IN-BETWEEN IMAGES: EVERYDAY PERFORMANCE, GENERATIONAL SUCCESSION, AND THE SHAPING OF POLONIA

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Abstract

This dissertation is an interpretive ethnography and autoethnography of how my interlocutors and I experience and perform the reality of migranthood as members of Polonia, the Polish migrant diaspora. I analyze how we imagine, devise, and perform the reality of living in-between spaces, places, and times using Julie Cruikshank's lens that "life is lived like a story" and Lisa Stevenson's "image as method." I interpret lifeworld images that my interlocutors and I consider pertinent to our lives and Polonia, especially our memories and heritage, dreams of the future, and present experiences of generational succession between baby boomers and millennials. I combine self-interpretation of mystory with insights from analyzing fieldwork conducted with other Polish Canadians residing in Brant.

Drawing from theory by Gregory L. Ulmer and Norman K. Denzin, I argue that, through everyday performance, our lives are simultaneously shaped by and contribute to shaping Polonia. That is, we perform our lifeworlds in ways that are in tandem and at odds with how we imagine them, individually and collectively. These performances then have affective potential to reinforce and alter our imaginaries and those of others.

Furthermore, while there is a certain level of passing down of images through generational succession—as so-called Polonia heritage—these imagistic landscapes undergo substantial re-articulations as they succeed. As a result, I conclude that Polonia remains in the crisis stage of a Turnerian social drama as each generation seeks to shape Polonia in its image.

I resolve the above insights by arguing that life is (not) lived like a story. Through everyday performance and generational succession, we are authors of our lifestories while simultaneously influencing the lifeworlds of others. Instead, this research reveals that my interlocutors and I live in-between images.

This research was conducted in Brantford, Ontario between January 2016 and March 2017 with 14 principal interlocutors—six millennials (in addition to myself) and six baby boomers (in addition to my mother)—who self-identify as either Polish or Polish Canadian. I also conducted participant observation and interviews with members of a Polonia cultural centre in Brantford.

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Finally, I wish to thank the interlocutors who devoted their time to my research, and who opened their lives and homes to me. I hope that this research has elucidated some of the complexities of our migranthood, and that they feel solace knowing that others have similar life experiences. We bonded over questions that we have wrestled with throughout our lives, and I hope they, too, feel closer to Polonia and our shared heritage. I am proud to be able to share their stories.

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Introduction

In this dissertation, I combine insights from ethnography and autoethnography with baby boomer and millennial Polish Canadians living in Brant region about how they and I imagine and perform Polonia in the context of everyday life. I tap the imaginaries of our lifeworlds, which I understand as a series of images—i.e., "mental photographic picture[s]" in the Durkheimian sense (Pickering 12)—pertinent to how one imagines their life, including how it is, was, and could be. I then analyze how we perform said lifeworld images—i.e., doing a dramaturgical analysis of everyday life in the Denzian sense—with a focus on the forces that affect and are affected by our imaginaries (Stevenson). My principal goal is to understand how the largest generational succession in the history of Polonia is affecting the diaspora by analyzing how my interlocutors and I imagine and perform our migranthood.

The lifeworlds of migrants are especially interesting and important sites of ethnographic engagement because migrants are "living in-between" (Grønseth 1). Migrants live a life that is "liminal" or in "friction" (Turner, *The Ritual Process*; Tsing). As migrants, the images we hold and perform are perpetually moving between multiple places and times, and between our individual selves and the larger collectives to which we belong (Horvath et al.; Bhabha). Living in-between often means negotiating various affective forces that push on our lifeworld images and our everyday performances. Being Polish-born or identifying persons living in Canada, we negotiate the sociocultural realities of our native and adopted homes while simultaneously belonging to an imagined third space known as Polonia by members of the Polish Canadian diaspora (Bhabha; Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society). In this dissertation, I offer a means to understand what living in-between is like by centering my ethnographic analysis on the lifeworld images my interlocutors and I deem pertinent to our lives and to Polonia, the friction that occurs between

these lifeworld images as we perform them in everyday contexts, and how our everyday performances ultimately reinforce, change, and break our lifeworld images.

My ethnographic concern is the gap between internalized images and the processes/conditions of migranthood that influence/are influenced by them. I follow Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston and Virginie Magnat who describe these gaps as "diverse, messy, shifting, incidental, improvisational and generative intersubjective experiences, practices and processes that constitute and are constituted by people's inner and outer lives, individuality and sociability, agency and constraint" (362). This ethnography will analyze this gap by elucidating interactions with the sociocultural affective forces that influence the lives of my interlocutors, what some of my interlocutors call "the silent push."

This research centres on perceptions that cannot be easily expressed in discursive statements or cannot be expressed at all but are nevertheless deeply felt at the limits of what can be thought and fashioned. To tap this intuitive dimension of personhood, I employ theories and methods that advocate imagistic, performative, affective, and indirect understandings of expression (Pickering; Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography"; Culhane; Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*; Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*; Irving; Kazubowski-Houston; Madison; Stoller, *The Power of the Between*; and Pink).

Another focus of this research is generational succession between baby boomers and millennials. The succession between these generations, which is in the crisis phase if following a Turnerian framework, is a stage upon which a social drama about the future of Polonia is unfolding (*Schism and Continuity in an African Society*). To understand this crisis, I analyze how lifeworld images pass between generations of Polish Canadians, and how this passage crystallizes, changes, and breaks them. Generational succession fuels social crisis in Polonia as millennials

feel that we do not have power over our lives or input to influence Polonia in our image, while baby boomers feel their images are not being realized or are in danger of being lost in transition (Danico; Ghodsee). As a Polish Canadian millennial, I interpret these images from my perspective—how they succeed from the baby boomer generation to my generation—while seeking to understand their bi-directional relationship. I also reflect upon the passage of lifeworld images across generations during reflective sessions with my mother, a Polish Canadian baby boomer.

Using Julie Cruikshank's notion that "life is lived like a story" as a theoretical starting point, I argue that my interlocutors live their lives like a story but often do not follow the story they imagined for themselves. How they imagine their lives unfolding and how they ultimately perform those images usually deviate, sometimes significantly. My research extends and complicates Cruikshank's theoretical conceptualization of life lived like a story by arguing that, even as authors of our lifestories, we must negotiate various affective forces as we imagine and perform our lives in everyday contexts that influence how our lifestories unfold.

Finally, this research shares "mystory" and, so, is partly autoethnography (Ulmer). To interpret mystory is to critically analyze the patterns pertinent to my life—what I call images—particularly in seeking to understand the historicity of those patterns. Applying Denzin's work from *Interpretive Autoethnography* to this research, I turn "the traditional life story, biographical project into an interpretive autoethnographic project, into a critical, performative practice, a practice that begins with the biography of the writer and moves outward to culture, discourse, history, and ideology" (x). During the fieldwork process and after considering my experiences, I questioned and then realized that my research is not only about understanding the lives of my interlocutors but is about understanding my own life. Without realizing it then, I was seeking to resolve questions about my mixed-heritage identity, my feelings of living in-between, and my desire to find

sociocultural belonging as a Polish-born millennial living in Canada. With this realization in mind, I combine analysis of personal insights alongside those shared by my interlocutors to acknowledge my implication as both ethnographer and interlocutor.

Literature Review

Imaginative Ethnography

My research is firmly rooted in imaginative ethnography. I employ theoretical interventions that seek to open up the imagination of my interlocutors and me. Inspired by Cornelius Castoriadis, I understand imagination as a creative process wherein individuals can visualize themselves and their lives and create "forms" that are self-representations of life itself, à la Durkheim (Castoriadis 3-4; Pickering). Individuals imagine and interact with the world-at-large and, in doing so, actively shape/are shaped by this dialectic (Castoriadis). I am concerned with this imaginative dimension wherein my interlocutors create and (re-)perform images of their life and the lives of others with the goal of better understanding how we navigate this dialectic and how it ultimately influences our choices, actions, and outcomes.

I consider "imagination and creativity as practices that we all engage in every day, that shape and are shaped by social relations, politics and cultural formations that infuse lived experience" (Culhane 3). However, tapping imagination is problematic because "as you know from your own lived experiences, 'imagination' resists fixed definition" (13). This slipperiness makes the capture and analysis of our imaginaries difficult. Despite these issues, imaginative ethnography is gaining ground as more anthropologists become increasingly dissatisfied with the concept of culture and are further realizing the challenge of compartmentalizing everyday life. In response, "there has been a tendency to substitute imagination for culture, where a social imaginary is viewed as a set of meanings and understandings" (Kazubowski-Houston and Magnat

362). Imagination in the context of ethnography recognizes "the complex and ever-changing ways of life we study" (Culhane 4). Thus, I work within this unfinished realm rather than against it.

This dissertation examines and describes how my interlocutors and I understand and perform the images that comprise our lifeworlds. Lifeworlds are individuals' complex and diverse inner life comprised of personal, social, cultural and historical narratives (Irving; Grønseth; Ingold). Lifeworld narratives are primarily internalized and consist of "inner speech, random urges, unfinished thoughts, unarticulated moods, and much else besides" (Irving 22) or what Michael Taussig calls "the bodily unconscious" (*What Color is the Sacred?*). Lifeworlds are personally and socioculturally constituted based on lived and imagined narratives of individual and collective human experience (Irving; Grønseth). They stretch across temporal planes, simultaneously connecting with past, present, and future narratives (Grønseth). As scholarship on cultural mobility studies has argued, lifeworlds are perpetually influenced by and simultaneously influence the "complex 'flows' of people, goods, money, and information across endlessly shifting social [and temporal] landscapes" (Greenblatt 1). In response, my research and analytical approached is rooted in Bourdieu's practice theory. I engage dialectically with the realities of my interlocutors to recognize that an individual's habitus is unfixable as it is perpetually (re-)imagined through everyday performance (Bourdieu; Cristiano). Ethnographic analysis of migrant lifeworlds is especially important because "migrants carry a unique and vital experience of habituated and familiar life-worlds that are constituted, shaped and figured socially and culturally… while also being challenged by crossing over other life-worlds that are both similar and different" (Grønseth 2).

I consider that life "does not begin here or end there, or connect a point of origin with a final destination, but rather that it keeps on going, finding a way through the myriad of things that form, persist and break up in its currents" (Ingold 4). This research engages with a Foucauldian understanding of the "life-process" of migrants; that is, recognizing "life's capacity [to continually] overtake the destinations that are thrown up in its course" (4). I focus this research on this anthropological concern because I believe it provides rich insight into how we (re)constitute our experience.

In this research, I am specifically interested in how my interlocutors and I draw images from our imaginaries and (re-)perform them in the context of the everyday. Combining theoretical viewpoints from both Lisa Stevenson and Julie Cruikshank, I consider imaginaries as a series of images that we hold and view as pertinent to our lifeworlds. This critical understanding is derived from Stevenson's notion of "image as method" from *Life Beside Itself* wherein she argues that the images we hold are a story we tell about our lives and the lives of others. Everyday performance of our imaginaries shapes our reality and that of the greater social collective, which is an understanding I draw from Cruikshank.

I argue that people think and live through their imaginaries and that, as ethnographers, much can be understood by focusing our attention on the uncertainty, hesitation, and undecidability of those images. Stevenson posits that unpacking lifeworld images "are useful precisely because they can capture uncertainty and contradiction without having to resolve it" (10). Drawing "our anthropological attention back to imagistic rather than discursive modes of knowing allows us to be faithful to a whole range of contradictory experiences" (ibid.). Adopting this critical perspective "entails being attentive to—even opening oneself to—those moments when the facts falter and when things (and selves) become, even just slightly, unhinged" (2). My research analyzes

the images that affect/are affected by everyday performance and how this reinforces and shifts them, particularly as they traverse generational divisions. In essence, I track the movements or trajectories of the images held by both my interlocutors and me because, by unpacking our performative imagistic dimension, we may better understand the discursiveness of human life. I further discuss how I apply this method in my research in Chapter 1, which discusses the specifics of my praxis.

Performativity

This dissertation is an ethnography of everyday performance. My critical approach, as described in the works of Richard Schechner and Erving Goffman, can be best understood as applying a theatrical or dramaturgical perspective in analyzing our ordinary social life or how we present ourselves in everyday contexts. Everyday performance includes "consciously enacted conventional behaviours, as at a formal dinner party or a funeral," but also can be "loose, as when you are walking down the street in casual conversation with a friend" (Schechner 208). In sum, my critical perspective views the world as a stage with us as performers (Goffman). Directionally, I analyze both how our performances are affective, but also how various personal and social forces affect our performances, what Alberto Guevara calls the "politics of theatricality" (2). That is, I am interested in those performative aspects of everyday experience that pertain to the dialectic between "what we do to the world and what the world does to us" (Eagleton 8).

Furthermore, I focus on the performative because it is a route to access the liminal. Migrant lifeworlds resist overarching or fixed resolutions and definitions because they are moving perpetually between past, present and future, and between here and there. Migrant lives are liminal, so focusing on the performative rather than the objective may bring us closer to understand-

ing the migrant reality. My research follows the performative turn in anthropology in that it exists between traditional frames of scholarship. The performative is, instead, an organizing concept "for a wide range of behaviour" and can be considered a "postdiscipline of inclusions" or, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett puts it, "sets no limit on what can be studied in terms of medium and culture" ("Performance Studies" 43). This research is firmly within and at the peripheries of the performative turn in anthropology.

Not all knowledge that individuals and social collectives carry is documentable textually. Some knowledge is carried by and between people in non-textual archives that Diana Taylor calls "the repertoire." Criticizing the hegemony of written text as the dictator of historical archiving, Taylor describes the repertoire as cultural knowledge created and experienced through performance and the performativity of things/bodies (19-20). This embodied knowledge—conveyed through gestures, oral stories, jokes, prayers, movement, dance, song, and other performances—is a secondary source alongside textual archives. Proposing to "expand" our understanding of cultural knowledge, Taylor suggests methodological shifts "from the discursive to the performatic" in which knowledge is not reducible to an epistemological description (16). The performative can provide access to personal and sociocultural knowledge that is often ignored or goes without saying. Thus, the repertoire of embodied knowledge, which exists in relation/opposition to archival knowledge (in the form of documented 'stuff'), should also be tapped.

However, negotiating non-textual knowledge, as Taylor has argued, is problematic; it undermines the textual hegemony that has come to dominate Western colonial knowledge systems that have been traditionally vested in the notions of objectivity and impartiality. Nevertheless, ignoring this vital dimension of personhood is colonizing and is not an authentic reflection of the

messiness of real life. Thus, I employ Taylor's sentiments at every level of this research by engaging with performativity as a critical lens, a methodological approach, and an analytical mindset in understanding the imagistic dimensions of personhood. Applying a performative approach to doing research is especially important when working with a migrant diaspora that claims belonging to a community with imagined boundaries, but that has a vivid and authentic identity that its citizens embody.

The images of Polonia held and performed by my interlocutors are highly individualistic. In response, I employ Lila Abu-Lughod's notion of "ethnographies of the particular," wherein she offers a counter to the usual othering effect of the concept of culture. Abu-Lughod argues that most writing presents the concept of culture as though it is a static, unchanging force that works in an affective capacity on individuals or collectives. This static understanding does not consider the realities of sociocultural change, everyday experiences, and individual performances. As a counter, she argues that we embody and perform culture and that it means different things to different people. As such, no single definition of culture can be applied broadly across individuals. As ethnographers, we must be aware of the individual situations of our research interlocutors by striving to understand their particular positions and that their performance of culture will be individualistic and, thus, unique to them (Abu-Lughod). I address the concerns raised by Abu-Lughod by focusing on the everyday individual lives of my research interlocutors to understand their performances of everyday life as a meaning-making practice. Rather than working from the sociocultural to the individual, I work from the individual perspective of everyday life and the realities of in-betweenness inherent to migrants (Hamera; Alcedo).

Migration and the Diasporic Imaginary

Current migration studies literature primarily focuses on external examinations of migrant lifeworlds. Most scholars consider migrant lifeworlds as constructed by outside affective forces—from 'there to here' or from the outside world to the individual—thus, most scholarship is focused on how these forces create and manage the migrant experience. Following recent scholarly explorations in migration studies, we now understand that migrant life is liquid and that migrants do not simply take on the lifestyles and realities of their adopted countries or that they remain frozen in the memory of their homes but that they remain in a state of performance through perpetual (re-)engagement with the homes they remember, the lives they currently lead, and their expectations of the future (Grønseth; Burrell; Ziemer and Roberts; Quayson and Daswani; Drzewiecka; Bygnes and Bivand Erdal). I incorporate a wide range of scholarship on migration but primarily focus on those arguments that highlight the liminal reality of the migrant condition.

This ethnographic research was conducted with interlocutors who identify as part of the Polish Canadian migrant diaspora. I follow the understanding that "diaspora, of whatever character, must not be perceived as a discrete entity but rather as being formed out of a series of contradictory convergences of peoples, ideas, and even cultural orientations" (Quayson and Daswani 4). Diaspora is a slippery term that requires specificity in the context in which we use it. In the context of my research, I understand diaspora as the quintessential migrant reality that we can best understand as a nation—as drawn in the imagination of its citizens—that exists between past, present and future.

Specifically, I embrace the views of Benedict Anderson wherein he defines a nation as "an imagined political community" that is "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (6, 7).

Like Anderson, I believe that "[c]ommunities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (6). Because "people who identify themselves as a part of a diaspora are creating an 'imaginary'—a landscape of dream and fantasy that answers to their desires" (Fludernik xi). Therefore, it is vitally important to understand *how* a nation is imagined by its citizens in addition to *what* is imagined.

Diaspora has become a catch-all term used to characterize and understand the elevated levels of human movement and migration in a postmodern, cosmopolitan reality (Irving and Schiller 5). Traditionally reserved to describe individuals that forcibly migrated, either because of social, cultural, political or environmental pressures, "diaspora is now increasingly used to describe a majority condition" in a globalized reality (Baronian et al. 9). Some migration studies scholars now argue that "[d]iasporic forms flourish and ethnicity is replaced by hybridity… or a 'third space' only known to diasporic people" (Ziemer and Roberts 6). Migration scholars now consider diaspora as "composed of ever-changing representations which provide an imaginary coherence for a net of flexible identities" or that diasporic representation is not fixed but is dynamic and irresolute (6). As such, I focus on individual lifeworlds to understand and conceptualize the slippery nature of diaspora in our shifting global reality.

The Polish Canadian migrant diaspora is an imagined nation which is (per)formed by its citizens and understood at both individual and collective levels. In this research and my everyday life, I refer to this imagined nation as "Polonia" because it is the colloquial term used by Polish-born individuals living outside of Poland to describe and identify with their diaspora. Although there exist large pockets of Polish migrants in the West that are geographically and sociocultural separated and engage in Polonia in unique ways (e.g., Chicago, Toronto, London), they still imagine themselves as belonging to a shared post-Poland identity. The statement that members (i.e.,

citizens) "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" is especially true for a massively displaced people that have been migrating in waves for nearly a century (Anderson 6).

My research examines the lifeworlds of Polish Canadian migrants and their experience between sociocultural borders to understand better the disparity of the diasporic and migrant experience (Baronian et al.; Irving and Schiller). I employ cosmopolitanism and transnationalism as necessary theoretical viewpoints in understanding the diasporic condition to be cognizant of the perpetual movements migrants experience between past, present and future, between here and there (their country of origin and their adopted homes), both physically and figuratively. My perspective is conscious of the "clash of cultures and nationalities within one's own life… the 'internalized other'" (Ziemer and Roberts 3). Moreover, a lifeworld is "not a fixed site, but is continually being generated, tested and reworked through social interaction and works of the imagination" (Irving and Schiller 20). As I see it, ethnography about migrants may provide better theoretical language and methodological approaches to engage with the messiness that usually results when trying to understand contemporary life in everyday contexts, particularly from the individual perspective. Migrant life is inherently in-between, and so analyzing the lives of migrants can tell us much about the present human condition as "[o]ur contemporary world is characterized by an increasing degree of movement that highlights how societies and cultural units are never separate but overlapping, rapidly changing and engaged in repeated processes of fission and fusion" (Grønseth 1).

Many Polish Canadians remain connected to life in Poland, such as through relatives and friends who did not migrate alongside them or regular return trips. Proposed by Kathy Burrell as "small-scale transnationalism," these connections are formed, maintained, strengthened, and

thinned over lifetimes (Burrell). She incorporates past views of transnationalism—which focus on the multi-sitedness of immigrants (Faist et al.)—as "on-going, two-way contact that is so ingrained in everyday life that it is not deemed as important to discuss as the migration itself" (Burrell 327). Furthermore, she recognizes that "not all transnational activity is necessarily extensive, regular or inclusive" and, instead, it "exists in a variety of forms and intensities" (324). Burrell might describe these "glocal" exchanges as central to everyday migrant performances. I consider these exchanges as primary forces through which Polish Canadians realize, experience, and perform their sociocultural belonging. We can best understand the lives of Polish Canadian migrants as permanently liminal (Clopot). Because of the shifting and evolving nature of the liminal lives of my interlocutors and me, it is imperative to offer a longue durée perspective and combine different scales of analysis when writing about Polish migration and diaspora (Kurti and Skalnik). For this reason, I have chosen long and slow methodological approaches to ethnography, which I elucidate further in Chapter 1.

Throughout much of this research, my interlocutors and I discuss matters of Polonia culture. Culture is a messy term that raises "questions of freedom and determinism, agency and endurance, change and identity, the given and the created" (Eagleton 8). I view culture as "a storehouse of essentially human or essentially national values" and also "a newer understanding of culture as the ordinary social, historical world of sense, of 'symbolic' or meaning-bearing activity in all its forms" (Mulhern xiii). I begin my understanding of culture from Clifford Geertz's *Interpretation of Culture* wherein he defines culture as a "symbolic system" or "webs of significance" comprised of deeply interconnected "historically transmitted pattern[s] of meanings embodied in symbols" that demands us to employ interpretation "in search of meaning" (17, 89, 5). I also draw from *The Location of Culture* and Homi K. Bhabha's understanding of culture as a

space that is "in-between," and that resists fixed definitions beyond those markers which articulate cultural difference (e.g., race, class, gender, generation, geopolitical locale, etc.) (1). Culture is a "something" that begins its "presencing" from a boundary that is only drawn after it has already moved (5). Thus, we recognize culture because of its very performance. For citizens of Polonia, cultural meaning is both reciprocated and (re)created by individuals and through the performative connection between individuals and collectives. Polonia culture and its system of meaning and symbol may be challenging to extrapolate and exemplify. However, Polonia culture is wholly tangible in that Polish Canadians identify with and shape its boundaries.

This research engages the affective economy of diaspora wherein material objects, sociocultural landscapes, and rituals/traditions interact with everyday life and shape the migrant experience (Quayson and Daswani 2). Not easily defined, we can best understand affect as the social, cultural, and political forces we involuntarily experience that collectively produce what Kenneth Little might describe as "an affective atmosphere"(Wetherell 2; Little 25). For anthropologists and ethnographers in cognate disciplines, "affect now means something like a force or active relation" that is "in excess of consciousness" (Wetherell 2; Clough and Halley 2). My research seeks to unpack the affective "contact zone" that is best described by Kathleen Stewart as a space where the various disparate forces and circulations of sociocultural power make contact with the everyday (*Ordinary Affects* 6). This zone is "abstract and concrete" (6) or, as Margaret Wetherell puts it, "comes in and out of focus" (12). This research focuses on how my interlocutors and I interact with, negotiate, and shape the affective economy of diaspora and its influence on our lifeworlds.

It is also essential to understand what is meant by multiculturalism, especially as it pertains to Polonia in Canada. After three major waves of Polish migration to the West since the beginning of the last century, Polonia in Canada continues to transform radically. Polish Canadians can be considered multicultural because of their experiences and performances of multiple nations. However, I wish to further this understanding by proposing that there exists multiculturalism within Polonia itself, particularly between first or 1.5-generation and later-generation migrants and also between the various migratory waves. Like other migrants, Polish Canadians trepidate about what constitutes the diaspora—particularly where the boundaries between self and other transgress—because their inherent multiculturalism "is complicated by the various sets of connections people have to often multiple notions of 'place' and 'home'" (Duffy 679). The diasporic imaginary is different for all members of a diaspora; that is, "[n]obody has the same dream entirely; and nobody's diaspora therefore looks wholly like their neighbour's" (Fludernik xi).

Generational Succession

My analysis focuses on two recent and historically significant generational cohorts: millennials and their baby boomer parents. Although the concept of a "generation" is contested—including when the various generations begin and end, who is included or excluded within a generation, and whether generations are useful compartments within which to associate individuals (Mannheim; Kuljić)—it is essential to respect these generational divisions in the context of this research as it represents social structure according to my interlocutors. My interlocutors frequently spoke and referred to themselves and others in generational terms. This generationalisation is especially true for those part of the most recent third wave of migration from Poland to the West that coincided with the fall of communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most third

wave migrants draw a hard line between life during and life after communist Poland, which mirrors the division between the baby boomer and millennial generational cohorts. Using generational terms helps to keep orderly the distinctions between these groups and, generally, the interlocutors in this ethnography self-identify as belonging to these generations and realize the considerable differences between each.

Literature on migration primarily focuses on first-generation migrants and, to a far lesser extent, their children (Danico). There are other even less explored cohorts of migrants, such as the 1.5-generation who migrated during their later formative years (Danico). There is also too little interest in understanding succession from one generation of migrants to the next (Lansberg). Significant change and incompatibility occur as the baby boomer generation ages—once representing the majority of the global population—and millennials become Polonia's torchbearers or sociocultural stewards (Bengtson; Lansberg; Walia). At the same time, millennials feel they lack the space to create and maintain their own imaginings of Polonia. Instead, they feel pressure from their parents to focus on and live within the sociocultural reality carved out by fore generations (Green). I extend the literature on migration studies by focusing on a social drama that some scholars call the "crisis of succession" between the generations implicated in this ethnography (Turner, *Schism and Continuity*).

I consider my millennial interlocutors, and me, as belonging to the 1.5-generation. This liminal generation comprises individuals who characterize their self-understanding as being influenced by first- and second-generation conceptualizations of migranthood (Danico; Suleiman). In response, I include scholarship which critiques the rigidity of categories such as diaspora, generation, and nation, or other suggestions of sociocultural essentialism (Danico; Ziemer and Roberts; Burawoy and Verdery). I follow research that aims to open up the complexities of devising

and performing identity when individuals live between possibilities (Drzewiecka). This research is centred on the 1.5-generation because it is the view from which I situate my perspective as a Polish-born, Polonia-raised Canadian, but also because I believe this liminal reality is especially telling of everyday migrant experience.

This ethnography is situated at intersections between migrant generations (i.e., baby boomer and millennial; first-, second-, and 1.5-generation) and between nations (i.e., Poland, Canada, and Polonia in Canada) because I believe that all migrants occupy and perform their identities along a spectrum that moves back and forth, between a range of dichotomies: here and there, past and future, local and global (Grønseth; Edmunds and Turner). To potentially understand these turbulences during the present generational transition, this ethnography is situated both within each of these generations and also within the gap between these generations. By unpacking some of the movements around and within this gap, this research aims to elucidate the liminality and fluidity of migrant life and the subsequent turbulence occurring from the crisis of generational succession (Turner, *Schism and Continuity*).

Research Questions

Although many questions have arisen because of undertaking this ethnography and, to varying degrees, I unpack throughout this dissertation, I ask four (4) primary questions:

1. **How can interpreting the lifeworld images of migrants unpack the complexities of life?**

   Subsequent questions include: What images affect and are affected by migrant life, and how? How might a living in-between places, spaces, and times offer insight into everyday life? How does life unfold in ways that are both the same and different from the ways one imagines?

2. **How do the lifestories of Polish Canadian migrants unfold in ways they are both imagined and not?**

   Subsequent questions include: How do the baby boomer and millennial generations of Polish Canadians experience, (re)negotiate and shape the disparate sociocultural processes and conditions or images that have influenced and continue to influence their lifeworlds in unique ways? To what degree do Polish Canadians identify with the sociocultural realities that defined their lives in their country of origin, and are now defining their lives in their adopted countries? How do they construct, perform, maintain, modify and thin their imaginaries over their lifetimes? How do they identify themselves and wish to be identified? What/where do they consider "home"?

3. **How is generational succession influencing and influenced by everyday life in Polonia?**

   Subsequent questions include: What do Polish Canadians think about the (crisis of) generational succession presently occurring in Polonia? What does it tell us about generational succession, particularly in terms of the performance and experience of lifeworld imaginaries? (How) are those processes and conditions constituted and transformed between generations? How is the transition between generations of Polish Canadians happening in Polonia in Canada and especially at cultural places such as the Polish Hall in Brantford?

4. **How does the analysis of other lifeworlds relate to realizing mystory?**

   Subsequent questions include: (How) does mystory influence other lifeworlds, and vice versa? (How) does realizing mystory relate to finding belonging? When I tell mystory, whose story am I telling?

Notes

Fieldwork was conducted primarily in English, particularly with members of the millennial generation and some baby boomers who preferred to speak English. However, participant observation at the Hall and interviews with baby boomers were conducted primarily in Polish. In those circumstances, I have translated from Polish to English in the most authentic way possible. However, when the nuances of the Polish language cannot be translated precisely or when my primarily English-speaking interlocutors decided to express themselves in Polish, I offer inline translations that attempt to capture their sentiments best. I have noted which of my interlocutors preferred to speak in Polish and, thus, which responses have been translated by using footnotes in their biographies in Chapter 2. Translations that are included inline throughout the analysis chapters indicate that an English-speaking interlocutor decided to use a Polish expression or word(s).

The use of tense is vital to the understanding of this text. Past tense is used to document what happened in the field in the past and is usually presented as dialogue between my interlocutors and me. The present tense is used as I subsequently analyze my fieldwork in the present. I combine the use of past tense and present tense to create temporal continuity in this work as it is not, typically, a faithful presentation of the order in which things happened but, instead, is a representation of my engagements and the subsequent analysis of those engagements, which co-occurred throughout my fieldwork. I feel it is vital to make these temporal distinctions clear as it highlights the performativity of fieldwork by stressing "the dynamic act of doing," which "can effectively convey the unfolding of a performance" during ethnographic research (Kazubowski-Houston, *Staging Strife* 20). In Chapters 3 to 5, some analysis is alongside my interlocutors' responses, but most is included inline as I wish to represent my analysis as it organically surfaced

during fieldwork. This analysis usually does not follow my fieldwork temporally but is, instead, structured thematically following the threads that I discovered as I transcribed interviews following culmination of fieldwork.

Furthermore, I also hope to highlight the shifting nature of migrant identity in that a considerable amount of time has passed between when this fieldwork took place and when this writing was completed and, as such, I believe that many of my interlocutors can and will change their minds. At the same time, I am aware of the danger in employing past tense to (re-)materialize the colonial legacy of ethnography that treated its research subjects as "others" (Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography"). By mixing past tense and present tense, I am writing in a way that means to subvert this colonizing tactic by drawing performativity to the surface. I intend to be clear with the reader of the performative reality of fieldwork, and to also emphasize this in my subsequent analysis.

Audience

This dissertation is relevant to scholars working at the intersections of performance studies, migration studies, anthropology, and neighbouring disciplines. However, I also wish for this work to be accessible to the non-academic reader, specifically the Polish Canadian migrant community I worked with. Not only are they the focus of my research outcomes, but, as a researcher, I have always favoured knowledge that is accessible. I hope this research combines the best of both academic and non-academic modes of writing, one that is theoretically and methodologically rigorous yet presents knowledge in a way many readers can engage with, understand, and utilize.

The individuals and communities involved in this dissertation engaged with me and my research for various reasons. For most, it was an opportunity to "tell their story" and have it documented for others and future generations, as many of my interlocutors expressed. Like me, perhaps, they see this dissertation as an opportunity to leave their mark and potentially immortalize their traces in this world. My interlocutors already do this in many ways: through their involvement in their communities (be it Polonia or otherwise), their families and friends, and their everyday engagements. This project merely offers them another space to reflect on their lives and, potentially, leave behind a (re-)performance of themselves.

Part of this research is inspired by a feeling that I owe something to my parents and their generational cohort. Not only is it because I want them to know that I did not forget my heritage and take great pride in being of Polish descent, but I want them to see that their migration was not in vain. The stories of hardship my parents' generation tend to tell need not leave them with a heavy heart. In different ways, the guilt felt and perpetuated by my interlocutors and me is a principal motivator of this work. Although many will consider guilt a primarily negative emotion, I have come to harness guilt as a motivating force that has guided me to engage in this research, reconnect with my roots, and better understand mystory and my place in the world. As such, I hope that other Polish Canadian migrants grappling with guilt will read this ethnography and realize that the guilt they deeply feel can be a positive force in their lives. Rather than holding back their dreams for the future, it can bolster them and help them realize a better life for themselves and their children.

I hope this ethnography can offer some wisdom to others that may relate to our experiences. I know many people, including myself, that have always felt a longing for a home they remember alongside a pang of guilt for leaving it behind while simultaneously longing to belong in

their new home and yet experiencing the guilt of not feeling entirely at home in their adopted country. These feelings of living in-between are challenging and can cause significant distress. I hope that, somewhere in these words, other migrants may relate to my experiences and find solace in their lives. I merely wish to have my non-academic readers consider that relational engagement can help an individual better understand themselves and, in the process, better understand the guilt and longing of the migrant experience.

Finally, this dissertation is an autoethnography or an interpretive self-reflection of my life. As a millennial born in Poland and now residing in Canada, I have always felt in-between two homes, yet never belonged to either. This reality has always left me feeling anxious and misunderstood in Canada and Poland because I feel neither entirely Canadian nor entirely Polish. Although the bulk of this ethnography is devoted to my interlocutors, devoting some of this text to myself has, ultimately, dictated not only the structure of this ethnography but also its presentation. My desire to do ethnography with other Polish Canadians like me was not born out of a desire to understand myself better. When I began this research, I was still determining what motivated me to do ethnography in the community I consider home. Nevertheless, upon starting this work, I often did a comparative analysis between my interlocutors and myself. In the end, I found that my research about the lifestories of my interlocutors also helped me to understand my experiences as a migrant better and, thus, myself. There were many moments where I found myself structuring research questions and meetings around questions of personal identity. This ethnography is a reflective journey that has offered me space to understand better who I am and where I fit in.

Chapter Overview

In the final few paragraphs of this introduction, I offer a chapter summary to help guide the reader throughout this text:

In Chapter 1, *Punctums in Mystory*, I combine autobiography of my life with a literature review of methodological scholarship that I find pertinent to this research and its praxis. I use this chapter as a space to explain my personal and methodological motivations and biases. I begin with scholarship outlining the praxis I employ in undertaking this research, specifically how I employ "image as method" for lifeworld interpretation. Also, I describe how I employ interpretive interviews and deep hanging out as practical methods for structuring my interview sessions and participant observation. I then discuss how I apply interpretation in my subsequent ethnographic analysis.

Moving onto the second section of the methodological review, I provide an overview of recent work in weak and slow methods of doing ethnography. I explain what I understand to be weak approaches to ethnographic research and how they are helpful in undertaking an ethnography of the particular. I also briefly describe my parataxical approach to weaving theory and methods through one another. Next, I discuss imagination and its role in my ethnographic analysis, or how I tap imagination to source ethnographic insights. Finally, I discuss the benefits of doing slow ethnography that is conducted slowly over long periods to surface rich ethnographic details.

In Chapter 2, *(Re)Connections*, I offer an ethnographic description of the fieldsite, including an overview of the Polish Canadian migrant diaspora, and a brief history of Polonia in Brantford (and Canada) and the cultural centre at which I was engaged (known to my interlocutors and myself as the Hall). I also further detail my reasons for researching in my home community. In

this chapter's second and third sections, I detail my interlocutors by including a biography for each. Here, I also define what I mean by baby boomer and millennial generational cohorts in the specific context of my research by explaining how I settled on these contested labels. Finally, I describe how I engaged my fieldsite and built rapport with my interlocutors by following my journey from snowballing to becoming an active member of the Hall. I also describe, in detail, some "failed" projects and engagements that did not turn out as expected. In particular, I document the failure of my original methodology, in which I sought to co-develop of "memory box" of items pertinent to my interlocutors, which most of my interlocutors were not interested in doing. Because these failures guided my fieldwork and subsequent analysis, I wish to elucidate in detail those moments wherein missteps changed the course of this research. This last section also functions as an arrival scene describing my entrance into a fieldsite or how I "came home."

In Chapter 3, *Migrant Life*, I discuss details pertinent to the migrant condition of living in-between and the reality of life in Polonia in-between a plurality of worldviews that often oppose one another. Based on the personal experiences of my interlocutors and me, I explain to the reader what it means to live a life in-between. I begin by explaining what my interlocutors believe it means to "be Polish" or "be Canadian," followed by a section on how this influences belonging to Polonia. Next, I describe some of the more pertinent memories my interlocutors hold in personal and collective contexts relating to Polonia and my interlocutors' migration experiences. Finally, I end with a description of guilt and how it operates as a principal force that guides the past, present, and future in the lives of my interlocutors. This section explicates the tumultuous reality of belonging to Polonia and how the tightly defined and often exclusionary nature of this community means that individual lifeworlds are heavily affected by Polish Canadian heritage.

In Chapters 4 and 5, *Imagistic Landscapes* and *Life is (Not) Lived Like a Story*, I engage in the heart of my ethnographic analysis over two chapters that weave together threads of analysis and my reflection on fieldwork experiences. I am interested in understanding how my interlocutors define their imaginaries, how they engage and are engaged by those imaginaries, and how they perform those imaginaries in unexpected and contradictory ways in the past and the present. My interlocutors hold certain imaginaries, which are potent motivating factors for emigrating from Poland and how they wish to perform their lives in Canada. However, their lives in the neoliberal reality of the West are different from what they hoped and imagined them to be, so they feel their dreams remain unrealized. Instead, they seek alternative ways to perform their imaginaries to actualize their dreams.

Chapter 4 focuses on the images that my interlocutors consider as comprising their past and their dreams for the future. I focus on the past as they consider it in the present and the dreams that guide their lives into the future. I also define the (new) spaces of performativity as the landscapes upon which Polish Canadians perform their lifeworlds. I consider these landscapes in an imaginative sense in that most do not exist physically but are, nonetheless, tangible to my interlocutors in the sense that they have a tangible impact on their lives. Some landscapes I analyze include personal/communal legacies and heritage such as language, food, and family, as well as unfolding spaces such as new communal connections and the need for the evolution of the definition of Polonia. I end this chapter by analyzing the dreams of my interlocutors and the shared Polish Canadian dream by explaining what my interlocutors and I consider a successful life and how we strive to achieve it.

Chapter 5 focuses on the future as my interlocutors describe it in the present. First, I describe what I consider broken images, or how my interlocutors and I believe that many of our

dreams have not been realized the way we imagined them individually and collectively. Then, I unpack the (crisis of) generational succession occurring between baby boomer and millennial generations, specifically concerning Polonia in Canada, and how it is and is not being realized how my interlocutors have intended and what this means for the future of Polonia. Finally, I end with a section that discusses how some of us are coming to terms with broken images and the crisis of generational succession by realizing that, as authors of our lifestories, we are free to change the narrative to which we have so tightly bound ourselves.

In the concluding chapter, *(Per)Forming Polonia*, I draw the considerations raised in this ethnography to a close and offer future scholars doing similar work a place from which to continue. Through discussion and reflection, I weave together the various threads that come to the surface of this research into a more coherent understanding that answers the research questions I posed at the outset of this dissertation.

Chapter One: Punctums in Mystory

This first chapter outlines the personal and scholarly influences that motivate and structure my research. First, I reveal mystory—a term posited by Gregory L. Ulmer and further developed by Norman K. Denzin, which is best understood as autobiography through which we make sense of the world—that begins to elucidate why I have chosen to do research with Polish Canadian migrants, the transition between baby boomer and millennial generations and its implications on Polonia, and the migrant reality of permanent liminality or what I call living in-between (Clopot; Grønseth). I trace my roots and explain, in some detail, my life during childhood and how this influenced my decisions in adulthood. I also explore how that upbringing created some bias in how I view the world personally and the questions I ask academically.

In the second section, I outline my methodology, which employs more reflexive forms of ethnographic research. The crux of my methodology is interpreting the images that my interlocutors find pertinent to how they define and perform their lives or what Lisa Stevenson defines as "image as method" in fieldwork praxis. By focusing on the imagistic, my methodology aims to be reflexive. It gives power over my research to my interlocutors in that they control what images we discuss and how they are to be interpreted. We undertook that co-investigation during interpretive interviews and "deep hanging out," wherein I asked probing questions to encourage my interlocutors to take the lead in interpreting their imaginaries (Gusterson; Geertz, "Deep Hanging Out").

Further, I discuss how I employ weak theory and slow ethnography to produce detailed insights into those discursive aspects of human life that are difficult to encapsulate. The lives of my interlocutors are inherently liminal, so I did not attempt to subvert this liminality in how I conducted and interpreted my fieldwork. Rather than striving to "get right" the representation of

the images my interlocutors shared with me, I focus on the movement or performance of those images or the "textures and rhythms of forms of living" (Stewart, "Weak Theory in an Unfinished World" 71). I interpret the findings of my fieldwork in their performative context and weave together a crab-like narrative that works athwart theory (Irving; Helmreich).

Background

Session with My Mother: Feeling Longing

In the time leading up to the start of my dissertation, I longed to engage in Polonia after having primarily ignored this aspect of my life for many years. Over one of our usual dinners together, I mentioned to my mother that I had been feeling "lost" for a few months and was not sure precisely what I needed to feel focused once again. She told me I was "coming back to myself," just as she had done around my age and when she finished graduate school. Asking her to elaborate, she explained that as a child my life was generally defined for me. Between school, work, and social responsibilities, I had been following an external structure, and there was little room or need to question myself or my actions. However, now I had time to consider my place as I began to chart my path and my future on my own. This led me to a time of deep introspection and anxiety as I worked to imagine the kind of future I wanted to realize. Perhaps I wished to find some answers through this research.

Mystory

I live a life of liminality. I am a Polish-born individual who identifies strongly with my country of origin. I also have lived most of my life in my adopted country of Canada, where I so greatly desire to fit in. I belong neither here nor there, now or then, and simultaneously to all these spaces and times (Turner, *The Ritual Process*). This dissertation explores the tension and

experience of trying to unravel the knots of living in-between and the subsequent questions this has raised for nearly the entirety of my life.

This research feels motivated beyond common scholarly interest. Instead, it is profoundly and inherently personal to me. Not only because I am doing research in the place I consider home but also because I am reflecting on my life as I conduct this research with others that have life experiences similar to my own. As I age, I have been thinking more and more about and around the themes I present in this research. Recently, I have found myself consumed with understanding mystory and my migranthood, particularly as I look forward to the future by reflecting on the past and how I am (not) living mystory as I imagined it to be.

Mystory begins with a series of moments that define a crisis or a turning point in my life (Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*). When I was still very small, only three years old, my parents, along with my father's brother and his family, decided to emigrate out of Poland. In 1989, our two families moved to Windsor, Ontario and rented two townhouses in a Polish migrant landing community known as Polonia Park to begin our lives anew. According to my mother, my father's decision to migrate to Canada came rather hastily. She would later tell me that she was not particularly enthusiastic about migrating, already having a good job as a lawyer in Poland with excellent prospects for career growth. However, in the late 1980s, Poland was experiencing monumental sociocultural and sociopolitical shifts with the crumbling of communism due to national labour protests and a troubled economy. Unsure about life in the coming years and decades, my mother agreed to migrate with her husband and children out of communist Poland to Canada, lured by the tales of fortune and opportunity in the West.

My parents had prepared very little: they did not know much English; they had not saved much money except for what they made from selling their furniture and other non-essential possessions; and they did not have support in Canada except for a priest from the Roman Catholic church in Windsor who had acted as our family's sponsor. My parents had roughly envisioned the first months/years of their life in Canada, although they were mostly unsure how life would unfold and questioned their decisions regularly. My parents decided that my father would work to support the family. Meanwhile, my mother would work part-time but primarily focused on upgrading her education at the University of Windsor to meet Canadian requirements so that she could secure a more lucrative job in the future. Before we left Poland, my father had already arranged some employment in the form of manual labour tending to turkeys on a farm in Amherstburg, near our home in Windsor. My mother studied economics, a discipline she had a natural talent for and one that allowed her to transfer some academic credits from law school in Poland. Too young to understand any of this, I lived my life blissfully ignorant and looked up to my parents as we explored this brave new world, together.

A particular memory sticks out above all others during one of my first days in the country. On my first day of school, I was sent to class with a small paper placard that had inscribed on it my name and the words "I don't speak English" just below. I was instructed to hold up the sign if I had trouble communicating. Although I could say some key phrases that my mother had taught me in preparation, the sign was meant to help me if I got confused or felt nervous. Those first five minutes when I entered the class are etched in my memory: I remember being surrounded by children, many of whom were eager to look at the strange new student from Poland and some of whom were uncomfortable getting too close. I did not say anything, and none of the

other children greeted me; instead, I tucked my head and raised my placard before the teacher instructed us to find our seats.

However, that first day at school was not entirely harrowing, as I remember coming home from school that day feeling relatively excited and enthusiastic. We learned about the different parts that make up a flowering plant, and I remember running off the bus to share with my mother some new words I had learned in English—roots, stem, and seeds. Over the next few weeks, I learned how to speak considerably more English, being encouraged by my parents to try to "fit in" with the children at school.

This is how I remember my first years in Canada: I was treated like an alien and felt that it was expected of me to adopt the language and customs of Canada, as though I was to forget from where I came. At the same time, my parents expected us to speak Polish at home and engage in Polish heritage activities outside of school, such as attending the near-monthly events at the local Polonia cultural centre or celebrating Polish holidays my parents considered important. My father had decided that it was through these traditions and learning the Polish language that we would retain our connections to our Polish heritage.

As a child, I spent most summers visiting family and friends in Poland for up to eight weeks at a time. For this reason, I felt as though I had never left Poland and still had a firm foothold there, even if it seemed fairly ordinary to me then. It felt more natural for me to engage socially with others in Poland than Canada. I understood this place better, and I felt more at ease during our summer visits "home." I had friends, much more than back home in Canada. My family in Poland, particularly my grandfather, was always eager to teach my brother and me about our history. We spent many days during our summer visits touring cities and heritage sites throughout Poland.

As a result, I have kept close relationships with our family in Poland. However, in other ways, this split life caused me to feel jarred on a personal level, an experience similar to many other Polish Canadian migrants wherein members of the former Soviet Bloc traversed sociocultural expectations between marginalization and identity reformation through "soft" colonization (Goulah; Lopez). To me, it was normal that I was from two places and spent my life between these very different nations. My feelings of in-betweenness and my interest in understanding the ways it may affect the lives of other Polish Canadians are a direct result of the discrimination I felt as a child in Canada and the parallel expectations of remaining connected to my Polish heritage perpetrated by my family, in Canada, in Poland, and the Polonia community.

By fourth grade, I was considered as having a learning deficiency and was taken out of class every school day for English as a second language lessons. Although I quickly developed a firm grasp of English, I continued to express myself through the customs I learned from a Polish way of life. Because I spent little time outside my home and Polonia, I was deeply misunderstood and penalized for being different. This alienation is a common challenge among first-generation migrants who feel disconnected from their desires and struggle to assimilate into their adopted culture (Garza et al.). However, in reality, I found non-Polish people just as strange and confusing as they likely perceived me. In response, I felt under-challenged in school and chose to distance myself from almost everyone but my family and Polish-speaking friends, feeling that they were the only ones I could genuinely relate to.

Since our arrival in Canada, I was encouraged to be "more Canadian" to fit into my new home. According to my mother, this came primarily from my parents. They "wanted me to try to fit in because [they] thought life would be easier" for my brother and me, as my mother often

said. I can certainly understand where this came from; during the 1990s, most people viewed migrants as strange and exotic because they lived differently from their receiving country's established sociocultural norms. Although whether this bias has changed much or not is contestable, being different in Canada at the time—especially as a child—was not easily understood and was treated with high suspicion and scrutiny (Goulah; Lopez). I was bullied and teased for being socioculturally different, which made (and still makes) me feel as though I am somehow inferior. However, from my perspective, the children I encountered in school were strange to me, so misunderstandings were frequent as many aspects of my life were difficult to explain to others. This was only exacerbated by what I perceived as a misunderstanding by others that I was somehow disadvantaged because I was born in a "communist country" (Goulah). My estrangement was only exacerbated by the fact that we moved frequently because my parents were desperate to find stable employment. Sometimes we spent only a few months in one community before my father was offered a better-paying job elsewhere. This meant that I had a hard time making friends outside of my family. So, it was not until secondary school, when we finally settled down in one community, that I started to feel more comfortable in social settings.

Regardless, I tried to fit in as much as I could. Even though I was raised in a Polish home, my native-sounding English coupled with my White appearance meant that I could blend in without advertising that I was from another country and, thus, different. Outside of my home and Polonia, I felt the usual pressure put on many migrants at the time: I thought I needed to blend into my new home rather than being allowed to represent myself the way that made me feel most comfortable, which meant not being able to embrace my Polish-ness fully. This may have seemed like the right thing to do, but, in retrospect, I realize that the circumstances meant that I

was never allowed to express my inherent identity fully and to connect with others as my true self.

In terms of mystory, Brantford is a place I consider as having deep roots and often refer to as my "hometown," even though I was born in Poland and my family landed and lived in Windsor, Ontario for the first 8 or so years in Canada. We moved to Brantford in 1996, a few months before I was aged eleven, and have lived here since, so it is the community where I spent most of my later formative years and where I formed some of the most vivid memories of what I consider being influential to the way I imagine and perform my lifeworld. When I look back to the moments that define what I believe to be mystory, many of those images were crystallized in Brantford. In the last few years, as I have aged, a small but persistent feeling in the pit of my stomach has been nagging away at me, and I have been asking myself: "where do I belong?" This question has only been exacerbated as I age by intense feelings of in-betweenness, mainly because I had a stronger sense of belonging as a young child in Polonia and Poland. We finally settled in a place long enough for me to make and maintain social connections.

It was in Brantford that my family became even more involved in Polonia: we were part of the Polish folk dancing troupes at the Hall; my parents were psalm and testament readers at the Polish language Roman Catholic Church at which I was an altar boy and eventually Sunday School teacher; my parents formed a Polish-language comedy improv troupe that was renowned in the community and beyond; and, I helped by catering and bartending at Polonia events. When I look back to the moments that defined what I believe to be my Polonia heritage, many of those moments were crystallized in Brantford.

When my brother and I went to university, my involvement in Polonia reduced dramatically and very quickly. I wanted to "see the world" that I was not exposed to as a child because,

in some ways, I felt that I was insulated from the rest of society. Over the next ten or more years, I devoted myself to studying, trying to learn as much as possible about the world. I enjoyed broadening my horizons and, to this day, feel that my desire to know as much about life as possible frames my general outlook and is the driving force of my research, particularly my ethnographic work.

It feels strange at times to think that I am an immigrant. The (often naive and exaggerated) images that come to my mind of migrants are of individuals that leave their homes with their most essential possessions to settle in a wildly different place in search of a better life. In some ways, this is true of my migration experience: we moved from Poland to Canada, which, especially at the time, were socioculturally different; we took only our most precious things, which was the family itself and anything we could carry because we could only afford one trip; and, we did it because life in Canada seemed unimaginably better, at least that was the shared understanding among my family and many other Polish people at the time. However, being a young child, when this happened, it did not feel particularly out of the ordinary to me. However, the reality is that I am from somewhere/time else. This became much more apparent to me once I started growing up and seeing other people that, to me, had a sense of belonging, which was something that I longed for. It is not that I did not belong somewhere—I belonged in my family, to Polonia, and to the Poland I left behind—but I certainly did not feel as though I belonged in Canada.

Because of my life experiences, I have always felt like two different people: the person I was born as half a world away at a home that I am deeply connected to yet long to experience more of, and the person I felt compelled to become to better fit into my adopted home. Poland is my birthplace and will always be my first home. Canada may be my second home, but it is where

I grew into adulthood and is more "home" than Poland. I could say that I belong to Polonia or the Polish diaspora living in Canada, but that, too, feels somewhat alien to me. I do not feel like I belong anywhere in particular. Instead, I feel as though my life is always in-between.

Throughout my life, I have tried to integrate these different sides of myself in a number of ways. However, certain things do not translate to/from one lifeworld or another. Some everyday engagements seem more familiar whether I view them with a Polish or Canadian or Polish Canadian sentimentality. Some things make more sense to me depending on which side of my personhood I engage with. I identify as both Polish and Canadian, and Polish Canadian, and it is the situation or my mood that dictates whether I will sway one way or the other. I use both Polish and English spellings of my name—i.e., "Wiktor" and "Victor"—although, more recently, I have begun to use the Polish spelling almost exclusively to indicate to others that I was born and raised Polish.

Motivations and Biases

To end this section, I wish to share my motivations and biases as I understand them so that the reader may understand how my lifeworld shapes this research. My motivations to do this work come from feeling like I am in-between plural realities, each making sense yet simultaneously being strange. This life of liminality—a scholastic viewpoint that I adopt from Tim Ingold's work on the conditions and potentials of human life—recognizes the performative nature of life, one that is traversing dreams and reality, memories and the present. For Ingold, life "is a movement of opening, not of closure," so, as ethnographers, he urges us to situate our interpretation upon the life process rather than its outcomes (4). Furthermore, migrant life is inherently performative in that, perhaps more than others, we live in-between past and present, here and there at the borderlands of the in-between (Grønseth). Like Ingold and Grønseth, I believe that

migrant life can tell us much about the performative nature of human life in general. My desire to understand the dialectical processes at work in my life is at the very heart of this research.

As an ethnographer, I assumed my task was to understand others, so when I began doing this research, I was focused solely on my interlocutors and did not consider doing autoethnography. It was about mid-way through fieldwork that I realized my research was not only about understanding my interlocutors but also about understanding myself *through* my interlocutors. I found solace in their answers and felt at ease when I heard them sharing experiences of their lives, especially their upbringings, that were similar to mine. What began as research that, I assumed, was academically interesting became research that was also personally enlightening. The research process opened certain frictions in my life that have proven to be insightful and propelled my research beyond a scope I could have imagined. Thus, I have reframed this work to incorporate both the ethnographic and autoethnographic insights that the fieldwork process made me realize.

Much of this ethnography relates to guilt as an affective force that shapes lifeworlds. Occasionally, it can be the kind of negative feeling one typically associates with guilt. It can also be the kind of feeling that one would associate with pride or the responsibility to honour their background. I do not use different words for these feelings because it was difficult for my interlocutors or me to separate feelings of guilt and pride as we often described them as though they are felt simultaneously but at varying degrees of impact. This feeling is ever-present among Polish-born individuals, many of whom believe there is a collective responsibility to be minders of history and memory following the atrocities that occurred in Poland in much of the 20th Century and the subsequent collective forgetting perpetuated by a traumatized nation-state seeking to reclaim its national identity (Ghodsee). Through deep reflection and dialogue with others, I have

realized that I, like some other Polish-born, feel we owe this kind of work to Poland and Polonia. I explore guilt in more detail throughout this ethnography but focus most significantly on it in Chapter 4 when I unpack what one of my interlocutors describes as "the silent push."

As an ethnographer doing "anthropology at home"—i.e., I am doing ethnography with/in the community I live and am deeply connected to—I am aware of the bias contained herein that reflects the realities of my life experiences. I do not attempt to negate or undermine this bias as I believe it tells how we develop our lifeworld in relation to others and outside forces. I assumed that because I felt so connected to and inspired by my heritage, many other Polish Canadians, particularly millennials, must share this sentiment and, like myself, have complicated and unanswered questions about (our obligations to) Polonia and how we engage it in our own, unique ways. Before I began this research, I knew many Polish Canadians had complicated relationships with heritage because it often came up in casual conversations with others.

My understanding of Polonia, when I entered the field, was that most cultural organizations (e.g., cultural halls and churches) were being criticized for not changing to better cater to millennials and had been losing younger membership in recent years to the point that, at least in Brantford, they were largely devoid of individuals under 40 years old. I wanted to understand better why this has been happening. I assumed that, like myself, most Polish Canadian millennials are torn between feeling proud of their heritage and feeling forced to participate in a worldview that does not reflect their current realities. As the baby boomer generation is aging and its members are passing their responsibility as shepherds of Polish tradition onto their children, I assume there is resistance, from both sides, over this transition and how Polonia will be

imagined. Although I like to assume that these biases are not hindering my research and subsequent analysis, I also understand that they have shaped this project, including the interlocutors I have chosen, the questions I ask, and how I view and analyze their responses.

Session with My Mother: Where do I belong?

One night after my first interview sessions, my mother asked me what I would be doing over the coming year or so. "Will you be working?" She asked, before correcting herself, "I mean, I know you'll be working on your research, but are they paying you?" I laughed, assuming to myself that maybe she did not understand what, exactly, I would be doing. She had posed a good question because—although I had spent months crafting a detailed project plan that purportedly outlined my work over the coming months/year—I knew there was no way I could have entirely prepared myself to be ready for the upcoming year of fieldwork and where it would lead me.

Within the first week or two, I realized the feelings in my gut were probably a warning. I had to prepare for a year of being comfortable going off the rails. Even though I had spent two years doing graduate-level coursework in and around ethnography, including a course specifically focused on methods and methodology, I felt overwhelmed with uncertainty and wished I had a better sense of confidence in myself and my work. Still, because I knew my mother was more concerned with my physical and mental well-being than being productive with my time, I answered: "Well, I'll be teaching for the first half of the year, at least… plus I won some money through an award in school." Her shoulders seemed to drop a little, and she smiled and then replied, "my smart son!" I felt she was satisfied with the response and was happy to know that I would be stable for the foreseeable future.

"So," my mother wanted to continue the conversation, "what will you be doing, exactly?" "Well," I thought about my answer for a moment and then decided to respond with materials

from my proposal, “I will be doing fieldwork with Polish Canadian millennials, and probably their parents, and I’ll be asking them questions about stuff that I’ve been thinking about my whole life.” “Oh?” She asked, “what kind of things?” “Feelings of where I belong… my place in life,” I responded, realizing that it sounded cryptic. “I think that there are other people like myself,” I continued, wishing to explain my last remark. “Immigrants that feel like they don’t belong in Canada but that they also don’t belong where they came from,” I explained. “We all feel that way,” my mother replied. “What do you mean?” I asked. “I feel that way; I know your father felt that way…” she replied, not quite finishing her statement. “We came here for a better life, for you, and your brother, and us, and we knew we were leaving our home behind,” she added. I thought about this for a moment and quickly realized that I had heard such sentiments many times before, not only from my mother but many other Polish Canadians as well. “Yes, but you had a home… as a kid, I mean,” I added, not entirely sure what I was trying to explain, “I mean, you grew up somewhere and have something to point back to… I feel like I don’t, and I wonder if there are others like me.” “I’m sure there are, honey,” my mother responded. “We all wonder what coming to Canada did to our children,” she added. “I don’t mean it was traumatizing, mom,” I tried to explain to comfort her, “I mean I want to know if there are other people that have the same priorities and outlooks on life that I do.” “Oh,” she replied, looking relieved, “so why don’t you join a Polish Canadian youth group?” “There aren’t any,” I answered. “Yes, I think you’re right,” she responded, “I don’t think there are any youth groups at the Hall anymore, [but] maybe [there are] dancers?” She asked, fairly certain the answer was “no.” “No, I think they stopped doing the dances too, except for maybe the very young kids,” I added. “Besides, I didn’t like doing them as a kid, and I don’t think I’d like doing them now,” I continued, “that’s

something you guys [our parents] like, and we [their children] don't." "Maybe, one day, you'll come back to it," she said. "Maybe," I responded, feeling decidedly unsure.

Methodology

My methodology draws from across disciplines, primarily in performance theory and anthropology. The research design I utilize is based on Denzin's interpretive (auto)ethnography with a focus on the imagistic and performative dimensions of everyday life (*Interpretive Ethnography; Interpretive Autoethnography*). Denzin outlines interpretation in (auto)ethnography as seeking to understand the "immediate particularity" of the lives of ethnographic subjects (*Interpretive Autoethnography* x). His interpretive methodology primarily employs "progressive-regressive" methods that strive to unpack the movement of life by working backwards through time and focusing on the performance that led to this particular moment (ibid. x). I frame my methodological perspective in a way that enables me to "tell stories of human becomings" (Biehl 591).

I employ flexible methods that can account for the unpredictability of life or "the confusing overlap between informal street corner conversation and the serious inquiry embodied in ethnographic fieldwork" (Gusterson 93). I primarily employed participant observation and conducted in-depth interviews with my interlocutors. Fieldwork was conducted with Polish Canadians in Brantford over a period of 15 months between January 2016 and March 2017. I transcribed observational and interview materials into written documentation of my experiences as a basis for my ethnographic analysis. In-field engagements were primarily documented via audio recording; when audio recording was not possible, I used detailed journaling techniques.

Because I am inherently implicated in this research, I employ autoethnography alongside the principal research that is ethnographic. Autoethnographic methodological considerations are

primarily drawn from those who advocate for deeply reflexive research highlighting the researcher's subjectivity, emotionality, and influence (Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*; Adams et al.; Ellis et al.). I include personal experiences, self-analysis, and reflective sessions with my mother that analyze my life experiences as a Polish Canadian and how they influenced the outcomes of this research.

My work is situated in the reflexive turn in anthropology. The reflexive turn marked a change in ethnographic analysis and representation, with new research realizing the impossibility of understanding the inherently disparate performativity of everyday life. Recently, scholars across a broad spectrum of disciplines have been questioning the colonial and positivist tendencies of their genealogies. Instead, they have aimed to focus on images and stories rather than "facts" (Culhane). With the inherent problems of trying to represent the interiorities of individuals, coupled with the understanding of the general inaccessibility of those internalized dimensions of personhood, I employ strongly reflexive ethnographic methods of research and representation which recognizes researcher/interlocutor power relations and the impossibility of understanding individual lives as an outsider looking in (Denzin and Lincoln; Irving).

Furthermore, scholars now realize that individuals have unique ways of seeing and being in the world that do not necessarily translate to others' experiences and understandings. Instead, individuals shape and (re)present their self in a number of ways; some of this knowledge can be wrote, but some of the more embodied and internalized knowledges cannot be easily translated into discursive statements (Irving). As such, new and unconventional sources of human experience are being analyzed—such as the performative, affective economies of experience, and the imagistic—that attempt to open up the internalized aspects of personhood. This ethnography uses

such scholarly insights as jumping-off points for reflexive analysis with the intention of creating a more holistic and authentic understanding of individual performance.

Interpreting Images

This ethnography is interpretive, engaging "with the discursive construction of experience… and a treatment of experience as already an interpretation" (Jackson and Mazzei 304). By recognizing and tapping the "performative" nature of experience through everyday engagement, it may be possible to understand better the mediated and self-produced nature of ethnography. I employ aspects of interpretive ethnography as both a research methodology and mode of producing text to describe my in-field experiences and to achieve more reflexive insight into everyday sociocultural realities (Ellis et al.). This approach challenges the poetics and politics of ethnography by disrupting how ethnographers research and represent ethnographic subjects, which had been traditionally devised out of deeply rooted structural and colonial legacies in anthropology and cognate disciplines (Clifford and Marcus).

I understand lifeworlds as comprised of a series of images we give meaning to and (re-)perform across time and place. I focus on the images that pertain to the migration experience and their lives in both their home and adopted countries, but also how these imaginaries (do not) translate into the present and, subsequently, the future and over generations. Thus, I place the critical lens of this ethnographic analysis within the imagistic performative space between the dreams and realities of Polish Canadian migrants and their children. I wish to understand how Polish Canadians "imagine" our lives.

Following Lisa Stevenson's approach to ethnographic analysis, I employ "image as method" wherein I bring "attention to the images through which we think and live" and, thus,

imagine life experiences (Stevenson 10). Stevenson describes her ethnographic practice as "being attentive to—even opening oneself to—those moments when the facts falter and when things (and selves) become, even just slightly, unhinged" (Stevenson 2). Like the lives of my participants, Stevenson's analytic method does not attempt to make neat the complexities of life but, instead, embraces this space of uncertainty as one that is rich with insights into everyday life and the fluidity that is the human condition. My ethnographic analysis acknowledges the performative nature of life as being comprised of ever-changing images. I focus on the images that affect/are affected by the performance of individual lifeworlds, the ways they are assembled, the moments of generative friction that influence and change those performances, and the discursive aspects of imaginaries in order to best unpack the lives of my participants as it pertains to them in particular.

For the bulk of my in-field research sessions, I engaged with my interlocutors through "deep hanging out," or what I understand as being present among/with my interlocutors in their own sociocultural contexts for extended, informal sessions as a participant-observer and interviewer (Geertz, *Deep Hanging Out*; Gusterson). This casual form of ethnographic research allowed me to engage with my interlocutors in their everyday realities. To unpack the images discussed during interviews and participant observation, I employ "interpretation," as proposed by Norman K. Denzin, by assuming the role of the epiphanic interpretive ethnographer. Denzin begs the ethnographer to be fluid, reflexive, and focus on imagination in the ethnographic pursuit of personal stories as a means of writing about life. Their role is to seek existential turning-point moments navigating "those strange and familiar situations that connect critical biographical experiences (epiphanies) with culture, history and social structure" and to analyze them through storytelling (*Interpretive Ethnography* 92). I listen closely to my interlocutors as we discuss how

they imagine their lives and perform those images in everyday contexts, focusing on the punctums that they feel are the most pivotal in their lives (Taylor). I then analyze these images in relation to the images held by others and me, and the images of Polonia as they collectively defined.

I interpret milieus by employing the "cartographic rather than an archaeological analytic of the subject" and by focusing on "the plurality of ways in which ethnographic rendering can open up new attention to people's arts of existence and the political stakes that make up the ordinary" (Biehl 574). In my fieldwork, I focused not on the archival moments of life but on those that exist in the repertoire (Taylor); or what we can understand as "life forms" (Stewart, "Precarity's forms"). As such, I steered interviews to discuss the sticky, precarious moments when life is out of flux or unhinged. I focus on how images have been constructed in the past and present, as well as the imaginings of future dreams and how those images have and have not been realized. I ask my interlocutors questions based on how they imagine their lives and wish their lives to be, and how they imagine their lives playing out in the present.

Weak and Slow Ethnography

In my fieldwork, I employ what Kathleen Stewart calls different modes of "attunement and attachment" ("Weak Theory in an Unfinished World" 71). Like Stewart, I am less interested in judging the value of images or striving to get their representation right, but to wonder about the infinite possibilities in which these images are (per)formed by "attending to the textures and rhythms of forms of living as they are being composed and suffered in social and cultural poesis" (71). For Stewart, "things have impact"; that is, things (what I call images) carry and resonate social and cultural meaning(making) (72). She calls her practice a kind of "weak theory" that

stands in contrast to strong theory (or high theory) that attempts to neatly connect the dots between the analytic subject, theory, praxis, and the world-at-large (72). Rather than seeking to make life orderly, weak theory is more interested in tracking moments of potentiality—"an opening onto a something," as Stewart says—and to engage, rather than contain, the messiness of everyday life (72). In this sense, my methodology does not have a specific end goal but, rather, is interested in engaging with the life-process and how it is imagined and performed, rather than attempting to distill it into absolutes.

When considering how ethnographers can coalesce various forces of sociocultural production into an ethnographic narrative, in *Alien Ocean* Stefan Helmreich is particularly successful at working parataxically in weaving together the vast dialectics weak theorists work to subvert (e.g., theory/praxis, epistemology/ontology, concept/metaphor, and stories/culture). Working athwart theory, I follow Helmreich's approaches to disciplinary methodologies from lateral or sideways tracking perspectives to create what Stewart calls an "idiosyncratic map of connections" between images (*Ordinary Affects* 4-5). À la *Alien Ocean*, I weave together a "crablike" narrative in which I read "materials and theories through one another" (22, 23). Following Helmreich, I begin in the middle of ethnography by moving my focus from epistemological considerations to ontological ones, away from matters of fact to matters of concern.

I undertake a kind of sensuous approach to doing ethnography—"ultimately a mixing of head and heart" or "an opening of one's being to the world" (Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* xviii)—which allows "for the interrelation of creativity, agency, embodiments and spirituality [that] can help promote more diverse and inclusive perspectives" (Magnat, "Conducting Embodied Research at the Intersection of Performance Studies, Experimental Ethnography and Indigenous Methodologies" 213). Following ethnographers that tap the sensorium—the "perception,

place, knowing, memory and imagination" stored/constructed in/through bodies that become knowable using methodologies that are engaged with the affective economy of lifeworlds (Pink 23)—I am interested in the imagistic dimensions of lifeworlds and, more specifically, the everyday performance of the imagistic. I believe that understanding how processes and conditions influence how my interlocutors imagine and perform their lives "need to be understood in terms of the specific expressive action" in the context in which it is being performed (Irving 37). These images lie in the realm of interiority making them difficult to access and unpack, but in doing so we stand to access vital embodied cultural knowledge otherwise inaccessible.

My methodology considers not what culture has produced (i.e., what things have congealed out of the various sociocultural forces present in the world) but how we enact, experience, and interact with those forces. I take into account the indeterminacies between the vast dualisms in sociocultural knowledge work (e.g., body/embodiment, text/force, sign/meaning, self/other, etc.) (Csordas). I engage my methodology within the liminal space between representation and being in the world because life is inherently liminal and is rarely fixed (ibid.). Rather than only focusing on things (memories/images/lifeworlds), I also focus on the performance of things (the affective economy of memory, the imagistic, and the everyday performative) or the potentialities of culture in practice.

Some ethnographers are practicing and advocating for "slow ethnography" that is slow in terms of pace and long in terms of time (operating over the longue durée) and hyper-focused on minutia in fieldwork (Grandia). The allure of doing multi-sited and para-sited ethnography to discover and unpack the global movements of contemporary human life draws the interest of many ethnographers, particularly those responding to cosmopolitanism and globalization (Nader). However, there is more "liberatory potential in grounded research, possessed by place"

as multi-sited and para-sited fieldwork can lead to “anecdotal vignettes, kaleidoscope, collage, and juxtaposition” which can result in inauthentic, surface-level ethnography (Grandia 303). To counter this, I prefer to work from a “hut with a view” wherein I work within one place and one (small) group/community, which allows for rich ethnographic detail that comes with doing a “slower mode of research” (303).

My methodology does not attempt to make neat the messiness of everyday life. I combine practical methods—what I have outlined as an interpretive ethnography of the imagistic or “image as method”—with weak and slow methods operating over the longue durée that are reflexive, performative, sensuous, and imaginative, and are athwart to the high theory that continues to pervade the way we do sociocultural research. Ethnography is the study of and writing about human life, a complex topic to encapsulate, given that life is in constant motion and changes from moment to moment. The in-between realities of my interlocutors highlight the discursiveness of the human condition better than most, given that they see themselves as being anchored between places and times, and between their memories, their present realities, and their dreams for the future. As such, my methodology responds to ever-changing life experiences by focusing on the moments of becoming, specifically by tracking and interpreting the affective forces that influence the images formed and performed in everyday experience.

Chapter Two: (Re)Connections

This chapter functions as an arrival scene of sorts by glimpsing an overview of the community in/with which I worked, presenting a diaristic account of my (re-)entering the field in Brantford, and a short biography of each of the principal interlocutors involved in my research. In the first section of this chapter, I describe my fieldsite, including a historical overview of the Polish Canadian migrant diaspora, followed by a brief history of Polonia in Brantford and the Polish Canadian cultural centre (the Hall) at which I spent a considerable amount of time. I also describe how these histories and geographies are part of mystory or how my upbringing in Polonia has shaped my outlook.

In the second section of this chapter, I give a biographical overview of the interlocutors involved in this work which is divided by the two generational cohorts I focus on, millennials and baby boomers. The details I share are pertinent to this research and do not necessarily represent a holistic representation of these individuals as they expressed themselves during fieldwork sessions.

In the third and final section, I describe how I entered the field, how I made connections with the community, and how I developed rapport with my interlocutors, from snowballing to becoming a registered member of the Hall. I also discuss two moments that I consider "failed projects" wherein my fieldwork methodology did not unfold the way I expected but that, nonetheless, influenced my subsequent ethnographic analysis. I frame this arrival scene as a kind of "coming home" given that I was not so much entering a new field but reconnecting with a community where I already have deeply established roots.

My original intention was to be in-field between January 2016 and December 2016; however, because I felt that fieldwork had reached critical momentum in the Autumn of 2016, I decided to extend in-field research until March 2017. At the beginning of the process, I had difficulty engaging interlocutors outside of my network of acquaintances. The process became significantly easier after many months of direct participation as a volunteer with the Polonia community in Brantford. Even though I consider Brantford one of my homes and have spent much of my life engaged with the Polonia community there in varying capacities, finding inroads within the community and building rapport came with significant challenges.

I began (re)engaging the fieldsite of my hometown in Brantford, Ontario, by spending the first six (6) months doing participant observation with Polish Canadians and volunteering at one of the local Polish Cultural Centres. Fieldwork was primarily participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and "deep hanging out" (Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*). With some interlocutors, I engaged in more experimental methods, such as the building and analysis of a "memory box" filled with items individuals deem important. In an attempt to unpack the imaginaries of my interlocutors' lifeworlds and my own, I discover the foundational desires, expectations and realizations of Polish Canadians during a time of significant sociocultural change that is occurring in a present of generational succession.

I chose to work primarily with Polish Canadians in Brantford for several reasons. First, Brantford is still a major receiving town for migrants. It retains one of the highest Polish Canadian populations per capita in Ontario, Canada, even though the number of new migrants has dropped significantly since the mid-1990s. Second, Brantford's large Polish Canadian population has led to the development of two large Cultural Centres, a church, and numerous Polish-language businesses, unusual for other communities with a similar overall population. Third, having

kept connections to friends and family still living in Brantford, I was confident that there remained a large population of Polish Canadians who still considered themselves as belonging to Polonia. Finally, I have planted some of my deepest roots in Brantford as it is a place that I have called "home" longer than any other; yet, at the same time, I wanted to understand why I no longer feel as strong a connection to it as I do to my home in Poland which I only have vague memories of and have visited infrequently in adulthood.

Fieldsite

This research was conducted with interlocutors residing in Brantford, Ontario. Although the Polish migrant population has waxed and waned, and the influx of new Polish migrants has been steadily dropping, Brantford retains one of the largest Polish migrant populations per capita in Canada (Statistics Canada; Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society). And, so, the Polish community in Brantford has long been considered significant, with a rich history that has shaped the identity of the city and surrounding community. In the following section, I provide a brief description and historical account of the Polish community in Brantford.

Polonia or the Polish Diaspora in Canada

Polish Canadians often consider themselves as belonging to Polonia, a colloquial term used by members of the Polish diaspora who trace their roots to the nation-state of Poland yet consider themselves as part of a nation decidedly separate from its mother entity. Poland remains a harbinger of how members of Polonia define their collective identity, but members of the Polish diaspora also consider their lives existing in a nation of their own (Verdery; Cervinkova).

Although members of Polonia often consider their identity as belonging to the nation-state of Poland, they also consider their lives as being influenced by the social, cultural and polit-

ical realities of their adopted homes. As such, many sub-nations comprise Polonia, such as Polonia in Canada. Furthermore, whether a person of Polish descent considers themselves as belonging to Polonia or not, many of its members believe that Polonia claims citizenry for all Polish-identifying individuals living outside of Poland. Polonia as a nation is connected to and yet separate from a homeland, which governs how its members define and perform their identities. Thus, Polish Canadians usually have a strong sense of post-Polish identity via a shared and mutually defined heritage for individuals who consider themselves as being of there but living here.

Poland has a history stretching back to the 10th Century and, depending on how the history is viewed, has roots in ancient times. Poland has "disappeared" numerous times as a nation-state, most recently under decades of Russian political occupation. Thus, for people of Polish descent, the notion of "Poland as a nation" tends to be particularly strong, and those living in Poland and the Polonia diaspora often have strong understandings of what they consider to be Polish and not (Verdery; Kubik; Bernhard and Kubik). However, recent scholarship on post-socialism argues from a mostly political perspective when instead, as anthropologists and cognate social scientists, we should be focusing on the liminal spaces between traditional spheres (Chari and Verdery).

Whether or not my interlocutors lived in Poland when it was under communist rule, the complicated legacy of Poland has undoubtedly affected their lives. Following World War II, Poland was left devastated by the German occupation, the numerous concentration and death camps established there, and being a front between Axis and Allied war efforts. Including the mass damages done to cities—for example, 90% of buildings in Warsaw were raised—some estimates claim that nearly 25% of the Polish population was killed, including over six million people of Jewish descent or roughly two-thirds of the European population and countless other minority

populations such as Romani, Slavs and numerous non-Europeans, LGBT peoples, differing religious sects, Polish elites and political prisoners (Library of Congress). Furthermore, with the defeat of the Germans in 1945 came Soviet occupation, and with it, communism was imposed on the Poles (Leslie et al.).

The Soviet occupation of Poland developed in stages between 1945 and 1947, during which a provisional government backed by the Soviet army was formed. Poland's communist party, the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* [Polish United Workers' Party], led a decade-long transformation of the country's socio-political system to one compatible with Soviet-designed communism. Although Poland officially remained independent, it remained closely linked to, and subsequently repressed, by the Soviets (Leslie et al. 297-298). Although the communist party successfully nationalized industry, they failed to collectivize Polish agriculture or to break the power of the Catholic Church. There was much resistance to the party's attempts for total control. Poland would teeter back and forth between freedom and dictatorship over the following decades. (Leslie et al. 354-366; 367-375).

In the summer of 1980, the government announced that food prices would double, causing nationwide strikes and mass social unrest. This unrest led to the forming of the *Solidarność* [Solidarity] movement, a labour/trade union that evolved from the workers' strikes led by Lech Wałęsa of the Lenin Shipyards in Gdańsk. The people rallied behind Wałęsa and *Solidarność* [Solidarity] and, eventually, forced the communist party to capitulate to the demands of the Gdańsk Agreement formed on 31 August 1980 (Leslie et al. 458-459). However, the party fought back and, in December 1982, General Wojciech Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law in Poland in an effort to stymie unionized activities.

The *Solidarność* [Solidarity] movement would continue to operate underground and coordinate labour disputes. Slowly, a national political revolution began. During elections in 1989, *Solidarność* [Solidarity] would make massive wins in parliament, leading to a humiliating defeat for the communist party. Simultaneously, the thawing of communism in Russia signalled the end of socialism in Poland and Europe (Library of Congress). Although it is now officially a democratic country, Poland, during the 1990s, continued to feel the legacy of communist rule. With its infrastructure in significant disarray, wages continuing to stagnate, and the social remnants of communism deeply entrenched in everyday ideology, the road to democratization continues in the present.

All of the Polish Canadian interlocutors in this project have either experienced or were affected by life in Soviet-occupied Poland. For Polish Canadian baby boomers, their lives were directly affected and shaped by their experiences living in a socialist nation and later experiences of moving to the democratized West. For Polish Canadian millennials, most did not directly experience life under communism or, at most, for a brief period in their formative years. Regardless, their experiences with migration and Polonia in Canada have been coloured by the experiences of their parents and those images passed over generations. As such, this research analyzes the (post)socialist identity through ethnography of everyday life, after communism.

The history of Polonia in Canada reaches far back, with migrants coming from Poland to Canada over waves of migration, with the first having landed in 1774. In the context of this research, I am temporally focused on Polish Canadian migrants that came to Canada during the third wave of Polish migration to the West. Scholars consider the most recent wave as having begun in 1981, with the bulk of migration happening between 1985 and 1995 when the exit requirements of Poland loosened significantly. Many of these individuals landed in one of the few

receiving towns popular among Polish migrants to the West, such as Roncesvalles in Toronto, the Polish Triangle in Chicago, and smaller communities like Windsor and Brantford, Ontario (Thomas and Znaniecki). As a result, there remain large pockets of Polish migrants with a shared heritage and migration experiences occupying identifiable geographic communities in North America. However, predominantly Polish migrant communities like Roncesvalles Village and Islington East in Toronto, Canada, have since diluted and are not the "Little Polands" as they once were during the height of migration in the 1990s.

Pockets of Polish migrants in Canada may have formed out of a necessity to use the little resources available to them upon their arrival. Many of my interlocutors told me that they had little in terms of financial or other security when they migrated, mainly because the purchasing power of the Polish Zloty has historically been very poor and because they had little in terms of capital or material goods as they had less opportunity to build up their wealth while living in a communist state. Migrants have long been considered as belonging to a "precariat"—an amalgam of 'precarious' and 'proletariat'—or a class that is disadvantaged and often faces existential threats, particularly in terms of unstable access to income or employment (Schierup et al. 3). Third wave Polish migrants are no exception to this description, often facing insurmountable obstacles as they work to build a good life in Canada. Although the opportunity for upwards social mobility has improved steadily following the collapse of communism in Poland, Polish migrants continue to live precariously as participants in a global migrant labour market that is designed to retain this status quo (5). The reality of precarity continues to dramatically influence the lives of Polish migrants and how they imagine their future. Although I explore aspects of precarity in this ethnography, further investigation of the Polonia precariat is a vital topic in need of future research.

Most Polish migrants to North America who emigrated during the third wave came from urban areas in Poland. According to a sampling of Chicago's Polonia population, only 16% or less of Polish migrants originated from rural Poland between 1980 and 1993 (Erdmans 72). Although statistical data about the geographic origins of Polonia in Brantford is likely not documented, from my lived experience and details shared by my interlocutors, I believe the majority of Polish-born in Brantford originated from the Subcarpathian and Lublin provinces in the southeastern and eastern regions of Poland, often near large urban centres like Rzeszów, Stalowa Wola, and Lublin (city). This region was historically known as Lesser Poland and developed a unique culture and set of traditions that diverged considerably from the rest of the nation. The reason that many Polish migrants to Canada originate from cities may be due to the strong urban/rural divide that has historically fractured the nation and which continues to influence the sociopolitical climate in Poland (Garapich). Urban dwellers in Poland have historically been considered as seeking better living conditions and improving their economic situation, unlike their rural counterparts who tend to lean towards staunch nationalism and preserving the Polish national identity. Unsurprisingly, the Polish community in Brantford shares many commonalities among its citizenry, particularly in how they view and shape Polonia as harbingers of change in the national imaginary.

Brantford has hosted a large population of migrants for most of its history, and it continues to be home to a high Polish Canadian population per capita (Statistics Canada). During the 1990s, roughly 1 in 30 Brantfordians were Polish (Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society). This significant number demonstrates the large volume of third-wave Polish migrants that landed in this community and consequently significantly influenced its social fabric. At first glance, it seems exceptional that Brantford would be a major receiving community for migrants: it is not

considered an urban centre; it is located decidedly outside the Greater Toronto Area; and it is not situated at an international border crossing such as Windsor and Niagara Falls, Ontario that tend to be popular receiving towns for migrants.

Regardless, Brantford has been a major receiving community for migrants (Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie). Until the late 1980s, the city was a leading industrial centre in southwestern Ontario that attracted many skilled labourers to work in manufacturing for globally recognized corporations such as Massey Ferguson Limited and S.C. Johnson & Son Inc. Many new Polish migrants to Canada begin their residency by looking for industry and skilled labour work either because of their training in Poland or because their education does not directly transfer to Canadian equivalents (ibid.). More recently, however, the community has struggled to maintain a strong manufacturing presence following the collapse of Massey Ferguson in the late 1980s, wherein the largest employer in the city at the time abruptly ceased operations. As a result, Brantford's attractiveness to migrants has diminished significantly, and the rate of new migrants has been steadily shrinking since (Ball; Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie). And, yet, with a lower cost of living and less expensive real estate when compared to other urban areas, Brantford continues to be attractive to young families and migrants to Canada that are looking to start a new life. This probably explains why most new migrants to Brantford fall within the age bracket of 25-44 years (Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie).

The Polish diaspora in Brantford grew significantly during the first wave of Polish Migration to the West, commencing in roughly 1902 and continuing until World War I. The population was sizeable enough by this time that the first Polish grocery store opened on Sydenham Street in Brantford in 1905. The second wave of Polish Migration to the West followed in 1928 until the outbreak of World War II. By this time, the newly formed Polish Mutual Benefit and

Friendly Society of Brantford, founded in 1927, aimed to create a centralized community for Polonia in Brantford and began building a new cultural centre in 1933, the first Polish Hall, located on Pearl Street (Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society).

Not much later, a great schism occurred within the community, and a second hall was erected between 1938–1939 (Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society). The stories of how it came to be that there are two Polish Canadian halls in Brantford have recognizably influenced the way the community congregates. The reason these two halls exist changes depending on whom you ask, and most of the stories do not necessarily represent history as it happened. Some stories are dramatic and sensational, often presenting the schism as an electrified feud between a small group representing steering members of the Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society of Brantford. According to the local historical record, there was a major disagreement in the late 1930s around whether Brantford's Polish Canadian community should seek membership into *Związku Polaków w Kanadzie* [Polish Alliance of Canada], a nationwide organization representing several Polish Canadian cultural centres across the nation. There were mixed feelings about the idea and, after much debate, a group of members left the established Polish Hall in Brantford to open a new space in the nearby Albion Street hall. They eventually joined the *Związek* [Alliance] while the rest of the society remained in the original building on Pearl Street which it continues to occupy (Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society).

In reality, the feud stretches as far back as Polish people have been migrating to Brantford, but most have forgotten what the fighting is about. Some will tell you there is no feud and things are generally cordial between the two halls. But that statement can change when something negative occurs within the Polonia community wherein the two halls blame each other for

their misfortunes and troubles, according to Maria and Jan. Other explanations are oddly categorical, like the story that the Pearl Street hall was built for the "more Canadian" members of Polonia who did not want to engage in heritage the ways their predecessors did. Or that each hall represents a different geocultural region of Poland which coincides with the origins of Brantford's Polish population.

The truth is less interesting than that, however. The history of the two Polish Halls in Brantford is financial and political. The likely story is that, due to the economic hardships of the 1930s, the *Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society of Brantford* could gain additional assistance from the *Związku Polaków w Kanadzie* [Polish Canadian Alliance] as official members. A group of interested society members began the process of joining the *Związek* [Alliance] and invited anyone interested to help build a new hall on Albion Street, which was erected between 1938–1939 and expanded significantly by the late 1940s (Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society).

I share this history and its machinations because it is the one that I heard so prominently as a child growing up in Brantford. This story would set the tone of my engagement with/in Polonia, past and present. As an older child and young teen, I worked at the Hall in various roles, so I was indoctrinated by these stories from an early age. As I aged and especially while doing this research, I began to receive additional details of how the two halls came to be, which I have come to understand is a very contested topic likely spanning back as long as Polish Canadians in Brantford have been congregating. Territorialism has ensued and a decades' long silent feud—sometimes friendly and sometimes not—has remained between the two organizations. This divide among Polish Canadians in Brantford is emblematic of how baby boomers and millennials can divide themselves into opposing sides in a social drama of Polonia heritage in Brantford

(Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*). Although both groups are, ultimately, seeking to engage and define Polonia in their own ways, their disagreements have created a hostile environment wherein each side struggles to be an influential shaper of Polonia.

For members of Polonia, "territory remains at the heart of the transnational equation, with the homeland as the physical and emotional focus of emigrant transnationalism" (Burrell 324). For people of Polish descent, Poland as a home territory is "almost overburdened with symbolism, from being an embodiment of national identity to being a reminder of life before migration and what life could have been if migration had never taken place" (324–5). This burden of symbolism is especially true for third wave Polish migrants when the *Solidarność* [Solidarity] movement was at its peak, colouring the imaginaries of Polish people with ideas of freedom during the country's "symbolic war" (Kubik). The "post-communist condition," as Galasiński and Galasiński call it, describes Polish migrants to the West not as being in exile but as leaders in an era of transition and, thus, in a constant exchange between past, present and future narratives of the Polish nation-state. However, most migration studies scholarship discusses this era of transition from a Polish baby boomer perspective, rather than their children who have been "socialized into migration" and, thus, have a more globalized and mobile outlook on their lives than that of their parents (White, "Young people and migration from contemporary Poland"; White, "Polish Return and Double Return Migration"). Life in-between is the reality for Polish diaspora members and is the foundation upon which Polonia is imagined.

Session with My Mother: Childhood Memories

Sometime after I returned home from the Hall following one of the first member's meetings I attended, I asked my mother if she had been to the Hall recently. She had told me, "no, you know I don't go much since your father died," and then, after a brief contemplative pause, "but I

have gone there for a few things over the years; why?" I asked her this because, as I had been working more closely with the Hall over the summer, I was overwhelmed by feelings of nostalgia; these feelings were only exacerbated by the idea that, to me, the Hall mainly appeared unchanged since I had last visited it at least five years before and that their situation was not good. It looked essentially the same to me, as though time had frozen, yet the signs of ageing were evident in the dulling patina of the wood accents or the worn fabric covering the seats of the dining chairs. I felt comfortable and safe in the Hall, almost like I had come "home." Sentimentality swept through me, and—when I should have likely been paying more attention to Maria or the other members she would introduce me to—I was primarily interested in comparing the Hall in its present form to how I remembered it. As I glanced around, I recalled experiences at the Hall from my childhood. I noticed the furniture and decorations were much the same when I worked/volunteered at Polonia events. I recognized all the faces documented in the photographs and portraits adorning the walls, even hearing some of their voices speaking to me. I noticed that the smells in the air retained a characteristic mix of pierogi and cabbage. I even noticed that the sounds of the ventilation system seemed familiar, the temperature of the bathrooms remained ice cold, and the main doors were as heavy to open as they always had been. To others, especially outsiders, it may appear that I was hyper-focused on mundane details. But, to me, these details are pivotal to mystory. The Hall is a place I formed many memories that directly influenced how I grew into myself, and entering that place again flooded my mind with those foundational images.

Interlocutors

In this section, I describe how I met my interlocutors and include short biographies for each. I primarily engaged with twelve (12) interlocutors who self-identify as either Polish Canadians or as Polish migrants living in Canada; six (6) of which are millennials between 30–40 years of age, and six (6) of which are baby boomers over 55 years of age. Initially, I sought to work exclusively with Polish-born individuals but, through mutual connections, worked with Canadian-born individuals who identify as having Polish heritage. Most millennial interlocutors emigrated from Poland to Canada with their families as children or as teenagers during the third wave of Polish migration to the West, roughly between 1985 and 1995.

The fieldwork I conducted with Polish Canadians located in or just outside Brantford I met primarily through connections that I maintained over the course of residency there since 1997 or through mutual connections I made with others or through members of my family and their friends. Before commencing research, I had established relationships with some interlocutors through my involvement with the Polish Canadian community in Brantford, Ontario, over the years. Some baby boomers are parents of millennial interlocutors, although most are not. I also met some interlocutors through snowballing as I connected with interlocutors' family members and colleagues.

Furthermore, I met some interlocutors through my engagement in the Polish Canadian community in Brantford during fieldwork. I engaged a significant number through the Polish Alliance of Brantford, Branch 10, a local Polish Canadian cultural centre that members colloquially refer to as "the Hall." According to Maria, the organization has seen a sharp decline in membership numbers and the use of the facilities. This decline means the possibility of closure within a few years is an ever-present existential threat. Aspects of this ethnography seek to understand

how sociocultural succession is happening in our present and affecting cultural spaces like the Hall.

While the experiences of my interlocutors (including my own) share commonalities, particularly in terms of feelings of displacement and inbetweeness, their experiences of diaspora develop in distinct ways. Our lives are influenced by various economic, social, political, gendered, and geographic factors, which shape how we negotiate the divide between displacement and integration. We maintain a complex and evolving relationship with our roots in Poland, Canada, and Polonia in Canada that is unique to each of us. There is no standard migrant experience, therefore I beg the reader to understand that the experiences shared herein by my interlocutors and me are best understood as individual facets of a rich tapestry that, when weaved together, gives insight into migranthood and the diasporic reality.

The majority of my interlocutors are women. This was not an intentional choice on my part, which speaks volumes about how the Polish Canadian diaspora is maintained. Women were the principal figures that I could engage with in public spaces, like the Hall or other Polish-led sociocultural places. For example, even though men tended to hold positions of power at the Hall, the women of the *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle] were the ones in charge of facilitating heritage events, acting as leaders of various groups and subcommittees, and functioning as connectors of the community. Women were also generally more outspoken and more interested in sharing their views of Polonia and its transition during the current generation succession. This is consistent with the gendered ways in which women assume leadership positions in diaspora contexts in Canada, Poland and beyond (Watson; Temple).

The nature of the small size of the Polish Canadian community in Brantford, Ontario, required that I employ specific tactics during fieldwork to ensure the anonymity of my interlocutors. There was a possibility that fellow community members might notice whom I was working with by seeing us together during public outings, knowing that I was conducting ethnographic research, and connect my interlocutors to this research and its findings. To protect the identity of interlocutors, I have anonymized interlocutor names and biographical details and, in many cases, blended their responses with those of other interlocutors to avoid identifying anyone specifically.

Millennials

Of my millennial generation interlocutors, I was previously familiar with most of them, some of whom I have been acquainted with for some years, either through friends or my parents. I did not necessarily choose to work with individuals I was familiar with, but working with individuals I had met before was inevitable because of the relatively small Polish Canadian population in Brantford. Furthermore, I tried to engage with Polish Canadian youth groups before the start of fieldwork, hoping that this would lead to meeting individuals outside of my social circle, but this proved unfruitful as there were no such active groups in Brantford at the time. However, to my surprise, between those individuals that I was already familiar with and those that I met through snowballing and chance encounters, I managed to conduct interviews with a few Polish Canadian millennials that I had not previously known.

Jolanda

My first interlocutor was Jolanda (31), a friend I had known for at least ten years and with whom I regularly kept in touch while I was away doing doctoral studies at York University in Toronto. When I visited my mother, I usually met with Jolanda for coffee or dinner to keep in touch. Jolanda was born in Brantford and has lived there most of her life, except for some time

away during and shortly after her post-secondary studies. Although not born in Poland, Jolanda identifies as a Polish Canadian and takes great pride in her Polish heritage. She is fluent in Polish, although she has a noticeable accent as it is not her native language, and she describes her Polish-speaking skills as "conversational." She considers herself as having been raised in a "Polish house" or that her family, led by her father, maintained a household abiding by a Polish worldview. Aside from conversations with her mother, she had spoken primarily in Polish when she lived at home as a child. I was often surprised by how much more Polish language and traditions Jolanda used and understood than I, given that she told me that she considered me "more Polish" than she was. Jolanda is single and does not have children, although she often spoke about how she planned to raise her kids in a way similar to her upbringing and that she will try to immerse them in Polish heritage and traditions as much as possible. However, she was unsure if that meant engaging them in Polish cultural spaces or not.

Her desire to participate in my project came from questions of identity that had recently been particularly important, perhaps motivated by her father becoming terminally ill shortly before we began engaging in fieldwork. As a result, much of her responses to our conversations were primarily related to memories of her childhood and the time she spent with her father. She also noticed a resurgence in her appreciation and connection to Polonia, which had only intensified in recent months and brought her a meaningful sense of fulfilment as a future without her father was uncertain.

When I asked Jolanda to be a participant, she responded to my request with intense eagerness. She also seemed very interested in doing the memory box activity, saying that she had "a lot of junk in the basement" we could look through together and that it sounded "like fun." I explained the process, and we scheduled a meeting for the following week. I ended the call feeling

very encouraged. I doubted whether my potential interlocutors would react to the experimental aspects of my methodology, but I was happy to see that, perhaps, it might be successful with some after all.

Gosia

I met Gosia (32) in childhood, but we only recently became closer friends after reconnecting at the Roncesvalles Polish Festival in 2011. At the time, she was studying for her graduate degree in chemical engineering; she decided to go back to school after years in the service industry had left her feeling "unaccomplished" and that she was "not living up to her expectations," as she put it. Gosia and I have deep philosophical and existential conversations much of the time. They are less about the day-to-day and more about our place in the world-at-large and things beyond corporality. It is not the kind of conversation I expected to have with my other research interlocutors. However, they were perhaps the most in-depth conversations I had throughout my fieldwork, even if we only met a few times. Gosia gave me the impression that she spent more time analyzing "being Polish Canadian" than I have. Some of my most vivid memories of Gosia have been discussing the heritage of Polish practices and objects; for example, we once spent an hour discussing why so much Polish food is pickled after she realized that many of her Canadian friends find her favourite foods too sour.

At first, it took much work for Gosia and me to find a mutual meeting time. At the beginning of my fieldwork, she was too busy to get involved and approached me later in the summer, asking "if there is still time to get involved." Of course, I obliged and told her there was "no pressure" if she felt that she could only commit to one session or more, or even less. Because we were friends, I believed that Gosia felt obligated to do research with me, but, in the end, she enjoyed our conversations as she always had. Like most millennial interlocutors engaged in this

project, Gosia was born in Poland and migrated at a young age. She is fluent in Polish and, although she now primarily speaks English, still uses Polish when communicating with her parents and other Polish friends and family.

Gosia was nearly always present when I think of my experiences in Polonia as a child. She and I engaged a lot in Polonia in Brantford; we danced together (although not as partners) in local folk dancing troupes, we taught Sunday School together at the Polish Church, we even worked together at the Hall during major Polish Canadian celebrations, like *Dożynki* [harvest festival]. Our meeting resulted from our parents being mutual friends, so we spent much time together as children, both in and out of Polonia. Regardless, we had become close friends recently, given we had so much in common, were experiencing similar challenges in life as of late, and that we "understood each other," as Gosia would say. When I called her, she answered with a very gentle "hello" as though she had just awoken from a nap, and I asked her how she was doing as we had not had the chance to connect since the past summer. She sighed and said, "Good… busy but good." Besides returning to school, she also ran a business that had grown exponentially over the last year. "What's been keeping you busy?" I asked her. "I went back to school. I'm taking cardiology. It's crazy times," she explained. "Congratulations!" I replied. "Thanks! But, I'm not sure if it was a good idea or not," she continued. "Why did you decide to go back to school?" I asked. "Well… business is good, but it's too much work," she continued. "It's like I never have time for myself, and I still can't afford a house," she sounded frustrated and let out another sigh. "So, what will you do with a degree in chemical engineering when you're done? I mean, what are you hoping to do?" I tried to steer the conversation towards what benefits Gosia would get out of going back to school. "I want to work in a lab," she replied. "Oh really? Why do you want to work in a lab?" I asked her, wanting to know what prompted such a

dramatic shift in her career. “Money!” she said as she chuckled and sighed. “And benefits… and stability… I’m sick of trying to find work and not having enough to buy a nice house… I’m supposed to be in a nice house by now,” she said with an air of frustration. “Yeah, because our parents said so,” I replied with a small amount of hysteria. She agreed, and we laughed about it, but I wondered why we were both so focused on measuring our worth through professional and social accomplishments.

“Anyway, I’m calling because I’m wondering if you would help me with my Ph.D.,” I said nondescriptly, trying to make my work seem approachable, although I was unsure exactly why I needed to do that. “Oh… okay… sure what were you thinking exactly?” She responded with some hesitation. “Well, I was hoping that you would like to join me as a research participant,” I asked her before I began to explain my research and what it would entail, being careful to frame it as voluntary and that she could commit as much or as little as she wanted to. I could tell she was uncomfortable as she told me: “I’d love to help, but things are just so nuts right now, and I just don’t know when I could help… but I want to because your work sounds super interesting… I mean, we’ve been talking about it for a while.” I knew that I was asking many of my research interlocutors to commit a few evenings over 2 to 4 weeks to meet with me, and, in my proposal, my sessions were supposed to be about 1.5 hours which meant that I would be asking them to give up a lot of their free time. “Well, how about you think about it? I’m doing this research for the next year; we can always get together in a few months, perhaps in the summer, when things are a little less busy for you?” I asked her, hoping to, yet again, emphasize that it was entirely up to her whether she wanted to participate or not and how much. “Sure… yeah… let’s do that… I think that could work… I mean, I don’t know! I’m sure things will quiet down, and then I’ll be able to help you,” she replied.

Before we finished, I asked her if she might know anyone else interested in participating with me. "Uhh…" she had thought about it for a moment, "well, I think that Veronica still lives in town, and then there's my cousin Bartek, I guess, but he's usually in Toronto these days." I was surprised that she did not know more people. Of all the people I knew, she and her family seemed the most connected and intertwined with Polonia in Brantford. She told me she would contact them to see if they might be interested. We ended our conversation with the usual "say hi to mom and dad… give them big hugs from me!" Suddenly, I felt less encouraged than before; it was only my second phone call, and I was already concerned that snowballing to meet new interlocutors would not be as easy as I had hoped.

Agata and Bartek

I had made a connection with a millennial family that was suggested to me by a member of the Hall. Although they were unsure what the purpose of my research was and assumed it was about "what it means to be Polish," Agata (33) and Bartek (39) were happy to participate in my research because, I assumed, they had remembered me from Polish Church and through our parents' mutual friendships. Even though it had been years since we spoke last, we had a strong sense of rapport from the outset of the research process, making conducting sessions feel natural. Agata and Bartek identify as Polish Canadians; Agata was born in Poland and migrated around the age of eight, whereas Bartek was born and raised in Brantford by first-generation Polish migrants.

We usually "just talked," which, in later sessions, took place over dinners that Agata had prepared. With Agata and Bartek, we often went "off script" in that the question prompts I had prepared inspired them to think well beyond my scope, leading our discussions in tangential directions. These sessions inspired me to consider how I wished to answer my research questions,

which influenced the questions I would ask other interlocutors as I discovered new ethnographic insights following our conversations. One movement was particularly influential on my process when Bartek stopped our discussion and reversed the role of interviewer/interviewee, forcing me to engage in autoethnography and consider my life as being implicated in my research. I realized I would have to reconsider my analysis to incorporate both my interlocutors' and my reflections on my research questions.

Agata and Bartek were among the few interlocutors that compiled a memory box, as they had told me that they had always been fond of keeping trinkets, photos, and other memorabilia to remain connected to their roots and as punctums for memories. Many of these items were from their childhood, but all of them held a special place in their home and were rarely used; most were stored safely away, sometimes under lock and key, such as the prized silverware collection that was given to them as a wedding gift by family in Poland.

Kamila

I also had extensive sessions with Kamila (37), a friend of my brother's whom I had decided to phone on his suggestion, knowing that she and her family still lived in Brantford. Born in Poland and raised in Canada, Kamila identifies as Polish Canadian. She was engaged deeply in Polonia as a child. However, following some off-putting experiences in her late teens and early twenties, she had largely disconnected herself from Polish cultural centres. However, she did choose to send her children to Polish language school for a time, even though they primarily speak English at home.

She was very eager to do research sessions with me. However, she was reluctant to engage in the memory box activity, indicating that she did not think she had anything meaningful to share and, more notably, that it was not an activity she would find engaging. I did not push my

interlocutors to compile a memory box, although I did try to present it in the best light possible. For Kamila, however, the activity did not resonate. She preferred our guided interview sessions when I read questions from a list of prepared prompts. Our conversations were always easy-going, and we could discuss various subjects rather openly. Toward the end of our sessions, Kamila even grew fond of our conversations. She enjoyed "the distraction" from her usual routine as a business owner and mother of two, later three, children. We had only met a few times because, following the summer, she soon became too busy with her children to continue.

Daniella

I met Daniella (35) in the summer of 2016 at a heritage function at the Hall. She was among the few Polish Canadian millennials attending, perhaps among five others and only one of two with children. She was there to support her children, who were part of the dancing troupe that regularly performed at heritage events at the Hall. When I approached Daniella, she was with her kids and two other women. I asked if one of them might be interested in researching with me. Daniella was the only one eager to do so and, without hesitation, agreed with a genuine "sure!" Followed by, "what, exactly, do you need me to do?" I explained the project to her in general terms. I told her that it was up to her to decide how much she wished to engage, that I was not entirely sure where the sessions would take us, and that "I really just want to chat about your life, engaging in Polonia, and everything in between." Although it seemed that she would have likely preferred a more concrete explanation of my work, she was happy to commit as it sounded like "she would be famous," as she put it, if I included her in my work. Being born in Poland and migrating at the age of three, Daniella also identifies as Polish Canadian, although, as I outline in later analysis of our research sessions, she is "ashamed" that she has largely forgotten how to speak Polish and believes that lost knowledge is a large part of her identity.

Baby Boomers

Meeting potential interlocutors from Brantford's Polish Canadian baby boomer population was significantly easier than engaging with millennials, given that many baby boomers volunteer at and frequent the Hall throughout the year. Also, they were generally more eager to engage with me having feelings of responsibility to "tell their story" and add to the collective heritage of Polonia in Canada. Although I was interested in understanding their perspectives on (the crisis of) generational succession, they primarily spoke of their experiences of maintaining Polonia in Brantford, the importance of its history and heritage, and how they succeeded the generation that came before them.

Zosia[1]

Zosia (55) has always been a go-getter, and her abundant energy is one of the main reasons the Polish Canadian community in Brantford-Brant continues to thrive. She was very involved as she volunteered with several sub-committees and the running of events, so her role at the Hall varied. She identifies as a Polish person living in Canada, having migrated from Poland to Canada in her early 20s. However, her identity is in flux as she feels "more and more Canadian" with each passing day. After attending a few meetings of the Polish Ladies' Circle and various other cultural events at the Hall in order to do extended participant observation, I would eventually approach Zosia about doing an interview session with me, to which she happily obliged.

[1] Research sessions with Zosia were conducted largely in Polish. The sociocultural formalities and immaterialities are translated into English as faithfully as possible.

Ela and Jan

After being invited to a few members' meetings at the Hall, I was approached by Ela (62) in mid-June, at which she and her husband, Jan (66), approached me and said they "had some stories they could share." I met Ela and Jan when the couple hosted a function at the Hall earlier in the year, but they had not previously shown interest in researching with me. Our sessions began in late June and ran into July, with less formal sessions continuing well past the end date of my fieldwork.

When I arrived for our first research session, I immediately noticed how immaculate they kept their home. Upon entering, I removed my shoes as I had always been instructed to do when visiting someone at home, even though they offered that I "leave them on." We sat together at the kitchen table; Ela was incredibly hospitable and offered to make me tea and "something to eat." We discussed their biographies, during which I learned that Ela was born in Poland and migrated at a very young age, whereas Jan was born in Canada to Polish-born migrants. Both identified themselves as Polish Canadians, although they primarily spoke English and preferred the anglicized pronunciations of their names, even when speaking in Polish.

Although my initial impressions of Ela and Jan were that they were both very relaxed and that I expected they would be reasonably open to the research process, they were inquisitive and asked many questions about my methodology and process, more than any of my other interlocutors. They were particularly interested in the depth of the questions and curious about the intimacy of the requests and what I planned to do with the information. I put their concerns at ease by saying that I would not be asking highly personal questions unless they decided they wanted to tell me something outside my routine roster. I also explained that they would be in control of the research, and we would discuss my representation of them before I submitted the final manuscript for consideration, which put them at ease.

Marcin and Beata[2]

I had a single, in-depth session with Marcin (65) and Beata (62). They could only agree to conduct one research session with me as they often worked opposite schedules and, due to the demanding nature of their work, were usually physically exhausted when they were both home at the same time. Still, our session together was long and very deep, given that they were eager to engage in my work and willing to do "whatever you need," they said, referring to me. We found a weeknight over the summer to do an extended session.

Because I was already familiar with them, I opted to skip many of the biographical questions that I would typically ask my research interlocutors, except for a few pertinent details I was unaware of. They are also familiar with my family, having been good friends with my father before he passed away, which further made the sessions comfortable and, I suspect, meant that they were more honest with their answers than some of the other interlocutors I engaged with.

Shortly after their marriage in Poland, Marcin and Beata migrated to Canada at the beginning of the third wave of Polish Migration to the West. Marcin had come a year before Beata and their two children to find a home and source of income to support his family, something fairly common for Polish migrants to Canada during that time.

[2] Research sessions with Marcin and Beata were conducted largely in Polish. The sociocultural formalities and immaterialities are translated into English as faithfully as possible.

Maria or the Koło Polek [Ladies' Circle] [3]

There are a few moments throughout this dissertation wherein I include transcriptions from moments of participant observation that I conducted with volunteers of the *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle] at the Hall who are primarily baby boomers or of similar age to Zosia, Ela and Jan, and Marcin and Beata. These women did not wish to participate in formal interview sessions but, at a members meeting, voted to allow me to include their responses in my analysis without identifying individuals in particular. Their insights are extremely valuable to this ethnography, so I include their responses throughout this research by treating them as a collective voice whom I have named Maria.

My Mother[4]

As a kind of reflection of my work, I often spoke with My Mother (61) about my research sessions, especially when I was confused about some of the more nuanced aspects of Polish heritage and traditions, which was, at times, challenging given that I retained the anonymity of my research interlocutors. I also used these sessions as a space to do auto-ethnographic reflection as, at about the mid-point of my fieldwork, I began to realize that this research was deeply personal and that I could not ignore the fact that I was implicated in my research, given that my feelings of displacement and in-betweenness were the primary drivers of my research questions and methods.

[3] Most responses by Members of the Hall were spoken in Polish. The sociocultural formalities and immaterialities are translated into English as faithfully as possible.

[4] Research sessions with my mother were conducted alternating between Polish and English. The sociocultural formalities and immaterialities are translated into English as faithfully as possible.

Although she did not attend any of the meetings with me, and I did not divulge the identity of my interlocutors, nor did I describe my fieldwork in much detail, I frequently had reflection sessions with her to try to parse and understand what I was experiencing and, especially, feeling. Part of this was because I was her son and was living at home with her at the time, so she had an active interest in my research and a "motherly" duty to help me in any way she could. However, another part of this was because, before my father passed away, my mother was actively involved in Polonia in Brantford. She had stopped engaging in Polonia rather abruptly after my father, her husband, was killed in a tragic work-related accident in 1997. She felt Polonia reminded her of him: "he was the social one and the one that formed the 'kabaret' at the Hall, so whenever I go there, I don't know, it makes me feel…" she never would say exactly how she felt, it was always a mattering of negative emotional sentiments followed by a deep, sorrowful sigh.

Like many other Polish Canadian baby boomers, my mother migrated with her family during the third wave of Polish Migration to the West and identified herself as Polish Canadian. However, she might shift that identification and sometimes says she is a Polish migrant living in Canada. She primarily keeps Polish-speaking friends and has strong connections with her family still living in Poland, including family on my father's side. Following my father's passing in 1997, my mother has largely distanced herself from Polonia in Canada; she was once very active at the Hall but had since stopped participating almost entirely because it reminds her of my father, who was very active there. Furthermore, she has sometimes told me that she feels like she does not belong in Canada or, more specifically, that she feels like an "alien" in Canada and that she constantly has to "prove herself" to non-migrants. However, she no longer feels at home in

Poland and, like myself, yearns for a place that no longer exists and, perhaps, never did in the first place.

Engaging the Community

Moving Back "Home" / A Small, Dense Field

The following arrival scene is atypical in that I was not so much arriving as I was returning home. A few days before the start of 2016, I moved back to my mother's home in Brantford after several years away doing my Ph.D. in Toronto. It did not feel particularly unusual for me, as I had been visiting frequently and kept in touch with my friends and family while I was away. Furthermore, I was excited to see them again more regularly, as I had been too busy to keep in touch as much as I used to and wanted to. Given that my home is not far from where I lived in Toronto, the commute was short, so I had only packed my essential items, assuming I would not be staying permanently. Upon arrival, my mother welcomed me with food and expressed her excitement to "have me home again."

I was excited to move back to Brantford for the foreseeable future because I had not enjoyed my time in Toronto as much as I thought I would. For a long time leading up to attending York University in Toronto to complete my Ph.D., I had dreamed of moving to a bigger city where I could experience a new lifestyle. I felt that I needed a change, having spent my entire childhood living in rural communities, and I can still remember speaking with my friends, like Jolanda, about how we "couldn't wait to get out of Brantford" and move to the "big city" (the Greater Toronto Area). But, in truth, the novelty of urban life wore off after a few short years, and I began to long for a space and lifestyle that I was more familiar with. The fact that I was a stranger to Toronto was not problematic for me—after all, I spent most of my childhood moving frequently—it was that I had no point of reference for living in such a large city, so I found the

environment and people there to be more strange than familiar. Brantford, as much as I yearned to leave it, suddenly seemed to be where I felt more comfortable than elsewhere. Although, like Toronto and every other home in Canada I remember from childhood, the feeling that I did not belong there was and is still very much present.

I assumed many of the Polish Canadians I knew would still be living in Brantford. This was largely true, however, as most of them did not necessarily remember me, so there would still be much rapport-building work. I assumed that entering such a small field would mean that I would be challenged in making new connections with research interlocutors, even though I had chosen to do research with a community in which I had deep roots. I expected to leverage the intimacy of such a small field to easily connect with Polish Canadian individuals I was not previously acquainted with. Associations between Polish Canadians in Brantford are far-reaching, as many families and individuals are already familiar with one another, even if they do not consider each other friends or acquaintances. As a result, social mobility was relatively easy to capitalize on in Brantford and, after a short acclimatization period, I quickly gained new interlocutors through snowballing.

Generational "Realities"

The first few weeks and even months of fieldwork ought to be spent doing in-field participant observation and engaged listening to get to know the community and interlocutors you are working with. This seems obvious when entering a field that one needs to become more familiar with, but I already knew the community well. My training in ethnographic methods guided me to start with participant observation; i.e., to engage with potential research interlocutors in the field. However, I quickly realized that I was not sure where such a field was exactly.

As I was envisioning my project during the proposal phase, I primarily wanted to meet with Polish Canadian millennials as I believed that the transitioning or disappearing of Polonia would lie squarely on their shoulders. Even though I did investigative work before fieldwork to find Polish Canadian millennial social networks, these groups were not very active, nor did they have large membership numbers. Given that my circle of friends and their acquaintances (largely millennial) still identified strongly with their Polish heritage at the time, I wondered where (and how) I might engage other Polish Canadian millennials when there are few physical and digital spaces of active congregation. I previously knew some of my millennial interlocutors, but I also wanted to meet new individuals or, at the very least, ones whom I did not have much previous interaction with to get perspectives on Polonia outside of my everyday reality.

This did not materialize as I had hoped and, instead, I primarily relied on snowballing to meet new Polish Canadian millennial interlocutors through baby boomers. These connections often resulted in gaining new interlocutors; perhaps they felt compelled by the baby boomers or, perhaps, they were genuinely interested in engaging in the work. I hardly received any opportunities to make new connections through the millennial interlocutors engaged in this research; most told me that their friends had long since left Brantford and that they do not keep many Polish Canadian friends (although, at least for Agata and Bartek, some were surprised to realize that most of their friends had Polish roots).

Finding potential Polish Canadian baby boomer interlocutors was easier than doing so with millennials. This is because many baby boomers remain engaged in cultural spaces like the Hall. Furthermore, they remain more socially interconnected, not only through cultural spaces but through Polish Canadian social groups and other collectives, which is different for the millennial generation. Of course, I considered contacting one of the Polish Canadian Cultural Halls

or the Polish Canadian Roman Catholic Church from the outset. However, I was interested in talking to individuals who, like me, identified as Polish Canadian but may or may not necessarily engage in Polonia-at-large. Furthermore, I very much wanted to meet Polish Canadians outside these organizations as I imagined this would expose me to different individuals and stories. Finally, I assumed that if these organizations remained important to Polish Canadians, my fieldwork would lead me to either the Halls or the Church anyhow, which ended up being the case for the former but not the latter.

Only a few months into fieldwork, I started to experience grave difficulty in finding millennial interlocutors. I wondered if the rumours told by my mother's friends were true, that the "youth" moved out of Brantford to larger cities where there are more opportunities and the lifestyle suits this new generation more. Except, I knew that this was not necessarily true. Having lived in the Greater Toronto Area for the last five years, I can say that the same is true for the metropolitan areas and the Polish Canadian communities they harbour; Roncesvalles (the 'Little Poland' of Toronto) has long ago been gentrified, having become too expensive for most to live in. Even newer Polish Canadian neighbourhoods, like Lakeshore West and Eatonville, have experienced similar gentrification. The idea of a Polish Canadian city-within-a-city is a relic of the past when rent was cheap and work was easier to come by. Of course, some Polish Canadians continue to live in the Greater Toronto Area, but they have also moved to other parts of Canada, and some have even moved back to Poland or other parts of Europe. Migration is now largely fuelled by employment opportunities, with migrants going where work is available and the cost of living is affordable (White, "Young people and migration from contemporary Poland"; White, "Polish Return and Double Return Migration").

My experiences encouraged me to believe that members of my generation were slowly becoming less inclined to engage in Polonia as their preferences changed as they began to live futures of their own that were different from what they were told as children or what their parents wished for them. My engagement in Polonia has slowly declined in the past decade or so, being highly motivated to engage in life outside of Polonia as I sought to expand my horizons. However, when I approached Maria about researching with them and, hopefully, getting connected with Polish Canadian millennials in the area, I was surprised to learn that the (mostly baby boomer) membership believed that many millennials were living here and actively engaged in Polonia. I was told that "many youths" participate in events and are active members of various Polish Canadian organizations in and near Brantford, including the Polish Language school, some Polish dancing troupes, and a provincial youth league. However, the reality was significantly different as membership numbers at youth organizations were very small, often only a handful of individuals, if they existed at all. Furthermore, there were significant barriers to engagement that limited my ability to approach and recruit Polish Canadian youth, such as having to follow strictly outlined policies on how non-members could contact members, as I would experience when attempting to reach out to the Polish School, which I outline later in this section. Of course, I considered other recruitment methods—e.g., via social media—but I was more interested in meeting Polish Canadian millennials in the context of engagements with/in Polonia.

My Mother's Telephone Book

In February, I decided to do some cold calling to some individuals that I remembered as being very active at the Hall when I was a child. I remembered that my mother had an old telephone book that contained phone numbers to local Polish Canadian families—a derelict, brown vinyl book that we bought when we first arrived in Canada and that was now very tattered but

hardly altered since most entries were written into it in the late 1990s. Even since the onset of cell phones, she had not used that telephone book much, but I had assumed, like my mother and my friends Jolanda and Gosia, that many families kept the same telephone number, so I thought this was an excellent place to start. I opened my mother's telephone book and flipped through its pages for potential contacts. I went to the pages with the most wear and tear and found three families that I thought would be good leads. I called in the late evening, hoping to catch people after dinner. Two of the three families were not home, so I left them messages on their answering machines, which sounded strangely familiar. Perhaps I remembered telephoning them when I was younger and heard the same message, or maybe I had just imagined they were.

Luckily, the third telephone call was to a family that was at home, Marcin and Beata, who are Gosia's parents. Marcin answered, expecting my mother but was pleasantly surprised to hear my voice on the other end. We spent a few minutes catching up. Beata—listening on the other phone in the kitchen—asked me how I was doing, particularly with my schooling. I filled them in on a few details before asking them if they could help me with my project. They told me they did not know precisely how to help me but wanted to support me "however they were able." They offered to connect me with the Hall and mentioned that "there are a lot of young people there" and that I would probably find a few potential research interlocutors that way. I was surprised to hear that Polish Canadians my age were still engaged with the Hall. They seemed to reinforce this by telling me that there had been an upswing in the number of millennials attending Polonia events at the Hall. They gave me the phone number to one of the Hall's board members and offered to telephone them that night so that she could prepare for my call. I thanked them tremendously and offered, once again, that should they decide to be research interlocutors, I

would like to interview them for my research. We finished our conversation, and I hung up, feeling inspired.

The next afternoon, I telephoned Maria, whom Marcin and Beata had suggested I connect with. I recognized her name from my mother's telephone book and many Polonia events I attended as a child. Maria answered with a very magnanimous "hello," and I introduced myself semi-formally, as is the custom in Poland, particularly when speaking with elders. She said, "yes, Wiktor, I remember you very well." I was pleased because, as a child, I also had fond memories of her, especially how she often gave me Odra mini fruit candies that she carried in her purse. "I know your mother," she continued, "and, your father, he was such a good man. [He was] so funny, always telling jokes and making people feel at ease." I instantly felt the pressure of living up to his image as I always had.

I replied with thanks but quickly tried to change the conversation to the purpose of my call—engaging her in my research. I also explained how I was curious how/if Polish Canadian millennials were involved in the community and had asked her to get me in touch with some of them. She excitedly answered: "yes, Beata told me about your project… it sounds very interesting." She was honest that she did not "know what you're doing, exactly, but we know it's important to tell our story." Maria told me there were a lot of "young Polish people" at the Hall and that I should consider participating in "The Villages" (The Brantford International Villages Festival) when a considerable number of Polish Canadian millennials and their families attended. This sounded like a perfect opportunity to engage with potential interlocutors. She had offered to take me on a "tour" of the Hall and to introduce me to some key members. As a guest, I was invited to attend the next meeting of the *Kolo Polek* [Ladies' Circle] later that month. "I will, of course,

help you any way I possibly can," she said confidently. We had set up a meeting time for the following afternoon, and, feeling reassured, I ended the conversation knowing that I had just made a strong connection.

Letting Ethnography Happen

The Hall

It was the afternoon following my phone call with Maria, and I had arrived at the Hall to meet with her. I should not have been at all surprised that I connected with the Polish Canadian community at the Hall reasonably early in the process, as I believe that space remains vital to the Polish Canadian community given that so many of my family and friends had been engaged there at one time or another, whether they continue to frequent it or not.

Maria began the tour with a considerable breadth, including historical accounts of the organization and its nearly century-long existence in the Branford community. She began this account by taking me over to two plaques that adorn the entrance hallway wall. The plaque on the left had headshots of nearly every Hall president since its inception; there have been a few women in recent years, but it is composed chiefly of later-aged men. Another plaque was hanging opposite and showed the leaders of the *Koło Polek* [Women's Circle], a shorter list entirely comprised of women. She had taken a lot of time telling me about the people on these plaques and how it was necessary to document our history. "The reason for this plaque," she had started, "is that it reminds us of the long continuity this hall represents." The first president began their tenure in 1932, and there have been 27 presidents since its inception. Similarly, the headshots of the *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle] showed the names of all the leaders since their inception. Her eyes had beamed with honour; those faces represented years of work and a connection to her/our past. I recognized many of the faces from the last 10 to 15 years or so.

We continued the tour through the various spaces in the Hall, like the main banquet space and various smaller rooms intended for other functions. I felt like time had taken its toll in some ways and had been frozen in others. It was my first time seeing the Polish School, which was on the upper level of the building. The wood panelling, characteristic of the 1970s, and worn desks told that this space had not changed much recently. The facilities were mostly untouched since a remodel was done shortly after 2000, and most of the upper and some of the lower levels of the Hall were not utilized and had been cleared out in the hopes that they would be ready for later use.

We ended our tour in the kitchen where some members of the *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle] were making pierogi. Perhaps my favourite place and the one where I had the most visceral and embodied reaction. I had spent many weekends over several years working in that kitchen as a server at heritage event banquets. This time, it was a pleasure to see that nothing had changed. Everything was as I remembered it; even the milk was kept in the same location in the fridge. I was greeted by the kitchen manager, a rather stern woman that still remembered me because her face softened when I asked her "when will the pierogi be ready? I hear you need a taste tester! "She giggled and said, "well then, it's a very good thing you're here," as she handed me freshly boiled pierogi to taste. It was a delightful and nostalgic experience, but that feeling quickly faded as I realized that more than fifteen years had passed since I started working in the kitchen and almost ten years since I last stepped foot into it. Where had the time gone? And what was the rock in my stomach? Was I happy to see a space I have such wonderful memories of? Or was I sad that it had not changed in the time that I had been gone?

We moved towards the main lobby area where a few of the Hall's executives were waiting and formally greeted me by having me shake hands, with one calling me "*Pan Doktor* [Mr.

Doctor].” It was like they were treating me like a dignitary meeting people of prominence in this community. Everyone seemed vaguely familiar, even if I could not remember their names or to which family they belonged. The formalities continued even when I tried to lighten the mood because, honestly, the severity of the meeting made me feel somewhat uncomfortable. Perhaps it was because I had not previously realized that my research would be perceived as necessary by the Polish Canadian community or for what reason(s) they saw so much value in my project. It was like I was being told about the history of Polonia in Brantford (and Canada) by minders, with the executives making sure to single out the things that they felt made their institution unique among others: I was told how the organization and building came to be; I was given an overview of the past presidencies, including some of the more important leaders that shaped its sociopolitical structure; I was made aware of some sub-organizations at the Hall, such as the *Koło Polek* [Ladies’ Circle]; and, I was also told one account of the infamous schism that led to the creation of two Polish Canadian halls.

There were several moments when I felt incredibly bored during the tour; part of this was because this history was told to me time and again as a child, but also because I was told about other historical moments that seemed alien and disconnected from my reality. This history was vitally important to them as it gave them a sense of longevity and continuance, belonging, and purpose. After the tour, Maria invited me to sit down with the executives. I thanked them for welcoming me and for providing the tour. I introduced myself and the research I was undertaking and mentioned to them that I wished to speak with other Polish Canadians, especially millennials whom I had yet to make new acquaintances. Not entirely to my surprise, they responded that, unfortunately, there were very few “young people” at the Hall but that I could potentially speak

with the instructors in the Polish School where the majority of the younger Polish Canadians were engaged.

As a child, I would imagine returning to the Hall as an adult with my own family and partner, much like my parents did. But during this first interaction with the Hall, I realized that said future may not happen and that my visions of the past were locked into an idealist fantasy. There I was, facing a half-empty space with a tired facia and a quickly evaporating pool of finances, all of which happened sometime in the last five years. It was troubling to see this space—once a jewel of Polish Canadian sociocultural engagement in Brantford—become something of a relic. I left that first meeting feeling deeply troubled.

Following Maria's suggestion, I set aside large amounts of time to volunteer at the Hall as they prepared for the International Villages Festival scheduled for early July. This meant engaging in planning meetings at the Hall and the larger International Villages Festival, helping to make pierogi in the kitchen, and assisting during the week of Villages festivities. So, I offered to spend some of the days in the kitchen, some of the days on the floor, and to spend one of the days running the sound and video projection equipment during the cultural presentations.

Volunteering at the Hall and Summer Interviews

Over the summer, I was regularly engaged in volunteering activities at the Hall, mainly through the *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle] and their subcommittees. My involvement grew in frequency and intensity in the latter half of May and early June as the group was preparing to host the Miss Polonia competition in May and, subsequently, the Brantford International Villages Festival in July. The work was plentiful with the majority of the labour done by volunteers, some of which were coming to work at the Hall almost every day, a considerable commitment. Although the pool of daily volunteers was largely comprised of retired persons, many of them had

daytime commitments. This certainly changed my views of engagement at the Hall as there were many members that were very committed to operating this venue, after all.

The *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle] was extremely open to my research and was forthcoming and even excited to have me engage in their activities. It was near the end of their annual year, so they were winding down as they prepared to take a short break for summer holidays in the next month or so. However, the group was still very much active as they were preparing for Miss Polonia Coronation and subsequent participation in the citywide International Villages Festival.

The first meeting to which I was invited took place at the other Polish hall and was an orientation and registration event at which all the other cultural centres in town participating in the International Villages Festival were expected to attend. "Is there a lot of work to do?" I asked one of the women before we started the meeting. "Oh, yes, of course," she replied as though I should have assumed so; "there are pierogi to make… and there is no good *kapusta* [sauerkraut] for the dinner," she explained, which prompted the women at my table to discuss the lack of access to good cabbage in recent years. The core of The Villages subcommittee consisted of eight women, with most having been volunteering for the Miss Polonia Coronation for many years.

In early June, I was asked to attend the *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle] year-end volunteers' meeting and dinner. It was a beautiful event and gave me the impression that the women enjoyed and took significant pride in this celebration as the atmosphere was electrified and jovial. A large number of women attended, most that I had not previously met at the Hall. It was a potluck, so each person brought something to share, but the main course was made by the "kitchen mother"

Pani Halina [Mrs. Halina][5]. I came early and asked if they needed help in the kitchen. The volunteers quickly put me to work, and I helped get the food out onto the buffet table and set up the coffee station. The women liked when men helped in the kitchen as they told me, "I need to buy a dress" as I was now "officially an honourary member of the *Koło Polek* [Ladies' Circle]"—a friendly joke that I understood as a sign of acceptance.

Seemingly overnight, my research sessions had become steadily busy: I was beginning sessions with Jan and Ela, members of the Hall whom I had met through the executive; a childhood friend, Gosia, had eventually decided to engage in some sessions; I began research with Kamila, someone that I had met through a chance introduction through my brother; and, I had started meeting with Daniella after we had met at the Hall.

Another thing I had on the horizon was the connection I was preparing to make with the Polish School in September; I had recently received ethics approval from the regional school board, and I had made connections with the headteacher of the school at a members' meeting with which I had quickly developed a supportive working relationship. I was excited about the pace of my research and was no longer worried about meeting new interlocutors or that I had to work to build rapport within the community.

During the busy summer, I was conducting, on average, two or three sessions each week. Meanwhile, I remained engaged in participant observation at the Hall. I decided that after about twenty formal interview sessions, which I conducted over roughly three months with various members of the Polish Canadian community, I would stop looking for new interlocutors to do one-on-one interviews with and would, instead, focus on unplanned sessions and "being present"

[5] "Pani," loosely translates to Mrs. or Ms., and is used, when speaking formally in Polish, as a title for a woman with whom you have been acquainted

in the community. I assumed that without an agenda or structure, I might be free to do more and see more and that it would also make my interlocutors more comfortable if they sensed there were no alternative motives to my research.

Considerations

Rapport

Considering myself of Polish descent and because of my connection with the Polish Canadian community of Brantford, building rapport with interlocutors came easily. By choosing to work with interlocutors in a community with which I already had connections, I capitalized on these relationships and my (family's) reputation, which helped me to recruit several interlocutors early in the fieldwork process. This choice also meant that my interlocutors often felt comfortable with our engagements and were eager to open up and discuss personal/private details early in the process. For these reasons, I decided to forgo the usual month or two of participant observation that most ethnographers would do to get a sense of the community. I felt like I already knew this community very well because, in some ways, I have been doing this ethnography for the entirety of my life.

When trying to meet new individuals for the first time, I defaulted to a more formal mode of engagement and maintained a strict level of professionalism, assuming that I needed to impress my research interlocutors to gain their participation. I quickly realized this was a poor strategy that left many potential interlocutors confused, intimidated, or suspicious of my intentions. That is, without necessarily intending to, I presented myself as an "expert" doing important research, leading me to take a colonial approach to ethnography that I had been taught to avoid. As a result, I had to change my approach to meeting new interlocutors by lowering some of my barriers and recognizing our bond through our shared heritage.

When I was formally introduced to the general membership at the Hall as an "honoured guest" at their Miss Polonia Coronation event in May, I asked the membership not to think of me as an "examiner" or that I was "testing their Polishness" but instead that I was there to "get to know them" and to "help out where I can." I felt it necessary to do this because, when speaking with members at the Hall or when conducting research sessions, I still had the impression that they felt obligated to highlight just how "Polish" they were (or not) as though they imagined that was the crux of my research. Although this was insightful, I wondered how and to what extent my methodology or position as a Ph.D. student conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the Polish Canadian community affected my research efforts. I wanted to be seen as "just another member," but I was treated more like an expert, a stigma that I worked hard to but could not entirely overcome.

Expectations

Initially, I knew that my research would likely go differently than planned. As I was building the methodology and praxis, I questioned whether my imaginative methods would resonate with my potential interlocutors as much as they did with me. I hoped that, with every session I engaged in, I would better understand what I needed to do to realize my research questions and then tweak my methods. Nevertheless, in my mind, I was sure that I had to "stick to my plan," as I repeatedly told myself at the onset of fieldwork. There were two reasons for this: first, I felt that I had invested a considerable amount of time—a few months, at least—towards defining this project over the proposal stage, and so I felt confident in my methodology and proposed research praxis; second, I knew my training, although rigorous and thorough over the past few years, was very much naïve and, regardless of that fact, I did not feel I was yet capable of "experimenting" too much.

I decided it would be best to "just start doing it" and see where the process took me. My supervisor encouraged me to do just that, even if the prospect made me nervous. I prefer to work with clear structures—and, from the outset, I tried to work within the theoretical and methodological boundaries to guide my work as outlined in the proposal—but I quickly realized that this sort of approach would hinder me. Although I did ethnography in a community that I have considered home for the better part of two decades, part of me felt compelled to imagine that I was exploring this community for the first time. In some respects, this was very true, as I had been away from Brantford for nearly nine years in graduate school. The home community I returned to felt familiar in many ways but, as I quickly realized, was imagined and in the past.

(Not) Methodological Failures

Although I consider engaging with Polish Canadians in Brantford to be mostly successful, there were times when I experienced notable resistance to my research methodology, which I outline below. In particular, there were two primary moments when I felt that my interlocutors were resistant to my ideas: first was in response to the memory box activity that I proposed wherein I asked my interlocutors to collect items pertinent to their identities and lived realities (e.g., trinkets, photos, stories, recipes, etc.); second, I wished to engage the parents of students attending the Polish Language School at the Hall where children are taught lessons in the Polish Language, focused on speaking, reading, and writing in Polish. Before I begin this ethnography's descriptive and analytic chapters, I would like to overview these failed engagements and how/why I felt they were not realized the way I hoped. Ultimately, these failed projects were not in vain as they revealed much ethnographic insight into how both baby boomers and millennials engage (and not) with Polonia, their priorities in life, and how they imagine their futures.

(Not) Doing a Memory Box

By the middle of the summer, fieldwork sessions were frequent, which kept me very busy. However, I was disappointed that most of my interlocutors did not want to engage in the more imaginative methodology I had proposed in which they would build a memory box. Instead, most of my interlocutors preferred meeting and having a casual conversation rather than what Daniella had described as "something that sounded like homework." Of course, I wanted to follow my interlocutors' desires to take the research and ensuing conversations where they wanted to lead them. I usually suggested a similar format to our sessions: first, we would do preliminary interviews where I would ask biographical questions; we would follow this with a series of in-depth interviews where we would chat about topics that related more specifically to my research questions from a series of talking points I had prepared; and, finally, I proposed that they build a memory box, and then we would meet to explore and discuss it.

Although some of my interlocutors followed this plan and were even eager to engage in the memory box activity, most preferred to spend our time together doing guided question interviews and simply talking. I did have a chance to work on memory boxes with Agata & Bartek, and Jolanda. I met with Agata and Bartek in late September to do a memory box, and they mostly seemed to enjoy the activity. Jolanda was the most enthusiastic about the activity. She considered the work a catalyst to reconnect with aspects of her childhood and re-display some cherished possessions she had all but forgotten about.

None of my baby boomer interlocutors were interested in creating a memory box, which I suspect was due to their desire to speak mainly about the intangible aspects of their lives, such as Polish Canadian heritage and traditions. For baby boomers, physical items were less important than the ideas surrounding those items, such as the plaque adorned on the wall of the Hall that

Maria so often admired because it reminded them of the rich history of Polonia in Brantford, or the pride she has in following a precise methodology for making pierogi.

In some ways, all of my interlocutors engaged in a memory box-building exercise, albeit indirectly. Although they may not immediately see the value in memory objects that they keep in their lives, the stories they shared with me during this fieldwork indicate that many objects function as a punctum for memory. As such, I devote a section in Chapter 3 to "Memory Objects," which also includes an analysis of the few memory box activities I co-conducted. Finally, I came to believe it is the imagistic dimensions of life that are essential things in the lives of baby boomers, such as the stories of their heritage, their family, and the community to which they claim belonging. The imagistic is difficult to "collect," so I believe this is a significant reason baby boomers preferred to talk over casual conversation rather than trying to compartmentalize their lives and those spaces that I sought to categorize and unpack neatly.

(Not) Engaging the Polish School

In early summer, a few members at the Polish Hall recommended that I contact the Polish School—*Polska Szkoła im. Mikołaja Kopernika* [Nicolaus Copernicus Polish School]—where many Polish millennials had enrolled their children in classes taught exclusively in Polish. Unlike other Polish Canadian communities in Ontario, Brantford continues to run a successful Polish School program for children between ages 5 and 16 (approx.). Although, at the time of my fieldwork, the enrolment numbers had dropped considerably, with only one class taking place each week that encompassed all grade levels of students, aside from kindergarten class that still ran separately from the more advanced levels. The school is housed in the Polish Canadian Alliance Hall and administered by the Grand Eire District School Board (the region's public school

board) as a “learning alternatives” programme that supplements elementary education with classes taught in the Polish language on topics that, usually, pertain to Polonia and Polish history.

Maria gave me a warm transfer to the headteacher of the Polish School with whom I met in the summer. As a result of the joint administration under which the school was governed, the process required for me to receive ethics approval was extensive and had to be done separately from the ethics approval I was granted from my graduate school. Once I received ethics approval from the Grand Eire District School Board, I set a meeting with the teachers of the Polish School to discuss my project in more detail. The headteacher was very eager to help and expressed that she saw “great value” in my research as an exercise in maintaining and encouraging “the Polish way of life.” She told me that several young people of Polish descent enrolled their students at the school, which had been increasing in recent years as the millennial generation was, purportedly, moving back to Brantford. I was thrilled; I felt like I had found a space where Polish Canadian millennials engage directly in Polonia in ways they consider “traditional.” I had this romanticized image of Polish families sending their Canadian-born children to learn their people’s history, heritage, traditions, and language, much like some of my friends who had attended Polish School in their youth.

The headteacher suggested that I introduce myself to the parents of the schoolchildren at their first parent-teacher night in the early days of September. She told me that it was “up to the parents” if they wanted to participate and that, “due to policy,” I had to proposition potential research interlocutors in this formal setting and would not be given other means to contact the parents or that I should expect the teachers to proposition the parents on my behalf. This meant that reaching this group would prove somewhat difficult as I only had one chance to meet with them and ask for their participation in my research. I was eager to engage with these Polish Canadian

millennials. I imagined they would be especially invested in Polonia, and that they would have many insights to share specifically pertaining to their desire for continuity of Polonia heritage and the Polish language among a new generation.

When I arrived for the parent-teacher meeting, I was asked to speak for a few moments to describe my work. Because I was concerned about making a good impression, and because of what I had learned in the past months of fieldwork, I spoke about my project very casually and said that I just wanted to "chat over coffee." One of the parents asked me to be more specific about "what, exactly, you [I] wanted" and "how much time would it take" for a participant to complete engagement in my project. I was very specific that "it could be one meeting or more" but that, ultimately, it was "up to you [them]" to decide how much time they would like to commit. Furthermore, I mentioned that we did not have to meet anytime soon as I would be doing research well into the early months of the following year. I kept the introduction short and casual to reflect my intentions and because the headteacher had given me the impression that she had much to cover about the upcoming school year with the parents.

Besides the individual who asked me about my commitment expectations, I was not asked any further questions about my project during the meeting, which ended with the headteacher encouragingly saying that I should expect some callbacks "very soon" which she would be facilitating on my behalf. I left the meeting with high expectations while also wondering if I would see these individuals or be given access to speak with them again. There was a feeling of hesitation deep in my stomach that I should not expect to receive many or any engagements. This proved to be the case as, the following week, the headteacher told me that they had not received any inquiries or offers to contact me but that she would remind the parents to do so

as they dropped their children off for lessons that night. However, even though I followed up weekly throughout September, I was unsuccessful in engaging this group of millennials.

The headteacher did not seem entirely surprised, even though she told me she had been promoting the project to the parents and stressing its importance. I understood that she had limitations in her influence over the parents of the schoolchildren, particularly because of the strict ethics policies that she and I were bound to. I thanked her for the attempt and said "it's okay" because the fact that they could not or did not want to respond "also might be telling me something" about Polish Canadian millennials who, perhaps, had too many responsibilities or did not understand or see value in my research. Perhaps I was also stereotyping my understanding of the parents with some romanticized image of being Polish Canadian and thus assuming they would want to get involved in work related to Polonia. Though I can tell that she wished the parents would be more encouraged to take an active part in such projects—"not just for your benefit but for Polonia in Canada," as she said—her reaction to the lack of interest from the parents indicated she had a general disappointment in the "engagement from the young people" at the Hall. During a later conversation with one of the other baby boomer members at the Hall, they told me that "they [the parents] want their children to learn Polish and our history," they said, "but they do not necessarily want to do the work," suggesting that the Polish school is a way for them to hand off the responsibility of doing some of the work of teaching Polish heritage to their children. Whether it was due to time commitment restraints or a lack of interest in my project or Polonia in general, in the end, none of the parents of the schoolchildren contacted me. Ultimately, this failed outcome influenced my subsequent analysis as I chose to focus on the disconnect between generations and their collective expectations.

Session with My Mother: On Research Sessions

Most often, sessions with my mother happened when I needed feedback during the more difficult moments of my fieldwork. Over one dinner early in the summer, I discussed with her my worries that I needed to be more engaging with Polish Canadian millennials and that my sessions with them were not as clear to me as those I held with baby boomers. "It's like I can't get them to talk enough about my research questions," I explained to her. "What do you want to know from them?" "Everything? Anything?" I asked as though questioning myself. "Well, you're talking about something," she said, "write about that." "I will," I explained, "maybe I'm just not sure what it means." "Maybe they are not sure, either," she explained. "Not sure about what? My research?" I asked. "I think I'm being pretty clear," I added. "Not sure about themselves," she said, "they are still young, they will change [their perspectives] as they get older," she explained, "everyone does." At this moment, I began to realize this would be the crux of my research: that I was looking not to capture the current climate of Polonia in Canada but that I should look to understand the performativity of Polonia during a time of significant change. "You can't expect specific things in life," she said, "*Każdy kij ma dwa końce* [every stick has two ends]," she added, as though explaining that I cannot look at my research from either end but have to look at the journey between those two points.

Unlike the millennials, whom I wished I had been meeting more of through local gatherings and events, it seemed much more natural for me to engage with baby boomers as they were more open to answering my questions and often replied at length without much need for prompting. The baby boomers had more to say, and I wondered why this was and posed this question to my mother. "Is it because they are older?" I asked. "There comes the point in everyone's life where you stop thinking about the future and focus on the past," she said, "you want to share your life with others so that you won't be forgotten." My mother was talking about legacies and

sharing them with future generations. “I remember when I was your age, I didn’t care about traditions or history or doing things a certain way,” she explained, “I wanted to live my life and work to make a better future for myself.” “That’s why we came to Canada,” she said, “that’s why I worked so hard in my thirties and went to school again, so that you and your brother could have a better life than we did… so that we could all have a better life.” She said, referring to herself and my father jointly because my mother was not the one eager to move to Canada; she had a good job in Poland, and she could not imagine a “better life” than the one we already had. “That will be your legacy, mom,” I said, “your generation will always be remembered as the ones that sacrificed their lives for their family.” She looked at me for a moment before replying, “well, I hope you’ll remember me for more than just sacrificing my life.”

Her sentiments were ones that she, and other Polish Canadians her age, had told me time and again: that they moved to Canada to provide a better life for their children. More than anything, this has left me, and other Polish Canadians my age feeling an enormous guilt that our success in life predicates their happiness. This has steered most of the decisions I have made in my life, and, as I discovered during the fieldwork, this is true for other Polish Canadian millennials. This guilt would shape how I would engage in fieldwork, even though I tried to imagine that I was being reflexive and would avoid the pitfall of letting these emotions frame how I engaged with my interlocutors, particularly the baby boomers. Of course, as I would discover throughout this ethnography, this would prove impossible. Working against this guilt would prove problematic as I would make decisions based on my negative sentiments about the dreams of fore generations.

Chapter Three: Migrant Life

In this chapter, I describe the forces that shape the reality of being a Polish migrant living in Canada according to my interlocutors and me, and what it means to feel as though one is living in-between. I begin with the latter by describing how, as migrants, we often feel as though our lives are liminal (Turner, *The Ritual Process*). As migrants, our lives move continuously, back and forth, between here/there/somewhere and as it was/as it is/as it could be. This movement is both static and perpetual in that Polish Canadians imagine life as being rooted in Poland, in Canada, or both. I then move onto discussing what it means to belong to Polonia, which is a nation that appears betwixt Poland and Canada but that is separate from both. Being inherently liminal, like the lives of my interlocutors, Polonia is a space that is difficult to define. The goal of this first chapter is to help the reader to begin to understand the tumultuous reality of the Polish Canadian migrant condition.

In the last two sections of this chapter, I outline the sociocultural forces within Polonia that affect and are affected by the lives of my interlocutors. Through my research, my interlocutors regard memory, nostalgia, and guilt as principal forces in their lives affecting both generations of focus in this research, albeit differently. I analyze these forces comparatively, specifically how views among and between generations are sometimes at odds and sometimes in tandem. I first look at memory and nostalgia, and their affective potential for structuring the past and influencing the expectations of the future of my interlocutors (Fine; Hirsch; Williksen and Rapport). Then I investigate how guilt is a primary driving force in the formation of my interlocutors' imaginaries, one that functions to both enable and inhibit the realization of an ideal life as it is imagined according to my interlocutors (Dein).

Living In-Between

My interlocutors and I imagine our lifeworlds as existing and unfolding in a liminal socio-ocultural space between multiple places and times, what Anne Sigfrid Grønseth calls "living in-between" (1; Horvath et al.). In this section, I analyze the different ways that we see ourselves as living in-between, with a focus on the performance of said liminality and how we seek belonging. Belonging to Polonia often means living in "a little world," as Jolanda described, wherein sociocultural discursiveness is firmly defined and has little room for alternate viewpoints (Hall, "Whose heritage?"). This world is primarily inspired by migration experiences that share commonalities for many Polish Canadians, binding this imagined nation together (Anderson; Pleszczyński et al.). At the same time, many feel pressured to amalgamate to life in Canada which leaves their sense of identity feeling fractured, as though best understood as a prism (Ziemer and Roberts).

Early into fieldwork, I was struck by something that Agata said about her childhood that seemed to mirror and reinforce my deeply rooted feelings of unbelonging. "I always felt like I didn't really belong here, like I was out of touch with this place," she explained. "Somedays I look at people's lives as they've gone by, and I wonder what life would have been like had we stayed [in Poland]," she added, "do you know what I mean?" "We are like fish out of water," I responded in solidarity. Agata, like me, had trouble expressing her feelings of displacement and need for belonging. She longed to live somewhere she felt more comfortable, even though she was unsure where that place was.

Agata described herself as "weird," or different, best understood as a kind of "everyday otherness" (Radford 8). Agata uses this moniker to normalize how her life is misaligned with other people her age and non-Polish Canadians or non-migrants. At first, it seemed to me that

Agata is uncomfortable with the fact that she does not relate with many people but, as her husband Bartek explained, they have come to realize that they prefer to live life with their preferences rather than trying to succumb to external pressures and expectations. “We’re just different, I think,” Agata added, “I’m different.” “It’s not that we go against the status quo,” Bartek explained, “we just like to march to our own tune.”

Daniella similarly identified herself as not fitting into any place in particular, which she described as her “weirdness” (Radford). She explained that she does not feel entirely Polish, Canadian or even Polish Canadian. “Polish first, and then Canadian… at work when they ask us to identify ourselves and the only option is Caucasian it’s like ‘yes, but what kind of Caucasian are you?’ Because I’m actually European and my other co-workers are white, it’s like, technically, we are usually grouped together, but I don’t consider myself white, and my co-workers understand why I feel like that because I’m very different from them,” Daniella explained. “[Polish people] went through a lot of stuff, and, to me, it’s important to remember that,” she replied. “But, I should probably identify myself more as Canadian rather than Polish,” Daniella explained, given that she has lived in Canada for most of her life. “However, I feel the other way around, probably because I was born [in Poland], which makes me feel more European,” she explained, “[it] would be different if I were born here, I’d probably consider myself that way [Canadian]… I’m proud of it, with our values, our heritage, our culture,” she explained. “It helps explain my, uh, weirdness,” she added.

“A Little World”

Polonia appropriates its identity from Poland yet is devised and experienced in ways unique to the Polish diaspora in that there is a shared national identity based on inputs over

waves of migration; i.e., each wave brings a substantial influx of identity-forming images (objects, memories, performances, etc.) that add their unique perspective to the shared understanding of Polonia culture (Pleszczyński et al.). Perhaps best explained by Terry Eagleton, "[t]he idea of culture, then, signifies a double refusal: of organic determinism on the one hand, and of the autonomy of spirit on the other" (Eagleton 10). Furthermore, the "diasporic individual often has a double consciousness" (Agnew 14). Polish Canadians belong to the Polish diaspora, modelled after Polish culture, while we simultaneously chart our path in Canada. Thus, we are inherently (dis)connected within parallel and plural realities shared by people of Polish descent.

Polonia is regarded by its members as a nation onto itself with a strong sense of identity that is collectively defined and considered by its constituents as being deeply connected to Poland as a place of origin (Thomas and Znaniecki; Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society). Because of the intimate and often exclusive nature of the Polish Canadian community, in that there is strict discursiveness of what we consider included or excluded from Polonia, some feel that there are strong expectations of what it means to "be Polish." For some, in order to fit in that definition and within Polonia, they feel that they have to "prove their Polish-ness," as Agata explained it, especially when they do not live according to socially established expectations.

These expectations are based on a heavy nationalism which stems from the repeat occupations of Poland that fuel a national desire to protect the homeland, conservatism as developed by the Roman Catholic Church to which the majority of Polish-born people claim or have claimed belonging, and the post-socialist condition developed during and following the fall of communism wherein Polish-born individuals felt pressure to conform—or adopt a kind of "oneness" (Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora")—to the ideals of the Polish nation-state (Leslie et al.). These images revolve around "a powerful legacy of interest in [protecting] the homeland,

casting the diaspora as watchful guardians of the nation's freedom and independence" (Burrell 324). That is, as Maria often told me, people of Polish descent feel that protecting the imaginary of Poland is the duty of all those who claim belonging to it, whether they live in Poland or not.

Living in Canada as a migrant, we are free to keep our identities or, at least, choose to live our lives according to our preferred worldview. Considered a "liberal state," Canada is among those nations where multiculturalism is tolerated, and globalization is considered orthodoxy (Joppke and Morawska 1). For people of Polish descent, this means one might consider themselves a Polish person living in Canada, a Polish Canadian, or a Canadian who belongs to Polonia. Jolanda, a millennial, described this as living in "a little world" or a kind of sub-nation that exists as its own space, somehow separate from Canada or even the world-at-large. Jolanda said she considers herself as having lived in "a Polish house." "All [our family] friends were Polish, and everything else was, yeah, for sure, Polish," Jolanda explained. "You know all your [social] activities… Polish songs… Polkas… [as a child], all I knew was Polkas because it was the days of the tape player, and we had, like, two tapes or whatever, and they were on repeat," she explained. "We didn't have CD players until, actually, it was a Christmas Party and [my parents] won a CD player, and I finally was able to listen to the radio, but I was already in high school."

"I grew up thinking it was a rule in just my house," I said, explaining to Jolanda that I assumed my family was unique in how my parents engaged in strategic avoidance of English media as a means to have their children exposed to more Polish culture and the Polish language. "But then I heard from other people that they also grew up on Polish media," I explained. "It's a comfort thing," she replied, "because once you realize there is actually good music out there, not just Polka which was just like…" she did not give a verbal description but, instead, made a face

as though she was eating something too salty. “You are sheltered within this little world [of Polonia],” she continued. Jolanda implied that when we were growing up, we did not often look outside the realities crafted within our homes.

Living in line with a Polish worldview can also extend to those born in Canada, so long as we consider our home life as being crafted based on a Polish ideology. “Brantford! Born and raised! [I’ve lived in the] same house until I got married,” Bartek explained when I asked him where he is from. “Well, I mean, I left for college for a while there,” he explained. “But even then, you spent some of that time commuting from home,” Agata chimed in. “But that’s how it was when I was a kid,” Bartek said. “My family, as far back as I can remember, they all lived at home,” he explained, “like one home, one big family.” He breathed, “until they were married, anyway,” he looked at Agata, his wife, and grinned mischievously. “But would you say you are Canadian or Polish then?” I asked Bartek. “Polish! 200%,” he replied without hesitation. “I may have been born here, but we [my family] identify as Polish,” he explained, “Polish and proud!” Bartek explained that his birthplace does not dictate his birthright; he and his family all recognize their Polish heritage and practice it proudly. He spoke at home primarily in Polish, observed Polish holidays and what he considered Polish traditions, and was heavily involved in Polonia through the Hall, having danced in heritage festivals for much of his childhood.

These little worlds of Polonia often extend into the workplace. In Brantford, there are several businesses whose Polish migrants represent considerable portions of the workforce (Statistics Canada). My interlocutors explained that Polish migrants to Canada often prefer to work with other people who identify as Polish or capitalize on the opportunity to be recommended for employment when starting their life in Canada and have few social connections.

In talking about her family's migration story, Agata explained how her father led their journey to Canada and chose Brantford because of the established Polish Canadian community comprised mainly of people from the Lublin region, and this camaraderie led to employment for him and his family. "My dad came when he was 25, and he went to work in the factory where he didn't have to speak English, other than, you know, 'basic English'," Agata told me. "Did he choose to work there because there were a bunch of other Polish people there too?" I asked. "Well, it's Brantford so, you know," she said, affirming my question with a statement before asking, "why do you think there are two Polish Halls and a Polish Church?" she continued.

When I asked Agata to describe her "worst job," she exclaimed, "the one I worked at for 9 years!" "The shifts were crazy," she continued, "the work was crazy… it was a hell of a job, I'll tell ya!" "Was it factory work?" I asked. "You mean, 'was it the same job that every Polack [in Brantford] did?'," she went on, "yup, that it was!" She was referring to assembly line work at a local factory where a disproportionate amount of the workforce was made up of Polish Canadians, primarily recent immigrants. However, many individuals remained employed until the factory closed sometime in the last decade. "It seemed like *everybody* worked there," I emphasized. "Yup, *everybody* worked there," she agreed, recognizing that I was referring to a factory in Brantford that made plastic mould-injected planters where many Polish migrants worked up to the mid-2000s when the factory shuttered.

Working with other Polish people also frequently happened for the children of migrants who were involved in cultural centre activities that hired Polish-speaking individuals. Like myself, Bartek worked at Polish cultural centres and felt that work was incredibly formative in his

childhood. He explained that he had found "bartending and serving at the Polish Hall at weddings" as one of his most rewarding jobs. "I mean, it was great," he continued, "I got to meet Polish people… I got to work with my friends." He added, "so that was probably the best [job]."

Further to workplaces, many Polish Canadians also maintain social circles with other people of Polish descent, further insulating Polonia's little world. This choice can be deliberate when Polish Canadians engage with one another in decidedly Polish settings, such as at a Polonia cultural centre or church. Other times, it is unconscious, wherein there is a natural gravitation towards other people of Polish descent because of shared understanding. Growing up, I tried to make friends with non-Polish people but naturally gravitated towards other Polish migrants or people who identify as being of Polish heritage. This gravitation has cemented as I have aged, with my present social circle being comprised almost exclusively with people of Polish heritage or European heritage.

Agata and Bartek reflected my life experiences when they told me that "most of our friends are Polish." "Around six couples," Agata explained. "And Italian," Bartek added, "one couple is Italian." Bartek said, "lots of cultures, Italian or Portuguese, for example, they are like that too." Agata nodded. "You feel more comfortable; you feel more of a connection," Bartek continued, "a lot of our friends, they can speak Polish." "Some of our friends we've known forever," Agata began, "but some of our friends we met along the way, like, for example, there's this one couple from Ancaster that we met, and we've known them for over 6 years, and we just [recently] found out they were Polish!" "But, it's not like we were trying to make friends with people that were Polish or just because they are Polish," Agata explained. "But, then, I met a lot of people by going to Polish events, the *zabawas* [dances], where you would meet a lot of other

Polish people," Bartek explained, "and, sure, we became friends with them because our personalities meshed, but I met a lot of people at those events." "There's a hidden connection that you can't describe," Bartek said.

Many Polish people living in Canada engage in Polonia cultural organizations, be it a Polish cultural hall, church or Polish-speaking business. My interlocutors often discussed the need to feel a sense of belonging as a migrant and that Polonia offers sociocultural spaces where we could feel that we belong, are understood, and are accepted by other like-minded individuals. Being of Polish descent and living in Canada has caused us to feel like we have fractured identities with a deep sense of unbelonging, especially as sociocultural assimilation has been experiencing a resurgence recently (Joppke and Morawska 3). This sometimes means engaging with individuals that prefer a lifestyle similar to the lives they left behind in Poland, sharing an understanding of the tribulations caused by adjusting to a new life in Canada, or finding solace in others that feel neither Polish nor Canadian exclusively.

Like Agata, Daniella described herself as being "strange" or "different," as though she could not explain her feelings of displacement in discursive ways. She had a deeply rooted sense of un-belonging or a lack of satisfaction from living in Canada or Poland. For Daniella, this means making her surroundings feel more familiar by, for example, finding a workplace where her colleagues find her in-between lifestyle to be normalized or, perhaps, even familiar. "But then I have the best boss in the world," she continued, "like, what other boss do you know that lets you wear *papcie* [Polish slippers] to work?" "Really?" I said, somewhat surprised, which prompted her to explain her statement. "Really!" She continued, "like I remember when I asked him if I could bring my *papcie* [Polish slippers] into work, he said, 'that is, literally, the weirdest request any employee has ever made to me'." I giggled, enthralled by the story. "I told him it

must be the European side of me, and he, my boss, is half-Polish, so he gets it," she continued, "and, now, every day when he sees me, he says: *'jak się masz, Polskie Ogórki?'* [How are you, Polish Pickles?]."

Zosia best explained the need for belonging as a major driving force and why she felt compelled to engage in Polonia through her volunteer work at the Hall. "[This work] is something that was missing for me [in my life] because, in Poland, I knew the language, and I always volunteered a lot in Poland as well. I always like to help people and to be with people," she continued. "So when I first came here," she explained, "the thing that was missing for me was having a strong understanding of the language, and also because I wanted to keep Polish traditions." "That's why the Polish School was very important to me," she continued, "and why I sent my children to the school, to learn the language and the traditions because I wanted my children to learn to speak Polish… because my husband's family doesn't live here, and I want them to be able to talk to grandma and grandpa, or for when we would go back to Poland for visits." "So, I was involved in the Ladies' Circle and, later, at the school when my children were going there," she explained, "and then we did a lot of dancing with my children."

This shared need for belonging is sometimes formed out of the realities of migration, wherein many individuals or families migrate together, forming small communities to support one another in their adopted country (Polish Mutual Benefit and Friendly Society). This was especially true during the first wave of Polish migration following WWI, which set an organizing precedent for creating pockets of Polonia (Pawlus-Kasprzak). I noticed that many families in Brantford trace their roots back to a particular region in Poland, in and around the city of Lublin. "In Toronto, it's largely people from Warsaw and Gdansk [regions]," Beata explained, "and, in Brantford, it's [people from] Lublin." Beata told me that "when [Polish] people were originally

looking to migrate, the people were poor, and so they could only afford to send one person to Canada… they would put their money together so that one person could go and, when they got to Canada, they would send money for the next person [to come]." "And that's how the entire village eventually came here," Marcin added. "You mean a family from the village, right?" I asked to clarify. "No, the entire village," Marcin answered. Beata confirmed, "not just one or two families, the whole village." "But those were old times," Beata added, "after the first world war," referring to earlier waves of migration to Canada.

A Quintessential Migration

For many individuals and their families that migrated during the third wave of Polish Migration to the West, the migration experience is somewhat similar: one or a few individuals received sponsorship to work in the West, and once they arrive, they begin the process of finding stable employment, housing, and a means to bring the remainder of their family and sometimes extended family as well (Ziemer and Roberts 1-2). Listening to Beata and Marcin's migration story, I noticed many quintessential features. "Marcin arrived in the [United] States in 1985, and then, in 1988, he arrived in Canada," Beata answered. "As for us, we came in 1989," she explained, referring to herself and her children. "And why were you over here for a year?" I asked Marcin, "was it easier to come to Canada that way?" "No, I was on vacation in the US, and I met with a friend who was already living in Canada, and he said, 'what do you have to lose'?" Marcin said, suggesting that his friend was coaxing him into moving to Canada, promising that he could return to Poland if things did not work out. "So, I said, 'why not,' and he signed my sponsorship paperwork to come to Canada and I came here, and then my family came a year later," he said. "As soon as I arrived in Canada, we moved to Brantford," Beata said, "into this house."

Marcin and Beata chose to migrate to Canada because they believed there would be more sociocultural acceptance. The country appeared to be the most familiar or "the most normal," as Beata described it. "What convinced you to come to Canada?" I asked. "They talked him into it," Beata said, referring to Marcin's friends. "Like they were staying in Poland at the time [before we migrated]," she continued before synthesizing her conversation with Marcin's friends: "if you are going to migrate, you might as well migrate to Canada; it's a more normal country than the weird one," she laughed, referring to the United States as the other option. "But, seriously, it's because it was easier to make a life for yourself in Canada," she explained, "it was easier to get established here, to find work or to start your own business." "People still have problems making a living in the States," Marcin added. "All the people who were on the boats going back and forth [between Europe and North America] said that Canada is more calm and more familiar than America," Beata added.

As a child, I had heard sensational stories of how Third-Wave Polish migrants journeyed to Canada. Many were the same: that leaving Poland was forced as a result of the social hardships Polish people were trying to escape from; that migration was a great trial as these families uprooted their entire lives, leaving behind many of their relatives and closest friends, the majority of their possessions, a lifestyle that they understood, and the (supposed) security afforded to them by a socialist state; and that, although their lives were unimaginably better, migration was severely detrimental to their lives, given that it occurred well into adulthood once they felt they had firmly established their lifeworlds.

Life in Poland seemed dire, especially when I heard first-hand accounts of living in a severely restricted state. For example, I often heard about the difficulties of owning a home in Poland, at least one that was not shared with another family. "You absolutely could *not* buy a

house!" Beata told me when I asked her to corroborate whether those stories I had heard were true. "Even if you wanted to," Marcin added. "You would have to put together what you call a 'down payment' on a house, which was called a *książeczka mieszkaniowa* [housing book], a room with a kitchen cost 27,000 [zloty]," Beata continued, "and those monies you had to put together saved already, and then you would be a member of the housing co-op, and then you were put on the list, and in 25 years you would get a house." Marcin looked at me as I looked back, completely shocked. "So, what, would you want to wait 25 years to get a house?" Marcin asked. "Or live with 3 or 4 other families in a house while you waited?" He added. "25 years?" I said, astonished. "Maybe 20," Beata said.

For some, life in Poland was so challenging that they were willing to take a one-way trip out of Poland to the West to search for a better life. Although a fairly common practice, it was not until I conducted this research that I learned about communist-era Poland offering a *wilczy bilet* [wolf's ticket] to those that wished to leave the country with the expectation that they could not return. These tickets were usually afforded to individuals that the state considered a liability to the communist regime either because they were too outspoken, were directly involved in an anti-communist movement, or did not otherwise conform to sociopolitical norms; as a result, they were considered "hunted animals" that would be imprisoned should they ever return to Poland (Davies, *Heart of Europe* 48). In communist Poland, "there was a lot of turmoil for people because they couldn't find work and there were mass workers strikes," Beata explained, "so people could get a deal called a *wilczy bilet* [wolf ticket], which was a one-way ticket, you see…" she paused to find the words "…if you were outspoken and were involved in the labour strikes, or if you rallied people to try to change things in Poland, you know what I'm talking about." "Yes, I do," I agreed, knowing that she was referring to the *Solidarność* [Solidarity] movement

in the 1980s and the mass strike involving the labour unions, which, only recently, I had learned, may have been the reason my father was so compelled to leave. “So, they would, very happily, let those people go past the border if they knew you weren’t able to return to Poland,” Beata continued, “of course, that’s all changed now, but, at that time, if you made them [the government] uncomfortable they would give you a passport and a ticket to anywhere [any country] that would take you.”

Like many Polish Canadian millennials, my memories of migration are often not my own but ones I received from my parents and other Polish Canadians. Because most millennials migrated at a young age, they rely on stories of migration—told by their parents and others whose memories they consider being accurate—from which they compile a narrative that they consider a kind of lived experience but that is prosthetic (Landsberg; Schwartz, “The Expanding Past”). However, these stories are often romanticized and seem reasonably similar, suggesting that they are collectively defined and not necessarily accurate. “We came from Poland and moved into the house my parents are living in now,” Agata confirmed. “And did they come with their whole family?” I asked. “Just like everyone,” she said, indicating that the migration experience mirrored those of many other first-generation migrant families, including my own. “It’s crazy that one set of the family comes,” Bartek realized, “but then no one else, like cousins, uncles, aunts.” “Well, my one cousins came,” Agata added. “Yeah, but not at the same time,” Bartek pointed out. “Right, but they came shortly after,” she explained, “like a few years later,” although not entirely sure. “That’s pretty common,” I said, “to have one family come and then, after they find work and get some money, they sponsor the next members of the family to come.” “That’s what happened to us,” Agata confirmed.

Daniella, who migrated at a very young age, described migrating from Poland to Canada as unsettling and generally estranging. Her parents had assumed that she was too young to understand the reality of migration and that there was no sense in explaining to her what she and her family were doing, moving to another country. Those feelings of displacement would leave Daniella feeling unsettled for the remainder of her life. She described her first memory in Canada as "vividly" setting a precedent in her life. "I remember getting to the airport in Toronto and thinking, 'what the hell are we doing here?'" She continued, "I remember standing in the airport thinking, 'where are we?' And 'this isn't Poland'." "I remember that I understood we took a plane ride, and I remember thinking it was fun, but I didn't expect to feel strange when I realized 'this isn't Poland anymore'." She explained, "that's my first memory here [in Canada]."

The stories of life in communist Poland I heard as a child were often sensational and coloured my perceptions of my family's reasons for migrating. However, I always remained skeptical of these migration stories because my mother told me that not everyone migrated to Canada searching for better living standards and that, for some, life in Poland was generally comfortable and fulfilling. "My life in Poland was not bad," Zosia told me, echoing my mother's beliefs about life in Poland. "I was going to school, and I was well-educated and trained, just like my husband, so life was good." "The only thing we had trouble with was finding housing," she told me, "my husband was 23 at the time, and it was impossible to get a single-family home, even with our good jobs, so we had to share our home with other families, and it was fine." "Today they were fighting; the next day they were making up, hugging and kissing," she said. "Just like a real family," I said. "Exactly!" She exclaimed with a laugh. "So," she continued, "did I come to Canada because life here was better?" She asked figuratively before pausing a moment to collect her responses. "I've never really thought about it, and I've never really thought in that kind of

way, anyhow," she explained, "we didn't come here because we wanted a better life; it, actually, wasn't a better life at first, it was a much harder life, because of the language barrier, the cultural barrier, and when a person is already 30 years old, and they give up a good job to move across the planet." She sidelined the conversation a moment to explain her life in Poland, "I was working as an admin assistant in a very big manufacturing firm and was making very good money," she explained, "I had a steady income, have always been very organized, so I was good at the job, and it was a good life." "So, it's for these reasons that I cannot say my life in Poland was bad or that life here was better," she explained, "because, really," she paused again to collect her thoughts, "really, my life in Canada didn't change much from what my life in Poland was like."

Hearing varying migration stories from my interlocutors was interesting because I believed a prevailing narrative that migrants choose to leave their homes "in search of a better life." Nevertheless, there are those migrants that do not hold this view. Although my interlocutors shared some quintessential features of migration—such as a single family member migrating before the remainder of their family to establish a life in Canada or the desire to leave Poland to escape difficult sociocultural conditions—these features were often a shared prosthetic, rather than directly experienced. There is some familiarity between these stories, which is evident given that the third wave of migration from Poland to Canada occurred within ten years. However, individual migration experiences are not quintessential. They can differ significantly from the collective narrative, particularly for millennials who were either too young to remember their migration experiences or were born in Canada and rely on adopting a collective migration narrative to fill in that aspect of their life. There is no quintessential Polish Canadian migration, even though we often describe it as such.

Belonging in Canada

Polish migrants to Canada enjoy the freedom of expression to perform their lives as desired. However, many of my interlocutors discussed feeling pressured to conform to a Canadian way of life, particularly during the third wave of Polish migration in the 1990s when my interlocutors argued there was less tolerance for people from former Soviet nations amidst strong Western nationalism. Migrant life in North America in the 1990s was marked by expected cultural assimilation to a national lifestyle. This expectation resulted in general intolerance for foreign ways of life and demanded cultural integration as the world shifted towards globalization (Joppke and Morawska 2).

Although this progressively changed over the next two decades, we are, in some ways, returning to a life of tribalism and nationalist supremacy, as is demonstrated by recent movements back towards migrant intolerance (Brubaker). Thus, intolerance towards racial differences in Canada continues and is perhaps escalating, which pressures migrants to conform to a way of life that does not necessarily speak to them authentically (ibid.). At the same time, as some of my interlocutors believe, this reality of intolerance is more likely a relic of habituated thinking than the current reality, which tends to be more open to alternative worldviews wherein migrants can feel more comfortable leading their lives in ways meaningful to them.

By conforming to what they imagined being the Canadian worldview, my interlocutors either believed it was easier to amalgamate within our adopted country than to live against it, or they preferred the liberties of this way of life over the reality in Communist-era Poland. Daniella described this as a freedom to do what she desired rather than what she was expected to do by her parents, other members of her family, or even the community-at-large. When she discussed her favourite aspects of school, she told me that she "liked that I could see my friends and was free to do what I wanted with them, well, within reason."

Many Polish migrants experienced what they considered forced integration into Western society while retaining a belief of the importance of Polish culture produced, simultaneously, feelings of inferiority and superiority in their adopted countries, which Jason Goulah describes as "soft colonization" (164). That is, Polish migrants to the West feel pressure to conform to the sociocultural reality of their new home in Canada but feel compelled to retain the values of their native homes, which is reinforced through their continued involvement in Polonia.

For Polish Canadians, there is often difficulty integrating as migrants as they struggle to navigate the reformation of their identities alongside a strong feeling of marginalization (Lopez; Erdmans; Goulah). This marginalization stems from what Marianne Exum Lopez describes as the collision of discourses that produce self-doubt over mastery of sociocultural conventions and language of their adopted homes, a soft colonization that continues to affect the lives of migrants. I have experienced the effects of forced conformity while wishing to retain those aspects of my experience that I continue to find as a significant influence in my life. I have come to acknowledge the reality of living in-between and how the forces of soft colonization affect the images, and subsequently, lifeworlds, of Polish Canadians, which, in turn, change Polonia in the present.

For interlocutors who came with their families, thus not necessarily having a choice, they sometimes described their life in Canada as being dictated by intense external pressures to conform to life here rather than feeling free to live as they wished. "I had two older siblings; everybody knew me when I got [to high school], so, like, my sister, Basia, her nickname was *Bush* because that's what everyone heard when she introduced herself, so when I got [to high school] they called me *The Offspring*… and I was like 'I don't really like *The Offspring* but, okay'," Daniella said, "so people went around calling me Offspring… 'hey, Offspring!'." She had a look

on her face that fell somewhere between fondness and disrespect. “Nobody really calls me Offspring anymore… well, the occasional person does, but it’s mostly Daniella, now.” Daniella explained how, as a child, she felt powerless against external pressures to conform, even taking on an identity that she did not feel connected to in order to fit in socially and to not draw too much attention to herself as an outsider. Although she felt the moniker garnered her some collegiality, and thus belonging, when she was still a newcomer to Canada, she also considered it disingenuous to her true self, which compelled her to hide aspects of herself in order to fit in.

This pressure to conform was particularly strong when it came to adopting the English language. Not only was it necessary for Polish migrants to learn English from a practical standpoint, but it also meant that they often lost parts of themselves that they considered pivotal to their identity. “I remember my first day of school and not knowing a word [of English],” Daniella told me, “and that I had an ESL teacher trying to teach me English.” “And I remember that it was important for me to learn English in order to ‘fit in’ with the other kids,” she explained, “my parents wanted me to have an easy time fitting in and thought that learning English was important for that, I mean, I still think it’s important.” Suddenly, Daniella’s face changed as though something was bothering her. “But it makes me sad a bit,” she said. “What does?” I asked. “Well, I tried so hard to fit in that I’ve mostly forgotten how to speak Polish, and I wish that didn’t happen,” she said, “I feel like I gave up my Polish identity to fit in here, but now I wish I could go back and change things.” “Is that why you send your kids to Polish school?” I asked her. “Yep,” she said, “that’s exactly why, [because] I don’t want them to forget who they really are.”

In my life, I have often felt, and still feel, like I am an outsider looking in. So, I was not surprised that some of my millennial interlocutors also consider themselves marginalized as outsiders. This marginalization is external and comes from the expectation to assimilate into Western culture and the general inability to fully express oneself authentically (Sargent and Larchanché-Kim). Some might express it as "floating" through life and not being certain where to find solace and comfort, given that no space exists where they can genuinely feel that they belong.

When I asked Agata and Bartek what they most remembered about their experiences in school, Bartek said, "Friends, definitely." He had to think for a moment but eventually settled on "the divide between who to hang out with and when." Bartek explained that it "created riffs in my [social] life" and particularly disliked the idea of territorial divisions among social groups. "I wish I was just one or the other," Bartek explained, suggesting that he would have preferred to be in or out of various social groups rather than connected to a multitude. "I didn't like being a floater," he continued, "that was hard because I had made new friends through sports but still had other friends from grade school, you know?" He explained, "it's hard because I liked those friends, but some of my new friends didn't like them."

"I hated [high school]," Agata told me. "I guess it was because I was not a 'cliquey' person," she continued, "because I think, in high school, kids can be so rude… so mean." I chuckled as Bartek made a strange expression as though Agata should have lied and said she enjoyed high school. "Sorry, but, you know…" Agata wanted to explain her sentiments. "If you don't fit in—fit in with the jocks, fit in with the geeks —[it's hard] because I march to the beat of my own drum, you know?" She explained.

The pressure to conform or the feeling of being an outsider is vital to how migrants imagine and perform their lifeworlds. It leaves an enduring impression that influences their lives in the present. “I know it’s something that I have dealt with my whole life,” I said when I had met with Marcin and Beata, “that I still feel like I have to either work harder to fit in, or be very clear that I am not from Canada and that I am different.” “There was a period where it was expected that we had to fit in,” Marcin said, “but that has changed recently.” “Right,” I agreed, “because when I was growing up, I did not feel welcome, [I felt] that I had to fit in or else… that way people would be nicer to me, they would actually talk to me.” “Do you think that people would actually dismiss you?” Beata asked, “or do you think they would eventually warm up to you?” “I agree with Marcin,” I said, “that it *is* better now, but it wasn’t like that then, in the ’90s.” “And they were young,” Beata said, “young people are much more cruel than adults, usually.” “But I would like to think that even young people nowadays are much more open to different people,” I said, “they understand that not everyone comes from the same place they do or that they don’t have two parents or same-sex parents, that is all normal.” “It’s almost like being Canadian is not normal,” Marcin added. “And yet, that feeling never leaves us,” Beata added, “even if times have changed, I still feel like a migrant.”

Some scholars argue that we may be returning to a form of intolerance towards others. Alternatively, perhaps equally likely, that this intolerance has reversed and, as previously marginalized people are seeking reparations, there is forming a systemic intolerance of tolerance (Morawska; Brubaker). Even as acceptance is normalizing, the feelings of intolerance remain in the memory of those who were victims of being ostracized. And, as the social climate in Canada is changing towards tolerance, a new kind of intolerance is filling this void wherein what was previously “normal,” as Marcin labelled it, is now becoming intolerable. Polish Canadians know

this feeling well and remain with it even when they feel accepted or have conformed, only to have these old wounds re-opened as the nation looks to normalize difference.

Prisms of Identity

My interlocutors have felt pressure to conform to life in Canada. However, they also feel it is crucial to continue to identify as a person of Polish origin. This pluralized identity can best be understood as an individual recognizing the "prisms of culture" of their lifeworlds and are due to an increasingly mixed global reality which has ushered in a new politics of multiculturalism (Ziemer and Roberts). What my interlocutors argue is that we feel increased importance to self-identify as a Polish person living in Canada, especially given that racial marginalization continues to be an issue that is being combated as the global narrative transitions towards acceptance of cultural plurality and the breaking of divisions between "us" and "them." My interlocutors reclaim this division by clarifying those distinctions between their past and current lives. They explained to me that this work happens publicly and privately.

When I asked Agata about how she self-identifies, she immediately jumped into prefacing her statement, "it's funny, I always say Polish Canadian because I was born in Poland, it's my homeland, and I'm Canadian because this is my adopted homeland because, obviously, that makes sense. I had Polish citizenship first, and now I'm Canadian… so I'm not Canadian Polish." "So, when I'm here, I'll say I'm 'Canadian,' but when they ask, 'what nationality are you… where were you born,' I'll say, 'I was born in Poland… I'm from Poland,' so then they ask, 'so you're Polish?' to which I say, 'no, I'm Polish Canadian,' so that's how I self-identify," she explained. "But also, it's because I'm proud to be Polish, you know?" Agata explained that our identities as Polish Canadians can be prismatic in that they shift depending on various factors, but all combinations of which are inherently valid to the individual. Agata is both Polish

and Canadian, but also Polish Canadian, depending on the context and her understanding, sometimes in a given moment.

Bartek said he identifies as "Polish Canadian," without hesitation. "My background is Polish!" He said very confidently. "That's my heritage; that's where my parents were born; that's how I was brought up," he continued, "I consider myself Polish Canadian." "I'd say that if you asked my [younger] brother or sister, that they would say they are Canadian," he added. "They don't know the language; they don't know the customs," Agata explained. "They don't know the culture as much; they don't practice it," Bartek reaffirmed. "They don't *want* to," Agata answered. "Yup, they don't *want* to; that's the difference," Bartek explained, emphasizing their choosing not to practice Polish traditions or learn to speak the Polish language as he had. Bartek, who was born in Canada, explained that being Polish is not connected to geography but, rather, is based on rearing. One can identify as Polish, and not only Polish Canadian, even though they were born in Canada. One can consider themselves Polish if they identify as belonging to Polonia and incorporate that sociocultural reality into their everyday lives.

How one practices their identity is profoundly personal as some are not necessarily concerned whether others acknowledge how they identify. "I think it's more for myself," Agata said when I asked her if she prioritizes sharing her Polish identity with non-Polish people. "It's interesting when we travelled to Europe recently, and it was Canada Day, we were very proud, and we would tell people, 'Yeah! We're Canadian, we're Canadian!' and we even put flags on our backpacks, you know?" She said. "But I'm not the type of person that would go to someone and say 'I'm Polish Canadian' or the type of person that would ride with a sticker of the [Polish] flag on their car… I'm not *that* 'Polish and Proud'," she explained. "But it's funny," she continued, "I get excited when, you know, you're driving on the highway, and you see the *biały orzeł* [white

eagle] sticker on someone's bumper, and you're like 'oh, their Polish!'," she said, very enthusiastically. "And then I drive by them and look and think, 'oh, no, I don't know them'," she added, laughing. Agata explained to me that her status as a person of Polish descent is not something that she needs to publicize and that, given the circumstances, she will modify her identity to focus on either side of her Polish Canadian identity. Yet, at the same time, she suggested that being proud of her Polish roots sits at the very core of her identity, and, perhaps, she has so wholly incorporated that facet of her being that she does not feel the need to perform being Polish.

Others did not often think self-consciously about their Polish heritage as it was merely a way of being for them. Daniella explained how one can be proud of their heritage without having to practice it actively or even to spend much time considering it on a day-to-day basis. When I asked Daniella to tell me where and when she was born, she did not know exactly, but that did not seem to matter to her sense of Polish identity. "In Poland," she told me, "in a little town in the mountain region." The mountains are in the south of Poland, which is close to where I was born, so I asked her what the nearest "large city" was. "Is it near Rzeszow?" "No idea!" She replied with a giggle. "Let me look it up!" I said as I proceeded to look up a map of Poland on my tablet. I turned the screen to her. She looked and dragged the map further to the West, at first towards Krakow and then much further south into the mountains. "So, that's Zakopane," I explained. "And there we are," she said as she zoomed the map in, "Łapsze Niżne." I looked at what appeared to be a tiny community in the foothills of the Tatra mountains. "Sorry, I had to look there for a second… it's that I've never gone back there," she explained. "Do you consider yourself a *'góral'* [Highlander]?" I asked. "Oh, yes, absolutely." She said confidently. "But," she continued, "at the same time, it's not that I know anything about the traditional dances or anything, or have taught my kids about where our family comes from, or even really think about my

home[land] for that matter." "But when someone talks about the *górals* [Highlanders] from Poland, I get this strong feeling… a good feeling."

Although many Polish Canadians want to feel that they belong somewhere, Zosia told me that she feels that she does not fit in anywhere in particular. She believes that no one does because this is just the human condition, even if we strive for the opposite. "There are a lot of Polish-Canadian marriages now," she said. "I am talking about the fact that [Polonia] is not 'Polish' anymore, that it is more Canadian now because most of the Polish people living in Canada have been living here for a long time." "And, so," she continued, "because we came from a country where Polish people married other Polish people, there were no mixed marriages, there was no mixing of cultures, which might be a challenge because one person wants their way and another person wants a different way." "But," she quickly continued, "in the end, it will be what is important for their children; like every marriage, they will take a little from one culture and a little from another." "You can't say that we have to go one way or the other," she said, "we have to go in the middle." "So, unfortunately, that is still a bit of a barrier," she looked at me as though wondering if I understood that she was talking about the changing landscape of Polonia. Confirming her sentiments, I said, "you are talking about how it is difficult for the Hall—or for any hall or cultural centre—to exist now because people see it as representing one culture, not multiple cultures, so it's hard to imagine how to have it cater to people that feel like they are mixed." "Exactly," she agreed. "Even for me, being from Poland," I said, "I don't feel like a typical Polish person, like a 'Polack,' but I don't feel entirely Canadian either." "And that's because your generation, Wiktor, is the last," she said, "look at the number of people that are coming from Poland now, it's not that much… and that's why you will never feel like you are really Polish, and you will also never really be Canadian either, you will always feel, umm, a little bit

here and a little bit there." "You're right," I agreed. "But you are always just people," she added, "always remember that you are still just people."

Session with My Mother: Who am I, really?

When I began this research, it was not clear to me the specific ethnographic inquiry I was trying to make. What was I trying to get at? What was I trying to understand about Polish Canadians, exactly? It was my mother that had illuminated to me that I was analyzing "mystory" about my experiences as a migrant and feelings of living in-between many realities, fitting in nowhere in particular, exactly, yet feeling at home in this plurality. I was looking for other individuals that could help me understand this unbelonging by finding others with similar life experiences or a solid sense of identity one way or the other.

"I'm not sure why I decided to do research, Mom," I told her, "I probably just did it because I figured it would be easier for me to work with others like myself." "You mean instead of what your friends are doing, travelling to strange places all over the world?" She asked. "Right," I concurred. "But you never did the easiest thing, honey; you've always challenged yourself too much sometimes, I think," I smirked with the right side of my mouth, then I looked at her as she looked back at me, either with pride or concern or likely both, I was not entirely sure. "So, why am I doing this research? What am I trying to figure out?" I asked her figuratively as though she had access to the inner depths of my mind, a place that I could not understand or reliably engage. "I'm not going to pretend like I understand what it is you're doing," she said, this not being the first time she told me that my research and my studies had "outgrown her," as she put it, "but it seems to me that you've been asking a lot of questions about who you are." I was taken aback. I had not considered this as the root of my motivations and, instead, had always assumed that I was doing this research to understand "other people like myself," as I put it. Of course, how

could I understand others if I could not understand myself? “What do you mean?” I asked her. “My love, I’ve watched you grow up, and I’m so very proud of everything you’ve done,” she began, “but, I’ve always wished you felt more at home somewhere,” she paused for a moment, “when I look at you, I see someone who feels like they don’t really fit in anywhere, and that’s probably our fault—your father and I made you move so much as a child that you never had a chance to make many friends.” I just sat for a moment and nodded, staring at the floor as I considered what she had just said. “So, you think this project is about me trying to understand who I am through other people like myself?” I asked. “Well, I am no doctor,” she said, referring to my doctoral studies, “but, hopefully, I learned a few things over my lifetime and something that I strongly believe is that everyone needs to feel like they belong.”

As I progressed through this research, I realized that I belong somewhere, even if I and others like me feel like we are in-between. We occupy multiple spaces, but none in there entirely, which may leave us feeling disconnected. However, through our prismatic identity, we belong to a diaspora that combines aspects of our past and present, and of our origin nation and our adopted homes. We belong to Polonia, which is a nation that is inherently liminal. Instead, it is the expectations of the constituents of Polonia that create and perpetuate feelings of unbelonging. It is as though we struggle to accept our liminal identity and, instead, each generation strives to shape Polonia in their image, as though they can imagine a final form for our liminal nation. We pull said collective image in multiple directions, hoping it aligns more closely with how we believe Polonia ought to be. This research has taught me that this performance of identity is inherent to how Polonia is defined and that we must embrace this in-betweenness as foundational to how we imagine ourselves.

Memory

This research is interested in unpacking the memories that my interlocutors and I believe are pertinent to our self-identity and Polonia. Memory is a social space that exists alongside history where migrants draw on the past to construct the present and imagine the future. Memory has been of sociological concern since the turn of the twentieth century, beginning with Maurice Halbwachs' *La mémoire collective*. Disciplinary attention has significantly expanded in the past two decades, with memory studies becoming a distinctly multi/interdisciplinary endeavour as scholars from across humanities, social, and natural sciences work on questions of memory (Schwartz, "The Expanding Past"; Wertsch; Janowski; Angé and Berliner; Baronian et al.; Garcia et al.; Williksen and Rapport; Landsberg).

As a result, the anthropology of memory is remarkably diverse in its aims and efforts. Even a quick look at some of the concepts explored in preparing for this research—collective or social memory, sites of memory, nostalgia, reverie, invented traditions, myth, memorial, heritage, commemoration, generationality, postmemory, and prosthetic memory—reveals the immeasurable scope of memory studies and thus the challenges of searching for foundations and conceptions in the field. My understanding of memory "allow[s] for an inclusion of a spectrum of phenomena as possible objects of memory studies" (Erll and Nünning 1). In this research project, I primarily focus on "autobiographical memories [that] encompass discrete forms of abstract knowledge about the self," "general or summary (i.e., repeated events) forms of personal knowledge" and, "memories for discrete, specific experiences" (Mace 4).

I consider memory as archival, but also dynamic and performative being negotiated by and through the body. Memory is sensate, affective, embodied, and emplaced. According to Cristina Moretti, sensate memory has agency and acts not only on the past, but also the present and

future. When we engage with our memory, we "create new understandings of both the past and the present" because remembering is "an active process by which meaning is created" (Agnew 8). Memories are not static spaces but "fluid and temporal" ones which we continually (re-)create and (re-)engage (10). And, so, my analysis of memory tends to focus on the performative and the repertoire (Wertsch; Taylor; Brosius and Polit).

Memories exist not only personally but collectively, prosthetically and (inter)generationally, as well. This can include: individual acts of remembering (both in personal and group / social contexts) (Williksen and Rapport; Irving); national memory that is simultaneously experienced, imagined or invented by/between people (Wertsch; Levitt and Waters; Landsberg); and transnational memory that operates in/through various global and local sites (Magnat, "Conducting Embodied Research at the Intersection of Performance Studies, Experimental Ethnography and Indigenous Methodologies"; Truc; Pink). In this ethnography, I access and interpret the personal and collective spaces of memory.

It is also important to consider the unintentional and implicit ways of remembering and the non-narrative or non-discursive forms of memory, such as those stored in/performed through the body (Pink; Wetherell; McLean), or even the vast "inalienable wealth" of "intangible heritage" that stored in physical objects, food, spaces and places, and the imagined heritage among members of communities or nations (Weiner; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production"; Basso; Magnat, *Towards an Indigenous Ethnography of Performance*; Rabikowska; Janowski; Anderson; Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum*; Taussig, *What Color is the Sacred?*). Therefore, I consider a seemingly limitless range of memory objects as potentially affecting/being affected by the lifeworlds of my research interlocutors and, thus, essential sites of ethnographic study.

With my interlocutors, I analyzed how we engage, perform and shape memories over the course of our lives in the context of our mixed heritage identities, our migration experiences, and everyday engagements in Canada. Memories bind individuals to a larger sociocultural reality and are, in turn, influenced by the reality from which they are drawn (Fine 396). Memories shape Polish Canadians' imaginaries as they are performed in the present, ultimately changing those memories and their imaginary. Memory is an active force that defines not only the lives of my interlocutors and me but also Polonia-at-large. Some memories have been personally experienced, while many are experienced prosthetically or collectively. In the following section, I look at specific examples of how we look into the past as we perform our lives in the present.

Freezing Memories

When we discussed memory during fieldwork, my interlocutors often shared formative memories from their childhoods which they tended to consider as temporally frozen. That is, how they perceive and engage with their memories may have changed in relation to their current reality, but they believe their memories to be anchored or firmly cemented and unchanging, even if revisiting those memories has and continues to transform them dramatically over the course of their lives (Schwartz, "Rereading the Gettysburg Address").

Our most influential memories are often imagined during our formative years when one looks out at the world to understand it and their place within it. These formative memories are usually fragmented or obscure but stick out and remain as signposts in our lives. Jan and Ela described these formative memories as strands of memory, or particular moments of intense clarity that we weave together into images. Jan meandered through his childhood, such as his first day of school in Grade 2, which he remembered "was about a 3-mile walk for us" every day, and re-

called stories of walking through deep snow—uphill—to get to class. “My dad owned a motorcycle, so he would take us [to school] on that,” his wife, Ela, chimed in, “I remember sitting on the handlebars… on the front.” Ela recalled living in a “small little village” and that her family “did not really travel much” when she was a child. She mentioned that “nothing really stood out” about her hometown as particularly “special,” being a typical farming village. She spent much of her childhood playing outside, remembering that her school was very far away from her home and that her “parents had to work very hard” to provide for her and her family. Both Jan and Ela told me their experiences in childhood had shaped their reality and how they raised their children.

When I asked Daniella about her engagements with the memories of her early life in Poland and with her parents, she described them as being fragmented and drawn together from many sources. “What is your earliest memory?” I asked her. She had to think about it for a while, and then, with a deep sense of uncertainty in her voice, she answered: “probably owning a cow?” I had not responded right away, unsure of what she meant. “That would be my earliest memory,” she continued, “my family having a cow and me feeding the cow with hay.” “And just… climbing trees!” She added. “That’s what I remember; I mean, it’s all sort of jumbled.” “So, what I think I’m hearing,” I asked her, “is that your memories are not clear and that you have, sort of, bits and pieces that you lump into one big memory?” “That’s right,” she answered, “it’s like it’s many different things that happened to me or even my family that make up one big picture.”

Bartek, a millennial, described his father as actively working to freeze the images of his childhood in Poland. Bartek’s father has strong sentiments about the country he left behind and his formative experiences during childhood, so he works to maintain that imaginary. Bartek told me, “if you look at my dad, he doesn’t want to go back to Poland because he has such good

memories." "Really?" Agata said, sounding confused. "He doesn't want to see what it looks like now; he doesn't want to see the 'new Poland'," he continued, "he has his memories; he had a great childhood, and he doesn't want to change them… he doesn't want to lose them." "Like my grandma's house in Poland, that's why I've never gone back," Agata said. "Exactly," Bartek agreed, "because they painted her house." "Right, and, to me, that house was always *that* colour," Agata explained. "Like they're getting ready to tear down St. Bernard's [Elementary School] which is where I went," Bartek continued, "and, you know, that's like a serious childhood memory for me and if they tear it down… I don't know… it's like they tear down a childhood memory that you have."

For some, memories are frozen as a deep nostalgia for life as it was during the Soviet occupation of Poland (Berliner and Angé; Williksen and Rapport). They compare their current realities to a time when life seemed to be more stable. Although employment opportunities were limited in communist Poland, the state provided many necessities and, besides the ongoing Cold War, life was sociopolitically consistent for decades. With the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc and the opening up to the West came profound change and a deep sense of anxiety felt on a national scale. Thus, some Polish Canadians look back with a sense of longing and reverie for a time when life seemed better, and some even seek to bring some aspects of those realities to their current lives in Canada (Kubik).

For example, Marcin and Beata shared a quintessential description of the tiny sizes of homes in Poland that seem to shrink as I continue to hear these stories. "And even if you lived on a farm, your house was still small, like it was, perhaps, ten by ten meters only," Beata said. "So, there were only three rooms in the entire house and then a kitchen," Beata explained, referring to the total number of rooms, not just bedrooms, as many rooms had shared functions. "When we

went to visit [my family] in 1995," she began, "my parents were sleeping in the kitchen, my sister, who was married with three kids, had two rooms, and my brother had the third room." "So, look, when the four of us came to visit them, you had my parents, my sister, 5, 6, my brother and his wife, 7, 8, plus us," she continued, "that was 12 people in one small house." I thought briefly about the math, which did not add up exactly.

Memories may appear to be frozen to my interlocutors and me. However, they shift over time as our lives change, particularly over generations, even if we continue to perform our imaginaries as though our memories are fixed (Schwartz, "Rereading the Gettysburg Address: Social Change and Collective Memory"). Williksen and Rapport argue that is a result of a yearning for a past that is no longer obtainable due to the passing of time, which is intrinsically vital to a sense of self, as the past "ultimately resides in the eye of the beholder" (4). For Jan, you can dream of a better future by looking out at the world-at-large, but without lived experience, those dreams are relative to your current experiences. "Many people that were living on the farms did not know what life was like in a strong economy like we have here in Canada," he explained. "Because [under communism] there were no luxuries," he continued. "Growing up in the 1970s in Poland, I remember when televisions finally came to the country," he said, "before they came, people lived humbly, and they did not know of all these luxuries we have today, but then technology came, and people's lives started to get easier and, well, they saw some of the things they *could* have," he stated, suggesting it was then that Polish people began to consider that Western life appeared unimaginably better. But "people perceived life differently" at the time and, aside from stories and imaginings of life in the West, people needed less and thus demanded less. Jan

described this in detail when we talked about the desire for a "better life" while living in communist Poland. "People lived much more simply than they do today, especially those living in the country[side] in Poland," he said.

As my interlocutors and I imagine and perform our memories in relation to our current lives, we subsequently alter said images to better fit into the present. Freezing memories to create a nostalgic attachment stems from the desire for a better life, a nearly universal dream among Polish migrants to Canada. However, as the act of freezing memory is itself performative, memories are inherently unfreezable. We may look back to our memories and believe that they are static, but they are always being re-imagined in relation to our lives in the present.

Prosthetic Memories

The memories experienced by and shared between my interlocutors and me are often prosthetic in nature, described by Alison Landsberg as "the production and dissemination of memories that have no direct connection to a person's lived past and yet are essential to the production and articulation" of their lifeworlds (Landsberg 20). This problematizes memory as "a connection between our individual past and our collective past (our origins, heritage and history)" (Agnew 3). Prosthetic memory suggests "memories are transportable and therefore challenge more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity, 'heritage,' and ownership" (Landsberg 3). This upsets and blurs "the boundary between individual and collective memory," complicating "the distinction between memory and history," which can be better understood as "*entangled* rather than oppositional" (Landsberg 19, emphasis in original). For my interlocutors and me, our understandings of Polonia and Poland are often prosthetic in that the memories we hold are not necessarily directly experienced but, rather, are received from and kept active in the repertoire of collective imagination.

Prosthetic memory is crucial in understanding how we imagine communist-era Poland as a difficult sociocultural reality, which sets the tone for how we imagine Polonia in the present by answering to the authoritarianism of the past. Daniella described this best when she said, "there was nothing there for us… I remember hearing stories from my parents of how hard it was living there." "Like, there's this one story I remember my mom telling us of how she lived with my grandma at her house with us—my mom had four kids—and I remember her telling me that she went back to work four days after giving birth to me, and she told me that *babcia* [grandma] would bring [me] to [my mom's] work so that she could breastfeed me." I said, "really puts things into perspective sometimes, doesn't it?" She agreed, "especially when you think about people in our generation that won't even go to the store to get something because they just don't feel like it." "And it wasn't just me she had to take care of at the time," Daniella continued, "there was my brother (we were five at the time) and my sister (who was eight), my grandma was taking care of them too, so she would have to bring all of them to my mom's work."

Prosthetic memories pertinent to Polish Canadians are collected, or what I understand as recirculating narratives shared by and between people in a social context but which we adopt on an individual level (Wertsch 30). That is, individuals compile their personal memory out of many memories, both from their experiences and also the experiences of others, which they integrate into their lifeworld as though reflective of a lived reality. Collected memories are drawn from the social narrative of diasporic people and are particularly influential to Polish Canadians, who often share a rigorously defined social identity (Faist; Anderson). For my interlocutors and me, memories are real and imagined, personal and collective.

Memory is appropriable from others and, as a result, alters our interpretation of reality because we often base our understanding on information that others have formed. Prosthetic

memory can be inaccurate and, like my understanding of the medical system in Poland, which is based on my mother's interpretations, can lead us to focus on facts that are untrue or have since changed. Because most millennials rely on prosthetic memories to form their understandings of life in communist Poland, their roots, or what they understand about life under communism, likely do not reflect reality.

Agata confirmed this, telling me that she draws most of her formative memories from stories told by her parents. "What did you do in your summers [as a child]?" I asked Agata. After pondering for a moment, Agata said, "I think I don't remember." "You don't remember?" Bartek, her husband, asked. She continued, "visiting grandmas, probably." "Okay, well, just tell me what you remember," I prompted. "I guess… well, I imagine I did Polish Dancing… the Villages…" she stated, "we travelled some… like we went to visit family in the [United] States." She was silent for a moment while looking at me and trying to recall those details, but eventually told me she would "have to ask her parents" for clarification and get back to me at a later research session. For Agata, her memories were not her own but those formed by her parents, which she carries into adulthood.

When I arrived at a series of questions about military service, Agata and Bartek agreed we should skip them, given that neither of them nor anyone in their immediate family had ever served in the military. However, they still had something to input about the year of mandated military service for Polish males, a law recently abolished in 2009. "We were lucky not to live in Poland where you had to do it," Agata said. "That's why when we visited Poland [in the early 2000s], I told [Bartek] not to use his Polish Passport," Agata explained. "What? Because you were worried about him being drafted?" I asked her to explain in more detail. "I mean, I don't

know, but I just thought better be safe, you know?" She continued, "so I made him get a Canadian passport." "He said, 'I wasn't born there'," Agata said, speaking for Bartek. "'Well, don't be surprised if they pull you in!' I said," Agata added, as she laughed uncomfortably. Polish law extends obligations to children of Polish-born individuals, regardless of if they were born in Poland or not. "My dad left Poland," Bartek interjected. "You mean before he served?" "No, I mean, that's why he left!" Bartek exclaimed, explaining that his father wished to avoid service in the Polish military.

For many of my research interlocutors, especially the millennials, the prosthetic memories we carry were experienced by our parents and even grandparents, formed out of the difficult experiences during WWII and the subsequent Soviet occupation of Poland. These memories might be better understood as "postmemory," which can be described as "the relationship of the second-generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were never-the-less transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch 103). Most millennials have no direct experience with the difficult periods in Poland's history; not only were many of us born during the transition of Poland into a Western democracy following or near the end of the collapse of communism, most also have no living connection to earlier experiences, such as the Holocaust and the Nazi occupation of Poland (Kürti and Skalnik). Although some baby boomers may have direct memories of these historical epochs in Poland, particularly the Soviet control of the Polish government, they are coloured by sociocultural experiences before, during and after the democratization process. Prosthetic memory plays an important role in how Polish Canadians imagine our lifeworlds, even if those memories are significantly transformed, particularly as they succeed over generations.

Memory Objects

Not all memories vital to Polish Canadian imaginaries are intangible. My interlocutors also discussed the various tangible items—important possessions I call "memory objects" such as photographs, memorabilia, jewelry, trinkets, recipes, toys, etc.—that function as a kind of punctum to which specific memories are tied and that, once expanded, connect us to the past through remembering (Janowski; Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*).

When I originally devised my research methods, I had intended to work extensively with memory objects by employing a methodology I devised wherein my interlocutors would build a memory box containing items they find pertinent to devising and performing their lifeworlds, I developed uncertainty early in the fieldwork process after my introductory phone call with Kamila wherein she was less than receptive to the idea. When I explained what interviews would look like and that I would like to build a memory box together, Kamila said she is "not a knick-knack person… I don't keep stuff; I don't like clutter." I told her that "I'd be surprised if there were nothing in her house," she thought was sentimental and that "it could be pictures or recipes, and it doesn't have to be a knick-knack… it can be a story, a song, or a recipe that you think is meaningful." I also explained that "it doesn't have to be Polish." She seemed to take comfort in that and was happy to do research sessions with me, but she was fairly decided that she probably would not want to do any imaginative research on memory objects.

Interestingly, Kamila displayed and kept objects of Polish heritage but did not focus on them as particularly important in her life, such as when I noticed a "tree of luck" that Kamila kept on the table. Realizing I had noticed it, Kamila explained, "it's a *drzewo szczęścia* [tree of luck]… do you know what that is?" "For sure, it's a tree of life," I said incorrectly. "Tree of luck," she corrected me, "I got that one, or should I say, *we* got that one from my aunt for our wedding." She gazed upon the tree, adjusting the branches and removing dust from the base.

"And she brought it over, I'm guessing?" I asked. "Nope," she said before laughing, "she mailed it because she never could come for the wedding." "Oh, I see; so, they sent that instead?" I asked. "Yeah," she said sarcastically and smiled before moving the tree off to the side.

I received a similar reaction after I proposed the memory box activity to Ela and Jan, who dismissed the idea rather quickly by saying, "no, I don't think we'd like to do that." I had left the possibility open that, "should you change your mind," I would want us to undertake a memory box activity together. Ela said it seemed like "too much work… we don't have enough time for that," to which Jan agreed. Wondering about the length of their commitment, Jan then asked, "how long will this take?" I told them that it would take however long they wanted to engage and that I wished to do 2 or 3 introductory sessions followed by doing a memory box. "Well, let's start with the interviews," Jan said, which had left me with the expectation that we would only be doing interviews.

However, other interlocutors, such as Daniella, did have strong sentimentality towards memory objects. "Oh, yes, I keep lots of things," she told me. She described a quilt that was especially important to her. When she was still a young adult, Daniella had obtained a small quilt made up of only a few patches that, based on the dimensions she had described by holding her arms up in the air, was a square, about half a meter across. "We've been adding to it," she explained, "now it's a full-sized blanket that we keep on the couch." It was constructed over a few years or perhaps decades; she was unclear. She told me that there were "a few patches that are very special… like the one my mom and I made together." She was excited as she described the patch: "it's a *panna młoda* [bride] with her mother," she said, "it's supposed to be me, but it's hard to quilt a person and, well, I'm not very good at it." "But all the little mistakes we made, like the crooked stitching, I love them because it reminds me of making it with her," she added.

"And then there's just some fun ones we made with the kids, and ones my grandmother made," she explained as she smiled.

Occasionally my interlocutors had strong sentiments to objects that they did not necessarily consider as vital to Polish heritage but were, nevertheless, closely linked to their Polish identity. During dinner with Agata, we discussed the differences between utensil sizes in North America and Poland. "[Do] you want to see some Polish teaspoons?" Agata asked. "I'll show you," she replied before I could answer. She went into the dining room, "I'll bring you our whole kit, you'll love it!" She returned a moment later with a briefcase-style box typically used to hold a set of silverware. "This is our wedding cutlery that I got from Poland," Agata said. "I don't know very many people who have a formal cutlery set anymore," I said, realizing that my parents and their friends often had one of these given to them at weddings or when they moved into their first home, but it was becoming less common. "Polish teaspoon…" Agata said as she placed a teaspoon from the set onto the counter. "And," she reached into her kitchen drawer, "a Canadian teaspoon," she said, as she placed it next to the Polish teaspoon. Looking at the significant size difference between the two spoons, it struck me that I had never really noticed the difference. "And their tablespoons are bigger," Agata continued, as she pulled out a tablespoon for comparison. "Because they eat a lot of *zupa* [soup]," she continued, "you know you're in Poland when it's 40 degrees [celsius] outside, and you're eating soup." "We also have a whole dinner set from Poland," Agata said, as she put all of the cutlery back into the box, "which I find, the dinner sets from Poland are… a lot nicer?" Although that set, too, was stored in the dining room rather than being used regularly.

Jolanda, however, was very interested in building a memory box with me and immersed herself deeply in the activity. She sincerely anticipated it and told me it "sounded like fun" because she had so many items that she had "been meaning to look through again." Jolanda had filled a box with items from her youth, primarily toys, a few photos and an old storybook. I spent the majority of the session just observing Jolanda as she excitedly went through her collection and described the various items to me. She told me how she remembered getting them and why she decided to keep them all these years. She experienced a tremendous sense of joy as she reminisced about the items, especially the toys "my father used to make for us because we didn't have any money when I was growing up, but my parents still tried to give us the best they could," she said, as she smiled and looked at a wooden toy car with a string you would use to pull it around.

In an old storybook, Jolanda opened her favourite fairytale—*Kot, kogucik i lisica* [*The Story of the Cat, the Little Hen, and the Vixen*]—and began to recall her father reading this story to her. She told me that she learned Polish by following the words along with the pictures. I had a terrible time trying to read the book, so Jolanda, seeing that I was struggling, stopped me and read aloud, doing so with perfect pronunciation. "It's written in Old Polish," I said as though excusing myself. "Yeah… did you ever find that there are a bunch of words that our parents use, but you have no idea what they mean?" She asked in response. "Or old expressions where I can read the words, but the combination doesn't make any sense," I responded. "There's so many words that I'm not familiar with… words that I'd never use… but that didn't really matter because I remember that I didn't understand all the words, but my dad would read us this all the time, so I would just fill in the parts that I didn't know," she explained. "Most of the book is actually kind of a riddle… or at least it's supposed to rhyme or something," she pointed out a few

particular passages that seemed to be more focused on rhyming than being sensical. “Anyway, it doesn’t really matter… it’s not like I really knew what was going on in this book,” she explained. “It looks like they skin the fox,” I said as we looked over the last page. “What?” She said, surprised and almost horrified. “Is that what they mean here when they say the fox is ‘taken away’ by the farmer?” She asked. “At least I think so!” I said, although I started to question myself. Either way, we agreed that something horrible happened to the fox, and we pondered how strange it was that our parents considered these kinds of stories good morals for their children.

Jolanda had thoroughly enjoyed the activity and even messaged me a few days later to thank me for giving her “an excuse to take this stuff out again” and that she intended to display some items, once again, rather than keeping the items in storage. Jolanda had found an old doll of a Krakowiak dancer in traditional dress. “I love the *czerwone korale* [red beads],” she said, describing the traditional red beaded necklace worn by Krakowiak dancers and which makes the costume immediately identifiable. “I also have another one… she has short hair, but she was never my favourite,” she explained. She quickly returned to talking about the Krakowiak doll, saying: “as you can see, she is really dirty… and I’ve actually been thinking about washing her, you know, trying to bring her back,” she said as she looked intently at the doll. After the end of our sessions, Jolanda renewed and redisplayed her doll as though she was finding a new attachment to her heritage.

Session with My Mother: On the Importance of Memories

During a walk with my mother on a trail near our old home in the west end of Brantford, we had a long talk about life before my father passed away. She was looking out to the river and let out a deep sigh, and when I asked her what was bothering her, she told me that she wished her husband was here to enjoy the “good life” our family had worked so hard to create. “He would

have been so happy now," she said, "he always loved taking walks, but we never had time to do it since we were both working so hard" to realize their dreams, presumably. "No one could have known that he would not be with us today," I told her, "he worked hard so that we could have a better life." We looked at each other for a moment, our dreams still influencing our lives in the present. "And we do," I said, "we have a better life… at least, it feels better than before even if he's not here to share it with us." "Maybe you're right," she answered, "still, it's not what I imagined."

Memories, for my interlocutors, are not only about how life was when they were younger but also about the loss of what was imagined during those formative moments wherein many of their core images were devised and firmly cemented within their lives. I am not arguing that these memories—both nostalgic and not—are unchangeable, as my interlocutors demonstrate that they hold on to specific memories and alter others, both guiding them into the future. For baby boomers, this often occurred in the context of their lives in Poland and their reasons for leaving or recalling the past; for millennials, some of these memories stem from early life in Poland but also their migration experiences and first moments in Canada. However, for both generations, these memories seem vividly clear and unchangeable to the individual and the social collective. I have argued that memories for my interlocutors are affective images that form/are formed by personal and collective forces. These images push on/are pushed by my interlocutors within and outside Polonia, ultimately influencing their everyday experiences. These images also change over time, both in relation to their current lives and their changing expectations, as their lives may or may not be realized in the ways they have imagined. Nevertheless, there are many memories which my interlocutors consider to be frozen in time and unchanging, even as they continue to age and move further away from when those memories were first formed.

Memories connect Polish Canadians with the lives they left to pursue the future they imagined (Grønseth). For others, they remind them of the home they left behind (Williksen and Rapport). Some may claim indifference or may have become far removed from the memories of the past (Hirsch). At the same time, others may experience their memories prosthetically through their family, friends and community (Landsberg; Fine). Finally, many consider memory objects as means to connect them to the past in the present, a tangible punctum that exists alongside primarily intangible sources (Truc; Basso). Although bolstered by additional detail and thus ultimately imagined, we recall these memories as authentic to the individual and, through transmission, the larger collective of Polonia.

Guilt or "The Silent Push"

Like me, my interlocutors believe that guilt is a powerful affective force that influences their memories, how they perform their lives in the present, and their expectations for the future. In the following section, I describe the deeply ingrained guilt felt by Polish Canadians, which is usually heavy, carries negative sentiments, and is a regular source of anxiety and grief. However, after analyzing my fieldwork, I came to understand that, contrary to my belief and that of many other Polish Canadians, some see guilt as empowering a call to action to engage in and preserve Polonia in Canada.

Theoretically, my analysis of guilt in Polonia is aligned with Simon Dein, particularly as it pertains to his realization that guilt can be carried socioculturally among a group of people. For Dein, guilt—which he defines as an emotion in reaction to something one has done or not done—is inherently felt by the individual but can also be transmitted among members of a collective through heritage and sociocultural activities and norms (124-5). Guilt is both embodied and socioculturally learned through performance. For Polish Canadians, collective guilt is multi-

sourced but is often considered as deriving from the post-communist condition following decades of oppression during and after WW2 (Galasiński & Galasiński; Svašek; Ghodsee); and also, from the (negative) experiences associated with migration and the unrealisation of the dreams that migration was supposed to afford (White, "Polish Return and Double Return Migration"; Conway and Potter).

I also incorporate Eric Gable's understanding of strong, negative emotions encountered during fieldwork as a source of rich ethnographic detail. For Gable, guilt should not be taken for granted but is a call to the ethnographer to engage with deeply set embodied feelings. This is especially true when the ethnographer, like myself, has personal connections to the emotions felt by their interlocutors and fears that this may cloud our judgement and, therefore, analyses (Gable). Furthermore, as posited by Thomas Stodulka, emotion-related phenomena can increase the authority of ethnographic narratives (9). Guilt is a powerful ethnographic source, and being implicated as both ethnographer and interlocutor (Liem), I unpack the guilt carried and felt by my interlocutors and other Polish Canadians, alongside my own.

Perhaps the group that spoke most openly and directly about migrant guilt are the Polish Canadian baby boomers engaged in this research. They often spoke of guilt—usually directly, but sometimes less specifically—as a source of negative feelings and the troubling connotations associated with their life choices and experiences of migrancy. For the Polish Canadian baby boomers I worked with, I noticed that they often talked about a few forms of guilt: the guilt caused by living in communist Poland; the guilt of leaving their home country and family behind; the guilt of taking their children through a troubling and unsettled life and wondering what

that impacts migration had on their development; the guilt of not realizing their or their children's dreams in Canada; and, the guilt of wondering what life might have been like back in Poland had they stayed.

Although this list is a generalization, the guilt felt by Polish Canadians pertains to questions of "what if?" They wonder what life would have been like if they and their families did not migrate or if they had migrated differently, perhaps at a different time. Their guilt stems from a sense of longing and remorse for a lost life that they were denied experiencing, either by choice or necessity.

Millennial interlocutors experience and engage with guilt differently than their parents. For this generation, we experience guilt both prosthetically (i.e., we share the guilt of their parents and communities, although not usually firsthand) and personally (i.e., either by being a migrant themselves or living a life structured by liminality). For my millennial interlocutors, some spaces of guilt are common among them: the guilt of not living up to our parents' expectations, particularly because we assume that they sacrificed aspects of their lives for the betterment of their children; the guilt of not carrying on Polish tradition, particularly if their parents value their Polish heritage and have made efforts to pass this onto their children; the guilt of not feeling entirely Canadian and thus not having as much opportunity as those born here; and, the guilt of wondering what life might have been like in Poland had their families stayed.

Millennials feel a deep sense of duty to improve our lives in Canada by realizing the images we have formed relating to our parents' and future generations' expectations. Many believe that because our parents had difficult lives in Poland and were given an opportunity to improve their lives in Canada, we ought to do whatever is necessary to take advantage of our new opportunities. "Who would you say is the most important person in your life?" "My mom and dad,"

Daniella answered immediately, “without question.” “And why do you think that?” I asked her. “Because they gave up everything—their life in Poland—for us,” she explained, “so that we could have a better life.”

Polish Canadian millennials may feel guilt as received from their parents, but also have private sources of guilt. This private guilt is mainly unexplored in current migration scholarship, which tends to focus on first-generation migrant guilt and less on the prosthetic and auxiliary guilt later generations feel. For millennials, guilt is less of an obvious driver in forming our memories than it is for our parents. Instead, it more strongly dictates how we envision our futures. Guilt over the sacrifices our parents made by migrating is often why we seek a better life for ourselves and our children in Canada, and it also intensifies when we feel that we have not lived up to those expectations. We feel guilt doubly, an ongoing reminder that we must live up to and exceed the standard of living our parents had as proof that our families did not migrate in vain, while we also navigate private guilt realized from our desires.

Agata described guilt as a “silent push” that is hard to describe. I asked, “What does it feel like? What does it look like?” “What does it feel like?” Agata immediately explained, “like… like... this… I think ‘I want to do this!’ but then I think ‘I don’t want to leave my parents. What if my parents wouldn’t like that? What if my parents wouldn’t be happy with me doing that?’ I’m not sure what you’d call that.” “Polish guilt?” I asked. “Yes!” Agata overwhelmingly agreed. “That’s it!” She proclaimed. “You finally figured it out,” Bartek said. “All these years I’ve been wondering what you call that little voice sitting on your shoulder going ‘meh-meh-meh-meh-meh’!” She said in a mocking tone, as though babbling words with a strong sense of authority. “Yeah, so it’s like whatever we dream, I think about how my mom would tell me: ‘we came here so you could be happy, so you could have a better life’ or whatever, so then there’s

this guilt as I wonder 'would my mom be happy if I did this?'," she continued, "then I end up doing what I think will make me more money, or this or that, so that I can help them and make their lives a little bit easier, so it's not just about me, it's about my parents and my family, and it's like 'holy shit,' you know?" "So, it's like that silent push." She continued, "I would love to leave Canada to start a new life, but then it's like, 'oh wait… my parents brought me here for a reason'." "And you feel like you're abandoning them?" I ask. "Yes!" She proclaimed, "it's that feeling exactly!"

Guilt can be an incredibly powerful yet largely undefinable force in everyday life decisions. Thus, one can be oblivious to the extent of how that guilt determines their actions and choices. Guilt is a primary force in the definition and performance of Polish Canadian imaginaries. However, it is often described as a lingering albeit powerful feeling or image that influences present thoughts and actions, which impacts the future.

When I asked Agata what would happen if she were to realize her dream of moving to Europe, she replied: "That would never happen." "My parents would probably have a nervous breakdown," Agata added. "I know when I have said that I wanted to sell everything and move to Poland, my parents responded, 'well, we didn't bring you here for nothing'," she explained. "I think they would be…" Agata began. "…devastated," Bartek added. "No," Agata disagreed, "they would be upset, and then they would probably question us on why they brought us here, and why would we want to leave… like if you think about it, they sacrificed everything… because I have asked, I've said I want to go back to Poland, and that usually didn't end well." "So, then you feel guilty, like their world is going to end," I added. "Exactly," Agata said. "They make you feel guilty if you don't [do what they want]," Bartek added. "The silent push," Agata said.

Guilt as Duty

Perhaps due to my own experiences with guilt as a Polish Canadian, I had approached my fieldwork with the expectation that my interlocutors would discuss guilt as though it were detrimental to their lives. However, I was surprised that as my research sessions developed, some interlocutors discussed guilt as a constructive force in their lives. This "guilt as a virtue" is a perspective that is often overlooked (Herdt 237). Some of my interlocutors consider guilt to be a positive force stemming from the belonging afforded by maintaining and promoting Polonia heritage and tradition. And yet, like their own lives, this positive force exists in a liminal space wherein they feel torn between the expectations of duty and the desire to live life on their own terms.

Engaging with the *Koło Polek [Ladies Circle]* brought forward the ideology of guilt as a potentially positive force that ensured the longevity and continuity of Polonia in Canada. Maria focused our conversations on topics of duty and how her actions have an impact over the long-term. "And then there was a period that I was busy so I lost some contact with the Hall, but I always remained connected with the Ladies' Circle," she said, "and there came a time when I *felt* that I wanted to reconnect with the Hall and because I was always such a hard worker, and I was always so committed to what I do, [I felt] that it would be such a shame to leave that behind," she explained, suggesting her work at the Hall is part of something more substantial. For Maria, guilt for not engaging in Polonia is the force that brought her back to engage in it once more, perhaps especially when she realized that the Hall now needs maintainers to return it to a place of prominence amongst the community.

However, for some millennial interlocutors, this duty has not been as well-received. They have been very resistant to the forced participation that comes with the expectation to serve the Polonia community and the lack of inclusivity many millennials feel as if they are not granted

the freedom to input their preferences for change. In many ways, Polish Canadian millennials reject nostalgic images of Polish heritage and, instead, desire to interpret history through their own experiences, both in Poland and Canada. This "social transition," as Kristen Ghodsee calls it, occurs amongst all members of Polish heritage but is, perhaps, most notably happening at the forefront of the millennial generation that has been further removed from life under communism (Ghodsee 177).

When I discussed this transition with Kamila, her guilt made her unsure of what to do. It demonstrated how a post-socialist identity is in a liminal space between the desire to preserve history and the transition towards a new understanding. "I would have stopped going a long time ago if it weren't for my parents," Kamila explained, discussing her choice to stop attending the Hall. "They always want people to join the Hall or to volunteer," she said with an air of nuisance. For Kamila, this was more than just a simple case of not wanting to attend a space that Kamila feels is no longer representative of her lifestyle. "So, what, is it that you don't have time or don't want to go to the Hall, or is it something else?" I asked. "Well," she continued, "I always hated the politics and the bickering between members of the community." She looked very annoyed, as though she felt torn between a desire to engage and bad experiences that soured her relationship with her roots. "It's too bad," she stated after a short pause. "What is?" I asked her, hoping she could explain her divisiveness. "I do want my kids to understand where we came from and how life used to be for my family and me, but it's not important to me right now," she said before shifting positions. "I mean, I don't plan to take them to Poland or anything anytime soon, so why do they need to learn to speak Polish or those old traditions and stuff, anyway?" To me, it seemed that she was a little embarrassed; I felt that she described a struggle within her between feelings of longing to engage in Polonia the way her parents and community wanted her to

engage and her current reality in which most of the images of tradition and heritage are irrelevant in her everyday life.

Session with My Mother: The Guilt of Expectation

Guilt was a universal image affecting both generations of my interlocutors, although not always through a shared understanding. Guilt can be personal and prosthetic, and individual and collective in that it is both individually experienced and formed but is also transferred amongst a collective and between generations. Prosthetic transfer is especially important as it strengthens the affective potential of guilt by reinforcing them within the collective. By mid-summer, I had been frequenting the Hall regularly and becoming more involved. I told my mother that Maria was very excited to help me as she had given me the impression it had been quite some time since someone was considering a project on "Polonia and our history in Canada… which is *very* important to tell," as Maria had put it (her emphasis). I was still at a very early stage in my research analysis, but I had the impression that, after speaking with several Polish Canadian baby boomers, it was assumed and even expected that I was doing a project on the history of Polonia in Canada, specifically on Polish migrants in Canada during the third wave of migration.

"So, if you're not writing about Polish Canadian culture," my mother asked, "what are you writing about?" Although it was somewhat true that I would be discussing the history of Polonia in Canada, I told her that, from the outset, I was not interested in doing a historical review of this community; instead, I wanted to know how "things were changing" as Polish Canadian millennials were becoming shepherds of Polonia. "It's like it has always been," I told my mother, "that I feel like I'm being forced to do something [about Polonia] that I don't want to." "No one is forcing you to do anything," she replied, "I always wanted you to feel that you could live your life the way you want to." "It's not that I am being forced to do anything," I explained, "I'm not

being told to do something because I have to; I just *feel* that there is an expectation to think about and write about Polish culture in Canada in a certain way," I tried to explain. She looked at me for a moment which made me unsure if she knew what I meant. "I've always felt that pressure, ever since I was a kid, to conform to Canada but never forget my Polish roots." "Is there something wrong with that?" She asked. "I don't know," I explained, unsure how to express my feelings of forced participation and deeply seated expectations. "What I *do* know is that there is more to this story than just heritage and traditions," I added, "it's how we feel about it that is important, I think."

The pervasive guilt I have felt throughout my life is not uncommon among Polish Canadians. This became clear to me when I began doing in-depth interviews with my interlocutors and often came about in conversation without much probing. In fact, I had never directly asked my interlocutors whether they "felt guilt" in how they performed their lives. Instead, we would discuss expectations of how we believed we best ought to perform our identities as members of Polonia. Guilt would be described by my interlocutors as a "silent push" or an unknown pressure that was deeply felt but difficult to describe. Like me, my interlocutors would describe feeling that they had to perform their lives a certain way for fear of not living up to expectations or that they would be considered false Polish Canadians. This shared revelation usually made me feel understood, but simultaneously disappointed that others had not yet learned how to deal with the heavy burden of guilt. Like any issue in my life, I have been seeking how to resolve my feelings of guilt, but it remains pervasive throughout my life. It is only lightened when I speak with other individuals with life experiences similar to my own, particularly Polish Canadian millennials whose lives reflect my own very closely. But, as I would discover over the course of fieldwork and which I will analyze later in this text, what I consider "guilt" can also be understood as duty

and deep connection. The process of this fieldwork and subsequent analysis helped me understand that the guilt I feel is more complex than a negative emotion pushing me towards disconnection and forgoing generation succession. I would learn that I need not seek to relieve what I consider a tremendous pressure on my life and, instead, embrace a powerful force in my life that offers belonging.

Chapter Four: Imagistic Landscapes

"Some days I think about returning to Poland," Zosia said, "and, really, I could if I wanted to but, I think," she paused for a moment as she stared out the window to find her thoughts, "I think I would miss my life in Canada." "Which is not how I feel about Poland," she said, "I don't miss Poland so much anymore, I don't miss my life like I once did," she continued, "because my life is a little different now, and Poland is different now, but I still want to keep my heritage alive because I still feel like I am Polish."

In this first chapter of ethnographic analysis, I analyze the imagistic landscapes my interlocutors and I consider pertinent to how we imagine, devise, and perform our everyday lives (Hirsch; Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum*). I define imagistic landscapes as physical and imagined organizing structures that we occupy, form, and perform, a definition I draw from Eric Hirsch. Building on the Western notion of landscape as a physical place, Hirsch incorporates a cross-cultural understanding of the term by positioning his definition in-between the physical and the imagined, both occupying space in our lives and are the grounds upon which metacultural production happens (2).

Imagistic landscapes in Polonia stage "different kinds of acts, different techniques or strategic practices" and "include rituals of a personal or collective kind, played out in city streets and country locations, taking the form of ceremonial revivals and mundane routines" but also are "inscribed in postcards, house furnishings and bodily habits" (Williksen and Rapport 4). Imagistic landscapes, thus, can be best understood as "poles of experience" which ground our lives and are, simultaneously, defined by the very enactment of the images we draw from them (Hirsch 5). That is, like Hirsch, I understand imagistic landscapes as a *process* in addition to our geographical understandings of landscapes as places and spaces (5). As such, some of this research was

conducted at a local Polish Canadian cultural centre (the Hall) which many Polish Canadians attribute as a principal place of heritage production (Hall, "Whose heritage?"). However, I am also interested, perhaps more so, in understanding how Polish Canadians envision, define, and occupy purely imagined landscapes, like language and food, and how these spaces relate to how Polish Canadians imagine their lives and Polonia.

Imagistic landscapes are harbours of sociocultural identity by being essential to our sense of belonging and are agents in shaping our identity. For members of the Polish Diaspora, landscapes are critical to developing national identity, given that Polish people have faced recurring and frequent displacement (Lovell). Yet, landscapes become problematic when discussing their importance to an imagined community like Polonia because they are not easy to pinpoint to a particular place. This is especially true for people who rely on the transportability of cultural capital wherein identity is de-territorialized, and members may disagree on what constitutes as origins of their identity (Bhabha; Lovell). Instead, the very act of remembering—or "the construction of collective memory surrounding place"—creates belonging and a sense of situatedness (Lovell 1). Our sense of belonging is "moulded and defined as much by actual territorial emplacement as by memories of belonging to particular landscapes whose physical reality is enacted only through acts of collective remembering" (1-2). The remembering and performing of images, thus, play an essential role in situating an individual within sociocultural structures larger than themselves as they "establish a connection between our individual past and our collective past (our origins, heritage, and history)… [t]he past is always with us, and it defines our present; it resonates in our voices, hovers over our silences, and explains how we came to be ourselves and to inhabit what we call 'our homes'" (Agnew 3). Thus, I understand imaginative landscapes as archive and repertoire in this context. The images they encapsulate are embodied by

Polish Canadians and by the community of Polonia-at-large in that these actors carry images pertinent to the individual and collective identity. However, they are (re-)performed in everyday contexts, and so are the ground on/through which the images of Polonia are realized (Taylor).

I am especially interested in understanding how history and legacies are carried (or not) over the transition between baby boomer and millennial generations. Theoretically, this research is aligned with Kristen Ghodsee's work on generational transition in post-communist Eastern Bloc countries. I focus on what is kept and lost between generations and how we perform those transitions in everyday contexts. I analyze "the process of transition and the poor way it was handled… that lies at the root of the growing nostalgia" for life under communism, particularly as baby boomers are ageing and succeeding generations seem uninterested in maintaining those histories, which is resulting in what Ghodsee calls a "collective forgetting" of our legacies and heritage (183). Ultimately, this collective forgetting leads to mass global changes as a new generation leads, arguably, the most dramatic demographic shift in history (Magnus; Levitt and Waters).

In the first section of this chapter, I analyze legacies or what I understand as imagistic landscapes focused on memorializing individuals and collectives. Legacies are spaces that my interlocutors and I look back upon as we make choices in the present and dream of the future. Especially important to my baby boomer interlocutors, legacies are spaces where individuals and collectives leave traces behind for future generations. However, legacies are in danger as their value is being forgotten via a crisis in generational succession wherein millennials are less interested in preserving legacies and, at least for some, wish to create their legacies and imprint their

identities within the heritage of Polonia. At the same time, millennials may not necessarily understand the value of the legacies we are so quick to reject, which is a lesson many of my baby boomer interlocutors are eager to teach their children.

In the next section of this chapter, I look more closely at the tangible and intangible imagistic landscapes of Polish Canadian heritage. Polish Canadians often share a tightly defined image of what is to be included and excluded from Polonia that many consider unchanging but, as my interlocutors revealed, is highly individualistic and constantly shifting. The baby boomers implicated in this research described the value of maintaining and sharing heritage, mainly because most of them witnessed occupations in Poland that nearly resulted in the disappearance of our national identity. On the other hand, the millennials discussed their desire to create new landscapes in Polonia. They credit a desire for change as stemming from feelings of in-betweenness by living a life that is neither rooted here nor there. In addition to our understanding of heritage as being drawn from our historical homeland of Poland and Polonia cultural sites, we also, if not more so, believe Polonia heritage is purely imagined. I begin by analyzing heritage in physical places, such as the Hall or the home, before analyzing intangible spaces like food, family, and the Polish language.

In the final section of this chapter, I explore the imagistic landscapes that pertain to our dreams of the future. My interlocutors consider their dreams as individual and collective in that they imagine them personally and socioculturally. As I analyze these dreams, I focus on the idealization of a successful life as was described by my interlocutors. Most baby boomers defined success in life as an idealized future related to the life they wish for their children—a "better life," arguably. Thus, success succeeds generations as they understand that succession is inseparable from realizing their dreams. Millennials, too, are thinking about the future but, perhaps due

to being in mid-life, are more focused on the present and the possibilities afforded to us by our parents. As such, my millennial interlocutors and I tend to view our dreams with increasing individuality, although we often shape them in relation to the dreams imagined by our parents and whether or not we realize their dreams successfully.

Legacies

"All I want is to leave something of myself behind," Zosia said, "something nice, something good, something, that, you know?" She turned to look at me, wondering if I understood what she meant.

In the following section, I look at both individual and collective legacies, who considers which legacies as being important for remembering, and the value that legacies offer to my interlocutors and me as we imagine and engage with Polonia. I begin by analyzing the value of legacy, according to my interlocutors, and how each generation understands and engages legacy differently. That is, my baby boomer interlocutors each shared a similar sentiment about legacy: that tending to the legacies of Polonia, and also Poland, is one of the most vital duties people of Polish descent should contribute to, sometimes even at the expense of their life priorities. On the other hand, millennials, although in some ways also see the value in legacy, feel that we are expected to follow in the maintenance work of previous generations, which is a prospect that only sometimes reflects our life priorities.

I then look at how my interlocutors tend to the landscapes of legacy. For some, it means answering a call to duty by being deeply engaged as active members of the community, while others practice quietly in their homes in ways that are both complementary and different to the established legacy of Polonia in Canada. However, this preservation work differs between generations for the reasons I mentioned above, wherein baby boomers and millennials see their roles

as caretakers of Polonia's legacy as vastly different. For some Polish Canadian baby boomers and their children, there is an inherent duty to remember the legacy of Polonia and Poland by relaying it to future generations (Dein). Some might say there is a collective responsibility for people of Polish descent to be minders of history so that future generations do not forget, and potentially repeat, the horrors that had occurred in Poland during the bulk of the 20th Century (Ghodsee; Wertsch). Furthermore, as Maria often explained to me, the history of Polish migration to Canada due to Poland's turbulent history is also important to remember and is a responsibility that falls squarely on the community that comprises this imagined nation. So, questions around "who deserves a legacy" and "who has input into the collective legacy of Polonia" stir contentions between these two generations, something that has left baby boomers fearing the disappearance of Polonia and the millennial generation becoming increasingly alienated and disconnected from our roots.

Value in Legacy

During fieldwork, my baby boomer interlocutors often discussed preserving the legacies of those who came before them. Many of their everyday performances were less about what they "thought was good for their kids," as Maria said, and more about preserving "our legacy" or what I understood as maintaining and sharing the collective legacy of our people. Legacies are imagined landscapes, which individuals and collectives embody, that give "a sense of continuity" as a space to draw from as we navigate the present and imagine the future (Williksen and Rapport 4). It is less about remembering individuals and more about the collective wisdom that must be maintained and passed on to subsequent generations. This knowledge is vital and, according to Maria, must be remembered otherwise Polonia risks disappearance.

Legacies function as a kind of archive (Taylor); it is a space where the histories of those that came before us are preserved or immortalized for future generations to draw from. Among my interlocutors, legacies are more important to baby boomers than to succeeding generations. Those that engage in the preservation of legacies are ageing and dying, and the succeeding generation seems hardly interested in preserving history. This is resulting in a kind of "collective forgetting" as legacies are slowly lost (Ghodsee 183). "There is a lot of pride in that place," I told Zosia about the Hall. "Almost every time I go, I am shown the plaque of past presidents by one of the executives as a reminder of the decades-long lineage that has supported the Hall," I continued. "They are so proud of that history… so very proud," I added. "There is a feeling like 'we don't want to lose this,' whether that is because the Hall runs out of money and can't do events anymore or because my generation doesn't want to be engaged anymore." Zosia smiled humbly and looked deeply into my eyes while nodding gently, but she had nothing to say or, perhaps, felt that she did not need to.

For my baby boomer interlocutors, there was a shared belief that preserving their legacy came second to preserving the collective legacy of Polonia to which they claim belonging and to which they see their actions as contributing to its maintenance and development. When I asked Zosia about engaging in my project, someone who has been a strong proponent of preserving the legacy of Polonia, she told me that her individual life does not matter as much as the history of the community. Before I even had a chance to ask her questions, Zosia asked me, "why did you choose me?" "What do you mean?" I asked her to clarify. "Why did you ask to interview me for your book? I am not that interesting," she replied. "You are one of the most active members of the community," I answered, "and a few people told me that I should speak with you." She smiled and answered humbly, "I did not realize."

Agata and Bartek explained how their parents often indicated to them that their legacies are to be dictated by a greater sense of duty which is a strong force pushing them to live out their lives as shepherds for the maintenance and continued development of the images set by fore generations. They likened this to the difference between older and younger siblings wherein they feel like, with the precedence of age, they have a greater responsibility to be shepherds of the future. When I asked Agata how she imagines her future, she told me, "my sister would say, 'you have to quit and open a business!'." "But she's a risk-taker because she's younger [than me]—I'm not," she went on, "I like stable, I like predictable." "Plus," Bartek chimed in, "with being the oldest, you want to be successful; you want a stable job because, you know, when it comes down to it, your younger siblings will not be there for your parents when they need it, to take care of them because that's not their mentality." "I don't know… Wiktor," Agata intervened, "you're [the] younger [child]; what do you think of that?" "I think I tend to agree with that," I replied, "my older brother tends to be the more stable one, the more predictable one, level-headed… he just likes everything the same… and then there's me where I'm just like 'I'll try it!'." Bartek laughed. "We're more calculated," he said, "we take calculated risks." "We weigh the odds," Agata added. "We weigh the options," Bartek said, "we wonder how much it might cost us, what we might have to sacrifice in order to get it… because we don't want to sacrifice the way we live, the way we are." "So, why do you feel like that responsibility is yours and not your younger siblings?" I asked. "Because you're the oldest," Bartek explained without question, "you're the example." "But, again, why are you the example? Because your parents told you? Because your parents spent the most time on you?" I asked, "that's what I really want to understand." "Because you're… you're…" Bartek fished for words. "Because they have expecta-

tions," Agata prompted. "Because they have expectations," Bartek continued, "you're the dependable one." "The silent expectations parents have of their firstborn is not the same [as their other children]," Agata confirmed, "we like to think that we paved the way for our younger siblings!" She laughed somewhat uncomfortably.

Although significant at the individual level, Polish Canadians value legacies for their influence on Polonia and the individuals who make up this collective. They consider their legacies to be not as—or, perhaps, *should not* be as—important as the legacy of the community. Polonia is constituted from the experiences of a people whose nation experienced disappearance, multiple times, by way of forced occupation. People of Polish descent who have living memory of these times believe there is critical value in preserving their collective identity as it is developed and maintained through legacies. As such, baby boomer Polish Canadians often urge other members of Polonia to continue this work even if this is at odds with their life priorities, something that is especially difficult for the millennial generation to condone and that I will analyze in the remainder of this chapter.

The Future of Legacy

The millennial generation of Polish Canadians is, perhaps, most implicated in preserving legacies and continuing Polonia. Our parents are urging us to (re-)engage in Polonia to preserve history, so the expectation for Polonia's longevity lies squarely on our shoulders. It is not that millennials do not care about legacy or that we are actively working against the wishes of our parents (I have posited that most feel that we owe this to our parents for the sacrifices they made by coming to Canada in search of a better life). Instead, we feel that our personal contributions and perspectives on Polonia are not being accepted. It is a common (mis)conception that Polish Canadian millennials do not care about "being Polish and proud," as Agata put it, and that we

identify primarily with what we consider to be Canadian values. Even Bartek and Jolanda, both of whom were born in Canada, identify as belonging to Polonia and incorporate aspects of its legacy in how they define their lifeworlds. Polish Canadian millennials often draw a deep sense of pride from our legacy, but we also wish to function beyond the role of minders of that legacy and, instead, maybe active shapers.

Polish Canadian millennials do value our Polish roots; however, because our engagement with Polonia is vastly different from that of our parents, I argue that we are seeking a way we can engage with Polonia in ways that better reflect our unique life experiences. Most of my millennial interlocutors explained that we do not wish to engage with Polonia heritage the way our parents do, and, instead, we wish to engage in ways that both mix aspects of our parents' heritage and incorporate new interpretations and expressions.

Kamila had best described this to me when she explained why she decided not to enrol her children in the Hall's Polish language school or the dancing troupe because of her own experiences in childhood when she was most involved in Polonia. "They didn't listen to me," Kamila said, referring to her parents and teachers, "I wanted to do things my way but was never allowed." Kamila felt frustrated that her personal understandings of Polonia were often brushed aside for the sake of "tradition" or what others believed was the right way to "be Polish." "Would you have stayed if they did listen?" I asked. "Probably," she replied. Like Kamila, I argue that my millennial interlocutors want to contribute to Polonia's legacy in Canada but to do so in a way that is both mindful of our legacies and personally meaningful. Because we identify as part of Polonia, millennials feel entitled to input on how Polonia is (per)formed but often feel sidelined by the legacy of that which came before.

However, millennials are disengaging from some aspects of Polonia without necessarily understanding why those processes and conditions are significant. Legacies give context to experiences because, even if they seem new, they may have unfolded similarly in the past (Ghodsee). And so, we are "forgetting" when we should be focused on "remembering," as Beata explained. "And, do you see what this conversation is leading to?" Beata asked. "That, if you grow with rich traditions, a rich history, a strong cultural identity," she continued, "that, even if you decided to disconnect yourself from that for a while, that most people come back to it because, as they get older and smarter, they realize how important it is, they start to long for it." "Why do you think that?" I asked, "why do people come back to tradition… to their roots?" "Because they realize it gives them something special," Marcin explained. "Or that you can buy a piece of meat, a tenderloin from Costco for $20," Beata explained, "and then you buy some potatoes for a few bucks, and I feed my family for the week!" "It's healthy; it's economical," she said, "this is stuff that you learn by doing, usually with your family." "So, now my daughter will call me and thank me for teaching her how to cook because she gets home after a long day and says, 'I am so happy that I have something to eat and not have to worry about it'," she said, "and it's not macaroni and cheese!" We laughed.

Legacies encapsulate wisdom, something that cannot be gained by means apart from having lived life or sharing understandings with others. What Marcin and Beata have tried to instill in txaheir children is the understanding that although some knowledge may not be helpful currently, it may and likely will prove helpful someday. Thus, the fear of "collective forgetting" is not only about avoiding the repetition of the horrors that occurred in Poland's past but also about losing the wisdom shaped by individual contributions over generations (Wertsch; Ghodsee).

Session with My Mother: On the Value of Legacy

When I asked my mother about what she believed was the value of legacy, she told me that "it's important to know where what we learned over the years," she said, "because we learn from that [past] to make good decisions [in the present]." "And what about the future? What can legacy tell us about the future?" I asked her. "I think the more experiences we have, over [the course of] our lives, it makes us richer… it will make our lives more fulfilled and richer [sic]," she explained. "So, it's a way to look back to help us make good decisions in the future," I said, asking for clarification. "That's a good way to look at it!" She exclaimed.

She also told me that, for her, legacy reminds us of what "feels familiar, feels like home." I understood home to mean belonging within a community and shared history. "We are in Canada and that shaped our lives, but the past also shaped our lives," she added, explaining that by knowing and remembering the legacy of Polonia and its constituents, we are better able to negotiate the inherent liminality of the migrant condition and, thus, feel "at home."

The remembering of legacies functions not only to create a sense of collective identity for displaced people to carve out a place for "home," it functions as the "alternate archives" from which Polish Canadians draw to create situated-ness and to encapsulate wisdom so that future generations need not experience similar difficulties (Agnew 7). The baby boomer interlocutors understand the value of legacies, with so many of them working to preserve this archive for future generations. Millennials interlocutors also see value in legacy, but the forced expectation to engage in Polonia in a certain way leaves them feeling powerless to insert their imaginings into the collective archive.

My research interprets the imaginaries that collective remembering creates. However, what we collectively forget is equally important (if not more important) than what we remember.

For baby boomers, there is fear that the legacy of Polonia is in jeopardy as the millennial generation is disengaging from acts of collective remembering and, instead, is engaging in "collective forgetting" (Ghodsee; Hirsch). However, I argue that millennials wish to retain the legacy of Poloia but also to be influencers of that legacy as they believe that their imaginings should be added to a diaspora that is purely imagined by its members to which they, too, claim belonging.

Heritage

In this section, I move on to discuss the importance of heritage to Polonia and the members of this diaspora. Much like legacy, I consider heritage as being drawn from the past as we perform our lives in the present and imagine our futures. Unlike legacy, which often relates to lived history and action, heritage for my interlocutors is distinct in that, by means of collective definition, tangible and intangible things come to symbolize how Polonia is defined and performed. Although physical landscapes such as Polonia cultural centres and Poland as a nation-state are fundamental symbols of Polonia, I spend the bulk of this chapter discussing the intangible heritage that my interlocutors and I consider vital to how we imagine Polonia in Canada.

Physical landscapes are vital to the sociocultural production and performance of Polonia heritage. For diasporic individuals, "'[h]ome' territories are almost overburdened with symbolism, from being an embodiment of national identity" (Burrell 324). This is especially true for the Polish diaspora, wherein "territory remains at the heart of the transnational equation, with the homeland as the physical and emotional focus of emigrant transnationalism" (324). Physical places can embody the nation as a kind of heritage archive; physical places are "actors" of the social imagination that contain localized knowledge vital to fashioning identity and our sense of home (Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen*). However, with the increase in migration and globalization, physical places "are not clearly tied to and defined via national territories and identities" as

migrant identity evolves, becoming more reflective of the reality developed in their adopted nation (Brosius and Polit 2). Furthermore, many heritage practices have become disengaged from cultural centres and similar physical landscapes, which are increasingly moving towards "museum status" because, for many, these kinds of places are no longer considered grounds for heritage production (2). As a result, these centres face extinction as their membership ages, and a new generation is hesitant or disinterested in engaging.

Polonia does not claim belonging to a particular place, given that the Polish diaspora is spread globally. Rather, it exists liminally, in-between place and space (Clopot). Intangible heritage is, arguably, more vital for how the heritage of Polonia is imagined and the grounds on which it is performed. Intangible heritage, although not easily described but nevertheless deeply felt, is perhaps best described by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett as a "living tradition" that supports "the conditions necessary for cultural reproduction" and includes "the 'carriers' and 'transmitters' of traditions" as well as "their 'habitus' and 'habitat'" ("Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production" 53). Intangible heritage exists alongside tangible heritage and, together with tangible heritage, drives what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls "metacultural production" (ibid. 52). This defines and is defined by members of Polonia, a largely imagined community. I argue that intangible heritage is central to Polish Canadian identity and belonging.

In the following section, I outline and analyze the heritage places and spaces—the tangible and, especially, intangible heritage—that my interlocutors and I consider as the grounds on and through which we shape and perform Polonia. For baby boomers, both tangible and intangible heritage is at the heart of their understanding and performance of heritage. Physical places, like the Hall, allow them to create heritage by connecting with other Polish Canadians in a meaningful place. They also find profound meaning in intangible heritage that cannot be physically

encapsulated but that, nevertheless, is pivotal to how they define Polonia heritage, including spaces like language, food, and their conceptualizations of family. Intangible heritage is critical to millennials that often do not frequent the physical landscapes of our parents but remain connected to the heritage of Polonia through these intangible spaces. However, at least for some of my millennial interlocutors, the heritage passed down from fore generations has been blended with adopted heritage from our lives in Canada which we find equally or more important in our lives and which we believe should be incorporated into our understanding of how Polonia is defined.

Places

For many Polish Canadians, places are grounds of metacultural production that enable performing collective belonging within an imagined community (Fortier). Because they are physical, they transcend the fickleness of intangible heritage and are often held with reverie as they can remain present into the future. Furthermore, because Polonia has few physical places of heritage, those that exist are considered especially important and are often elevated to sacred status. Before analyzing intangible spaces, I devote this section of analysis to the importance of physical place in imagining and performing Polonia.

Before I began fieldwork, I did not expect to spend so much time at the local Polish Canadian cultural centre for two primary reasons: first, I assumed that most of the Polish Canadian baby boomers would be ageing and that the membership population had been slowly declining; and, second, I keep several Polish Canadian millennial friends, and they typically show general indifference to frequenting these kinds of places. These assumptions were based on experiences I had leading up to the start of my research, and, in many ways, there is some truth in these statements. The Polish Canadian baby boomer population is indeed ageing, and the membership at

local Polish Canadian cultural centres is shrinking, particularly among members from younger generations. However, according to my interlocutors, baby boomers remain very active at cultural places and, at least at the Hall, a core group of members maintains cultural places, some engaging daily.

In addition to their desire to frequent cultural centres, there is a sense of urgency in preserving what my baby boomer interlocutors believe to be a disappearing place of monumental importance to Polonia heritage. As millennials slowly disengage, there is doubt that a new generation will continue to maintain these places, so baby boomers fear Polonia's heritage will change too drastically or, worse, be forgotten. During my fieldwork, membership at the Hall was almost exclusively comprised of individuals aged 50 years and older. Of the less than ten active "youth" members, I was the only one attending most events and meetings, and, as such, I received much attention from the older members who sought to enlist me to participate in centre activities. Many times, I felt overburdened with requests, and although I did agree to many as part of fieldwork, I did not have time enough time to honour them all. Furthermore, like other Polish Canadian millennials, requests for participation often stir strong emotions of "forced participation" that I experienced as a child wherein I felt I had to conform my engagement in Polonia in specific ways at the expense of my inherent desires. Maria said it is because they hope "one day you will return," or that the millennial generation will realize the importance of places of heritage and, so, we will return to tend to them once more.

Physical places are animating—they have the agency to animate those who frequent them (Cruikshank *Do Glaciers Listen?*)—so many Polish Canadians consider places as centres through which Polonia is given its vitality and which anchors our heritage. For most of my interlocutors, the Hall is a physical landscape of particular importance whether we engage there or

not. The Hall is a physical reminder of the work that members of the Polonia diaspora have done in building—literally and figuratively—their shared identity, which is especially important to displaced people who have difficulty claiming belonging to any one place in particular. "It reminds us of where we come from," Maria once told me, a sentiment I often attributed to Poland as the ancestral homeland of my displaced people. It is not surprising, then, that many Polish Canadian baby boomers are concerned about the implications that losing a physical space, such as the Hall, would mean for the community, not only because it is a place to congregate and to engage in the heritage of Polonia, but because it is a kind of archive that cannot be supplemented (Taylor).

Several prominent Polonia heritage activities are performed in cultural centres like the Hall. There are many holidays that Polish Canadians congregate at the Hall to celebrate. One of the most important of which takes place in early July when the Brantford International Villages Festival becomes the central focus of the volunteer activities at the Hall. Colloquially known as The Villages, this week-long festival has been drawing participation from cultural halls around Brantford for over 40 years and is one of the most significant annual tourism events in the city. My family and I have been frequenting the Villages annually since arriving in Brantford in 1997, many times working the festival as volunteers, so I had deeply set images of this heritage event and what it means to the community.

A few days before the start of the Villages, Maria requested that I attend a volunteer's meeting; to my surprise, I was one of the few millennials there and younger than most of the volunteers by three or four decades. Even the parents of the children engaged in dancing were largely absent from the festivities and, instead, a lone Polish School teacher led the children. In fact, that year, they did not have an older youth dancing group able to present. Instead, there was

one performance by the only dancing group still operating at the Hall, made up of children primarily between the ages of 7 and 10. The adult dancing performance was done by a hired international artist from Ukraine. Her performances were beautiful and very much resembled Polish dancing, but, according to Maria, it was not "traditional Polish dancing" and was certainly not like the dancing from the region of Poland where the Hall drew the representation of its village from. The remainder of the dances were video recordings made during the mid-1990s, when the Hall was more active, and were projected onto a giant screen in lieu of live performances. For some members and patrons, there is an expectation as to what kind of heritage can be performed at this place or what they consider traditional performances.

The Hall as an archive must conform to specific established definitions if it is to be considered belonging to Polonia, a definition its members decide. As a child, I understood this to mean that certain things belonged in Polonia, whereas others did not. During The Villages, I noticed that the event format had mostly stayed the same since I was involved in these events as a child. Most of the decorations were the same, including the "cultural display" that the volunteers installed in the foyer of the Hall. According to some members, the formalities were also much the same and followed a tradition initially developed in the mid-1990s. Polonia heritage, rather than being a vibrant repertoire from which Polish Canadians draw to imagine and perform their identity, had become a kind of relic to be preserved in a particular way.

By the third day of The Villages, I decided to visit the "other" Polish village operated by the neighbouring Polish hall. I was surprised to see the other hall was bustling with patrons, many of whom seemed to be my age. To me, it seemed as though most volunteers were second or third-generation Polish, as I recognized few individuals and families. The general impression of this place made me feel as though it was more 'Canadianized' than the more purist hall at

which I had been researching. For example, this hall served *Szarlotki*—which is a cocktail created in Chicago using Polish spirits with a taste that resembles a Polish apple cake dessert called *Szarlotka*—presumably because it is very popular in other Polonia communities across North America, particularly among younger generations. They also had a young, English-speaking mayor (the village emcee) and what seemed like substantially more non-Polish patrons.

The performances were mostly done through dance and were all performed by youth groups. The dances were similar to those that I remembered learning as a child. As I watched, I could recall some of the steps, although the dances seemed far different, perhaps because I had forgotten them after all these years. I felt that, if I were asked to do Polish dances now, dancing would feel awkward and that I would likely not be able to move my body how I remember I could or feel that I should. To some extent, I never felt comfortable participating in Polish heritage dances, just like I do not enjoy pierogi-making. When engaging in these kinds of embodied heritage activities, I have long felt like a misfit, both cognitively and physically. It is as though my body resists these kinds of choreographies. Or, perhaps more aptly, it is as though embody an awkwardness that can be considered a physical expression of my in-betweenness. Drawing on Anna Harris' notion of sensate memory, I conceptualize the movements and gestures of embodied heritage performance like dancing and pierogi-making as embodied "micro-histories" and that their "sticky threads" did not fully stick to my past, or present and future (271). That is, I see this awkwardness as constituting the fabric of my in-betweenness.

Some aspects of the experience were extremely familiar—what I would consider "traditional"—and others were not. It did not matter, however, as it demonstrates how Polonia is not disappearing—as many Polish Canadian baby boomers might argue—but is evolving. Maria

would say that it is not the "Polonia" that they and their parents built; while this is true, is Polonia not a shared space that is decided upon by the community rather than a place? Some, like Maria, feel that there is a vital importance in keeping places of Polonia heritage alive, particularly for a nation that has been colonized numerous times before. Either way, the heritage of Polonia survives in this place, whether it is traditional or not. For the remainder of this chapter, I analyze how Polonia is imagined and performed in intangible spaces, where it very much remains.

Language

For a people who are largely disconnected from their historical homeland, the Polish language creates a "home" by uniting a disparate community within an imagined space wherein (inter)national identity and heritage are preserved and can be passed down along generational lines. Language carves out a social space and perpetuates a shared reality by connecting members of the Polish diaspora temporally and geographically across social, cultural and political borders, binding them together (Basso; Craith). The Polish language connects members of the Polish diaspora to Poland and its heritage, as well as to Polonia in Canada and the heritage that is being performed in a new post-Polish reality.

As a child, I was expected to speak primarily in Polish, particularly at home and with other people of Polish descent. This "rule" was enforced by my parents—strictly—because they believed it would ensure my brother and I would have "a solid foundation of Polish culture," as my mother put it. Although I was very resistant to abiding by it as a child, I believe it helped me to remain connected to and better understand my Polish roots. Of course, simply knowing the Polish language does not mean I necessarily understand my homeland's sociocultural reality. It has, however, made it significantly easier to remain connected with my family living in Poland,

with whom I speak regularly, and to absorb sociocultural knowledge through my engagements with other Polish Canadians, through my regular return visits to Poland, and by reading texts and watching media in the Polish language. The Polish language has acted as a vehicle through which I have assimilated knowledge of my roots and subsequently performed it with and among other Polish-born people.

Like me, Polish was the primary language within Jolanda's home and, as such, became the predominant worldview through which her reality was envisioned, even though some of her family had strong English-speaking skills. Jolanda explained that her mother speaks excellent English, but her Polish is "poor" as she primarily communicated in English at home and work, having migrated at a much earlier age than her husband, Jolanda's father. In contrast, her father speaks primarily Polish and has poor English-speaking skills. When I asked Jolanda how this influenced the lifestyles of her parents and herself, she explained that she felt in-between two primary worldviews at home. However, she described the Polish worldview as "much more dominant," given that her father was always the head of the household. "English was not the priority even though my mom didn't speak Polish, not even in the house," she explained. Furthermore, she explained that her mother was not as interested in Polish traditions or the Polish way of life. Jolanda further discussed that, even though she spoke in both Polish and English at home while speaking English at school and extracurriculars, Polish sticks out in her memory almost exclusively. "The funny part is that I don't remember the English books… I only remember the Polish ones," she said. "So, like Polish was *the thing*, you know?"

When Daniella and I discussed Polish colloquialisms, she shared similar sentiments to my own wherein, because Polish can be considered our second language, we often do not understand nor use Polish-derived expressive statements because we are unsure of their meaning or the

context from which they originate; the result is that we can feel like aspects of our identity are fraudulent. “I just don’t get them,” Daniella said. She told me that many of her Polish relatives, particularly her grandparents’ generation, use expressions that she finds strange and that “they have to explain them” to her. “Like, even to this day, my mom will say something, and I just sort of stare at her and think, ‘yeah, sure, that thing!’, not having the slightest clue what she means,” she explained. Daniella wants to understand the meaning of these colloquialisms, but because she did not learn them in context, she struggles to grasp their meaning. As a result, Daniella, like me, feels that her Polish identity is not entirely authentic because she cannot understand the social nuances that so many other Polish Canadians do. The Polish language, thus, can be an internalized measure of how authentic one considers their Polish identity to be, and it can be a significant source of estrangement if one feels that they cannot understand or express themselves as authentically as other Polish-born do.

Further along the path to disconnection, Kamila abandoned having her children learn Polish, claiming that she no longer considers it useful. Kamila told me that she recently decided to take her children out of Polish School, claiming that it was not a productive use of their time. “I just felt like they don’t really need to learn Polish anymore,” she explained, “we don’t plan to go to Poland, ever, and we don’t speak Polish at home, so why bother having them learn it?” “We don’t really follow [Polish] traditions, except for some of the stuff around Christmas and Easter,” she explained, “and my family in Poland never calls me, and why should my kids have to learn Polish to talk to them? Why can’t they learn English?” For Kamila, having her children living in an English-speaking country has led her to believe that learning Polish is not particularly useful in their day-to-day lives and the future she imagines for them.

Agata had similar sentiments to her parents in that learning English only happened as much as needed. She explained that the ownness to be fluent in both Polish and English to bridge sociocultural barriers often falls on the younger generations. “Other than the basic stuff that you had to know at work [to do your job], my dad’s English didn’t really have to improve,” she explained about her father. “Other people that worked in jobs where they had to talk to clients, like your mom, they had to develop their language,” she continued, “my dad didn’t have to continue improving it.” I agreed, “because you can live your life in Canada and still live your life completely in Polish.” “Yup,” she agreed, “doctors, butchers, lawyers, delis, travel agents… you name it.” “You can basically get everything you ever need and never learn a word of English and still live in Canada,” she added.

We often believe that knowing the Polish language is a requisite for belonging to Polonia. Millennials, me included, may feel burdened to learn two languages in order to maintain belonging to different social groups. In contrast, many of our parents may not learn much English beyond basic conversational skills because they migrated well into adulthood. This mastery of the Polish language strengthens our connection to Polonia, whereas those with a poorer mastery of Polish can feel disconnected.

However, mastery of the Polish language should not mediate one’s belonging to Polonia, as Jolanda explained best when she argued that the images of Polonia she holds—which she imagines as existing beyond words—predicate her feelings of belonging. “It’s funny to think that I just have kind of broken language, you know?” She said. “Like I remember the image, but I don’t remember the words, but it really doesn’t matter,” she realized. “And, like, even now I seem to switch between English and Polish without even realizing it,” she said, indicating that she speaks and thinks in both languages, at different times depending on the context.

Language creates an intangible space wherein diasporic people can feel connected to a "home" that is an imagined place which lacks geographic definition. Through language, Polish Canadians imagine and perform the heritage of Polonia, seeing it as the grounds upon which they connect with and outwardly express those aspects of Polonia culture that are inherent to an identity defined by and between Polish migrants (Craith). However, following the third wave of Polish migration to the West, many people who claim belonging to Polonia are no longer necessarily learning the Polish language or bolstering their mastery of it. Many now believe that knowing the Polish language should not predicate whether or not one can identify as a person of Polish heritage. At the same time, some continue to see value in learning the Polish language as a means to maintain the Polish Canadian worldview, especially as other aspects of Polonia heritage change or disappear. The Polish language is at an intersection between past and new imaginings within Polonia that question whether or not language should be a requisite for belonging. As we are still in the midst of transition between baby boomer and millennial generations—often those that migrated out of Poland and those born within the diaspora of Polonia—the Polish language will remain as grounds upon which we reimagine the performance of Polonia.

Food

Food has always been central to the Polish way of life, with most major heritage events centred around food and the sharing of meals with family, friends or the community-at-large. Unsurprisingly, many interlocutors discussed food and how creating and consuming food made a connection to heritage and memories (Rabikowska 378-9; Holtzman). For most of my interlocutors, food is essential and "vibrant" for its way of reminding us of Polonia (Bennett). Through what they imagine being traditional foodways, Polish Canadians perform those aspects of their lifeworlds that they associate with being Polish. These foodways include making and consuming

food as is passed down over generations, in the home and through social engagements, but also imagining new ways that are not necessarily the "traditional way," as one of my interlocutors described it. Understanding food, and the performances of making and consuming food, opens up the embodied aspects of Polonia culture that are otherwise intangible and difficult to encapsulate given that they lie in the realm of interiority (Rabikowska; Irving).

Polish cuisine was and continues to be developed largely in the home, primarily because Poland has historically viewed eating outside of the home as a luxury that most Polish people could not afford. "We ate to live," my mother explained to me. "Even now, most people cannot afford to go to restaurants [in Poland]," she explained, "although that is changing." The most popular Polish foods, such as pierogi or bigos, were made of inexpensive and humble ingredients like potato and cabbage. However, they are often prepared in labour-intensive ways to elevate the quality and experience of those recipes. The Polish kitchen continues to follow this perspective, even as younger generations have more disposable income and the liberty to enjoy exotic foods not traditionally incorporated into the Polish diet. Food continues to be a principal space for the development and performance of the Polish imaginary by acting as an anchor that firmly roots the Polish people at home and within the diaspora by way of the images they embody.

Performing Polish foodways is an act of remembering what is authentically Polish—"eating real food," as Daniella put it—or what people of Polish descent consider to be Polish, whether it is traditional or not. For Daniella, this means preferring homemade meals, something she never really thought about because it is what she has "always known" or, perhaps more aptly, always embodied. She told me, "I remember going strawberry picking and blueberry picking when I was a kid and, I don't know, that's what I'm familiar with." "Is food something that helps you remember?" I asked. "One of my first memories is sleeping over at my friend Sarah's house,

and she said we were 'having grilled cheese sandwiches for dinner,' and I thought…" Daniella said as a sour look came over her face, "…like, what is that?!" We laughed. "The next day, when [her parents] asked what I wanted for breakfast, I asked for grilled cheese sandwiches because they were so good; I never had something like that before," she explained. "I told my mom about it because it was so amazing… but, instead of making it with white bread, she made it with rye bread! And *masło* [butter] from that giant tub!" She said fondly before adding, "so, there was a Polish spin on it."

Many Polish Canadians engage with food outside the staple Polish diet because of their exposure to new cuisines in multicultural Canada. Some still enjoy eating a primarily Polish diet, while others, particularly younger generations, have updated how they engage with food and the rituals surrounding meals. However, the reality lies somewhere in between. Agata and Bartek follow what they consider a more "Polish diet," including "meat and potatoes," which are considered, sometimes stereotypically, staples of Polish food. However, they told me they also enjoy a variety of cuisines, being cosmopolitan in their choices, albeit preferring food of European origin which they insisted is "good food" or "real food." "I'm not saying we eat *kotlety* [meat patties] and potatoes every night like my parents," Agata explained, "it can be goulash!" She laughed, sarcastically suggesting their food choices did not venture far outside the typical Polish kitchen. "I just mean that we tend to have a meat, a potato, and a vegetable," she explained. "It's usually healthy," she said, "so it can be chicken breast." "It's summertime right now, so we tend to barbecue a lot," Bartek explained. "But there's always a potato… some kind of starch," Agata explained. "And how do you prepare them?" I asked. "Boiled, sometimes mashed, with butter and dill," she said, which are traditional ways Polish people prepare potatoes. "For me, food has to be good," Agata said, "and around here people just don't seem to care about food." She shared

a story wherein she spoke with a couple who was not fond of the food at her favourite Italian restaurant. “I thought to myself, ‘why because the portions aren’t huge?’,” she explained, her opinion coming across strongly. “For us, it’s about quality,” Bartek added, which especially resounded with me. Bartek explained why they preferred small restaurants over chain restaurants, “like [after eating at] The Keg, it just makes me feel sick; it makes me feel too full.”

Food has been and continues to be a way Polish Canadians build and maintain social connections. My parents taught me that giving food is not only a way to gesture appreciation but also a way to create a bond of trust. For most of my first one-on-one sessions with my interlocutors, I brought something to eat to thank them, a gesture I learned as a child. When I visited Agata and Bartek for the first time, I brought with me a box of Polish jelly-filled chocolates. “Thanks for the chocolates,” Bartek said. “Yeah, these are great! I love these! Did you get them at the Polish Store?” Agata asked. “Food Basics!” I replied. “You wouldn’t believe it, but they have an amazing international food selection there.” “Really? I’ll have to check that out,” Agata said, still very surprised. “It’s like two or three aisles with stuff from all over—India, Jamaica, a tonne from Asia,” I said. “And Poland!” I exclaimed as I opened the lid of the chocolates. “Here, which one do you want?” I gestured the box towards Agata. “Which ones are those?” She asked. “I believe those are lemon[-flavoured],” I explained. “I like those. *Limonka* [Lemon],” Agata said as she popped the chocolate into her mouth. “I think it’s one of the new flavours,” I explained. Bartek followed suit and tried one of the lemon-flavoured chocolates. “Mmm, that’s good!” He said, his words muffled. “I’ve only really had the cherry and raspberry ones, but those lemon ones are actually really good!” I said. “And there’s also…” I trailed my voice as though building up anticipation, “lime!” “Lime?” Bartek asked, now in complete disbelief, given that

lime is not a typical flavour used in Polish foods. “Hmm, that’s so interesting!” Agata said as she tried one of the lime-flavoured chocolates.

Food as an imagistic landscape is pivotal to how Polonia is formed and performed (Rabikowska). It is a space from which memories are drawn that compose tradition while also altering lifeworld performances as Polonia moves into the future. What is considered “real food” to my interlocutors is often imagined and performed concerning what we remember as traditional. This “traditional food” can be recipes passed down over generations, foods we remember eating as children, or social gestures made through food that bind our collective together. Food is also the landscape upon which new imaginings are created as it extends what we consider to be traditional to Polonia while remaining rooted in memory. Food as a space of performance remains important for Polish Canadians and, whether traditional or not, is considered vital to the Polonia imaginary.

Family

Finally, I look at family as a heritage landscape for Polish Canadians, functioning as a bridge connecting us to our roots even as our lives change radically. The vitality of familial belonging for Polish Canadians stems from life as it was in communist-era Poland when family offered permanence during volatile and unpredictable times and was also the principal motivating factor for Polish people to better their realities (Kubik). This mentality has spilled into the post-socialist present and is being (re-)performed in my interlocutors’ current lives in Canada. If all else were to disappear, family and homemaking are meaningful ways we continue to give our lives meaning and situate and understand our place in the world (Williksen and Rapport 4). So, for many Polish Canadian baby boomers and their children, the practice of Polish homemaking

in Canada is a vital connection to the heritage of Polonia and how we continue to perform it in our daily lives.

Zosia explained that as long as her basic necessities are met, she spends the remainder of her time with her family and gives them all her superfluous resources. “I, personally, don’t need much to fulfill my life,” Zosia told me. “If I have bread and milk, I am happy,” she explained. “And,” I added, “perhaps your family, based on what I gather from your responses and how you spend your time.” “Absolutely,” she said, “what I am trying to explain is that family, to me, is more important than what you eat.” She collected her thoughts, “it doesn’t matter what you eat or what you eat it on,” she added, “you can have a golden plate, but it doesn’t matter; what matters is what you put on the plate and who you share it with.”

Family is a landscape that remains vital throughout life. My interlocutors and I see family as a cornerstone, a way to create permanence and longevity in our everyday performances, as we can always return to the space of our families to become grounded and reconnected. Daniella, in particular, explained this in great detail as she believes we are losing touch with the importance of family and how she continues nurturing this landscape above all others. Family, to Daniella, is “someone who will be there for me, unconditionally,” she said, “through thick and thin, someone who loves me unconditionally… who I love unconditionally… someone to build memories with.” “Even though we weren’t the best off—like we weren’t extremely poor, but we didn’t have much—my parents still gave us everything they could,” she added. “I still go over to my mom’s house every weekend and eat all of her food!” She chuckled. “We spend all day there and then don’t leave until the latest hour, and she loves it! I love it.” “And that’s the kind of relationship you want to build with your kids?” I asked her. “Of course,” she responded. “So, you want

to have a strong, tightly knit family?" I asked for more clarification. "Because it's a rare commodity these days," she responded, "a few of my friends are divorced, and every other weekend is with their kids, and even though you see that their relationship is good or pretty strong or whatever, I want it to be that my kids realize what they have is good—special—and that no one is ever going to be better to you than your siblings and your parents."

Closeness to family was consistent amongst my interlocutors. Many said they spent the bulk of their formative years at home and, thus, developed strong bonds with their parents. "Close… very close," Bartek said as he described his relationship with his parents. This closeness can also mean being close geographically, as Daniella explained. "I even told my mom, if I were to ever divorce my husband, I'm moving back in," she added. "Mommy, I'm coming home… forever!" She laughed. "My daughter had the best idea," she continued, "that our family all buys a fourplex on the same street, and we live next to each other." "The Polish dream!" I exclaimed. "Everyone living right across from each other," she confirmed.

The importance of family is ineffable, often being an image that is beyond description and challenging to explain. "What does the word 'family' mean to you?" I asked Bartek. "Everything…" he answered. "Everything?" I asked. "Everything," he said. "What do you mean by that?" I asked. "Family is everything," he said matter-of-factly, "I don't need to explain more." "Yeah, but what do you mean?" Agata asked. "It's everything to me, everything that's important to me." He answered. "Well, I'm glad you could say it in one word," she went on, "because I couldn't think of an answer to Wiktor's question." "Because my family is important to me too, but I couldn't think of a way to explain it," she added. "Some things don't have words, right?" I assured her. "Yeah, and that's what I mean with my answer," Bartek added, "that it's everything to me, and it's hard to describe it otherwise."

For many Polish Canadians, family is the most vital landscape upon and through which they imagine and perform their lives. Strong relationships with family are ways we connect with our heritage, which was especially important in communist-era Poland and has remained so. We feel that family offers us connection, belonging, and a sense of place, which is often why we dream of a better life and work towards realizing that image, and it is often difficult to encapsulate discursively, instead being felt deeply in our being. It offers situatedness to perpetually dislocated peoples that have faced unbelonging for much of their lives and the history of their people. Family, thus, is home.

Session with My Mother: In-Between Heritage and Change

In discussing change in Polonia with my mother, as I was trying to understand better why so many Polish Canadians in her generation seem to dislike change, she told me that "it's only natural that things evolve and change—we cannot live in the past—we need to continue the things that are important, but they also have to be adjusted to the time we are living in," she explained. "But that's a good change—not a bad change—because we can't be stuck in the past; we still have to make our future," she added. My mother values change and the new ideas it can bring as we strive for a better life, but change must be balanced with heritage, especially for things we collectively deem important. "No one can be stuck on what to keep, at least not 100% [of the time]; otherwise, we would not progress, but we should respect and appreciate the experiences of what we had in the past," she said, "and that's impossible, because [life] is always evolving." "Even the way we make pierogi are not the same, we try to keep them the same, but we have to use what we have right now, so they must change," she added, "it's important to feel like we are Polish, but also to accept, and fully participate, in life in Canada."

What we collectively decide to be the heritage of Polonia consists of our most vital images, and they must be valued for the wisdom they contain, as they can help us in the present and as we imagine the future. However, heritage cannot roadblock innovation but should inform our decisions as we change into the future. The dialectic between heritage and change may rest on the liquidity of the migrant condition and the Polish migrant's desire to lead more "grounded lives" that preclude stability (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal). A "better life" for many Polish migrants is a more grounded life, so rejecting change is in reaction to the inherent mobility of the migrant reality. Change also negates loss because heritage may be "lost in transition" (Ghodsee). For a nation that has endured erasure or its threat multiple times in its collective history, and especially recently under communist oppression that many have a living memory of, there is a natural fear of change as it continues to threaten the heritage that so many had fought to keep as external forces operated to erase it. And, yet, as my mother believes, "it needs to be more balanced… certain things we will continue with, but they need to be adjusted to the new reality… that does not mean it is wrong or not good, its actually very good because you cannot be stuck in the past… we need to evolve."

Dreams

In the final section of this chapter, I turn to the imagistic landscape of dreams by analyzing how Polish Canadians imagine our dreams of the future and what constitutes a successful performance of those dreams. Polish Canadians largely crystallize our dreams by combining our life experiences with dreams imagined by fore generations. For nearly all my baby boomer interlocutors, their dreams of the future are imagined in the context of communist-era Poland, wherein the sociopolitical reality was considerably different from their current life. Most of my

baby boomer interlocutors told me that life in Poland was difficult because of a lack of social opportunity (e.g., in terms of finding lucrative work, owning a home, or receiving good medical care) and personal freedom (e.g., having an outlook that did not necessarily correlate to the sociopolitical norms). As such, many baby boomers left Poland to pursue their dreams which they felt could not be realized living under the communist condition (Galasiński and Galasiński). For millennials, our dreams are often imagined in relation to the sacrifices we believe our parents endured to provide future generations with a "better life." As such, our dreams of the future are often imagined as repaying our parents for those sacrifices by way of realizing success in life as imagined by past generations, but that was sidelined for those that succeeded.

Generations of Dreams

The dreams of Polish Canadians are imagined as we perform our lifeworlds throughout our lives and as those dreams carry over generations. Each subsequent generation carries on the dreams of fore generations while simultaneously adding to them based on their own life experiences. Dreams may seem wholly devised by individuals, but as Polish Canadians carry the weight of legacy and heritage, we form our dreams in relation to the dreams held by those that came before us. The dreams of Polish Canadian baby boomers are often centred around providing a "better life" for themselves and their families because of the hardship they consider their parents to have experienced under communist rule in Poland and the long road they travelled to gain sociopolitical liberty (Davies). For millennials, our dreams are often imagined as fulfilling our parents' desires for their children's success while charting an alternate path based on vastly different life experiences formed within the context of living most of our lives in the Polonia di-

aspora (Ghodsee). With each passing generation, the dreams of Polish Canadians—being simultaneously personal and prosthetic—can be best considered as both carrying forward and changing.

The imaginaries of Polonia in Canada are seemingly crystallized by the dreams of the baby boomer generation, which were subsequently crystallized by their own desires as formed by their experiences realizing the dreams of their parents. For many baby boomers, their dreams for the future are defined as that which their children often stereotype as the quintessential image of Polish people migrating to Canada: searching for a "better life" for themselves but, more importantly, for future generations. When choosing to migrate, they considered Canada, being part of the West, as having boundless opportunities to which one can escape from the trivialities of life under communist rule, and so representing a brighter future and a life free from a restrictive state. As such, migration seemed like an immense gamble worth taking because life in Poland seemed so dire at the time (Bútora).

Jan and Ela discussed the transference of dreams over generations most forwardly given that they have reached a point in their lives wherein they understand that we form our dreams in relation to those imagined by fore generations. I had made a joke about there being a series of fieldwork questions on politics. Jokingly, Jan said, "we support communism!" We all laughed. "No, no, we don't, obviously," Ela responded, chuckling. "But to a certain extent," Jan interjected, speaking a little more seriously as he, perhaps, felt open and inspired by the free-flowing conversation. He explained that his parents "didn't like government because of what was happening in Poland." "So, there was resentment—whether right or wrong—towards organized government," he continued. "Or anything organized in general," I said. "If there are people in power, we don't like them," I added. "Right, exactly," Ela said, agreeing. "They talked like there was

freedom," Jan continued, referring to life in communist Poland, "but they would ration your food, or you would go to a market, and you couldn't sell your product or buy anything because there was nothing available," he explained. "That's why, when they came here, this for them was heaven because when they compared it to where they came from… I'm not going to say it was hell, but maybe it was purgatory or something!" Jan exclaimed.

For Ela's father, his dream was to own his own home, not be indebted to anyone, and to do so as quickly as possible. "When [my dad] came to Canada, he was not used to mortgages in this country like other people," she began. She straightened up in her chair and said, as she tapped her wristwatch, "for him, it was 'work, work, work' to pay off that mortgage as quickly as possible." "So, he often had two jobs, and he would come after working all day [and] late into the night, and I would say, 'Dad, you stink!'," she said, giggling with a somewhat grave undertone. "And he would say in Polish: *'Dziecko, to nie ja, to pieniądze'* [Dear child, it's not me, it's the money]'," she said and took a slight pause. "I remember that he would work so many hours… that he would sometimes sleep under a tree before going to another job because he wanted to pay off his house as fast as possible because…" she tapped her wristwatch again, "…you can't have a mortgage, you have to pay it off." "[That was their] mentality whereas now, with young people, [they] are mortgaged up," she continued. "Right, like some people have two mortgages," I say, agreeing, "or they can't afford a mortgage at all!" "So it was that generation, my dad was always like, 'oh my god, I have to pay this mortgage off'," she added. "I think it's because they didn't want to be indebted to anyone," Jan said. "Because if you're indebted, then you don't own it," Jan continued, referring to the dreams for more freedom held by his parent's generation. "They had the pride that they could brag that 'I own it!' And it didn't matter if it was a house or a small business, but it's that 'I own it,' so it's pride," Jan explained.

Ela's dreams of the future are crystallized similarly to how her father imagined his dreams, much like the millennial generation that has come after. However, these dreams are defined and realized uniquely by her, but in a way that is distinctly connected to her father's dreams. Ela's dreams of giving her children the same opportunity and freedom she was given are inspired by her father's sacrifices to secure a life free of living under the shadow of someone else's expectations. "Children had no say in family matters, [and] women were not allowed to work," Ela explained, "men were the leaders of the house and had the only say." "Everyone had 10 or 11 kids because I believe that, at that time in Poland, there needed to be something to fill up women's time so that women did not have any free time to 'think for themselves'," as she put it delicately. "The man was the head of the household and," she paused, looking at me intently while she tried to collect her following thoughts, "well, my generation was very much against that… we went to school, we were the first to be educated [at universities], and we learned about how life could be and not how it was," she explained. "My parents were not very educated, and they did not agree with most of what I believed in," she said, "but we all wanted it, and we felt like we were making those decisions for ourselves." "Right," I agreed, "and you started to live your own lives, not beholden to your parents or to the state." "Exactly," she said, "and we started to really understand what is good and what is bad, what is a real comfort, what we could have and how life could be, and that's how it began," she concluded, referring to the changing mindset of Polish people as the Cold War progressed. "We have come a tremendous way already; we already have a huge progression since even when I was a child," Ela said. "There is so much more equality when it comes to power and rights that women and men have," she said, "and, I believe, this will change for the better—even more—with your generation."

Defining Success

What the above dreams have in common is that "a better life" is defined by a shared understanding among Polish Canadians of what constitutes success, but which is primarily defined by fore generations and how life subsequently unfolds in ways that are often different. Although success can be defined in many ways, for my interlocutors and me, it largely centres on having financial freedom, meaningful work, and comfortable living conditions, and then passing those successes onto the next generation. I have held a strong belief from a young age that hard work and study will inevitably lead to success, and so should be a primary goal in life. This image is firmly rooted in the rhetoric of current neoliberalist trends and is distillable to a general expectation that hard work pays off in the way of a prosperous future (Schierup et al.).

My understanding of what constitutes success comes from my parents, who claim to belong to the baby boomer generation. They received their understanding of success from their parents and subsequently modified it based on their life experiences. Their parents often encouraged men to work and women to raise a family or maintain a household, which stemmed from the prevailing sociocultural reality and their experiences around WW2, the subsequent Soviet occupation, and the Cold War. However, such ideologies changed with the baby boomer generation seeking equality. By the time millennials grew into adulthood, the freedom to imagine any future for oneself had become more common.

Ela discussed this in detail during a conversation with me about how she raised her children differently from how her parents raised her. She wished for them to feel as though they were free to live life in any way they desired. "When Jan was working, you were at home with the kids, but did you work as well?" "Yes, I worked one or two days a week, wherever we were living at the time," explaining that they had moved several times to accommodate Jan's career. "But my dad didn't really push me to get a job," she explained, referring to the expectations

placed on her as a child. “That’s interesting because it sounds like that changed for your kids,” I said. “Yes, we push our kids to go to school whether they’re a girl or a boy,” Ela explained, “none of that old-fashioned stuff that ‘if you’re a girl, then why get an education when you’re just going to stay home and raise kids’.” “That’s why we always made sure our kids got a good education, so they could stand on their own two feet,” she explained, describing how forced expectations and her life experiences shifted her dreams away from those devised by her father.

The definition of success among Polish Canadians is relatively rigid, often falling into black-and-white categories that allow little room for deviation from the socioculturally established understanding. Beata and Marcin discussed how they feel the current generation needs to live up to the standards placed on and by baby boomers and how this ultimately means failing to realize the Polish Canadian dream. “There’s no excuse either,” Marcin said. “Like our neighbour, I remember seeing her lying in the sun, tanning… she was never working, it seemed, and one day I overheard her children asking her for something to eat because they were hungry, and she said, ‘don’t bother me right now, I’m relaxing,’ yeah!” He scoffed. “And do you think that’s fair?” Beata asked rhetorically. “That I have to work 12, sometimes 14 hours [per day] just so someone else can lay in the sun and tan? No one’s ever paid me to lay around.” “It sounds like you have strong opinions about this; why does it make you so upset?” I asked. “Because!” Beata exclaimed, “you should only get paid if you work—if you contribute [to society]—you shouldn’t get paid just to lie around and do nothing. What are *they* paying for?” “Help is supposed to be for people who need it,” Beata said, “if you get into an accident [or] if the father of your children dies, that’s when you need help, but not for the rest of your life.” “And it seems to me,” she continued, “that many people that come to this country seem to go one of two ways: either they take advantage of the Canadian system and become lazy, or it pisses them off,” she explained, as

though suggesting they fall into the latter category. “I know lots of Polacks that just say, ‘it hurts here, and it hurts here,’ and they don’t go back to work anymore,” Beata added, pointing to various parts of her body. “Then some of them go back to work but get paid under the table, so they can still collect handouts,” she continued to explain, “uh-huh, and what do you think his kids will do? Do you think they will take after the father or not?” She added, suggesting that the pattern would continue. “Why would I bother going to school to learn? Why would I bother to go to work just so I can deal with an annoying boss? I’ll still have enough money for food, right?” She asked, again rhetorically. “But then, once in a while, I meet someone [who] doesn’t fit into that mould, that is different [from] that stereotype,” I said, trying to suggest that they painted a very stark picture of two opposites. “But you’d be surprised, Wiktor,” Beata said, “yes, there are always exceptions to the rules, but people tend to fall into stereotypes more than they don’t.”

How Polish Canadian baby boomers imagine success stems from the expectations placed on them by their parents, and a subsequent shift, which occurred in the context of their lives, has impacted how millennials define success. As such, the way Polish Canadian baby boomers define success is often grounded in the materialistic and tangible, reflecting their parents’ difficult lives (Garza et al.). I imagined that their definition of success further developed as they grew into adulthood and wished to incorporate the changes that occurred as the world shifted further into neoliberalism and the slow road to the democratization of Poland. However, as the world evolved, so, too, the dreams of baby boomers should have evolved and yet, as my interlocutors revealed, their dreams were largely imagined in childhood, and thus many remain frozen. As a result, their children, the millennials, often feel disconnected from this definition of success and imagine it differently than our parents. This misalignment of expectations for what constitutes

success is central to the disconnect between these generations, causing contentions over whether one has realized the dreams shared among Polish Canadians.

My millennial interlocutors defined success as a shared desire to "repay" their parents for their sacrifices for a "better life." This desire is affectively similar to how the baby boomers form and perform their dreams in response to their parents' realities. Our repayment was not necessarily in the form of financial compensation but, rather, through intangible compensation such as having a successful career, family, or both (Lansberg). "What would make you happy?" I asked Agata and Bartek, who had to think about it momentarily. Agata eventually answered, "I wish I could do something that I am passionate about, but also something that would help my family," she said. "My parents gave up so much for us that I want to do something to show them that their sacrifices did not go to waste," she explained. "Like, they would be happy that their children are happy," she added. "Interesting, I hear that a lot from Polish Canadian millennials," I said. "Really?" Agata asked, genuinely interested. "Yeah, a lot of us feel like we owe something to our parents for coming to Canada to give us a better life," I explained, "it's like you want to repay them for it—not that they're expecting you to or anything." "No, I don't think that they are expecting it from me or anything," Agata went on, "but they sacrificed so much just so that we can be happy, do you know what I mean?" I listened intently. "But, you know, you're not going to ask that of your parents 'why did you bring me here'," she said, "and I did, kind of, ask that a couple of times—and the answer was always 'to give you guys a better life'—so you want to show them that their sacrifice was worth it, whatever way you can."

We may feel as though we need to realize the dreams of our parents because they have sacrificed their own life for their children. As a result, some baby boomers explained how they live vicariously through their children by considering their children's successes as their own.

However, this can come at the cost of our happiness, as realizing our parents' dreams might mean sacrificing our own. "I saw a quote on Facebook recently that said something about giving as a way of bringing happiness," Bartek said. "Right," Agata said, "but I don't think that should come at the expense of your own happiness." "What do you mean?" I asked. "Like, I mean that I sacrifice a lot because my parents have such high expectations of you and me," she said while looking at Bartek. "Right," he said. "And you want to live up to those expectations, but, in essence, that doesn't always make you happy all the time, right?" Agata added. "No, no," Bartek said, agreeing, "it doesn't." "Like you went into engineering because your dad wanted you to, and you gave up a career in sports, maybe, to do that, right?" "Of course," Bartek said. "Yes, certain aspects, yes, but if I…," he did not finish his statement, either because he assumed it was self-implied or because it was too nuanced to explain. "Yeah, see?" Agata said. "Right," Bartek agreed, again getting lost in thought. "And it becomes this weird juggling act," Agata went on, "between trying to do what makes them happy and, ultimately, doing what makes you happy, which doesn't always line up with their expectations." "Because," she continued without pause, "that's what I feel parents tend to do to their kids; they make them do what they couldn't become, necessarily." "So, do you regret them pushing you towards this but not that?" Bartek asked Agata and then continued, "I can't say that because I don't know what life would have been like otherwise, you know?" "Yeah," Agata said, confirming Bartek's understanding. "It's hard to know if I would have been successful [in sports] or not," Bartek continued, "they just want to see you succeed, and they want the best for you—and what they think is the best for you may not be what you want—but you trust them and believe them because they lived through [childhood] and lived through hard times."

Because many we have an internalized desire to succeed as our parents imagine, we often opt to continue to work towards realizing life as we were advised to imagine it so that our parents may realize their dreams prosthetically through us, which does not necessarily manifest in the reality millennials desire (Landsberg). For example, Gosia mentioned that she had been in school longer than she would have wanted, but she continued to study to realize the "better life" that her parents wanted her and her sister to have. I asked Gosia: "you told me that you went back to school because you felt that you were not living up to your parent's expectations, right?" She squinted her eyes slightly, took a deep breath, and then told me, "it's just that—[because] they gave up so much for us to come to Canada so that we could have a better life—I think we owe it to them."

My millennial interlocutors often agreed that they consider the dreams of their parents as being thrust upon us. This has led to us feeling both guilt and resentment because we understand that our parents gave up so much of their lives to realize a "better life" for future generations, but we feel this came at the expense of our will to choose our own futures. But, when I had asked Gosia, "so why do you feel you owe them something?" She looked surprised, and, after a few moments of consideration, she responded, "well, I mean, they gave up their lives in Poland to come here." "Yes," I agreed. "But did they do it only for us? It's not as if their lives in Poland were especially good." "Sure, it was familiar to them," I continued, "but, for most, it was not a good life." "Could that be the [real] reason why they came here?" I asked, seeking her opinion to offer me clarity. She thought about it momentarily and then responded, "I suppose you're right." She had thought some more. "They always told me it's because they wanted a better life for their children, but now I'm not so sure." My question was like a catalyst. It was not my intention to change her opinion. I just wanted to understand some of what I had learned during my sessions

with baby boomers, which caused my views to become unsettled. “I’m sure they wanted a better life for themselves, too,” she continued. “Now that I think about it, my mother always used to tell me how it wasn’t her idea to come to Canada [but] that it was my father’s idea and that he was bugging her for years before they decided to make the move.” She explained. “She would say how he wanted to come to America and start a business—a *‘byznesik’* [small business] as he called it,” something that would have been nearly impossible in Poland at the time, she explained.

The Polish Canadian Dream

For both generations, dreams are often considered as realized vicariously through those that proceed and, as I have argued previously, are formed from the guilt placed by those that precede. Dreams can pass along generational lines, with each generation claiming that they have sacrificed their dreams for the sake of their children. As Polish Canadians pass dreams over generations, they become lost in transition as it becomes difficult to ascertain whose dreams are being performed and realized (Ghodsee). Instead, as my interlocutors guided me to understand, succeeding in one’s dreams is a matter of perspective that requires us to balance our dreams with those we receive from past generations because Polish Canadians realize dreams vicariously across generational lines. Our individual dreams cannot be easily separated from the collective dreams of Polish Canadians, ones that are largely predicated on success and performing life as envisioned by those that came before.

When I asked Daniella what she considered her most significant accomplishment, she said, “Probably my kids?” She explained that, like her mother, Daniella wanted her children to remember her as a good parent that did whatever she could to make them happy. Like her

mother, Daniella believes it is a parent's role to give up aspects of their lives so that their children can realize success. Of course, like her mother, Daniella dreams of success as the generation envisioned it before her. The dreams she sacrifices for her children neither belong to her nor them nor even to fore generations who, perhaps, were also instilled dreams imagined by generations prior. "I want them to be successful as adults," she explained. When I asked her to explain in more detail, she said she wanted her children "to have an education… to have a good job… to care for people… to be good to others," she said, "to be happy themselves… to be proud of themselves!" "So, just having the self-confidence, self-worth, self-…" she paused momentarily, "just to be their best selves." When I asked her where she drew that measurement from, "from me," she said, "I want them to be better than me… in every respect, as a human being, I want them to have it better than I had." I asked her to elaborate on what she thought a good human is. "I don't know yet… I'm not there yet… ask me in five years," she said, somewhat sternly but somewhat unsure of her answer.

Sacrificing one's dreams for the sake of the generations that follow comes at the price of being unable to perform life as one imagines. Jan and Ela explained that their parents valued work over nearly everything else, which, given that they were motivated to provide for their families, meant they could not spend time with those they deemed most important and for whom they believed they were sacrificing so much. "So, for us, with our grandkids, you know, we just…" Jan said before Ela interjected, "we just eat them up!" She smiled. "Yes, we try to spend as much time with them as possible, whether it's babysitting or going to a soccer game or recital, which is because our parents never had that chance because, you know, they were…" Jan continued. "...always working," Jan and Ela said in harmony. They realized that they, too, had sacrificed aspects of their lives so their children could succeed, much like their parents did. Now that

there is a third generation, they have come to balance success with living life as both they and their parents dreamed it.

Like me, most millennial interlocutors said they felt estranged from the dreams envisioned by their parents. Instead, we remain focused on the future, bettering our lives, and realizing our dreams as different from how our parents imagine them because we believe that the future is still ours for the making. Some millennials also believe their parents are too preoccupied with grousing about how their lives and children's lives did not turn out as expected. However, as Beata so clearly put it, life has to be realized reasonably, primarily being a matter of perspective because what constitutes success is shared with others. "So, why does it seem like there are so many people who are complaining about their lives? That they are not happy with their lives?" I asked. "Not everyone can have the same lifestyle," she said, "firstly, life would be very boring if everyone had the same and was the same because there would be nothing to talk about!" "What did you have for breakfast?" I asked jokingly. "Exactly!" She said, "we would all know that we ate eggs for breakfast, so we wouldn't have to ask about it." We laughed. "So, that's why the world is made in such a way that there is variety… that countries are different, that people live differently, and that there are some people who are similar." She continued, "that's why not everyone can be a doctor [and] not everyone can be a mechanic because we need all sorts of things [to be catered] to, so that's why life is built the way that it is."

Session with My Mother: On Dreams

My views that the dreams of Polish Canadians are primarily shaped by life experiences in communist-controlled Poland stem from my mother. "I think that our dreams come from our lives in Poland and wanting a better life," she told me. For her, life in Poland during her youth made her and others dream of a free life filled with opportunity and the resources to realize those

dreams. So, when I think of the "Polish Canadian dream," I think of a future collectively imagined by Polish people living in a dire reality that seemed hopeless, with migration offering the most immediate, and perhaps only, solution.

However, when I asked her if migration and our subsequent life in Canada have afforded us our dreams, she could not offer a clear answer and, instead, offered her belief: "Are we all successful? I can't say that for certain," she said, "I have a better life, and I have succeeded it many of my dreams, but not everyone has." Seemingly feeling that the success of the Polish Canadian dream is not universal, I asked her to explain. "It's important to respect your roots but not to let them stop you from realizing your life here," she said, "and that's why so many people cannot realize their dreams because they are stuck in the past and cannot move on."

For baby boomers, their dreams of the future are directly related to their lives in communist Poland, wherein life was difficult, and there were calls for improving it, with migration often the only plausible solution. The parents of baby boomers strived for freedom from an oppressive government and desired the liberties and securities they associated with life in the West. This inspired baby boomers to migrate in search of a "better life" at the cost of starting their life anew in a nation considerably different from their own. Millennials, feeling that their parents impeded their lives to give their children better living standards, shape their dreams in relation to the sacrifices they consider their parents have made for them. This upward mobility is developed over generations, wherein children are expected to realize the dream of having a successful life (Lansberg; Walia; Green). It is common among (Polish) migrants that there is an expectation that things will get better for each new generation, even if the reality has turned out differently (Morris 20).

Nevertheless, for many, the dream is stuck and seems to be perpetually unreachable. They imagine that a "better life" means raising a successful family, receiving a good education which leads to lucrative work, owning a nice home and other luxuries, or, preferably, all the above. Focusing too closely on realizing those aspects of their dreams imagined in the past causes disappointment when said dreams are not realized exactly as imagined. Ultimately, baby boomers strived to ensure their children would not face the same hardships as they did. Millennials seek to repay their parents for their sacrifices and hardships by having a better life than their parents. So, their dreams have been realized in many ways, even if not in the way they imagined them to be. "That's why it's called Polonia, not Polska," my mother said, reminding me that the success of our dreams is a matter of perspective, which I will more deeply analyze in the subsequent final chapter.

Chapter Five: Life is (Not) Lived Like a Story

"We set a precedence," Zosia told me, "by migrating together, we created something together at that specific time and, now, it is changing as time goes on; it is, as some people might say, thinning out." "For some people Polish traditions will remain important," she said, "look at my daughter, although she was raised here in Canada for most of her life and is married to a Canadian, she still retains a lot of our traditions; she likes them, she still goes to Church and blesses eggs at Easter time, but will her daughter do that?" She looked at me for a moment, "I'm not sure... it's hard to tell because my son does not engage in our culture as much, he enjoys the food, he enjoys the traditions, but he doesn't start them, it doesn't matter to him whether we do them or not." "And," she continued, "it will be very difficult to keep it all, to keep all the traditions alive in such a situation, even though we are trying, we are doing what we can, but will it work out for us, who knows?"

In this second and last chapter of ethnographic analysis, I look at how my interlocutors' and my lifestories do not necessarily align with the way we imagined them to be in the context of the past as it was experienced and the future as it is imagined, and what this means to the individual and to Polonia in the present. Life is a series of images woven together as a narrative we tell (about) ourselves. In this chapter, I unpack the movements and transformations that result from performing these images, as discussed by my interlocutors. Furthering ideas from Julie Cruikshank's *Life Lived Like a Story*, life is lived like a story, but it may not be realized the way we imagine that story to be.

As outlined in the previous chapter, these stories are imagined as legacies, heritage, and dreams for the future. I begin this chapter by analyzing how everyday performance changes or

"breaks" the images we consider most important in our lives but also to our generation and Polonia. The images are broken in the context of socioeconomic precarity, wherein we believed that migrating to the West would result in boundless opportunities to better our lives. In many ways, life in Canada is better, but it is not how we imagined it to be, and so, there is a shared disconnect among Polish Canadians between the way we had imagined the future in the past and the reality within which we live.

Next, I look at generational succession as it is occurring in the present, roughly thirty years following the most recent wave of migration, and the changes to Polonia this movement of succession is causing. My interest is to understand the "crisis of succession" occurring in Polonia via Turner's model of social drama (*Schism and Continuity*). I begin with the millennial view of succession in that we question our place in life and our relationship to the forces within Polonia that shape it. Many millennials have come to reject Polonia as our parents define it, so I unpack the moments in which those rejections have been realized and how we have decided to live our lives differently. In the last pages of this second section, I analyze how baby boomers see the changes occurring in Polonia as relating to millennial rejection, the ensuing crisis of succession and the massive change it is creating, and how baby boomers feel responsible for what they consider the loss of Polonia.

I end this chapter by examining how the breaking of images pertinent to Polish Canadians pushes for a re-understanding of how Polonia is collectively defined and performed and what this means for the future. In some ways, this has called for a re-imagination of Polonia. Meanwhile, this has also ushered a call back to those images defined by fore generations as the so-called heritage of Polonia. I begin the last section by discussing how many of my interlocutors seek belonging in an ever-changing global reality, especially as spaces of Polish Canadian heritage are

changing or disappearing. I also discuss how the baby boomer generation is attempting to enlist the millennial generation to become torchbearers of Polonia by urging them to "start something" that will continue engagement in Polish Canadian imagistic landscapes, places such as the Hall and spaces such as tradition. Finally, I explore how some of my interlocutors believe, given time, millennials will return to those imagistic landscapes to actively engage and develop them again.

Broken Images

Many of my interlocutors described their imaginaries as being comprised of broken images. Broken images are a kind of "dream in the shadows" wherein life does not turn out exactly how we expect (Thomas). We may have realized some aspects of our dreams, but not entirely, so we are left straddling between longing to realize better those broken images and learning to accept their incompleteness. This drives an unending desire to realize dreams and finally live the life we desire, which might be understood best as mourning for a lost future (Butler). Moreover, we may believe that others are realizing a successful life, so realizing our dreams should be within reach, too (Johnson). Finally, because migration for Polish Canadians was a challenging undertaking and a significant gamble, and because some left behind a "good life" in Poland, we have high expectations of success in realizing our dreams.

The success or failure of realizing images is predicated primarily on what my interlocutors believe to be a precarious reality and the failed promises of neoliberalism. Their expectations of a better life, as they had imagined it while in Poland, are only sometimes in line with their experiences following migration. For my baby boomer interlocutors, they often wonder if life is more stable in Canada and whether migration afforded them the freedoms and liquidity that motivated them to leave then-socialist Poland. For their children, the millennials, many feel frustrated that hard work and education did not necessarily lead to the abundant life their parents

promised them as the promises of neoliberalism. As a result, they described their lives as not always being as successful as they believed their parents had hoped. Precarity then leads to guilt wherein interlocutors from both generations believe neoliberalism has failed them and, so, they have failed to achieve their dreams. Many of my interlocutors have had to come to terms with the disconnect between reality and the future they imagined for themselves and their children.

Although most of my interlocutors told me that they had realized many of their dreams, they tended to focus more on broken images than those they considered successfully realized. This realization was especially true for my baby boomer interlocutors who are farther along in life and have more images from their past to look back upon and evaluate. On the other hand, my millennial interlocutors are still looking forward to realizing the images comprising their life-worlds and were less likely to consider their images as broken. When they did, it was most often when analyzing the success of the images of fore generations. As such, the failed images held by my interlocutors are not so much broken but have undergone change from being subject to different sociocultural forces following their move to Canada. Some have come to fear and reject the change that has resulted from sociocultural movement, the mixing of worldviews, and the altering of memory as life has moved forward. The result is a kind of identity panic as their images no longer reflect reality and Polonia seems to further shift into the unknown. Some now grieve a life they were denied living because change has shifted their images of the past and the future.

Pervasive Precarity

For Polish Canadians, successfully realizing dreams often hinges on precarity and varies considerably between generations. For Polish Canadian baby boomers, precarity stems from life in communist Poland, where an unstable socioeconomic climate limited realizing success (Schierup et al. 1). For millennials, precarity means balancing dreams with stability—usually in

the form of lucrative employment—because we believe it is a means to enable a comfortable life. Our understandings and experiences of precarity are individually imagined but are also shared as we form them in the context of generationality.

My interlocutors often described precarity as pervasive, given that they or their parents left Poland in search of a better standard of living and more opportunities to increase personal freedoms, usually via more financial security. Not realizing their dreams because of a precarious life in Canada has led some of my interlocutors to feel guilt. For my baby boomer interlocutors, some believe their lives in Canada are not better than those they left behind in Poland. For their children, the millennials, some describe feeling guilt doubly; they feel guilt for not realizing their parents' dreams and, subsequently, for sidelining their own dreams at the expense of those imagined by fore generations.

I was always encouraged to "follow my dreams" but also to "be realistic," as my mother would often say. She encouraged me to balance my dreams with a reality she believed was inherently precarious. Like me, Agata said her parents "told me to 'do what I love,' but they also…" She paused for a moment, searching for the right words. "It was like there was a hidden push to get a job that would help you be successful, [to] help you make money, [to] make sure you're taken care of, [and to] pay the bills…" she explained. "Ultimately," she added, "I think my parents wanted us to be happy with whatever we were doing and now, whenever I complain about my job or say that I want to quit or whatever, my parents are like, 'why would you quit [when] you have it so good' and 'think about retirement, think about the future' they would say." She took a breath, "and I'm like, 'yes, but now I am not happy, and retirement is a long way away'."

As a child, I often heard stories of how life in communist Poland meant that success could, and most likely would, be denied. These stories shaped the images our parents held by

framing their outlook. I told Jan and Ela a story my mother often told me: “A family was planning a vacation… they had paid for the tickets, had the days booked off, and then, two weeks before they went to go on vacation, the travel company called them and, basically, said ‘sorry, you’re not going anymore’ because they had sold the tickets to someone else… because someone else had paid more money for the tickets, and they didn’t even get their deposit money back, could you imagine?” I said, with a furious undertone. I continued, “living in Poland [during communism] meant that at any moment someone could just take it away.” Ela looked at me for a moment before she said, “oh yes, that was very common” and then asked if I knew this popular Polish expression: “*‘czy się stoi, czy się leży, dwa tysiące się należy’* [whether you stand or you lie down, you are still owed 2000 zloty]?” Not knowing many Polish adages, I prompted her to explain. “When there’s [sic] communism, you just got paid whether you worked or not,” Ela said, explaining that life in communist Poland was often not fair, and this caused many to do and expect less.

The power of precarity can be compounded as later generations feel that their parents sacrificed much in life and that they ought to take steps to unburden them or, at least, to fulfill some of their expectations. When I asked Agata what she did for work, she told me that she worked in law; the income was good, but she did not find the work particularly fulfilling. “I mean, it’s work; you’re not supposed to like work, right?” She explained. “I did not take any job because I thought, ‘oh, that sounds like fun’,” she took a breath, “I took the job because I thought it would help me pay for things so that burden didn’t fall on my parents.” Agata quickly continued her train of thought. “I mean, working at the Polish Hall was fun; you got to do a lot of cool stuff,” she continued, “working there in high school mostly helped me save money for college.” “Then, when I worked [at the plastics factory] in college, it helped me save for a house,” she explained.

"Blah, blah, blah, that kind of stuff," she concluded, "so, it wasn't like I thought about enjoying the job." Working is a means to an end, the end being the avoidance of precarity as that would mean that dreams go unfulfilled even if those dreams are not one's own. Precarity, thus, acts as a principal affective agent for how we imagine our dreams and what constitutes success in life. For many, success means stability—especially financial stability—because it allows for a "better life" than the precarity we sought to leave behind in Poland.

However, for my millennial interlocutors especially, the desire to realize dreams and stave off precarity is problematic because, like the guilt of performing other images held by Polish Canadians, life is pushed in ways that are different from how one might imagine it. Many believe that precarity has broken their images of a successful life. Agata explained that she has lofty dreams but fears realizing them because they might appear foolish to her parents, a sentiment I have felt myself. "So, I went to college first because [my mom] was like, 'what are you going to be doing?' She did not want me taking a year off," she said with a stern air of authority. "She's like, 'just go to school for something,' so I was like, 'fine,' and that's why I decided to do law office admin [sic]," she continued. "And that was fine because it ended up changing my mind," she started to explain, "because, after high school, I was sure I didn't want to go to university, and that got me a job that I did for a year after college, and then I did end up going to university for my job." "But I think a lot of what you learn for work you learn on the job," she explained, "like I did use some of the information I learned from college and university, but at the end of the day, it's a piece of paper, and it's what you do with that piece of paper that matters." "Yeah, but it all depends if you like the subject or not," Bartek continued, "like I know that with mechanical engineering, I didn't really care about the material, you know?" "There was no passion for me because I was, kind of, forced into that," he explained. "And I don't think that's

something someone should be allowed to do," Agata added, "to tell you what you should and shouldn't do with your life."

For Polish Canadian baby boomers, precarity can be a baseline that stems from firsthand experience in communist Poland, wherein many felt that life was challenging and that they often had to fight to achieve success or could never realize it. For their children, the millennials, we straddle between the narratives of precarity as told by our parents and a new social reality wherein we believe that hard work and education lead to success. Millennials are regularly at odds with these diametrically opposed ways of imagining and performing our lives. In contrast, baby boomers wish their sacrifices to result in a good life for their children. Both generations may feel that their lifeworlds are comprised of many broken images because neither can realize them as they had dreamed them.

The Failed Promises of Neoliberalism

As a child, I believed that the life my family left in Poland was precarious and that our forthcoming life in the neoliberal West was to be one of boundless opportunity. Like many Polish Canadians, I believed in a shared understanding that life in the West was abundant and, through hard work and education, one could secure a prosperous future for themselves and their family (Garza et al.). However, the upward mobility Polish migrants expected from living in the West has not necessarily equated with success (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal). The reality is that economic mobility is not guaranteed, and, with ever-present economic turmoil, some Polish Canadians have realized that life in Canada does not mean a better life than in Poland (Greenblatt); instead, it may be the opposite (Yurchak). This realization can be especially troubling for first-generation migrants who believed life in the West was incomparably better than in communist

Poland where opportunity seemed restricted by political, social, and cultural control (Mikolajczyk). With its seemingly inherent freedoms, the neoliberal West was attractive to those living in communist Poland. However, neoliberalism is not the answer to precarity. In fact, many feel defeated by a new precarity that seems inherent to neoliberalism—the very sociocultural system meant to provide a "better life."

Zosia told me, "when we came to Canada, we felt so lucky that there were so many opportunities to make an income from which you could take care of yourself," she explained. "When we arrived [in 1992], there were likely 120 factories in Brantford and the area, so getting a job in manufacturing was easy," she said, "but, now, they have mostly closed those businesses, and there are, maybe, ten factories left." Although she underestimated the number of factories operating in the area, Zosia highlighted that work is increasingly scarce, a reality that many people, migrant and not, have been living. "But this problem is the same all over the world," she added, "there is now a larger population, so there is more demand, and more people want more for themselves—and better for themselves—so there is less to go around for everyone else." Zosia described the quintessential neoliberal dream as imagined by many who lived in communist Poland, wherein they believed freedom and upward mobility were a cornerstone of life in the West. However, Zosia, like other Polish migrants, has realized that neoliberalism is likely a failed system as many Western nations experience turmoil, particularly regarding economic and social stability (White, "Polish Return and Double Return Migration"). The promises that drew Eastern migrants to the West are failing, and, for many, in retrospect, life in communist Poland does not seem as dismal as it was originally imagined.

Daniella and I discussed the difficulties of seeing a doctor in communist Poland. She quickly responded that seeing a doctor in Canada is perhaps equally difficult, a view that directly

opposed the understanding I had drawn from stories shared by my parents and other baby boomers. I told her a story my mother often told me: to get medical care, they would "have to visit their doctor very early in the morning because you could not make an appointment, and because if there were too many people ahead of you, there was a chance the doctor might not have time for you [that day]." "But then, even today, it's the same with the walk-in clinics… you have to get there as soon as it opens if you want to see the doctor," she explained. "Even my current family doctor only takes appointments that day, so if my kids are sick, I have to call her office at 7:00 am to get an appointment… and then it's like everyone else is doing the same thing, so you call, and it's busy… then it's like my husband and I are both calling—double-dealing—hoping one of us gets through to see if she can take us." "It's interesting that you mention that because, in my mind, the medical system in Canada is *so much* better, but when I stop to think about it, you're absolutely right… it takes me around six weeks minimum to make an appointment to get a check-up," I told her. "Exactly!" She agreed, "and then when you do get in to see them, you only have a few minutes." "And so, it's great that we've 'evolved' [socially], but we [actually] haven't because, really, it's exactly the same!" She explained.

Others believe they could have worked harder to realize their dreams, a common experience in the neoliberal present wherein hard work does not necessarily mean success. When I asked Agata and Bartek whether they ended up in careers that they desired, Agata could not immediately answer. "I'll go first," Bartek had begun to explain, "I went to college because I didn't want to go to university… because I wanted a more practical training versus just book knowledge." He continued, "did I end up doing what I wanted to do?" He pondered and then replied, "no, not necessarily… but I didn't know what I wanted." "I was, kind of, pushed by my dad to take mechanical engineering because that's what he took," he explained. "Oh, because

there's good money there," I said, politely teasing his father's sentiments. "Yeah, exactly!" Bartek said, echoing that I understood him. "If I *did* have the choice, I would probably go into something more sports-related because that is more my calling," he continued, "but that was not what my dad thought was the best way to make money, you know, because he believed there wasn't much money to be made in sports, so…" Bartek had trailed off, feeling that he did not need to explain more. "I think I know my answer to your question now," Agata responded. Bartek chuckled, seemingly comforted by the mutual understanding we all shared.

Neoliberalism may be a failed promise that one can have a better life by way of financial freedom gained through hard work and education. This promise was tempting to Polish people living in communism because it was both the antithesis of their lives at the time and offered the independence and security promised by communism. Much of our understanding of why neoliberalism was a solution to the ills of communist Poland had been based on naive optimism that stemmed from the troubles of sociopolitical rigidity and our desire to emulate the "better life" as we believed it was in the West. My understanding of neoliberalism came from my parents and other role models, like many Polish Canadian millennials. We never questioned those understandings because we assumed that the hardships they experienced were beyond our imagination, so their socioeconomic wisdom far surpassed our own. However, as a number of my baby boomer interlocutors may now argue, neoliberalism is not the solution we imagined it to be, and perhaps life in communist Poland was not as dire as we remember it. Our images of neoliberalism and its fruitful life are broken, leaving us to long for a better life that we must now imagine as being realized differently.

Fearing Change

The ongoing pervasion of precarity and the failure of neoliberalism results in some of my interlocutors' dreams being unrealized. This is further exacerbated as the world evolves away from the context in which we crystallized our lifeworld images. We are living in a new age of cosmopolitanism wherein the world is mixing at an unprecedented rate as human migration and global interconnection escalate tangentially (Calhoun 110). For some, this movement means being pushed further away from realizing their dreams, often in unpredictable ways. For others, it is moving closer to the images of a better life they strive to achieve. For others still, this movement is inherent to the human condition and, as a migrant, means little to the everyday reality they have long been living and the future they are working to realize.

For us, migrants, change is fundamental to our lifeworlds, given that many chose to leave Poland in search of new possibilities in the West. However, we cannot necessarily control where that change will take our lives. "Things have changed a lot in Canada since I came here," Zosia said, "when I came, everyone was so friendly and had warm personalities—like I am thinking back to the people I met at the store or out in the street when everyone was so helpful and, now, everyone just turns their backs, everyone just hides, no one wants to help anymore." "Everyone is afraid, it seems," I said, agreeing. "And that's not just here, really," she added, "it's everywhere… all over the world." Even though Zosia understands that change is part of the migrant reality, she is also unsettled with the direction led by change. Migration is often considered a means to change for the better, but with the world seemingly changing for the worse, some of my interlocutors wonder if the change they pursued has moved their lives in the direction they anticipated, and some are left discouraged that it has not.

My experiences have shaped a belief that Polish Canadians fear change because of the importance they place on what they understand to be their culture, with change threatening the

stability said culture offers. We learn through the actions and engagement of others (living and not) that are preserved and disseminated as "culture." When that shared understanding is threatened by change, particularly for people who have been subjugated repeatedly, they feel it necessary to remember the value of culture.

Beata best explained this to me: "I think a lot of it has to do with where you are from," Beata said. "I think in Europe people had to learn to live in a community because there were so many other people around, [and] because you had to learn to take help from other people and to help other people in return—you got kicked in the ass if you didn't want to play along," she said, "but, here?" She rolled her eyes, insinuating Canada was not as collegial. "We have more rules, more structure," Beata said as she pointed to herself, as though referring to Poland or perhaps Europe in general. "What would you call that?" I asked. "Culture," Beata said, "the culture of how you are raised, which you carry with you out of the home." "If you see that your mother and father cherish each other—that they take care of each other—then you are more likely to do that in your life," Marcin said. "Of course, it happens that you meet someone that doesn't fit into that picture," Beata said, "someone who plays to their own tune but, usually, people follow in the footsteps of their parents." Beata had referred to the notion that in Poland in the past, there was a single, shared worldview that everyone was expected to conform to or face difficulty. In Canada, a plurality of worldviews often intersects and clash. Although this allows for more personal and collective freedoms, it simultaneously causes restrictions as we are not only abiding by the worldview imagined by us but also the worldviews imaged by others.

Daniella responded to the inevitability of change by wanting to freeze time by making memories. She believes that life moves too quickly; and, so, she uses her memory to take "snapshots" of her life so that she can create permanence within the movement. "There's a moment

when you're a kid where you just get lost in your time, but then, sometime during adulthood, someone pushes the fast-forward button and, suddenly, your life goes forward in the blink of an eye," I told her. "My wedding day!" Daniella responded, "that's my fast-forward button—everything from that day seems to be a big blur." This helped explain why Daniella places so much importance on focusing on the present and making memories. "Every single day," she explained, "I wake up every morning and cuddle my daughter as long as I can, and it never seems like enough." "And she says, 'how long are you going to hold me, mom?' and I say, 'probably a few minutes too long,' and it's still not enough," Daniella said, smiling softly in content. She sighed and continued, "I tell my daughter all the time to stop growing; I want her to stop getting older—to literally freeze her in time." "Sometimes I like to think about life as a movie, and memories are those moments where we pause the tape, or take a photo, or cut that frame out of the movie…" I started. "… so we can keep them," Daniella finished my thought. "Life isn't as simple as it used to be, I think," she said. "Life is so all over the place," she added. "And it sounds like you wish you could remember more… that you could record more details, or…" I trailed off, not sure what to say. "…to make time!" Daniella offered to finish my thought. "So that the memories are clearer," she explained. "Like, I remember my son was a crawler and was late to learn how to walk, and then the other day he was standing up on my counter, and I realized that he's not a crawler anymore—he's walking," she said. "So, I took a picture of it because I wanted to remember it," she said, "because soon enough, it will be long ago."

During my many conversations with Gosia, even well before I began researching, we often discussed how she felt that "Brantford was changing," and that would mean having the life she imagined for herself. At times, I would agree with Gosia and her assessment as we would see

the change firsthand—new people, new buildings, new priorities—but we would be equally discouraged by what we perceived as a kind of stagnation of progress. “Some days, I feel like I will never live long enough to be happy,” I said, “that I will always be fighting for something better or dreaming about moving somewhere else.” Gosia leaned towards me, “Brantford is changing, Wiktor,” she said, “I can see it; I’ve seen so much change already, it will keep changing.” I did not believe her, having lived in the area for almost 20 years and always thinking about my sense of un-belonging and my hopes that, one day, I would either feel settled or look to settle somewhere else. I scoffed, “I feel like you’ve been saying that forever, and nothing ever seems to change.” “Look at the YMCA they are building,” she said, “that’s amazing.” “Yeah, it looks great,” I replied, “and it will be amazing, but for someone else… that’s not for me, it’s not for us.” “I know, I know,” she agreed, “but it’s a sign of the times, and things will only get better and better.” I was skeptical, because I often heard those closest to me speaking of change as though it is just beyond the horizon, yet it remains unreachable. “But you know what I mean, Gosia,” I looked at her, “I feel like we belong somewhere else, and we are not free to live like we want to [in Canada]—it’s just not home for us—and you have lived here practically your whole life!” I said, trying to recall if she was born in Brantford or Poland, the latter of which is correct. “Maybe that’s why I’ve noticed more change than you have,” she said, “or maybe I’ve just learned to enjoy it.” “But you always talk about ‘Brantford changing’ and needing change,” I replied. She just looked at me and then down on the floor momentarily. “Look,” I said, “I’m not trying to be a pessimist; it’s just that, some days, I wonder if all this desire for change is doing us any good—is it moving us closer to the life we want or further away?” “Maybe you’re right,” she replied, “maybe you’re right.”

Zosia described change as causing a kind of identity panic wherein, as the world mixes, identities are no longer as clear. Identity is at the heart of how we imagine and perform Polonia, with its importance escalating following Poland's numerous occupations and the global spread of the Polish diaspora. As the imaginaries of Poland and Polonia change, those who claim belonging to these diasporas fear their uniqueness will disappear, much like Poland has many times before. Zosia said, "I see it in your generation, especially those that were raised Polish or are from Poland, see how the world is mixing, how people are becoming more and more like each other and as they wonder who they are, your generation can say, 'I know who I am, I know what my roots are, I know where I am from'." "Which is both a good thing for me and bad," I said, "because many times, people look at me and assume where I am from, that I am from Canada or have a Canadian sentimentality, but, in reality, I do not feel entirely Canadian, and there are moments where I feel like I am strange—like I am an alien." "Exactly," she said, "because you are not Canadian and because you did not get raised as a typical Canadian… because, when your mother and father came here, they didn't forget their heritage, they couldn't forget their heritage, and they passed it down for you, for better or for worse." I nodded. "But I think it's a good thing that they remembered," she added, "because I know very many Polish people living in Canada that have completely forgotten that they are Polish, and when they came here to Canada, they didn't bother to remember how to speak Polish, they started eating hamburgers and that is that!" I laughed, deeply understanding what Zosia was explaining. "If your mother had not raised you Polish, you wouldn't have that other sense of yourself—that Polish-ness—and you wouldn't be able to speak with your family, [and] you wouldn't have access to that other side of you," she ex-

plained. “And what happens when there are those Polish kids who are not raised with that outlook?” She asked. “They come up to you and say ‘hey you’ instead of ‘good day *Pani* [Ma’am]’ and that’s our culture, that’s our structure,” she said, “and that’s important.”

Although change is part of how migrants perform their everyday realities, change is also antithetical to how Polish Canadians imagine those performances. That is, Polish migrants engaged in change to find stability and bring our lives closer in line with our dreams. Most realize that change may be part of the migrant condition, but stability is more desired, given that they, and fore generations, have faced so much uncertainty and flux throughout their lives. As a result, my interlocutors tend to perform their lives with much consistency, or “routine,” as Agata put it. My interlocutors believe that, in seeking consistency, they are striving to preserve Polonia and that which makes it unique. This desire for stability then permeates to Polonia-at-large and may account for some of the stagnation my generation has recognized in its heritage and views.

Grieving a Life Un-lived

With ongoing precarity, the failed promises of neoliberalism, and a rapidly changing global reality pressing upon a deeply seated desire for a better life, Polish migrants to Canada can be perpetually longing to realize life as imagined and may grieve as it fails to materialize. This better life usually remains just beyond the horizon, seemingly unreachable, if only minor, albeit monumental, changes could be made. The disconnect between dreams and reality is perhaps best described by Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* wherein he discusses our means to imagine many lives for ourselves, but that our fate predicates we are able to live only one (45). The disappointment my interlocutors describe feeling may be due to living a liminal life between their imaginings and their present realities (Horvath et al.).

Marcin and Beata explained that they formed their imaginings of a better life out of the seemingly dismal reality in the communist East compared to the plentiful and luxurious life in the democratic West. And regardless of how life turned out in Canada, they remain convinced that only migration could afford them this better life. “In Poland, you lacked the money to have a normal and calm life, which was possible in Canada,” Beata said. “And the stores were empty,” Marcin chimed in, referring to the inability to buy even essential goods during the worst economic hardships. “My mom would always tell me that even if you had money in Poland, it didn’t matter because you couldn’t even buy anything,” I said. “Never,” Beata answered, “I had half a million [zloty] the day we were leaving Poland, and the kids came in these raggedy boots made of cheap rubber because it’s all I could find; I had a half a million [zloty], and I couldn’t buy anything with it because there wasn’t anything [to buy]!” “I remember that in 1977 was when it started to get particularly bad,” Beata said, “my daughter was born a few years after that, and the situation had gotten so bad.” She explained that “there was no milk, no diapers, no pacifiers—there was nothing, not even toilet paper!”

Longing for a better life is challenging to put into words because that life exists as an imagined story that has never been lived. Ela described this as a wish that life had “turned out differently” but admitted that she did not know what that life would be like. When Ela discussed her “goals as a parent,” as I had put it, Ela had mixed feelings, “because my dad didn’t push me to school and having that old-fashioned mentality that women stayed at home and raised kids and, you know.” “In my case, I think I was the opposite,” she said, “I tell my kids to get their education, [because] you don’t want your kids not to be able to stand on her own two feet.” “Because, in the future, she may not be able to provide for herself,” Ela explained, now speaking about her daughter but in a way that was meant to describe all her children. “So, you said earlier that you

wouldn't change a thing with the way your life turned out, but it seems like you told your kids [to live] the opposite," I said. "Well, it's hard to say," she said before pausing for a moment. "I'm very happy with the way things turned out, but do I wish I would have gone to school and become a career person like my daughter? I'm not sure…" she looked at me as though lost in thought and unable to answer her question.

Although being retrospective of one's life primarily occurred during sessions with baby boomer interlocutors, it was not unique to that generation. Millennials, too, looked back in retrospection, even though most considered much of their lives as being ahead of them. Daniella believes that life often does not turn out how one imagines it to, likening this to a kind of "loss." "I've lost a lot because I had kids really early," she started to explain. "[My husband and I] got married, [and then] found out like three months later that we were pregnant!" "And then we thought, 'well, this didn't work out as we had planned," she exclaimed, followed by a nervous laugh. "And we wanted to, you know…" she searched for words. "…have the honeymoon period?" I said to complete her thought. "Yeah!" She exclaimed. "I wanted to travel, maybe see the world, [or just] spend some time together!" She continued, "even our honeymoon got cut short, so, I guess, we thought, 'now we're not going anywhere because we're pregnant, and we need to do our kids' bedroom, so we need to spend money on that so…" she looked straight into my eyes looking deeply troubled, "yeah, there goes our honeymoon!" Her voice had raised as though underscoring her regret.

Longing for a better life means grieving for a future we imagined but did not achieve because life developed in ways that differ from our dreams. The disconnect between dreams for the future and the reality of precarity in the neoliberal West can fuel a sense of longing or, for some,

grieving. Like the inherent liminality of the migrant condition, liminality can extend beyond sociocultural boundaries and into individual ones, between expectation and reality (Sargent and Larchanché-Kim). Longing is a self-imposed affective force born out of individual and shared expectations that push on the lifeworlds of my interlocutors, influencing how we imagine the future and our relationship with the present. We wonder whether our efforts are paying off, and, for first-generation migrants in particular, we mourn the unlived lifestyles we have lost (Butler). Instead, there is a widening disconnect between past and present, between dreams and reality.

Session with My Mother: Broken Images and Being Realistic

My mother taught me to "be realistic" in how I imagine my life, or that we have to find and live in a middle ground and balance our expectations. However, this is on an individual basis, "because some people will think one way and some people will think another way because it comes down to how people feel about living in Canada, and about balancing our expectations with what we remember and where we are living now," she had told me. "And Canada allows that—a beautiful freedom—so it all depends on how people understand that [sic]," she explained, "because some people are stuck in the past and fear change." "If we want a new generation to take over, we need change," she went on. For her, broken images caused by the failed promises of neoliberalism equate to fearing change, which keeps us stuck in the past and, thus, grieving a life unlived.

By this point in my fieldwork, I was starting to understand and resolve some of the more complex threads I had been unravelling with my interlocutors. Some realizations were not especially surprising to me, as I had been thinking about many of these threads over the course of my life. But now I was beginning to understand how the threads interweaved, particularly when rec-

onciling a seemingly immeasurable number of affecting forces pushing on my life from numerous directions. My mother had the wisdom to understand that we must balance said forces with our dreams to consider our lives successful. However, I have not yet found this resolution, and I learned the same was true for most of my millennial interlocutors. Perhaps, then, Polonia is not facing a crisis of succession or the threat of being lost. Instead, it is the members of this diaspora who have yet to settle the dust of forced migration, the post-communist condition, the failed promises of neoliberalism, increasing globalization, and the myriad of other reasons they believe are blocks along the path to perform their dreams successfully.

Generational Succession

"I've been thinking a lot about life recently," Jolanda said, "about the future."

Central to this ethnography is understanding generational succession between Polish Canadian baby boomers and millennials, especially the anxieties we feel as we move through succession. My experiences as a Polish Canadian millennial living amid a massive sociocultural transition fuel my interest. My research reveals that Polonia is in the "crisis stage" of a Turnerian social drama, in that generational succession is causing a series of moments highlighting generational incompatibilities in how Polonia is socioculturally formed and performed (*Schism and Continuity*).

This section begins by looking at generational succession from the millennial perspective, primarily because it is the generation to which I claim belonging and, so, is the viewpoint from which I engage with and understand succession. Our generation is becoming the principal social affective agents in performing and shaping Polonia, yet many of us are rejecting Polonia because we consider our life experiences as not fully compatible with our heritage. I then contrast this analysis with understandings shared by my baby boomer interlocutors. They believe they are the

most implicated in how successful the succession of Polonia will be because they are the last generation to maintain Polonia's history and traditions. Many believe they are failing at this task and, so, that they will be responsible for losing Polonia. However, I conclude that Polonia has always succeeded, time and again over waves of migration and generational succession, and is, in fact, fundamental to its identity.

A concept originally forwarded by Karl Mannheim, the phenomenon of generations can be identified as sociocultural and existential ties that exist among a group of people based on the proximity of their age (382). Although generational divisions are imagined, the idea of generations produces a real influence on individual identity based on one's assumed belonging to a sociocultural group (379, 381). Generation divisions can create a "clash" due to "discrepant values, mindsets, and approaches" in forming worldviews (Green ix). My interlocutors frequently spoke in generation terms, particularly when discussing how the past influences the future. Understanding Polonia in a generational context is especially important at this time, given that Polonia shifted from experiencing changes over waves of migration to experiencing changes over waves of generational cohorts.

Generational succession is the shift of sociocultural power to younger generations (Magnus). Some individuals see sociocultural succession as unique to each person or generation. For others, succession means repeating narratives in current contexts, albeit with new actors and agents. Regardless of one's perspective, due to generational succession between two of the largest generational cohorts in history, we are in the midst of a monumental demographic shift creating a unique set of challenges and considerations.

To map this shift, I employ Victor Turner's theory of social drama as a framework to understand how transformative change within a community is collectively performed. Turner's

framework is a four-stage model for understanding how social crises or conflicts arise and are resolved. In the first stage, breach, underlying tensions within a community reveal a problem, and a social drama is primed to unfold. In the second stage, a social crisis occurs wherein an event or series of events set into motion the need to repair or redress the problem. In the third stage, the community performs redressive action to mend the problem or move in a new direction. This then leads to the fourth stage that culminates in either social reintegration or schism (*Schism and Continuity*). By proceeding through Turner's model of social drama, we can chart how a community undergoes a collective re-evaluation of social values, norms, and power dynamics. My research reveals that Polonia in Brantford is in the crisis stage of Turner's framework as the baby boomer and millennial generations succeed and have varied understandings and expectations of Polonia's future. However, I wish to further this by arguing that Polonia—a nation that schismed from its motherland—is in perpetual crisis as it has been and continues to be re-evaluated over waves of migration and the succession of generations.

Rejecting Polonia

Generational succession has resulted in some of my interlocutors rejecting Polonia as they seek to live their lives in ways that do not necessarily align with the values passed down from generations prior (Danico 85; Ghodsee xi). This "crisis" is especially true for millennials who feel torn between worldviews that are often in opposition (*Schism and Continuity*). Our blended experiences mean Polonia no longer exists as most imagine it, and certainly not in the ways our parents do. But some also return to Polonia after a period of rejection, realizing later in life that they may have misunderstood the value that Polonia offers or because they come to long a belonging they can only find in their roots.

Kamila best described this as being born out of her desire to live life differently than how her parents and the elders of her community imagined it. Her involvement in Polonia began at an early age, "like many of [her] friends." She started her involvement by attending Polish School as a student, although she did not stick through it until the end of Grade 8, like some other children. She also began Polish dancing lessons at The Hall, which ended after a few months because she disliked that the teacher was stubborn and not open to her input. In some ways, she desired to get involved because she was proud of her Polish heritage. However, perhaps even more so, she resisted engaging in Polonia because, as she put it, "my parents made me" and in ways that did not necessarily reflect her desires.

Like Kamila, Gosia also felt torn between a deeply seated desire to engage in Polonia and perform her life in newly imagined ways. Gosia understood and respected the "long history" that she saw as inherent to Polonia heritage performances, such as national dancing, not because she was "told they were our 'national dances'… but because I just genuinely felt they were important to me. I can't explain it." "Maybe it was my parents" or "maybe it was the entire community" that regularly reminded us of the importance of the dances and the vitality of carrying on the tradition and the Polish heritage, she said. "So, what made you stop [dancing]?" I asked. "The usual story," she continued, "rebellion as a teenager, wanting to do my own thing rather than being told, wanting to explore the world on my own." She looked at me as if I understood, and I did, but I wanted her to explain. "I think most Polish Canadian migrant children get tired of being told how to be Polish and that it was important to be Polish, especially when we were encouraged to 'fit in' in Canada." "By whom?" I asked. "By our parents. By the culture. By everyone! I always felt like my life was largely dictated for me. I was told how to act and what to believe." She explained.

Because of these experiences, and the associated guilt of not performing Polonia how her elders imagined it, Kamila does not engage much with Polonia anymore, an outcome common for many Polish Canadian millennials. Her opinion is that its members are not open to suggestions or new ideas. With time, she believes that "we [the Polish Canadians] have changed, but the Hall hasn't." The priorities of the Hall no longer reflect her life because "there is very little time for people living in Canada, so we pick and choose things… if they did more activities for us that were fun and engaging, I'd go." For Kamila, "it's not that I don't care about my heritage or my background, it's that I am not the kind of Polish person that The Hall caters to… no one is anymore." 'No one' referring to other Polish Canadians who feel that their reality has evolved but Polonia has not.

Other millennials may reject Polonia because they cannot fully understand the history and heritage that others consider vitally important. Gosia told me that, as a small child, she would watch her parents and the older children participating in dancing troupes but never understood their meaning. "They were so beautiful," she reminisced, "[but] I could not really understand them." She explained that "the words were, you know, 'old school Polish,' which made it hard to understand," she said, "but it was mostly because the audio recordings of those songs were absolutely ancient... like they were from the Soviet era and had been played a million times already." We laughed and shared a deep sense of understanding. "The screeching audio!" "The terrible fuzz that the dance instructor would try to drown out by cranking the volume, which, really, only made it more unbearable." "The women that sound like children and then men that sound like soldiers, it was so bizarre!" We exclaimed back and forth. Like me, Gosia rejects aspects of Polonia because they are strange to her, as though relics of a bygone life that has little meaning in

the present. We reject Polonia not intentionally but ignorantly. We do not understand its inherent meanings, and thus, we deem it irrelevant.

Most Polish Canadian millennials have spent the majority or all of their childhood in Canada. Childhood is a time of discovery during which we are free to explore and (re)define our lifeworld performances. Childhood provides a means to explore alternative worldviews outside Polonia (Danico 3). During this time of discovery, many Polish Canadian millennials modify their lifeworld images and performances by adopting sociocultural aspects that may not be compatible with Polonia. Their desire to incorporate these incompatible images into their lifeworld performances can result in rejection.

Jolanda told a story about when she cut her hair as a child: "I was four, and I cut my own bangs… I thought it was a great idea [and], as a kid, you don't care if you're going to look stupid!" I asked her why she told me this story, but she did not have an answer. However, it became clear when she started talking about a trip to Poland she took shortly after. "When we went back to Poland right after I did that, and my parents were just *so embarrassed*," she told me (emphasis in original). "I can remember that, shortly after that, I decided that I didn't want bangs anymore," she had made her voice lower and more assertive as she said this, likely imitating her father. "My dad told me that I can't have hair in my face," she explained, "so I had to wear a headband for like three years straight while they grew back in, probably because I had cut them so short." "It was all about being clean, looking neat, being groomed… not looking like some sort of rugrat," she said, explaining that her father always focused on the outward appearances of his children. Because we have a shared sociocultural upbringing, there were many things we mutually under-

stood that did not need explaining. Jolanda's desire to experiment with her everyday performance was at odds with her father's images of what a Polish child should look like and produced the contention experienced by both.

Rejecting Polonia stems from seeking a life that may not be compatible with its established sociocultural reality. Especially true for Polish Canadian millennials, it is not uncommon for us to reject some or all of the images we associate with Polonia. For some, they wish never to experience the associated guilt and hardships. For others, as their lifestyles change, the images of Polonia are less relevant to them, and their lives begin to drift away. For others still, they may quietly continue to perform some heritage traditions they adopted from Polonia but not as regularly as before or as fore generations. Finally, some may have modified those performances in ways that are no longer compatible with Polonia as others imagine it.

The Generation That Lost Polonia

"I don't want to forget things; I don't want my kids to forget things; I don't want my husband to forget things; I don't want to be forgotten... because it's a big thing," Daniella said. "Why is it a big thing?" I asked. "Because [life] goes by so fast," she said, "I might need to cry!" "I have tissues," I said as I passed her one. Daniella smirked, then sighed in relief.

During a routine visit to the Hall, I arrived early, and Maria, who had been decorating the Hall that day, was dusting the two plaques on the wall adorned with dozens of pictures of past presidents of the Hall and the Ladies' Circle. The photos stretched back to the inauguration of the Hall; some of them had been hanging there so long that they were fading almost beyond recognition. "Sometimes we forget to clean these photos," Maria said, wiping the dust off the presidential photos, "but I try to remember once in a while… they are very important." I asked, "why is that?" "These are all the people who built our Hall over the years," she began, "there is a

history here that cannot be forgotten." She gestured me closer. "See here?" She pointed to a photograph from the 1950s. "This is one of the most important presidents; he served for many years and did a lot of good for Polonia," she explained, "it took me many years to track down his photo." I looked closely, trying to make out the face of the president, but his face was too obscured. "I know the photograph is not the best," she explained, "but it is the only one I could find, and I thought it was very important that he is remembered by us." "You mean the photograph was not added when he was president?" "No, no," she said, "some of these [photographs] are very old, and others are new because we did not have everyone's photograph until a few years ago." "Why did you decide, now, that it was important to put up these photographs?" I asked. "It has been my mission to represent better the people who helped make this place the way it is today," she explained, as she gazed upon the photos with adoration, "so that we never forget… so that you never forget." Presumably, Maria was talking about my generation and Polish Canadians in general rather than me. The look of pride that beamed across her face as she gazed upon those past presidents was inspiring.

Like Polish Canadian millennials, baby boomers succeeded the generation before them, and they, too, individualized how they imagined their lives, often succeeding in ways different than their parents might approve of (Walia). My millennial interlocutors generally showed indifference to the crisis of generational succession, which is leaving baby boomers assuming personal responsibility for the continuance of Polonia. In turn, baby boomers are more openly expecting millennials to become more involved in preserving Polonia's heritage. For my baby boomer interlocutors, these broken images cause intense anxiety and only seem to grow in intensity with time. Some fear that they would be remembered as the generation that lost Polonia, as

one of the volunteers at the Hall said. They fear they have failed in their role as caretakers and in attracting a succeeding generation to become torch bearers.

"And that's what I think you meant when you said that it would be a shame to lose the Hall," I said, "because it's important… to Polonia, to you and me." "Not only that," Zosia said, "not only is it because the Hall is important and because it would be a shame to lose it, but because someone worked very hard on it." She looked at me very seriously, "the Hall represents a very important history of the people that came here, the people that built the Hall, that worked hard to build it," she had taken a breath, "you always feel differently when you are somewhere other than in your own place, so the people that came here, that built the Hall, they wanted something familiar, they wanted something Polish, something that would remind them of Poland, and they worked very hard for it, and I think it should be preserved."

"You young people don't understand yet," Zosia said, "one day you will be gone, but your memory will always remain." "I don't do it because I necessarily need to be remembered," she explained, referring to her work at the Hall, "it's that I want to preserve the history that is already there." I listened on. "Because," she continued, "I don't need to be remembered, but I worry people will look back at our generation as the one that lost the Hall." She looked down at the table for a moment, and her expression had become heavy. "But that's what it looks like it will be," she said, "that's what's going to happen; even though we are trying our hardest to change it, we are doing everything we can to keep it running, but it looks like it's probably going to be lost."

The contentions between Polish Canadian baby boomers and millennials are sometimes about the maintenance of legacies in Polonia and the perceived reluctance of the millennial generation to take on the role of maintainers, particularly as their parents age. Many baby boomer

interlocutors told me they fear Polonia will be lost if millennials do not take on the role of maintainers of heritage and culture. They believe we are duty-bound to tend and maintain our collective history, especially concerning the strife experienced by the Polish people over the past century.

I have always assumed that baby boomers are more connected to Polonia than millennials. I assumed that they see value in its practices to transmit sociocultural norms and knowledge, and that millennials have a different relationship to that heritage. However, after listening to Maria discuss the importance of those fore members adorned on the lobby wall of the Hall, perhaps it is less about maintaining Polonia and its associated traditions, and more about remembering the individuals who imagine and perform those traditions, thus creating the value we ascribe to them. As Ela and Jan once explained: "we wish to be remembered... by our family, our friends, our neighbours... that we were good people, that we were good members of the community."

Downward Pressure

One of the primary reasons I became so engaged at the Hall was due to the recruitment work of the executives. They put tremendous effort into onboarding younger members—especially those that they believed would be effective in attracting other youth—to undertake some of the work the executive envisioned as being "important to Polonia," as Maria put it. She had once mentioned that she was "training" me to assume more responsibilities at the Hall because it was the "duty" of the younger generation to be more active in leading Polonia.

In late May, I was approached about becoming more involved in Hall operations, which was a few weeks after I started to engage there regularly. It began with requests to volunteer at events and in the prep work leading up to them. At first, I accepted these requests as I believed the experiences would allow me to build rapport and conduct participant observation. However, I

quickly became overwhelmed—as the number of meetings and volunteer requests escalated rapidly—and I found myself spending most evenings throughout the week engaged in Hall-related activities. I offered to volunteer as much as possible but to do so realistically as I had to prioritize my research at the risk of overextending myself.

When I was asked to take the lead on devising and executing a project at the Hall—to "start something," as Maria put it—my initial reaction was resistance. The pressure to engage was similar to that which I have been experiencing for the entirety of my life, not only at the Hall but in other baby boomer-led engagements with Polonia. As I covered in Chapter 3, this guilt follows us everywhere and only grows in intensity, especially when we pose resistance to engaging in Polonia in ways that defy the expectations of fore generations. When I began engaging more directly in Polonia again, I had forgotten how that guilt felt, but it quickly returned when I started experiencing the constant pressure to be more involved, even when I could not or did not want to.

In late August, I was approached once again (although this time with considerably more pressure) by members of the executive at the Hall. Ideally, they wanted me to (re-)start a *Grono Młodzieży* [Youth League] and to convince other Polish Canadian millennials—with whom they knew I was doing research—to (re-)engage at the Hall. "You could do a *zabawa* [party] or *taniec* [a dance social]," one of the members suggested to me as I arrived for a meeting one evening. Another member said, "we need more youth… it's time that you started taking a more active interest in your hall and the *grupa* [membership]." I assumed they believed I had some unique influence over other millennials, meaning I would be successful in engaging youth members at the Hall, something the executive was having difficulty doing. Most of my millennial interlocutors

were not interested in engaging more in Polonia, and certainly not by engaging in Hall activities like their baby boomer parents expected them to.

Instead, I offered to "think about" taking on any more significant commitments at the Hall, and that I would get back to the idea after the summer or closer to the end of my fieldwork. I agreed to join for as many meetings and events as time permitted. This would make up the bulk of my in-field research for the remaining months I had set aside for doing more participant observation. I felt guilty having turned down the request even though, in retrospect, I was already engaging more than the majority of their members and was one of the few youth members active in any capacity.

Since completing my fieldwork, I learned through Agata that some millennials decided to re-start the "youth" dancing troupe, which had not been operating for years. This group is composed of dancers between 20 and 45 years old, which is the cohort of individuals the executive at the Hall is most hoping to enlist. I cannot be certain that my research was a catalyst that inspired this to happen. However, Agata did mention that—following our talks—some Polish Canadian millennials began to "think more about Polonia" and, perhaps, their relationship with it. Ultimately, my intention for producing this work is to reflect deeply on the reality of generational succession as it is occurring in Polonia so that each generation may better understand how Polonia is being (re-)imagined.

On numerous occasions, Maria would ask me a rather direct question: "what is your research about?" She was curious about the topic but, more so, was unsure what my research would do to benefit the community and how the results would reward their time commitment. From the outset, it was Maria who inspired me to consider my work as helping to better under-

stand the realities of Polonia in Canada, particularly in terms of generational succession. However, being in the midst of my fieldwork, much of my ethnographic analysis was still very much elusive to me. It was not until the months after fieldwork that I would more fully understand the implications of my research and, especially, what my interlocutors were telling me.

The executives at the Hall want to ensure that the next generation of Polonia carries on the legacies and heritage that were imagined by the baby boomer generation and fore generations. Most of my baby boomer interlocutors indicated that preserving the Hall is vital to preserving Polonia. The anxiety and guilt they feel around potentially losing it within their lifetimes fuel a kind of downward pressure that succeeds generations (Walia; Lansberg; Green). As Kamila and Gosia most clearly explained, many millennials are not interested in engaging in this preservation work because it does not speak to their life priorities. However, as I will analyze next, the succession of Polonia is less clear than the prevailing narrative shared amongst its constituents.

Succession Always Succeeds

For my baby boomer interlocutors, the succession of Polonia predicates on maintaining the heritage and legacy of the Polish diaspora. Unlike their parent's generation, my millennial interlocutors often wish to include different perspectives on Polonia that may not always reflect how it was imagined and performed by fore generations. That is, the "generational consciousness" of these groups is often mismatched (Edmunds and Turner). As I have argued, this mismatch has created feelings of contention wherein each group views their role within Polonia differently, some even choosing to disassociate. If succession indicates a following, my research reveals that the performance of succession can manifest both as a continuation and an evolution in tandem. Therefore, I argue that Polonia in Canada can be considered as perpetually "in crisis" when viewing it from a Turnerian framework of social drama (Turner, *Schism and Continuity*).

That is, rather than moving onto redress or schism, my interlocutors and I see Polonia as remaining in a liminal crisis stage perpetuated by incompatibilities in our imaginaries even though we continue to strive for resolution.

Millennials may have dreamed of a life different from their parents, but perhaps they often perform their lives similarly. The millennial dream is fundamental to being individual and separate from the legacy of fore generations. Nevertheless, they may emulate the best aspects of their parents' lives, either by accident or choice. Agata did not realize that how she performed her daily routine was not unlike her mother's. "I get up, make breakfast, get lunches ready… then we go to work, come home, make dinner… then we go for a walk, come back to watch the news and relax… sometimes we go for a swim at the neighbours," she said. "Water the flowers," Bartek had chimed in. "Water the flowers," Agata repeated. "Oh, I sound so Polish!" Agata exclaimed as she put her head in her hands, as Bartek laughed. "Sorry! I just realized that's exactly what my mom used to do!" She paused to think. "I go grocery shopping on Friday like my mom does," she said humbly. "Oh my god!" Bartek, still laughing, said, "you are your mother!" "I am my mother!" Agata said and then exclaimed, "surprise!!" We laughed.

Daniella, on the other hand, hoped that she could adopt any of her parents' best qualities and that, in doing so, she would consider herself succeeding in her life and her role as a parent. She described this as an accomplishment, although, at the same time, Daniella told me she wishes for her daughter to consider her a successful parent in her own right. She admires her parents because "they have strong values, they work hard, they have goals…" she trailed off, as a smirk appeared across her face, "they're absolutely the best." "If I get to be anything like them, I'm okay with that… I'm *really* okay with that," she said. "It's because I want my daughter to

think about me the way I think about my parents [because] if my kids think I'm the best, then I've done my best, and there's nothing more that I could have done."

Images succeed generations in unexpected ways but often similar to the previous generation. Even if we consider these images unique, many are shared from prior generations and heavily influence our lifeworlds. This realization was not necessarily positive for Agata because she felt embarrassed that she was not more individual. For Daniella, however, this sameness was a source of pride, as she feels her greatest personal accomplishment is to emulate her parents as much as possible.

The millennial understanding of how baby boomers imagine succession may seem like a continuation, but they understand that Polonia evolves with each new generation. Inherent to realizing the images of Polonia is that their performance will be different, albeit the same. "Like my daughter is a career person, she's opposite from me… she wouldn't stay at home with the kids like I did… it's a generational thing, you know?" Ela explained. I told Ela that I, too, am career-focused, a mindset I developed in response to my parents' expectations that I excel in school and in my career. "And that's what I mean by 'I don't know'," Ela replied, answering my earlier question on whether she wished her life had turned out differently. "I mean, I'm sure I would have wanted to if I [had] lived differently, but it's difficult to say 'I would do this, or I would do that' if you just don't know," indicating that one can imagine their life a certain way but can only perform it one way.

And, yet, perhaps baby boomers are more open to change than millennials have given them credit for, and the change they initiated is even more dramatic than what millennials believe it to be. Baby boomers were navigating massive sociopolitical changes in their youth and

during migration. More importantly, there was newfound freedom of choice that opened considerable avenues of performativity for self-expression, especially during the collapse of communism. “And, so, was there a general feeling among people that the best option was to leave Poland and try to start a new life?” I asked Beata and Marcin. “Or was there a feeling that there was no hope? Or that things would change? Or not change?” Beata and Marcin looked at each other, “that’s how our parents felt,” both said simultaneously. “The older generation thought that way,” Beata said, “they believed that things were too dire to be fixed.” “That nothing would change,” Marcin added. “But the younger generation, our generation, we believed there was hope, so many of us decided to emigrate,” Beata explained.

Session with My Mother: On Generational Succession and Losing Polonia

When I asked my mother if she agreed that Polonia was being “lost,” as so many of her generational cohort seem to believe, she told me that “we cannot say it is being lost, [but] it is changing over generations, for sure.” “Because we all have different experiences, because people your age who [mostly] lived [in Canada] have a different life… so you can’t say how people should live their lives, that you have to go to the Polish Hall and dance Polish dances, and that’s it,” she explained.

I was caught between two sides of a community whose intentions were often at odds. The baby boomers expressed their desire for millennials to engage at the Hall and continue their heritage work. Whereas millennials wished for their parents to respect their visions of what constitutes Polonia rather than doing so in the shadow of past imaginings. Polonia is inherently evolutionary as it is comprised of migrants searching to improve their lives and being defined over generations. To say that Polonia is a continuation of what came before it is to misrepresent the dreams of the those who comprise this diaspora. Polish migrants to Canada left Poland in search

of a better life. This movement ultimately changed their images of the future. These images only intensify as they succeed between generations, with younger members of Polonia seeking to realize their parents' dreams while simultaneously imagining their own (Lansberg; Walia). Performing the dreams of Polonia requires that they evolve over generations because they are about realizing a different life, a better life. So, I argue that Polonia remains in "crisis" and is not able to move towards redressive action because, according to my interlocutors and me, we seek to resolve the social drama within Polonia while desiring to realize the lifeworld images that are incompatible between generations (Turner, *Schism and Continuity*).

The Future of Polonia

Polonia is experiencing a seismic shift in the way its members define the landscapes that comprise it. That is, we are witnessing the imagining of a new heritage of Polonia that is often different from past imaginings, but that is, nonetheless, derived from the experiences of people of Polish descent. This section analyses this transformation and what it might mean for the future of Polonia and its constituents.

First, I discuss how the transformation of Polonia relates to how people negotiate belonging to this changing nation. Millennials are balancing the desire for belonging with feelings of alienation. We desire to belong somewhere—and Polonia should be the best home to belong to—yet we may also feel we do not have enough influence in defining the collective images of Polonia that seem to be slipping further out of sync with our lived experiences. On the other hand, my baby boomer interlocutors understand the value that Polonia offers in creating a sense of belonging but may lack the ability to convey that message fully. They see Polonia as akin to an extended family, a concept my generation may not yet understand.

Next, I discuss the perception shared by my interlocutors that Polonia is disappearing and how this sentimentality threatens this critical space of connection. Polonia offers Polish Canadians tangible and intangible landscapes that bind together its constituents. In losing those places and spaces, our nation and its identity are also being threatened. However, I build my argument towards an image of Polonia that lies somewhere in-between disappearance and permanence.

I also analyze how the lives of my interlocutors have moved in different directions as generations succeed, but Polonia will remain through this shift. Even those interlocutors who most consider their lives disconnected from Polonia engage in activities and hold beliefs that they do not consider to be of Polish heritage but are, nonetheless, affecting and affected by their migrancy. And so, Polonia remains as it is continuously reimagined through the everyday performances of these individuals, as it always has been. This statement remains true even if they consider themselves leading lives that do not correspond to the images of Polonia imagined by fore generations.

Finally, I end this section with an analysis of speculation on how we may return to Polonia in the future in ways that retain many of its past imaginings, a desire that my baby boomer interlocutors primarily hold. Many hope that Polonia does not transform and that future generations will return to tend to the images already envisioned. Some believe millennials will hear the calling to return to Polonia following the exploration period we presently find ourselves in. Others believe we merely need to be reminded of the importance of Polonia in our lives. Nevertheless, the future remains obscure, as it often differs from what we imagine.

Needing Belonging

Regardless of what degree Polish Canadians engage in or reject participation in Polonia, these actions stem from the desire to find belonging and a sense of place. Their deeply rooted

feelings of un-belonging and in-betweenness have always been a primary force in their lives—either from feeling like home is neither here nor there or seeking to re-live their pasts or realize their imagined futures (Grønseth). Polonia acts like a physical and imagined neighbourhood for the displaced people part of the Polish diaspora. It gives its constituents a means to connect with others who have experienced life in similar ways or a means to a single cultural identity (Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora").

How my interlocutors describe their understandings of belonging to Polonia varies along generational lines. That is, millennials tended to discuss their relationship with Polonia as disengaging as their lives shifted further away from the collective images of Polonia that they consider as being imagined by fore generations. Their parents, the baby boomers, seek to resist change in Polonia as they see this as a threat to their belonging. For both generations, change is inevitable but has different outcomes and, so, is approached with varied agendas. Belonging remains vital and is a principal ground upon which the future of Polonia will be imagined.

Ela and Jan explained that because they are in advanced years and have lost their parents and many siblings, they choose to spend most of their time with adopted family members that they have made in the Polish Canadian community. I asked Ela and Jan, "what does Polonia mean to you?" Both Ela and Jan said, "family." "If people have events or ask us to come," Jan said as Ela finished, "we never have excuses." "When people need advice on certain things, then we give advice," Jan continued. "We know a lot of Polish people that are friends, that are not totally fluent and do not understand English very well, and they need a translation or something,

we help out with that," he explained. "We had the same hardship," Jan added. "*Do tańca i do różańca*[6], as they say," Ela said, explaining that it is their duty to treat other Polish Canadians like an extended family.

For new migrants to Canada that do not have much family here, Polonia can fulfill similar needs by offering belonging and a sense of home, as Jan explained. "Well, for us, we didn't have a lot of family [in Canada], so it was more, you know, close friends that actually became like family," he explained. "Then you would spend [time]—whether it was Christmas or Easter or whatever—with those people [who] also didn't have, you know, many brothers and sister here," he continued. "So, family for us is people that you got to know very well," he went on, "it could be associates from work, or neighbours, or people you met at social functions… family for us is a bit of everything," he explained as Ela nodded in agreement. "Yeah, we have a great social life," Ela added.

These adopted family members are as close as blood relatives and, at times, even more so. "For me, family is family, and blood runs thicker than water, as they say," Ela added. "We sort of *adopted* a lot of *'ciocias'* [aunts] and *'wujeks'* [uncles]," Jan explained, his emphasis, describing a Polish custom to call non-blood relatives that are considered as close as biological family, like aunts and uncles. "There's only a couple of them that are left," Jan explained, "that, you know, we were very, very close with." He continued, "[some] were closer than [my parents'] sisters and brothers that were back in Poland… because they didn't talk much." Ela and Jan explained that for baby boomers, Polonia might fill the need for belonging to a family or community with which they share a commonality in their unique life experiences. As I have argued,

[6] A Polish idiom which means one is ready to engage in both pleasurable and serious matters.

home for Polish Canadians is neither here nor there but an imagined nation created by and between people.

On the other hand, millennials, me included, may not fully understand the importance of Polonia in offering belonging. Most millennials I know do not engage much in Polonia anymore, and certainly not to the extent their parents do or did. Instead, they are even further displaced than fore generations and, perhaps, feel this estrangement is compounded as they do not feel they belong to either Poland, Canada, or even Polonia in Canada. My millennial interlocutors described their lives as "fluid," as Agata had put it. That is, they find belonging where they can, but they do not feel they belong to any one place in particular.

Bartek imagined his life as too complex to belong to one imaginary wholeheartedly. Instead, he feels he floated from group to group—or from imaginary to imaginary—finding solace in all but none in particular. "I was kind of caught in the middle," Bartek explained how he remembered his relationships with other children in school. "I had friends that were 'not popular'," he said while he gestured with air quotes, "but I also had friends that were popular because I knew everyone." He had thought for a moment, "I was, sort of, stuck in the middle trying to balance being friends with both [groups]," he explained. "What are you doing with *them*?" He said, recalling a typical question his schoolmates asked him in the schoolyard. "In high school, I tried to be friends with everyone because I had grown up with all of them," he explained again. "I was the same," I added, "I called myself a 'floater' because I would float from group to group." "Yeah, yeah!" Bartek agreed, "that's me; that's totally me!"

Leading a life in-between for much of our lives, my millennial interlocutors and I discussed our desire to find spaces that could anchor our lives. In response, some of us have been realizing new spaces of social engagement which come from our desires to find belonging and in

reaction to the unease of losing publics wherein real human connection can happen (Lovell 1). Remembering back to childhood, when we seemed to be engaged with one another more immediately, some millennials discussed the need to have this lifestyle return once more. They believe we are in an age where everyone is more connected through social media yet, at the same time, less connected with one another in a physical sense.

Daniella explained this as a need for the return of neighbourhoods and the social connection they create. “I had the big driveway, my friend Becky had a pool, my other friend Jamie had a trampoline,” she added, “so we’d just share our stuff… all the neighbourhood kids would get together and share what we had.” I nodded. “Like, even today, it’s not the same with kids anymore,” she continued, “there is no sense of ‘being a neighbour,’ there is no sense of community with your neighbours anymore… it’s just not there.” “It’s different now,” I agreed, “communities are online; we chat through our devices and the internet instead of seeing each other outside.” “Exactly, like there are two little girls that live across the street [from us], and the likeliness of them ever coming over and playing with my kids is really slim,” she agreed, “I used to do that all the time with my neighbours… we would literally just hop fences to get to each other’s houses, but that doesn’t happen anymore.”

Unlike the millennials I spoke with, my baby boomer participants understood the value of Polonia as a community. For them, the importance of Polonia transcends the mere familiarity of its heritage. Instead, they consider Polonia their “home,” as Maria described it, and see the community as an extended family that gives their lives meaning and situatedness. On the other hand, my millennial participants, myself included, do not always see the value of Polonia as offering community because many of us have decided to disengage and have tried to feel at home else-

where. Millennials also feel un-belonging like their parents but have not yet realized how engaging in a community with others who have similar life experiences, even if those experiences often feel alien to us, offers us the deep roots we so often desire. Millennials may feel they do not belong, even as their parents strive to show the belonging inherent to acknowledging their place within Polonia.

A Threatened Place

Generational succession has forced Polish Canadians to face questions of power and responsibility over co-created places of performing Polish Canadian life. Seeking to answer these questions is especially important, I believe, in the current climate wherein traditional Polish Canadian heritage places—like the Hall—are facing extinction in the neoliberal present due to increasing costs, a lack of funding, and decreases in overall membership. In response, many cultural centres are considering new ways of staying relevant. Not only are these places modernizing or changing to appease a new generation, but they are also seeking to balance change with efforts to preserve legacy and ensure accessibility to cultural places in the future.

It is not a secret that the Hall is facing existential threats. Rising costs and lowering incomes have led to a precarious reality that is only compounded by the pressures of neoliberalism. Some cultural centres have remained lucrative and successful, while others are finding it extremely difficult to remain open, particularly when negotiating the expectations of the membership and the precarity of the neoliberal reality. Jan and Ela described this as balancing expectations, in that there is "talk about who [sic] this hall benefits, but you can't get people from Brantford to go to it," Ela told me. "So, you can say that Brantford wants this," she continued, "but if they wanted this, they would try very hard to come to functions." "We have to find out why the

other hall is successful in having so many functions," Jan interjected. "I even noticed at the Villages—not that our hall was particularly under-visited or anything—there was more happening over there," I told them, referring to the other Polish Canadian cultural centre. "There was more happening during the performances, more dances, more members engaged… it was just more lively," I added. "Yeah, there isn't much going on at our Hall," Ela responded, somewhat sheepishly, as though she was embarrassed. "But, Wiktor, that's just the Villages," Jan responded. "The interesting thing is that [the other Hall] can still attract more events than [our hall]," Jan insisted. He reminded me that recent events had very low member attendance numbers, so "there is something wrong." "Members aren't coming!" Jan asked passionately, "Why?"

Perhaps, it has to do with power and the desire to be considered sociocultural leaders in their respective communities. In this sense, influence and power over a community are more important than maintaining a community and its ties, as Jan and Ela described. "They [the executives] also have to check out what other halls are like," Jan explained, suggesting that the executive is too focused on the other Polish hall and have ignored other cultural centres. "They're doing very well," I explained, knowing that some neighbouring halls are fairly active, at least much more so than this Hall. "They have to see what they're doing differently [than we are]," Jan argued. "So, what do you think it is?" I ask. "Pride," Jan said without hesitation. "There is no way that Brantford can support two Polish Halls, but they will never see eye to eye," he added. "I'll tell you a little story," Ela said, "when I was going around town collecting donations for the Villages, I walked into a place—I'm not going to mention names or where I went—but I showed [someone] the flyer, and they agreed to donate a gift certificate," Ela told me, "and, wouldn't you know it, someone walked in—a member of [the other Polish Hall]—and asked to see the flyer… so I asked [them] to come, and [they] said 'over my dead body!'." Ela put her hand on her chest,

as though indicating that she had a deeply emotional response, “and I thought, ‘what an attitude’ but said ‘you know I think the Halls should help one another’ and [they] said, ‘never!’.” Ela had put a lot of emphasis on that person’s comment, as though to underscore the intense patriotism they felt. “As I was leaving, I said, ‘so, I’ll see you there?’ To which [they] replied, ‘like hell!’.” Ela said, “and I thought to myself, ‘oh my god’!”—again, emphasizing her complete surprise at devout territorialism. “Even if I had that attitude, I would never reveal that to a person in a public place,” she said. She told me that she had only heard stories about these long-standing issues and was dubious of their truth, but “this confirmed it.”

“Well, I can say that I’ve felt that, too,” I told Ela, “I ran into someone at the [other] hall that I met as a member of [our] Hall—either used to be or still is—and they pretended like they didn’t know me.” I paused for a moment and looked at her with a sign of disbelief on my face. “Why? Because of some stupid old feud that everyone has forgotten how it even started?” I asked, recalling that I had not yet heard a consistent validation for this feud. “Unfortunately, with the members that are currently at [the two Halls]… it won’t happen,” Jan responded.

Further to the threats of precarity and neoliberalism is an engagement crisis wherein some believe that cultural centres en masse are experiencing diminishing participation, even within age groups that have traditionally been very active. The engagement crisis is beyond the control of the members maintaining cultural spaces. It is not that they do not want engagement or actively work to discourage it, but they feel powerless to do anything about it, as Ela explained. “But then maybe it’s just that people don’t want to go out,” Ela added, as though trying to look at all perspectives of the engagement problem. I thought about my life and my experience with other millennials. “It’s not like it’s an easy answer,” I said, “it takes years of being there and learning *exactly* what’s going on.” “That’s what we’re doing,” Ela explained.

The answer to this crisis may be to create Polish Canadian heritage places that ease the engagement barrier rather than imposing strict expectations of what constitutes acceptable performances. After all, socializing is engaging, even if it is not performed as formal monthly meetings and traditional heritage events. “They’re not going broke; they’re making money,” Jan explained, referring to the other Polish Canadian cultural centre in Brantford. “They attract members and, maybe, they don’t come every month [to meetings], but at least they come for many of the Friday dinners,” he argued. “Every Friday?” I asked, wondering how popular the event was. “Well, when I was there, I’ve been there only once, and I’d say there were 100 people there,” Jan explained. “Are you sure?” Ela asked, very surprised, “it’s not every other Friday? Or once a month?” “No, no,” Jan responded confidently, “every Friday.” Ela looked on very surprised and did not know what to say. I told them “I was recently invited for lunch there, and I was surprised that they offered lunch almost every day.” Jan responded, “it’s something that is drawing people in… at our hall, there’s nothing drawing people in.” “I mean, they have weddings and ‘Buck & Does’ [sic],” he continued, “but there is no reason to get together on a Friday night.” “It’s like there is no reason for community,” I said, somewhat disheartened. “They want to have a community [at the Hall], but there isn’t any,” Ela responded as though agreeing. “They tried Friday dinners,” Jan said, “for two, three months, but then they had to close it because people just weren’t supporting it.” I took in a long, deep breath as I felt disappointed to hear that the membership had lost their drive to support the Hall. “It’s too bad,” I said. “But at the same time, when I walk into a space and get a feeling that I don’t want to be there…” I added before Ela finished my statement, “…if there’s no positive energy.”

The threats facing cultural centres like the Hall compound upon themselves and create a seemingly impossible situation to resolve. My baby boomer interlocutors see the value in preserving cultural places, like the Hall, but feel powerless to save them. My millennial interlocutors may respect the importance that these places have for Polonia heritage, but do not believe these places reflect our life priorities or how we have decided to perform our lifeworlds. The threats facing heritage places, like the Hall, symbolize the threat to the entire nation of Polonia. Like Ela said, "we know what the problem is; we just don't want to say what it is," which explains her belief that the threats facing Polonia run deeper than what is visible.

Polonia Remains

Some of the interlocutors that participated in this research believe that Polonia is disappearing as a response to the changes they are witnessing in the fabric of Polish Canadian identity. However, Polonia is not a static imaginary with a clear definition, as some Polish Canadians might believe. Instead, as I have argued through this research, Polonia is a community of individuals who share commonalities among their lifestories and connect through a mutual understanding that is often difficult to describe to non-Polish Canadians. Instead, Polonia as an imagined community is perpetually re-imagined in response to our present reality and, so, will remain regardless of how it transforms over time (Fludernik; Anderson).

When I consider how my millennial interlocutors define and perform their lifeworlds, I see that they remain connected to the heritage of Polonia, albeit in unusual ways. They may not engage in "traditional" Polonia heritage as they consider their parents doing so. Instead, millennials engage in performances that resemble those born of Polonia, such as serving tea when a guest visits you at home or eating Italian cuisine because it is "real food."

During my first engagement with Kamila, who described her life as being more Canadian than Polish, I often noticed her engaging in Polish culturalisms that she might have been unaware of. When I first went to her home to do an interview, Kamila offered me *papcie* [slippers]. Polish slippers tend to mould to the feet of the wearer after a few days, so they did not fit quite right as several other people likely wore them already. Nevertheless, the gesture made me feel at home. We sat across from each other at the kitchen island. Kamila offered me some tea and asked, "perhaps you're hungry?" I felt that I did not want to be a bother, but my parents taught me it is rude to turn down an offer of hospitality when visiting someone in their home. So, I politely accepted the offer of tea but asked her "not to go to too much trouble." She smiled and responded that it was "no trouble at all" and made two cups of tea. "I hope bagged is okay," she continued, "my mom hates this stuff and tells me that it's 'not really tea' because it's not loose-leaf from the Polish store." We looked at each other and laughed. "Tea is tea," she said. "That's right!" I said, agreeing. "It's about the gesture," I continued. Thinking back to my life in Poland, my aunt regularly made tea in a big glass teapot, covered in a hand-made tea cozy; it was always loose-leaf and was served with a range of accompaniments (such as lemon, milk and honey) depending on the drinker's preference. Although Kamila did not make an entire pot, she did offer sliced lemon and honey with our cups of tea, assuming that I would "drink my tea the Polish way," as she had put it.

Similarly, Agata invited me to do one of our research sessions over dinner, which she requested to do at her home because she preferred home cooking. When I arrived, Agata was finishing cooking, so she immediately invited me to sit at the kitchen table. Agata said "good food" is important to her and her husband, Bartek. She said they prefer simple dishes with fresh, authentic ingredients inspired by their parents' and grandparents' cuisines. "There's no good places

to eat here," Agata said. "Have you tried the new French restaurant?" I asked. "Not yet… if you can't tell, I'm a fan of Italian food," she said, "French food is too fancy for me… I like simple food."

Agata put a large serving dish of store-bought, fresh fettuccine noodles tossed in butter and shredded Parmesan cheese on the table. "If it's too plain for you, let me know, and I'll add some chicken or ham," she said. "It looks delicious!" I said as I put a serving onto my plate and admired the dish. "Do you want pepper?" She asked, to which I happily obliged. As I went to take my first bite, I noticed that Agata and Bartek were observing my reactions. They were very curious about whether I would like the food. I took a bite and instantly felt a warm sense of comfort as the dish reminded me of *kopytka* [potato dumplings], which my mother used to make for me as a child. "And?" Agata asked. "You don't have to like it; I can make you something else," she assured me. "It's really, really good!" I answered, "it reminds me of…" "*Kopytka* [potato dumplings]," Agata and I said unanimously. "See, that's what I told her," Bartek interjected, "she didn't believe me at first, but you're the second or third person we've made this for who's said that." Agata and Bartek, who consider themselves as belonging to Polonia but rarely as active participants, perform their heritage in ways that may not be "traditional" but stem from their roots.

Polonia remains because its members share commonalities in imagining and performing their lifeworlds. By considering themselves as belonging to a diaspora of people that have life experiences like their own, they continue to belong to Polonia. Polonia has always been and will always be perpetually re-imagined. To say Polonia is being lost is to misunderstand what Polonia is and has always been. How we imagine and perform Polonia has altered, and it may not be comprised of the "traditional" images of Polonia that we often consider as defining it. However,

because individuals who claim belonging to their Polish roots devise and perform those images—even if said images have been altered—Polonia continues and will continue to remain.

Returns or Starting Over

Instead of re-imagining Polonia as it moves in new directions, some hope that, like a cycle that ebbs and flows, future generations will return to tend the heritage of Polonia as imagined by fore generations. This belief is prevalent among the baby boomers, particularly those actively engaged in Polonia heritage activities, such as members of the Hall. They often shared their wish for a return to Polonia as they remember it, which can only be had if millennials and future generations continue on their legacy work.

Zosia prefers to place her beliefs in this positive outcome. She believes that, like herself, her children and their cohort will eventually realize the importance and value of their roots, wish to reconnect with them and return to tend to them once more. “And then there was a period that I was busy, so I lost some contact with the Hall, but I always remained connected with the Ladies’ Circle,” Zosia said, “and there came a time when I felt that I wanted to reconnect with the Hall… because it would be such a shame to leave that behind,” she explained.

When I asked Zosia how she imagined that should happen, she told me that my generational cohort would one day come to realize the importance of Polonia much like she did. “Well, when we talk about the youth, we are talking about your generation,” she answered, “which, in all honesty, are no longer youth but the main generation… we’re old now, [and] you are what we used to be.” “Those individuals that came from Poland—like you and like my daughter—their understanding of Polonia depends on their parents [and] what they instilled in them… whether or not they engaged them in Polonia as children,” she said. “In my house, we speak Polish; my chil-

dren know how to speak and read and write in Polish, [and] even my son, who was born [in Canada], speaks in Polish," she continued. "And there are many people like yourself that are aware of what is happening at the Hall, that know the Hall," she said, "and, I believe, that when there comes the moment when we say 'too bad, but we just can't do it anymore,' the youth will be ready and will have the desire to return and take it over." I nodded. "I think that, right now, the youth is not interested because they see that, oh, *mama* [mother] is doing it, *tata* [father] is doing it, *Pani.* [Mrs.] is doing it, but," she tapped her open palm against the table, "if there comes a time that we make an announcement that, listen, we need to close the Hall or you need to take it over, that you need to get together and do something, you will take it." She leaned back in her chair, "and, I believe, that at that moment you, the youth, will do it."

Yet, such a return is still largely uncertain, as Kamila pointed out. Like her, some millennials straddle between the importance of re-engaging with Polonia for the sake of its legacy and preserving that imaginary and feeling as though returning no longer matters or is far too difficult, much like White describes ("Polish Return and Double Return Migration"). Although Kamila feels a duty to expose her children to their heritage and thus feels guilt for not realizing that duty, she also believes it is a considerable undertaking that may not be of any value to her or her children living in Canada and a new worldview. She had recently decided to take her children out of Polish school because she did not see the value in it; she has little contact with her family in Poland and believed having her children learn the Polish language was "not useful" anymore. Besides speaking to her parents in Polish, Kamila and her family practice little in terms of Polish heritage and traditions, and she gave me the impression that she does not see a future where that would change.

Furthermore, my generational cohort continues to feel the pressure to conform within Polonia. It can be so great that we remain in a state of rejection because we feel that there is no space for alternative images. For Agata, this explains her continued dislike of certain Polish foods, a few of which she still refuses to eat simply because she was forced to. “I remember in [kindergarten] we had these prepared lunches and, to this day, I will not eat… do you know what *kasza gryczana* [buckwheat] is?” She asked. “Buckwheat,” I remarked, confirming that I understood. “I won’t eat *kasza gryczana* [buckwheat] because every day I had *kasza* [buckwheat] and cucumber and goulash,” she explained. “That’s a delicious meal!” I said, laughing. “Oh god, no!” Agata replied, sinking her head into the palm of her hand, “I’m traumatized to this day! I won’t eat buckwheat!”

And yet, after what we may consider a period of exploration, some younger Polish Canadians return to those familiar experiences that they learned at home during their formative years. Perhaps, as Beata put it, they discovered the value of their heritage after years of seeking to live otherwise. “Look at my daughter, for example,” Beata said, “I remember when she was going to school, she didn’t want to take the sandwiches I made for her because, as she said, they were ‘not Canadian,’ because her friends had something other than sandwiches for lunch, so I took her to the store and said ‘okay, pick out what you want’… even if I didn’t agree with it.” “She wanted those boxed lunches or those frozen lunches,” she explained, “but, then, she wouldn’t eat them anyway because she didn’t like it; she bought it, but then would throw it out because she preferred the food I made at home.” She puts her head into her hand, “*Święta Maria* [Holy Mary]!” “She wanted to fit in,” Beata explained, “I get it; it was hard being a Polish kid in school.”

For Jolanda, returning may have been sidelined in life, but her heritage bloomed back when a small seed was planted. When speaking with Jolanda—one of the few interlocutors that

conducted the memory box activity with me—she realized that she re-kindled her deeply seated interests in Polonia and her Polish roots by re-engaging with her memories through artifacts. When I asked Jolanda to share with me the memory box she had assembled, she told me that she was "actually excited about that." Jolanda told me that she used our research together as an opportunity to reconnect with her roots by revisiting some of the old trinkets that she had stored away and hardly looked at in many years. In fact, following our meetings together, Jolanda purchased a doll stand to display her prized Krakowian dancer figurine in her home that was stored in a box for much of her life. She remembered playing with it as a child, and now, as an adult, she feels comforted by the memories that the figurine triggers. When I visited Jolanda after my fieldwork officially ended, I noticed the figurine being displayed. "So," I told her, with an excited smile on my face, "you brought her out after all!" "Sure did!" She said and then smiled while looking intently at the figurine as though lost in thought for a moment.

Realizing the dream of a thriving Polonia may mean beginning it anew, led by a younger generation of Polish Canadians. For the baby boomers, who can be considered the current shepherds of Polonia in Brantford, disagreements have fractured the community due to broken dreams and a general feeling of disenchantment with their realities in Canada. At the same time, the millennial generation has been mostly absent from engaging the imaginaries of their parents because they feel that their dreams have been sidelined for the realizations imagined by someone else, often in ways they believe are unrealistic or incompatible with their own. "Now, membership at our hall is considerably older, and kids don't want to participate," Jan continued as Ela nodded and "mm-hmm-ed" in agreement. "I think the reason the kids don't want to participate is [that] there's a little bit of history," he said uncomfortably. "I think [their] parents [had] issues in the past with some of the stuff that's been happening, and it's coming back to haunt them," he

concluded as he shrugged his shoulders and tilted his head to one side. “I think you’re right,” I agreed, thinking about some of my millennial interlocutors, myself included. I said, “I’ve heard from my interlocutors and friends and family that…” “…there’s too much bickering,” Ela said, as though finishing my statement. The Hall and Polonia are facing a dire future because the dream has become sickly and may be beyond saving. And, so, the future of Polonia remains uncertain, caught between desires for returns and desires to start over.

Session with My Mother: Polonia Always Succeeds

One of my principal research questions asks how and if Polonia will succeed between baby boomer and millennial generations, a transition that many believe is unprecedented and will likely change Polonia drastically, some claiming Polonia will be lost in this transition. When I asked my mother what she thought about Polonia and succession, she said, “there is Polonia in the Polish Hall, but there is also a Polonia in our house,” she said. “Anyone living outside of Poland belongs to Polonia, which is a balance between their Polish culture and where they live [now]… it is a combination of both,” she explained.

Like me, my mother also sees Polonia as primarily existing in intangible spaces. “It is nice to have a community and to share experiences with others, but it is not the only way we continue with Polonia,” she said, referring to the physical places of Polonia, “because even if the Polish Hall will not survive, that Polish tradition will survive in our homes and our hearts.” As I have argued throughout this dissertation, Polonia is imagined by the everyday performances of those who belong to it. Polonia is a diaspora that may be understood best as a landscape of intangible images (Fludernik; Hirsch; Anderson; Cristiano). These intangible images are as alive as

those who imagine them (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production"). So long as there is a living memory of Polonia, this imagined nation will continue to succeed, even as it evolves into the future.

Authoring Our Lifestories

Life both about the reality we occupy and the imaginaries we form and perform. Zosia described this best by likening life to a kind of story and her belief in our autonomy as writers of that story, even when the prevailing narrative seems at odds with our dreams. As I bring this dissertation to a close, I wish to reconnect the reader to a theoretical framework that functions as a cornerstone to my analysis: that life is akin to a kind of story that we imagine for ourselves and that we perform everyday (Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story*). Our lifestory is formed out of memories of the past, our experiences in the present, and our dreams for the future. In this final section, I weave together the threads of my ethnographic analysis into a closing argument which examines how my interlocutors, and me, live our lives like a story and how we negotiate images of the past, present, and future as we strive to perform said story successfully.

For Zosia, life is not predetermined, and we make choices and have outlooks that determine how we perform our lifestory. I asked Zosia whether she agreed with my assessment that many Polish Canadians are unhappy with how their life turned out because they feel they are not living their dreams and likely never will. "They always want it better," Zosia agreed, although I was uncertain if she was referring to Polish Canadians or just people, more generally. "Life is not a story," she said, "life is never going to be like a story in a book, and this is why I approach life the way I do and why I think the way I do," she continued, "whatever road you build for yourself is the road you will live." "Would I like my life to be better?" She said, thinking for a moment. "I don't think so," she said, "because my life is good now, so why?" "I have a chair to sit on,"

she added, “whether the chair is yellow or green, it doesn’t matter because it’s still something to sit on.”

“People have different visions [of life], and we each approach it differently,” Zosia continued to explain, “for those people who want more and more and more, life escapes so quickly that so many of us have much more than we will ever need, and we won’t use most of the things that we have anyhow,” she explained. “It’s obvious that if you come to Canada, you are going to want your life to be better than it was in Poland,” she added, “I had a car in Poland, I had a home, and now I have those things here.” For Zosia, realizing our dreams is a matter of perspective, and how we perform the images pertinent to our lifestories is equally, if not more, important than what we imagined.

A prevailing narrative I have heard from Polish Canadians is that they often feel powerless to make dramatic changes in their lives, which stops them from performing their dreams. Nevertheless, as Beata and Marcin explained, they must have felt they had enough control over their realities because they decided to uproot themselves to realize a better future. “In some places, the dream did happen,” Marcin said, referring to his images of a good life. “Here, they just focus on money, money, money,” Beata said. “And, then, no one wants to work,” Marcin said. “They don’t even have a dream,” Beata added, “they dream of Friday, [they dream] of… what do they call that new restaurant, ‘Wacky Wings’?” She laughed, then explained that “the youth nowadays… none of them want to do anything; they don’t even want to learn.” “And we don’t mean *everyone*, of course,” Marcin clarified, to which Beata nodded, as though making an exception for me and other like-minded millennials. “Maybe that’s because our parents told us to educate ourselves,” Marcin said. “They said, ‘go to school and learn so that your life will be easier’,” Beata added, “and, perhaps, that doesn’t work for everyone anymore.” “But why?” Marcin

asked. “They don’t feel like working for things to be better,” Beata responded, “they don’t work to reach something higher than they have now, which is what our parents taught us and what we tried to teach our children.” “You have to work,” Marcin said, “you have to work if you want to eat or drink beer; you can’t just drink beer.” “Yes,” Beata said, “they didn’t have to come across the ocean with whatever they could carry, they didn’t leave all their possessions behind, they don’t know what it’s like to work very hard.” For Beata and Marcin, the only way to realize one’s dreams is through a commitment to hard work because a good life is not guaranteed. Having experienced the turmoil of migration and the subsequent difficulties adjusting their lives to a new worldview has cemented their belief that, as authors of our lifestory, we must take the lead on realizing our dreams, especially if they are threatened or may be difficult to achieve.

Some look back and wonder if migration afforded them a better life or if their memories represent the better life they have always sought. Zosia told me she went to “a very advanced school, one where the lessons were extremely difficult and at a much higher level than the rest of the country.” “I was among the children of other upper-class people—the children of doctors, teachers, and so on and so on—the class that was considered elite at the time.” “That’s why I learned a lot,” she said, “not only from school, but from being in that class, from seeing life in that class, and from having friends in that class.” “I never felt like something was not possible or out of reach for me because of my privilege,” she explained, “I never felt like something was missing from my life, that I was somehow disadvantaged… I felt advantaged.” She collected her thoughts, “I never had to eat kielbasa like most people did,” she explained, “I had bread—even if it wasn’t bought at the store, but it was homemade—it was very good bread, you know?” She said. I thought about something my mother had said several times about her life in Poland: “my mother has told me similar things, that she had a very good life in Poland, that they were well-

off, that she had a very good job, and that she was always very worried and, in some ways, angry with my father for making her give up a life that she considered good," I said. "She's never admitted it, but I believe that somedays she regrets coming to Canada, that she would have never done it if it wasn't for my father pestering her—relentlessly—about 'coming to Canada' or that they 'needed to go to Canada,' as she told me," I explained. With her eyes widened, Zosia nodded in agreement.

Some might look to Poland as an example of a life that was/is even more precarious than their current lives, which can offer solace that life "is not all that bad," as Beata described it. Beata and Marcin believe that the economy in Poland still suffers from corruption and that there is too much "under the table" financial compensation wherein employees are paid in cash, often in Euros. "Those are what we call the *'szwingle'* [swindlers]," Marcin said. "There was a time that you worked full-time and part-time, whatever you decided, and that was it," Beata exclaimed. "And now everyone is hired for a project, they are on some contract, they are temporary, they are this and that, but they are not working," she said, "the reality is, in Poland now, there is no ability to get a steady, full-time job, and people and companies want to avoid paying taxes, so they pay people in the hand because I could pay you $1200 [per month], but then I need to subtract taxes so, suddenly, you only get $800." "So, that's why a lot of that is happening in Poland," Marcin said. "And that's why there are no benefits in Poland now," Beata added. "Even the government doesn't cover you sometimes," she continued, "like when my grandma needed to go to the hospital, she went thinking she had coverage, but it turned out she had nothing! So, life may be difficult in Canada sometimes, but at least I am not living in Poland anymore," she added.

Others might not have to look that far, noticing that their lives in Canada are better than most, giving them the justification they need to realize they are living a good life. “We had different parents, Jan and I,” Ela explained, “his parents encouraged him to go to school, and my parents always said ‘you gotta get married, and have babies’… because they came from Poland, it was different attitude versus those people that [have] lived here [in Canada] since birth.” When I asked Ela if she wished her life had been different, “no, I tell my kids this all the time [that] if I had to live my life all over again, I would do it exactly the same,” she answered. “I used to travel a lot with Jan, we would go to conferences and things, and I would see these women—you know, in high-profile positions—and sometimes I would think to myself, ‘that could have been me’,” she took a pause before she continued, “but then we would come home, and I would see my life here and think how good I have it.”

Many have been waiting their entire lives for their dreams to become a reality. Although they may have settled with the understanding that life is good and could be much worse, they still feel relatively disappointed that their dreams are not and may never be realized, and so, they have changed their perspectives accordingly. Their lives have become more “grounded” (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal 104) or “more normal,” as Beata best explained. ”We wanted to be independent,” Marcin added, “if I want to go to the store to get a slice of ham, I should be able to go to the store to get a slice of ham… if I want sausage, I go get it.” “So, the freedom to choose?” I asked. “Not only,” Beata replied, “we both work average jobs in Canada and from that, we have enough to raise the kids, have a house, buy a car and live normally.” “And, second, Wiktor,” Marcin went on, “we set ourselves up with the idea that we are going to have a good life, we wanted to have a good life because as children we knew better [than our parents], and our children know even better than [us].” Beata agreed, “they have better jobs, they never had to count their pennies

like other people had to." "In some ways, I see what you're saying," I said, with a tonne of skepticism, "but we also worry about all those things… the fact that no one has steady work anymore, that everything is on contract… or the company will go out of business… or that there will be layoffs." "But that's everywhere, Wiktor," Beata said, almost consoling me, "it's all over the world like that." "That's what it was like [in the 1980s] when the strikes were happening in Poland," she continued, "that's why people were striking." There was a pause. "And even though everyone worked, there was never enough money," she added. "There were big dreams," she said, "but it was 40 or 50 years after the war, and the dreams still weren't fulfilled." "It seems like that was the dream of your parents," I said, "but the dream didn't turn out." "I guess no dreams ever turn out the way you expect them," Beata added, "a single facet of them, maybe, but never the whole dream."

Furthermore, life in Canada could easily change, for better or worse, just like it had fluctuated in Poland. For Zosia, this has influenced her outlook on life to be less focused on the details, and more about the outcome. "Everything resolves itself in the end; the details are not important like I've been saying," Zosia explained. "Poland was not a bad place to live," she said, "at least, that's how I felt about it." "Look at life in Canada and how it was in Poland," she said, "you went to school for free, the doctor was free, [and] medicines were free," she added, "so there were pros and cons." "Of course, there were many changes made after 1985, in Poland—when the borders were opened, when many of our laws changed—the country changed, [and] the people changed, both their lifestyles and their perceptions," she went on, "however, the sense that looking back to a time when there was no bread, or there was no work, there were absolutely those times in the country but, you never know, it could be like that in Canada someday, perhaps

even soon." "Right," I agreed, realizing that Zosia was sharing her understanding of living under varying circumstances over her life. "So, you never know what life could be like," she said.

Life is a story we author, and, like any story, authoring requires us to apply imagination. My interlocutors shared their understandings of what constitutes success in life, regardless of the origin, and whether we consider those dreams successful or not is individual and largely a matter of perspective. She told me, "I never believed that something is unachievable," and she explained, "if you *really* want something, you will figure out a way to make it happen." "If you can't afford single-use diapers because you don't have the money," she described, "then you buy a multi-use diaper that you wash," she continued, "sure, it's not the luxury that you may want, but with a simple change to your frame of mind, it suddenly becomes the luxury that you wished for—it's all about perspective and how we look at something." "That's how my mom always taught me," I said, "because she talked about her life in Poland like you talk about yours, that it was actually a very good life." Zosia nodded. For Zosia, success in life is a story that we tell ourselves. Whether or not we are successful is up to how we imagine and perform our lives. Zosia considers realizing our dreams as a "luxury" because success is not a given, instead being in the eye, or imagination, of the author.

Session with My Mother: A Better Life is a Matter of Perspective

In this final session with my mother, we discussed the major revelations of my research in broad strokes. "If you are a Polish person living in Canada and don't want to understand life in Canada, you will be unhappy," she told me, "because you will never be able to find happiness… because you won't fit in here, but you won't [fit in] over there [in Poland] either." "Those people are lost—half here and half there—and I think a lot of people are like that because they cannot find where they belong," she added. This revelation brought me to this dissertation's central

theme: that Polish Canadians live in-between images and that the "better life" they seek can be found by negotiating belonging in this liminal space. My mother believes that we need to find balance to realize our dreams—between where we came from and where we live now, between generations, between spaces and places, and between the past, the present, and the future. "And, so, it's a combination of everything," she said.

Looking back at this revelation, it seems obvious that Polonia exists as a liminal nation. I suppose I have always inherently known this, but I had also considered this as detrimental because, like my interlocutors, I wished for Polonia to "be something." Liminality seems to preclude definition because being in-between means it is neither this nor that. However, Polonia is a space carved out in-between other points we use as reference—giving it shape. It may not be containable by borders or have a consistent history, and its constituents may struggle to explain how they define the imagined nation to which they claim belonging. However, it is incredibly tangible to us, nonetheless. Over the course of fieldwork and its subsequent analysis, I came to realize that liminality is inherent to the Polish Canadian condition, and I believe it is in our best interest to acknowledge and further incorporate this liminality into how we define Polonia if we are to ensure its succession into the future.

Conclusion: (Per)Forming Polonia

The goal of this research has been to understand and explain how migranthood often means feeling that we do not belong anywhere in particular but simultaneously feel connected to multiple worldviews. Occupying this liminal space means migrants are at odds with these (often diametrically) opposed ways of imagining our lives which shape how we perform them in our everyday lives (Grønseth; Horvath et al.; Bhabha; Clopot). My interlocutors and I have trouble expressing what it means to be a migrant, even though we feel it deeply and realize that it affects every aspect of our personal, professional, and social lives. Although we feel that we belong to Polonia (or Poland or Canada), we do not feel like we belong anywhere in particular, which leaves us feeling displaced. Yet, at the same time, many of us have embraced this unbelonging as inherent to our identity and what makes us unique in an environment wherein we often feel encouraged to assimilate. At times, we may feel connection; at others, we may feel disconnection.

Living in-between often means feeling pressure to engage in Polonia abiding by its firmly defined cultural discursiveness as cemented in memory. The interlocutors I worked with believe that Polonia, as a nation onto itself, has a strong identity with clearly defined collective memories, particularly when determining what does and does not belong to Polonia (Thomas and Znaniecki; Verdery; Galasiński and Galasiński). As a result, as members of Polonia, we often feel pressure to conform to this reality, and there is little room for change or alternative viewpoints. Social contention is often a byproduct of actions that expand or change the definitions of Polonia and is usually met with resistance and critique. At the same time, Canada, as our adopted nation, is also seen as being rigid in definition. So, we are left feeling that we must simultaneously adopt values from Polonia, Poland, and Canada. Furthermore, there is a powerful interest

in preserving the legacies of Poland and Polonia in Canada, wherein we feel the expectation to imagine our lives within—rather than outside—established social conventions.

According to my interlocutors, guilt is a two-way street for members of Polonia. First, it pulls us into the past as we feel it vital to remember where we came from, especially when relating to the struggles experienced by fore generations. Second, it pushes us forward into a future we often do not define for ourselves but, rather, is defined by the social collective that feels it necessary to preserve the past while realizing a better life for ourselves and our children. We feel torn between a reality we cannot conquer, a past that has long disappeared, and a future that may not be realized but is, nonetheless, deeply connected to our identities (Dein). Thus, we feel like perpetual outsiders living a liminal life that has habituated our everyday performances as lost in diaspora.

The baby boomers involved in this research frequently told me they feel responsible for preserving Polonia and the legacies of those that imagined it. This legacy work is vital because of the struggles they and fore generations endured to realize the collective dream of living a better life. The imaginary of Polonia requires maintenance, and Polish Canadian baby boomers feel it is their inherent duty to do this maintenance work (Williksen and Rapport; Dein).

Some feel this call to maintenance so strongly that they are happy to cede their individual legacy for the preservation of the collective heritage as shared by the Polish Canadian community. Zosia had felt surprised that her life was "important" enough to document in this ethnography. She also mentioned that she "needs no special treatment" and, instead, was happy with her role as a caretaker of Polonia. In this sense, legacy is both for the individual and the greater whole.

The millennial interlocutors, however, feel as though our lives are second to the legacy work of our parents. I have revealed that many of us feel this work is forced upon us and that our unique contributions to Polonia are not considered significant enough to incorporate. It is not that millennials are not concerned with preserving Polonia; we have different understandings of what it means to be Polish Canadian. We wish for those understandings to be realized and for room to be made for heritage-building activities incorporating our perspectives and experiences of migranthood (Ghodsee; Danico).

Furthermore, the baby boomers' approach to enlist the millennial generation's support is based on guilt and expectation (Dein; Schwartz). Many Polish Canadian millennials feel we have an inherent duty to repay our parents for their sacrifices to give their children a better life in Canada. We recognize that our parents gave up many freedoms—both in Poland and Canada—to ensure that future generations could be afforded additional liberties and lead successful lives that would further the prosperity of future generations. And, yet, we do not necessarily know how to reconcile our feelings of forced participation through guilt and our deep-seated desires to repay our parents for the life we were given.

Finally, there is a disconnect between the expectations of Polish Canadian baby boomers and millennials in that constituents of the former may not be fully communicating the importance of legacy preservation, and constituents of the latter do not fully understand the legacy work they are so quick to reject (Danico; Green; Walia). Many baby boomers believe that millennials will come to understand the importance of legacy preservation in Polonia and so will return to tend to it. However, the future is uncertain as millennials remain steadfast in their desire to include their perspectives in imagining and performing Polonia, which they feel are yet to be incorporated.

Polonia is experiencing cultural mixing due to increased migration and an ever-globalizing world (Burrell). Some of my interlocutors believe this has caused a thinning of strong Polish Canadian heritage and traditions. With the increased mobility of people and ideas, an influx of change threatens the rigour of Polonia culture, which some believe is loosening in definition. This then fuels fears that the nation they imagined is beginning to disappear. Most of my millennial interlocutors have left behind the Polonia imagined by their parents and are reasonably sure they will not return. With a shrinking base of constituents and an evolving Polonia reality, baby boomers may be right in saying that Polonia they know is disappearing.

Fewer millennials engage in Polonia in the ways our parents did/continue to and how we used to when we were younger because they do not see these spaces and places as grounds of metacultural production (Brosius and Polit). Most of my millennial interlocutors told me they no longer frequent heritage places like the Hall. Although many still celebrate major Polish heritage events such as Christmas, Easter and *Dożynki* [Harvest Festival], they have modified their lifestyle to include many other non-Polish heritage performances. Our decisions for this are at least two-fold: first, we feel as though living in Canada has caused us to perform our lifeworlds in ways different from fore generations; and second, we were never fully invested in Polish heritage and traditions as our parents defined them. However, I have also argued that this is unfolding in ways we did not expect. Some of us have experienced a call to return to our roots, while others have realized that those roots have remained ever-present (White, "Young people and migration from contemporary Poland"; White, "Polish Return and Double Return Migration").

Polonia is formed through the performance of the everyday lives of Polish Canadians. As Polish Canadians perform the images that we believe constitute the heritage of Polonia, we in-

fuse those images with our understandings. Thus, we collectively define how Polonia is imagined. By analyzing how Polonia is imagined and performed in the context of generational succession, I have offered an analysis of the re-imagining of Polonia during an especially turbulent transition. With the third wave of Polish migration to the West moving well into the past, Polonia is no longer being defined in waves as it had been. Instead, it is now being defined as one generation passes to the next. Through generational succession, Polonia continuously receives input from new constituents who wish to see it defined in ways reflective of their life experiences, memories, and dreams of the future.

For some of my interlocutors, with the thinning of Polonia comes the thinning of the Polish Canadian dream. Baby boomers dream of freedom and prosperity for their children so that they do not live through the horrors of WWII and communist Poland or feel as though their future is not open to boundless potential (Bútora; Garza et al.; Galasiński and Galasiński; Ghodsee; Schierup et al.; Lansberg). For millennials, neoliberal precarity and a growing rejection of Polonia means we feel guilty for not living up to the dreams of our parents while simultaneously not living up to our own. We wish to honour the legacies of our parents and generations prior, but, at the same time, we feel we are giving up our dreams, which are not always the ones our parents imagined. Ultimately, the dream seems broken for both generations as each works to realize a future that is only sometimes aligned. However, perhaps, as Zosia had explained, "I believe things will come back… you will come back as I once did," referring to the natural ebb and flow of life and how dreams end up becoming fulfilled in ways we do not always imagine.

Some interlocutors described the images pertinent to performing their lifeworlds as broken—often beyond repair (Thomas). They believe that life in Canada is not much better or even worse than life in Poland, that the future of their children is not secure, that the strifes they

fought against in Poland continue to plague life in Canada, and that they feel lost in understanding how to resolve these issues. This causes significant anxiety for them, given that they feel they have not fulfilled their images of a good life or even a better life (Johnson).

Although they continue to work towards fulfillment, some also feel significant discouragement that they may not, and likely will not, realize the future that they hoped for. Some wonder if migration afforded them the life they had imagined and if the journey was worth it. Others realize that life in Canada may be better than life in Poland, but there remains a significant disconnect between their reality and the future they had dreamed of. They feel this especially true because of how much they struggled, how hard they worked, and how much they gave up in the search for a better life. Parts of their lives may be better, but life as a whole is not. In response, some have chosen to integrate past and present. They realize that life can be good so long as perspectives centre on the realization that the world has changed, and expectations of what constitutes a fulfilled dream must also change.

Concerning generational succession, I have posited that the present transition between baby boomer and millennial generations is turbulent and has resulted in a crisis of succession that casts doubt on the future of Polonia (Turner, *Schism and Continuity*). My baby boomer interlocutors expressed their fear of a collective forgetting of Polonia, particularly in terms of history, heritage, and tradition, because they failed to attract subsequent generations to maintain Polonia, particularly the millennials who are considered next kin in undertaking this maintenance work. However, those that belong to the millennial generation are not necessarily collectively forgetting the history of Polonia and Poland but, instead, are transforming it in ways that are not necessarily recognizable or compatible with the views of fore generations. Life in Canada and Poland

has changed and continues to change, but this is a global reality not exclusive to us (Ziemer and Roberts; White, "Young people and migration from contemporary Poland").

I have sought to unpack some of these concerns by focusing on the sociocultural movement occurring due to generational transition in Polonia rather than some of the more static analyses that have been predominant in migration and post-socialist studies of late. My interlocutors have demonstrated that, like life itself, lifeworld images are a moving target. Recognizing the movement of our lives grants us the freedom to make choices, which is the very thing Polish migrants to Canada dreamed of.

The baby boomers wishfully believe that there is no succession crisis and that, despite the dwindling numbers, Polonia is as frequented and supported as ever. Yet, at the same time, many complain that the millennial generation is not engaging and that Polonia is being lost in transition. The changing landscape of Polonia has left many in disarray as they do not know how to navigate this new reality that had been, or at least appeared to be, firmly cemented in its longevity. In this sense, the images held by baby boomers have been broken. Coupled with this is a denial that is largely fueled by hope that the millennial presence will one day return to continue the work of previous generations. It is like my mother once said: "I've never pressured you [to engage in Polonia] because I always believed that, one day, you would realize why it's important and return [to it] yourself."

Suppose I was to offer advice on how to best secure the future of Polonia. In that case, we must learn to allow space for the next generation to perform Polonia's heritage in ways that reflect their individual perspectives and experiences. Their everyday performances are the grounds upon which Polonia is realized because they will not only perform those aspects of Polonia that they learned from fore generations but also infuse Polonia with new images that will continue to

bolster this collective imaginary into the future. The rigidity of denying those performances is what inspired most of the millennials to reject Polonia. So, we must be vigilant to ensure that future generations feel free to add their lifeworld images to the collective. At the same time, future generations must not lose the spaces of heritage, history and tradition—those intangible aspects of Polonia that we are so quick to forget. Space must be made for all generations—present, past, and future.

Like our parents, Polish Canadian millennials are succeeding the generation that came before them, which comes with certain expectations and responsibilities. My analysis reveals that every generation succeeds in ways different from the fore. Baby boomers had drastically different visions of their future than their parents. They dreamed of a world with liberty, freedom, and abundant opportunity. For many, these images drew them to the West, with some ultimately choosing to make the move. Succession may bring change, but it also carries forward the best aspects of the past. To deny that generational succession brings change hinders the benefits of succession—new ideas that both realize the dreams of the past while creating new ideas for the future. Polonia must succeed and will succeed, whether it happens in ways that are expected or not. Thus, it is best to consider Polonia as remaining in perpetual crisis because of its inherent liminality (Turner, *Schism and Continuity*). Each generation forms and performs Polonia differently, but neither can be said to have a correct image of Polonia because they experience it authentically, even if it appears inauthentic to others. Instead, the perpetual crisis of succession is what redresses Polonia. We must acknowledge it as foundational to its identity, especially as Polonia continues to evolve over subsequent generational transitions.

Early into my fieldwork, I realized that rather than following my ethnographic research where it was taking me, I was following my life's journey back through time. I sought to unpack

my sociocultural identity and how it was formed to understand better how I was performing my imaginaries in the present to realize my ideal future. This research has been a personal journey because, like many other ethnographers, I believe good ethnography must be highly self-reflexive and subjective (Jackson and Mazzei). This research has catalyzed the means to understand me better, which has sparked a transformative experience that will likely continue long after finishing my research and writing.

My connection to Polonia has waxed and waned throughout my life. As a youth, I was like many other Polish Canadian millennials in that I did not want to engage much in Polonia and often lived against it. It made me too different from others when I sought to fit in by being as "Canadian" as possible. As I have aged, I have realized that I have remained deeply connected to Polonia (whether I tried to or not) through the friends I keep, the food I eat, the activities I engage in, and the traditions I honour. These everyday performances are how I have kept Polonia around me, even if I thought I was actively pushing it away. The cathartic and reparative journey culminating in this ethnographic project has further reinforced this. I now imagine a new story for myself: I no longer feel at odds with my in-betweenness. Instead, I understand this as part of mystory (Denzin, *Interpretative Autoethnography*). This dissertation may have surfaced old wounds, but, at the same time, it has offered unexpected benefits as I have come to embrace my mixed-heritage, in-between identity. Researching with other Polish Canadians that share a mutual understanding of life has offered much solace.

Migrant life is in-between geographies and times, dreams and realities, and unfolds in unpredictable ways. As we move further into an interconnected global reality predicated on movement, migrant life becomes increasingly representative of life in general. Furthermore, everyday

life is messy, unpredictable, and in constant motion. We all look to the past and dream of the future to make decisions in the present. In this way, all life is migratory, and interpreting said shifting reality can help us better understand how individuals and collectives understand themselves, their futures, and the local and global movements within which we live.

Our dreams for the future can be at odds with our present realities, yet we strive to best realize our lifestories as we imagine them. At the same time, these images might be performed in ways apart from how we imagined them and yet still be in line with our dreams. From the perspective of the baby boomers, the millennial reality is not exactly what our parents may have dreamed of. Besides this, most millennials are still only beginning to realize their futures. It is still largely unknown to us, much like our parents' futures were unknown to them when they left Poland. In this sense, the images that baby boomers believe are broken have been/are being assembled differently because life is a story that is not always realized the way we expect.

The baby boomer interlocutors that participated in this project are concerned that the legacy of Polonia and its members face the threat of disappearance as their millennial children no longer seem interested in preserving the heritage imagined by fore generations. In some ways, this may be true. Youth attendance at many cultural places, like the Hall, is shrinking and—even if youths attend cultural centres and festivals—their interest in heritage and tradition has shifted considerably as they seek to invent new ways of engaging in Polonia. Baby boomers value physical heritage landscapes over non-physical ones that interest millennials more. With these changes comes the fear that the legacies and histories—of the generations that have come before—will be lost, much like Polish history faced erasure in the past. At the same time, millennials are quick to reject history, heritage, and legacy that they may not fully understand and often have yet to grasp the importance of. They may not see the value in their present lives, so they may benefit from

heeding the rich advice these landscapes harbour, which many baby boomers understand but struggle to make clear. However, legacy is organic and cannot be frozen in a particular landscape. Instead, there needs to be room for it to transform with each new generation, just like before. Polonia, being diasporic, will continue to resist fixed definitions. If anything is consistent about belonging to Polonia, it is that Polonia has changed many times since its inception and will continue to do so.

Originally, my research sought to understand how Polish Canadians imagine and perform their disparate identities. However, the time spent unpacking the lifeworlds of my interlocutors was equally telling of how I imagine and perform my own. Working through this research has helped me understand the images I am performing in everyday contexts as a Polish Canadian millennial seeking belonging. Perhaps I had chosen to do ethnographic research with the community I consider home because I was also seeking to better understand my own lifestory, the images that comprise it, and how I perform them. At the outset of this research, I asked myself: "how could I tell other people's stories if I could not even understand my own?" It is through self-reflexivity that I have come to learn—firsthand—how imaginaries shape, and are shaped by, our everyday performances.

The contributions this research makes to the literature further elucidate the in-between reality of the migrant condition and how our everyday performances are imaged and authored within this liminal space. These contributions are crucial to the areas of migration/diaspora studies, generational succession, and interpretive ethnography. Ultimately, this research reveals that migrant life is best understood as being inherently performative. As ethnographers, we ought to work within the imaginary space of the in-between to elucidate the complexities of the migrant reality.

This research further develops interpretive approaches to ethnography of migration and diaspora by using a combination of conventional and imaginative ethnographic methods which highlight and unpack the imagistic and performative landscape of migrant lifeworlds. By understanding how Polish Canadian migrants imagine and perform their migranthood, we expand our knowledge of the complex and liminal natures of migrant life. Understanding the liminal is difficult, as encapsulating a space without definition is inherently problematic. However, as I have argued in my research, the liminal can provide borders from within which we can structure ethnographic analysis to counteract the seemingly indescribable.

This research provides an alternative perspective to current migration and diaspora studies scholarship that remains focused on divisions between first- and second-generation migrants. In an ethnographic context, I unpack, engage with, and describe the lifeworlds of Polish Canadian migrants across and between generations. With a plethora of literature on first-generation migrants and, less so, second-generation migrants, there remains untapped knowledge between these generations and the 1.5-generation. My research adds to and complicates our understanding of generation divisions and the succession between them. Furthermore, I complicate the directionality of the movement between these generations by following temporal succession from past to present, but also backward and indirect movements.

By exploring the shifting of Polonia over waves of migration and generations, this research also furthers Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined community by moving away from its literary roots of "print capitalism" and towards an imagistic conceptualization of collective consciousness and identity. My interlocutors and I demonstrate that national identity can be formed and expanded through the sharing of intangible heritage or the images we collectively hold, which exist alongside tangible heritage, physical places, and discursivity. Polonia, which is

simultaneously connected to and divorced from its homeland, exists as an understanding shared by and between its people, which is maintained and developed through embodied everyday performances.

Finally, this research advances ethnographic scholarship on Polish Canadian migrants as it pertains to post-socialism and Polonia in Canada. I offer new and imaginative perspectives on the performative nature of migrant and diasporic life following the Third Wave of Migration from Poland to Canada. Given that this is the most recent and final major migratory wave of Polish-born peoples, it is crucial to interpret this cohort that remains relatively absent from ethnographic literature. This wave follows the collapse of Communism, which brought about monumental shifts in global reality. And, so, in understanding the experiences of a group whose lives were directly affected and shaped by the end of the socialist state and their subsequent journey to realize their dreams that were limited during life during socialism, we can better understand the realities of life in the neoliberal West.

Like all research, this dissertation has some limitations that became more evident over the course of fieldwork and its subsequent analysis. Given that my life is so intimately implicated in this research, I understood that it would be difficult—if not impossible—to distance myself from this research to avoid bias. My intimate relationship with this research topic and its subsequent questions, and my belonging to the Polish Canadian diaspora, predicate that my ethnographic analyses are partial. I suspect readers will question my position and its relationship to my subject, particularly because I focused my analyses across generations when I only belong to one. Instead, I chose to implicate myself more directly within this research, which led me to produce a blended ethnography and auto-ethnography in that I sought to better balance my interlocutors' understandings with my own. Furthermore, my expectations of what I would reveal in the field

were far outshadowed by the exponentially more complex reality of the field I studied. What, I thought, would be a relatively uncomplicated field to lay bare was, in actuality, a deeply complex and nuanced rhizomatic structure spanning vastly across places, spaces, and times.

Several topics are vital to Polonia that I should have discussed more during my research sessions. Notably absent are discussions about religion (specifically Polish Roman Catholicism) that I had assumed would be especially important to my interlocutors. However, most of my millennial interlocutors are not churchgoing, albeit some who consider themselves as religious or, at least, spiritual; and, my baby boomer interlocutors were much more interested in speaking about the Hall because of the grave reality facing its existence, so I suspect this topic capitalized their consciousness more than discussing other Polish Canadian places. This is a topic that I wish to research in the future.

Additionally absent are the understandings of Generation Z, the most recently defined generation following the millennials. During my fieldwork, most of these individuals would still be in their teenage years. Because the ethics of working with underage individuals is challenging to resolve, and because their understanding of Polonia is still developing, they are absent from this research. Of course, now that some have entered adulthood and we have moved almost three decades away from the end of the Third Wave of Migration to the West, it will soon be pertinent to revisit this research with the intention of including their voices and views.

In this research, the voices of women far outnumber those of men. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, this was not by design but because it was far easier to gain access to and engage with women than men. The role of women in forming and performing the Polish Canadian diaspora needs to be further explored, specifically regarding how/if women are the "homemakers" of Po-

lonia, minders of our shared heritage, and community connectors. It will therefore also be pertinent to analyze how/if men contribute in similar ways, or what insights those differences highlight.

Finally, I hesitate to outline that my choice to do hyper-localized research is a limitation given that I already argued about the benefits of working from a "hut with a view," the results of my analysis are heavily restricted as my interlocutors live within a relatively small community in a limited geographical area. I am unsure how to unpack lifeworlds and analyze their images with a larger group of individuals. I have asserted that even after 18 months in the field with a handful of interlocutors, I have still only reached slightly below the surface of my interlocutors' imaginaries. Still, it is crucial to continue working with more individuals in different geographies that host the Polish diaspora.

I want future ethnographers to be more comfortable with the uncertainty of everyday life, as this is where many fruitful realizations about human existence can be made. In some ways, we are all migrants in that we navigate disparate affective forces as we imagine, perform, and author our lifestories. Life is not a story that can easily be distilled into narratives, or even images, but if we unpack some of its movements and trajectories, we can better understand what it means to be human.

Concerning future scholarship, there are at least two main areas wherein research can be furthered. First, as millennials begin to age, it would be pertinent to re-examine this research as this generation becomes the torchbearers of Polonia imaginaries and how/what they transmit in terms of Polonia's heritage and traditions to their children. It would also be interesting to re-visit how millennials have changed their opinions (or not).

Second, given that my sample size was relatively small, there are likely many other images of seminal importance to defining the imaginaries of Polonia that are not included in this research. I hope other scholars may buttress this analysis by interpreting other images of importance in Polonia, perhaps around some of the more widespread heritage activities such as dancing, home-making activities such as cooking and crocheting, or in non-cultural spaces such as Polish-language churches and businesses. These are just a few of the activities I am aware of that are important to Polonia but not deemed as vitally important to the interlocutors who were part of this research.

As a child growing up, I was often an outsider looking in, like a stranger who should expect to fit in and ignore the life I was born into. However, with time, especially as I have undertaken this (auto)ethnographic research, I realized that my life has been training for understanding the world from a dichotomy of angles or as a series of complementary images. In this sense, my outlook is "imaginative," in that, I am eager to understand the world from many perspectives and to incorporate those in my analysis of the way we imagine and perform our lives in everyday contexts. This thinking is helpful because, like this research and my life in general, I can situate my analysis at various intersections of thought and being. As a result, I hope that the analysis of this research shows that in-betweenness bolsters, rather than hinders, imaginative thinking and offers an opening up of those moments of generative friction that are often avoided because they are complex and messy. I argue that life is inherently imaginative and cannot be thought of in terms of a linear story but, rather, one in a constant of movement or performance. I believe that to understand the complexities of life, we must adopt imaginative thinking in all facets of our being and for it to permeate into the very fabric of our research methodologies and analyses.

"Life is not a story," Zosia told me, because it does and does not unfold to a predetermined narrative. Instead, we live life as a series of images that we perceive, change, and perform throughout our lives. Our engagement with these images is in a constant state of movement—back and forth—much like life itself. Going simultaneously in line and against Julie Cruikshank's notion of "life lived like a story," I argue that life is not like a story because it is not predictable or predetermined. Yet, life is like a story because we are its authors and performers. For my interlocutors (and me), this means weaving together an imaginary narrative from the images we hold of Poland, Canada, and Polonia in Canada. We have power over our realities in that we can craft our imaginaries from the forces present in life, such as those I have outlined in this ethnography. My interlocutors have shown me that life may not be like the story we imagine for ourselves, and yet we treat it as one and seek ways to fulfill our lifestory even if our memories and expectations do not match our reality, or our dreams are never fully realized. Instead, life is in-between images.

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