nostalgic representation of Poland. Poles do not experience this place in similar ways either. While for some it is an essentially Polish center of the community, others move through its space quickly buying products they need troubled that it is this places that comes to present 'Poland' to others.

The bakery provides an opportunity to meet and interact with other Poles. These interactions, as observed during fieldwork, are often short and superficial. Some Poles are frequent customers and they speak Polish with the owner. Besides the owner, there are two sales people: one speaks Polish, the other one only speaks English. During interactions, customers negotiate which language to use. Detecting a Polish accent, the owner sometimes switches to Polish which often leads to a conversation about the length of stay in the U.S. and a place of origin in Poland. Other customers persist and insist on using English. Not all of the customers are Polish, as some of the most frequent customers are non-Polish U.S. American. They often know the names of the pastries in Polish.

Picnics are perhaps the most postmodern. The late summer picnic has a few organizers who take care of the site reservations, transportation of religious artifacts for the mass, and publicity. In the mountains north of Phoenix, the picnic draws Poles who wish to socialize and engage in late summer traditional Polish activities, e.g., building a fire, grilling meat, drinking vodka, singing Polish songs. Again, there is nothing in the Arizona mountains that is inherently or essentially Polish. The picnic itself is not postmodern. Rather the fact that for many participants, it is the only or one of the very few opportunities in the year to interact with other Poles turns it into a postmodern space. During the picnic, as well as during visits to other 'Polish' places, Polish immigrants enact, at the particular moment, one aspect of their identity configurations which might become insignificant at other times.

Negotiation of Identity

Poles in Phoenix are active subjects who negotiate the communication of Polish identity within a framework that allows tremendous movement and fluidity across the urban space, but these contacts are constrained in time, by the moments when Polish contact is available. Yet, the framework itself is never fixed nor stable. For example, the lines that are traveled between the Polish church and the Polish bakery are dynamic, as the bakery may move to another location, new Polish businesses may emerge, or the church itself moves. We need not view these sites as static, but as dynamic points located in place and time, serving multiple functions and never permanent.

The lines of contact and communication among Poles are very complex, ridden with conflict, and politically charged. The history of immigration, political divisions from communist times, and social class are the main factors which divide Poles at this moment in ways which are difficult to map out. Perhaps the most visible is the division between the older and the younger generation of immigrants. The conflict centers on the authority on, or expertise in, 'Polishness' and the right to represent it to others. Each group perceives its knowledge and experience as more authentic. Poles we interviewed disidentified with 'Polish' representations by the older generation. Partly in response, partly due to their desires for cultural anonymity and assimilation, they withdraw from active participation. Most of the younger Poles are not interested in activism and communal life. Rare visits to church (once a month because of the long drive) and/or special events satisfy their need for contact with other Poles. Their anonymity is

increased by the spatial structures which surround them. As one of the interviewees observed: "social interactions [here] are totally different than in Poland (...) life style here is a lot more closed, people live in isolation, everybody, especially in Arizona, is fenced in." One interviewee attempted to create a sense of community before his enthusiasm was tempered by the lack of response from a greater number of people. He described this situation in the following way:

Once a year, during the Christmas wafer ceremony [a Polish Catholic ceremony in which people break and share wafers while offering each other good wishes], or we have also a traditional Easter meeting, more than a thousand people will show up but it is only once a year. . . . Here in Phoenix people sink into American life. . . . The official gubernatorial information says that there are over 100 thousand Poles living here but when you go to the church, there are 50-60 people; if you go to any of the events, artists from Poland, etc., there are maybe 100 people, they are not interested; sometimes I asked: Why are you not coming? "Oh Victor, it is all the same, I am not interested anymore, I know Kobuszewski [a well known Polish actor] and his act, I prefer to watch Agassi playing tennis"

Some attribute the reasons for this apathy either to traumatic experiences surrounding their Solidarity times in Poland or to political pessimism from the communist times. Others claim that conflicts among different groups which disable any unity are symptomatic of remnants of old communist social relations that result in a lack of trust.

Certainly, this situation does not mean that Poles do not want to maintain their cultural identity. All of the interviewed Poles claim that being Polish is important to them; however, they sustain their Polish identity in unsystematic, irregular, and differing ways. Some of them do look for other Poles (e.g., some interviewees reported looking through the phone book for Polish last names, going to the church or the Polish school [a Saturday school for children to learn Polish] at the church in order to meet Poles) and select a few friends whom they see regularly.

Others maintain their Polish identity through contacts with Poland, e.g., visits to Poland, news from Poland, reading magazines and books from Poland and visits from their family members or friends from Poland. They perceive Poland to be more important to the maintenance of their identity than the experiences of immigration shared with other Poles. One of the interviewees noted: "I am not trying to cut myself off, but on the other side I am not trying to hold onto the community. For example, I went to the Polish church, but I did not like the type of people that go there. (. . .) I read e-mail news from Poland my father receives. For me there is a difference between Polish community here and Poland." The rejection of the hybrid Polish culture that has grown in Phoenix also reinscribes the nostalgia for a more 'authentic' Polish culture that exists and can only exist in Poland. The *mélange* of cultures in Phoenix heightens the hybridity and multiplicity of the social scene; claims of authenticity retreat in this new postmodern cultural life.

Another group claims that speaking Polish and maintaining Polish traditions in their homes (e.g., holidays, food) is sufficient and satisfactory in maintaining their Polish identity outside of Poland. Poles in these last two groups often claim that they have not been able to find friends among Poles because they do not meet people of their own social standing with whom they share a common ground. As one interviewee claimed:

people come here from different environments in Poland and there are divisions between groups; in Poland, we were in one environment and we did not know other environments because we kept within our own group. [. . .] we are burned out. Several times it seemed to us that we found someone we were looking for and after several meetings it turned out that no, it was not it.

Others have been disappointed with their previous relationships, e.g., one couple reported feeling used by newcomers whom they were trying to help. There are also those who feel in the way best summarized by one of the interviewees:

Most of them came here wanting to leave Poland behind; they have some bad situation in their past, prison, persecution, being fired from work, different situation, and they said to themselves: this is the end, this is the past, we have to start a new life, learn English, find American work, and live like Americans do, not half & half.

For most Poles living “half & half” means that their lives are fragmented between different contexts of communication with others—changing languages, interaction styles, dress, and food.

Their identities are fluid and mobile, shifting in response to changing communication contexts. Because of differing relations to Poland, Polish immigrants negotiate and communicate their Polish identities in differing ways. The absence of a Polish neighborhood or district allows them greater freedom to engage in or withdraw from Polish interactions. They are given greater space to negotiate their relationship(s) with Polish cultural identity and create new hybrid identities.

Most of our respondents claimed that they do not have time to maintain social ties often adding that they had more time in Poland where life is slower and the socialistic system placed smaller time demands on people. This conflicted nostalgia for a different Polish cultural experience is intertwined with a lost economic system as well. In the new world of transnational capitalism, Polish cultural identity must be renegotiated in the international scene. In Phoenix, that renegotiation is only one aspect of a larger identity process that is ongoing and continual.

CONCLUSION

The postmodern urban environment insists upon new formations of identity and identity functions. Within this space, it is difficult to find a fixity or stability in identity, as individuals inhabit many differing identity positions. In the case of Polish immigrants in Phoenix, their Polish ethnic identity was only one aspect of the configuration of identity positions they inhabit. Unlike the more modernist urban environment, Polish immigrants in Phoenix do not live in any particular district. In contrast, Polish immigrants in Chicago tend to live in Jackowo, the Polish district, and thus they tend to work together and socialize together. Polish identity in this more modernist setting is a central, defining feature of cultural life and cultural identity configurations. In a fragmented urban setting, ethnic identity can be enacted selectively in particular spaces.

For those in intercultural communication, these new identity formations make it difficult to make broad claims about ethnic (and other types of) identity and group characteristics. The urban space and the particular histories of immigration have tremendous influence on the ways that ethnic communities are formed and function. The communication of identity differs much more in the postmodern urban space than in the more traditional modernist city.

The sites of identity maintenance are both fleeting and private. These are significant factors in the postmodern social scene. The fleeting nature of the sites reflects their temporal and spatial fluidity. Their relevance and maintenance reflect the shifting cultural needs in the contemporary moment. The private nature of many of these cultural sites is not only an indication of the state of advanced capitalism, but it is also a reflection of the intertwined nature of cultural identity and capitalism. No longer are ‘culture’ and ethnicity relegated to museums, theaters, public functions, or the more traditional forms of ethnic and cultural enactments. Instead, capitalism caters to and profits from ethnic identities.

The outlook for Phoenix and other postmodern urban landscapes is tied to the shifting winds of transnational capitalism, global migration, and changing notions of community. As Rouse observes: "We live in a confusing world, a world of crisscrossed economies, intersecting systems of meaning, and fragmented identities. Suddenly, the comforting modern imagery of nation-states and national languages, of coherent communities and consistent subjectivities, of dominant centers and distant margins no longer seems adequate" (1991, p. 8). Indeed, these larger forces need to be taken seriously if we are to understand the complexity of the communication of identities. Our essay is a call toward that end.

We must be careful, however, that we remain attentive to the nuances and complexities of identity formation. In this study, we examined the ways that Polish immigrants negotiate the social space of Phoenix. The mobility and access to other sites is differs markedly for other groups. For example, African Americans and Latinos in Phoenix tend to live in much more segregated sections of the city. Although segregated schools no longer exist in Phoenix, the remnants of that system continue to mark the social scene. The relative 'invisibility' of Polish immigrants, i.e., they are often taken to be 'white,' offers them far greater mobility than many other groups. Keith and Cross rather directly note: "Ethnicity is acceptable, or even celebrated, in the collage of the exotic cultural pick-and-mix, while race remains a taboo vestige of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation which was, and is, anything but playful. But like all taboos, it remains ever present, even in the systematic silences and exclusions." (1993, p. 8). When we study other identity formations, it is crucial that we remain attentive to these power differentials and differing histories that influence the negotiation and communication of identity in the postmodern urban social space.

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