

The Rhetoric Of Anchoring And Conditional Inclusion: Ethos, Pathos, And Logos In Media Discourses On Polish Migration In Scotland

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Abstract – Migration is not solely an economic or demographic process—it is also a communicative, emotional, and rhetorical phenomenon. Within public discourse, migrants become not only objects but also subjects of narration, engaged in struggles over recognition, legitimacy, and the right to voice. The discourse of migration thus represents a contested arena where different modes of persuasion, rationalization, and emotional registers of belonging intersect. The purpose of this article is to examine how distinct forms of ethos, pathos, and logos emerge within discourses on Polish migration to Scotland—both in mainstream media representations and in grassroots digital communication. The analysis identifies two contrasting rhetorical formations: 1) The rhetoric of anchoring, observed in Facebook groups of Polish migrants in Scotland, characterized by emotion, communality, and everyday morality; 2) The rhetoric of conditional inclusion, dominant in Scottish mainstream media, marked by technocratic rationality, institutional ethos, and controlled affect.

These rhetorical registers construct radically different visions of the migrant: on the one hand, as an active participant in a community of care and emotion; on the other, as an object of regulation and management. The study draws on two complementary datasets: 1) Digital Anchors, Diasporic Spaces – 852 posts from four Facebook groups of Poles in Scotland (2025); 2) Measuring Frames, Tracing Couplings – 165 articles from *The Herald*, *Daily Record*, and *The Scotsman* published during 2004–2016 and 2024–2025.

Keywords—Migration discourse; Polish migration; Scotland; media framing; digital diaspora; ethos, pathos, logos; migrant representation; public discourse.

Introduction

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Rhetoric as Social Practice

The analysis begins with Aristotle's classical triad [1]—ethos, pathos, and logos—as the foundation of persuasive communication. Every discourse, regardless of its form, constructs credibility (ethos), emotional resonance (pathos), and rational justification (logos). Contemporary rhetorical theory, particularly within the New Rhetoric tradition (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958), emphasizes values, shared beliefs, and moral legitimations that sustain communal coherence.

From the perspective of affect theory (Ahmed, 2004), emotions are not subordinate to rationality but its precondition. Affects “stick” to concepts and subjects, shaping relationships of attachment and repulsion. Building on this, Papacharissi (2015) conceptualizes digital publics as affective publics—communities organized around expressions of feeling that constitute a form of political life.

Fairclough (2010), in turn, reminds us that all public discourse is inherently legitimizing: language constructs institutional ethos, projecting an aura of objectivity, rationality, and expertise. In migration discourse, such ethos often functions to de-emotionalize public debates, transforming moral dilemmas into administrative procedures.

B. The Rhetoric of Migration

Migration discourse represents a zone of tension between emotion and structure. On one side, bottom-up narratives produced by migrants are affective, communal, and moral; on the other, media and political representations operate through the language of expertise, management, and bureaucratic rationality.

This duality reflects the clash between the rhetoric of community and the rhetoric of the system. Diasporic communities functioning within social media spaces cultivate an anchoring rhetoric, where pathos operates not as fleeting emotion but as a means of sustaining belonging. Conversely, institutional media enact a conditional-inclusion rhetoric, where ethos and logos of technocratic expertise overshadow the affective dimensions of exclusion.

Following Grzymała-Kazłowska (2015), anchoring is understood as the process of stabilizing identity and security under conditions of mobility. Rhetorically, it may be seen as constructing credibility and meaning through language, emotion, and narration.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study analyzes two interconnected levels of discourse that operate within different communicative regimes and institutional settings.

A. Grassroots digital discourse (Facebook).

The first dataset consists of 852 posts collected between January and June 2025 from four Facebook groups: Polacy w Edynburgu, Polacy w Szkocji, Polacy w Edinburgh, and Scottish Poles. These groups function as semi-public diasporic spaces where Polish migrants exchange information, seek assistance, express emotions, and negotiate everyday belonging. The collected posts addressed issues related to everyday life (housing, employment, administrative procedures), social relations and mutual aid, education, healthcare, political developments, and personal experiences of migration.

Particular analytical attention was devoted to the affective and moral dimensions of communication. Posts were examined in terms of how emotions (e.g., anxiety, gratitude, nostalgia, frustration) were articulated, how communal bonds were constructed, and how moral evaluations of institutions, policies, and social actors were formulated. This layer of analysis allowed for identifying the emergence of a rhetoric of anchoring, grounded in shared experience, emotional proximity, and relational ethos.

B. Institutional media discourse (Scottish press).

The second dataset comprises 165 articles published in The Herald, Daily Record, and The Scotsman during two time periods: 2004–2016 (post-EU enlargement and pre-/post-Brexit debates) and 2024–2025 (contemporary migration debates). The articles addressed

migration policy, labor market participation, access to public services, national values, demographic change, and historical memory.

In this corpus, the focus was placed on identifying dominant argumentative structures, logics of rationalization, emotional tone, and strategies of legitimization. Particular attention was given to how migrants were positioned within institutional narratives: as contributors, burdens, beneficiaries, risks, or symbolic figures within broader political debates. This layer revealed the prevalence of a rhetoric of conditional inclusion, structured around technocratic reasoning, institutional authority, and carefully regulated affect.

C. Analytical framework

The analysis combines classical rhetorical categories—ethos (credibility and authority), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (argumentative logic)—with frame analysis and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010). While rhetorical analysis enabled the identification of persuasive registers and communicative styles, frame analysis facilitated the reconstruction of interpretative schemata organizing migration narratives. Critical discourse analysis provided tools to examine power relations, processes of legitimization, and the broader socio-political context within which these discourses operate.

By juxtaposing diasporic digital communication with institutional media discourse, the study captures how different communicative arenas produce divergent constructions of migrant subjectivity and belonging.

D. Coding Procedure and Reliability

The analytical process was conducted in several iterative stages combining deductive and inductive coding. In the first phase, a preliminary codebook was developed on the basis of the theoretical framework (ethos, pathos, logos; frame analysis; critical discourse analysis). This initial coding scheme included categories such as: types of argumentative logic, emotional registers, constructions of credibility, strategies of legitimization, moral evaluations, and representations of migrants (e.g., active subject, beneficiary, burden, contributor, regulated object).

In the second phase, an exploratory reading of a subset of the material (approximately 10% of each dataset) was conducted to refine and operationalize categories. During this stage, additional emergent codes were identified, particularly within the Facebook corpus, where affective expressions, relational positioning, and everyday moral judgments required more fine-grained distinctions. The codebook was subsequently revised to ensure conceptual clarity and mutual exclusivity of categories.

The full dataset (852 Facebook posts and 165 press articles) was then coded using qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo/Atlas.ti). Coding units differed slightly across datasets: in the Facebook corpus, the unit of analysis was the individual post, while in the press corpus, both the article as a whole and specific argumentative segments were coded to capture macro- and micro-level framing strategies.

To ensure reliability, a second trained coder independently coded a randomly selected subsample (15% of the total corpus). Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa. Across the main analytical categories, kappa values ranged between 0.72 and 0.84, indicating substantial to almost perfect agreement. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through negotiated consensus, leading to minor adjustments in category definitions.

This systematic coding procedure enhances the transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor of the study while preserving sensitivity to contextual nuance and discursive complexity.

III. RESULTS

3.1. THE RHETORIC OF COMMUNITY: FACEBOOK AND EMOTIONAL ANCHORING

The analysis of the Facebook corpus reveals that Polish migrant groups in Scotland operate not merely as informational platforms but as affective infrastructures of belonging. These digital spaces function as semi-public arenas in which migrants collectively negotiate identity, vulnerability, and moral responsibility. Communication within these groups constitutes what may be termed a rhetoric of anchoring—a discursive formation that stabilizes migrant subjectivity through shared emotion, reciprocal care, and experiential knowledge.

Rather than positioning migrants as passive recipients of structural forces, this discourse constructs them as active participants in a community sustained by relational trust and moral interdependence.

A. Communal Ethos: Credibility Through Reciprocity

In the Facebook dataset, ethos does not derive from institutional authority, professional expertise, or formal credentials. Instead, credibility emerges through shared experience and demonstrated willingness to help. Authority is relational rather than hierarchical.

Typical posts include: “Can someone translate NHS documents for my mum? She doesn’t understand the forms.”

“Does anyone know a good GP in Glasgow who speaks Polish?”

In these exchanges, trustworthiness is grounded in proximity, empathy, and mutual recognition. Users rarely cite official sources; instead, they invoke lived experience (“I went through this last year”), positioning themselves as credible through narrative testimony.

This communal ethos is morally structured. The act of responding, advising, or offering assistance reinforces one’s status as a reliable member of the group. Silence, conversely, may be implicitly marked as withdrawal from communal obligation. Ethos thus becomes a performative practice of reciprocity: one is trustworthy because one participates.

B. Pathos as the Glue of Community

Affective expression constitutes the core organizing principle of this discourse. Emotional registers—nostalgia, longing, gratitude, indignation, pride—create a shared moral atmosphere in which belonging is continuously reaffirmed.

Examples include:

“I miss Christmas Eve in Poland... do you ever get tears in your eyes?”

“Let’s help little Zosia raise funds for her heart surgery—every penny counts!”

Here, pathos does not merely intensify communication; it structures the community’s moral space. Nostalgia articulates cultural continuity across borders. Appeals for help mobilize compassion and collective responsibility. Expressions of frustration (e.g., regarding bureaucracy or discrimination) create zones of shared grievance that reinforce internal solidarity.

Pathos operates as an emotional economy of belonging: through the circulation of feeling, migrants symbolically reconstruct “home” within digital space. Emotional articulation thus performs stabilizing work—it mitigates precarity by embedding individual experience within collective affect.

C. Everyday Logos: Pragmatic Rationality of Experience

Although affect is central, the discourse is not purely emotional. It is complemented by a practical, experience-based form of logos grounded in everyday problem-solving.

Typical statements include:

“Apply at the council—it only takes a week.”

“Don’t pay in cash—your landlord must provide a contract.”

This form of reasoning is pragmatic rather than technocratic. It relies on situational knowledge acquired through lived navigation of institutions. Advice is concise, action-oriented, and oriented toward immediate utility.

Importantly, this logos is embedded within relational exchange. Practical guidance is rarely abstract; it is tailored to the specific vulnerability of the person asking. Rationality here is contextual and embodied, not detached. It reflects what might be termed experiential rationality—knowledge validated through use rather than institutional endorsement.

D. Integrated Rhetorical Structure

The three dimensions—ethos, pathos, and logos—do not function independently. They form an integrated rhetorical pattern:

Ethos of community → Pathos of solidarity → Logos of experience

Communal credibility legitimizes emotional expression. Emotional solidarity sustains engagement. Practical reasoning resolves immediate uncertainty. Together, these elements construct a discursive ecology of stabilization.

This configuration constitutes the rhetoric of anchoring: an affective-moral language that enables migrants to re-root themselves symbolically within a transnational environment. Identity is stabilized not through formal citizenship or institutional validation but through relational care, shared feeling, and collective knowledge.

In contrast to institutional media discourse—where migrants are often framed through regulatory, economic, or demographic logics—Facebook communication foregrounds relational subjectivity. Migrants appear not as objects of governance but as agents embedded in networks of reciprocity.

The rhetoric of anchoring thus represents a counter-discursive formation: it reclaims narrative agency and reconstructs belonging from the bottom up.

3.2. THE RHETORIC OF INSTITUTIONS: CONDITIONAL INCLUSION IN THE SCOTTISH PRESS

In contrast to the affective and relational discourse observed in Facebook communities, mainstream Scottish press constructs migration through a markedly different rhetorical configuration. The dominant communicative mode may be described as a rhetoric of conditional inclusion—a discursive formation in which migrants are accepted, recognized, or valued primarily insofar as they fulfill functional, economic, or systemic roles.

Rather than foregrounding lived experience, institutional media discourse privileges procedural rationality, expert authority, and policy-oriented framing. Migrants appear not as narrating subjects but as objects positioned within governance structures.

A. Technocratic Ethos: Authority Without Proximity

In the analyzed articles from *The Herald*, *Daily Record*, and *The Scotsman*, ethos is constructed through institutional credibility, expertise, and alignment with policy discourse. The press positions itself as a rational observer mediating between governmental actors, economic systems, and public concern.

Typical formulations include:

“Changes to sponsorship licensing could threaten NHS staffing continuity.” (*The Herald*, 2025)

“Migrants remain pillars of the care system despite administrative redesigns.” (*The Scotsman*, 2025)

Authority is derived from references to statistics, policy frameworks, governmental consultations, and expert commentary. Journalistic voice is measured, analytical, and detached. Emotional immediacy is replaced by institutional distance.

This technocratic ethos is impersonal. Migrants are rarely quoted as experiential subjects; instead, they are described through aggregated categories (“EU nationals,” “care workers,” “visa holders”). Credibility resides not in relational trust but in alignment with bureaucratic language and systemic evaluation.

B. Moralized Pathos: Gratitude Without Intimacy

Although overt emotionality is limited, pathos is not entirely absent. Instead, it is domesticated into symbolic or historical registers that reinforce social cohesion without destabilizing institutional order.

For example:

“The Polish pilots of WWII remind us that solidarity has long roots.” (*The Herald*)

Here, emotion functions as commemorative recognition rather than empathetic engagement. Migrants are integrated into national narratives through selective historical gratitude. This moralized pathos acknowledges contribution but avoids present-tense vulnerability or conflict.

Such emotional references operate within controlled boundaries. They evoke pride, respect, or historical continuity, but they do not foreground precarity, anxiety, or everyday hardship. Emotion serves to stabilize institutional legitimacy rather than to amplify migrant subjectivity.

C. Systemic Logos: Governance and Procedural Rationality

The most dominant rhetorical force in the press corpus is logos understood as governance-oriented reasoning. Migration is framed through metrics, thresholds, compliance mechanisms, and policy adjustments.

Typical statements include:

“Salary thresholds and visa compliance remain under review.”

“ILR timelines directly impact continuity in care homes.”

This systemic logos translates human mobility into regulatory variables. Migrant experience becomes quantifiable and administratively manageable. Articles frequently

reference labor shortages, economic contribution, public service capacity, and demographic projections.

Crucially, this mode of reasoning depersonalizes the migrant subject. Individuals disappear into categories of labor, productivity, or administrative status. Rationality is abstract, forward-looking, and system-centered rather than person-centered.

Where Facebook discourse articulates experiential rationality, press discourse foregrounds procedural rationality.

D. Integrated Rhetorical Structure

These elements coalesce into a distinct rhetorical pattern:

Ethos of expertise → Logos of system → Pathos of moral restraint

Institutional authority legitimizes systemic reasoning. Procedural logic defines the terms of inclusion. Controlled moral emotion ensures symbolic cohesion without challenging regulatory frameworks.

Together, these elements produce the rhetoric of conditional inclusion: migrants are acknowledged, sometimes praised, and often defended—but primarily as long as they remain economically useful, administratively compliant, and socially non-disruptive.

In this discursive formation, belonging is not relational but contingent. Inclusion is structured by contribution, legality, and policy alignment. Migrants are incorporated into the narrative of the nation not as emotional communities but as functional components of institutional continuity.

TABLE 1. COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Dimension	Rhetoric of Anchoring (Facebook)	Rhetoric of Conditional Inclusion (Media)
Ethos	Communal, empathetic, moral	Institutional, expert, detached
Pathos	Strong, everyday, affective	Restrained, moralized, controlled
Logos	Practical, situational	Technocratic, procedural
Persuasive Aim	Sustaining community and identity	Legitimizing policy and control
Migrant Subject	Active, caring, co-feeling	Subordinate, “useful resource”

These two rhetorics reveal two epistemologies of migration:

- The emotional-relational (anchoring rhetoric), in which community is sustained through affect and morality;
- The rational-institutional (conditional-inclusion rhetoric), in which belonging is contingent on systemic logic.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study has demonstrated that migration rhetoric operates not as a binary opposition between emotion and rationality, but as a dynamic field in which affective and technocratic registers coexist, overlap, and compete for legitimacy. The analysis of Polish migration to Scotland across grassroots digital platforms and mainstream press reveals two distinct yet

structurally interconnected rhetorical formations: the rhetoric of anchoring and the rhetoric of conditional inclusion.

First, the Facebook corpus illustrates that diasporic communication constitutes more than information exchange; it forms an affective infrastructure of belonging. Emotional expression—nostalgia, solidarity, anxiety, indignation—is not peripheral but constitutive of communal coherence. In these spaces, pathos does not undermine rationality; rather, it organizes a moral order within which practical reasoning becomes meaningful. Ethos emerges relationally, through reciprocity and experiential testimony. Logos, in turn, is grounded in pragmatic knowledge derived from lived navigation of institutions.

Digital platforms thus function as sites of emotional legitimation. They authorize vulnerability, validate everyday struggle, and stabilize migrant identity through shared feeling and mutual assistance. In doing so, they counterbalance the structural precarity of transnational life. The rhetoric of anchoring reconstructs belonging not through formal citizenship or institutional recognition but through affective interdependence. Migration here is narrated from within—as experience, relation, and moral obligation.

By contrast, mainstream Scottish press articulates a markedly different rhetorical logic. The rhetoric of conditional inclusion is structured by technocratic ethos and systemic logos. Institutional credibility is grounded in expertise, data, and policy alignment. Migrants appear primarily within economic, demographic, or administrative frameworks—figures of labor supply, service continuity, or regulatory adjustment.

Importantly, the emotional dimension does not disappear in this discourse; it is transformed. Pathos becomes moralized and symbolic—most visible in commemorative references or narratives of historical contribution. Such emotional gestures do not destabilize institutional rationality but reinforce it. Gratitude is expressed without intimacy; solidarity is invoked without vulnerability. Affect is regulated, disciplined, and subsumed within a broader logic of governance.

Taken together, these findings suggest that migration rhetoric functions simultaneously as a practice of stabilization and a politics of legitimization. The digital rhetoric of anchoring stabilizes migrant subjectivity through relational ethos, affective solidarity, and experiential reasoning. The institutional rhetoric of conditional inclusion legitimizes migration within the boundaries of utility, compliance, and systemic necessity.

Crucially, these rhetorical formations are not isolated. They are interdependent components of the broader communicative ecology of migration. Emotional communities online sustain the lived meaning of diasporic existence, while institutional media define the public criteria of rational recognition. One produces belonging; the other regulates legitimacy. One privileges experiential voice; the other privileges institutional authority.

The tension between these rhetorics exposes emerging boundaries of discursive legitimacy: Who is authorized to speak? In what register must migrants articulate their claims to be heard as rational rather than emotional, credible rather than particular? Which forms of pathos are permissible within public debate, and which are relegated to private or diasporic space?

In this sense, migration rhetoric becomes a site of epistemic negotiation. It structures not only how migrants are represented, but which forms of knowledge—experiential, affective, statistical, bureaucratic—are recognized as valid in the public sphere. The study thus contributes to broader debates in communication and migration studies by demonstrating that the governance of mobility is inseparable from the governance of emotion and credibility.

Future research may extend this framework comparatively across national contexts or explore how algorithmic mediation further reshapes the balance between affective anchoring and technocratic inclusion. What remains clear, however, is that migration discourse cannot be adequately understood through policy analysis alone. It must be examined as a rhetorical field in which emotion and rationality co-produce the boundaries of belonging, recognition, and civic value.

Migration rhetoric, therefore, is not merely descriptive. It is constitutive. It organizes who counts, on what grounds, and through which language of legitimacy.

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