

The basic premise of this article is that, contrary to the *tabula rasa* hypothesis, individuals in the new democracies of post-Communist Eastern Europe have been able to form meaningful political identities even under conditions of great fluidity and uncertainty. These identities are expressed through the pattern of voting choices that individuals make during successive elections. The authors based their analysis on a 1993 panel survey of a national sample of the adult Polish population first interviewed in 1988. They show that when political identity is conceptualized in a dynamic manner, the majority of the Polish electorate exhibit patterns of electoral choice that conform well to interpretable types of political identity. Such political identities are shaped by social group memberships and individuals' experiences under communism. These identities, in turn, shape individuals' orientations toward crucial issues related to the systemic transformation of their society.

## POLITICAL IDENTITIES IN THE INITIAL PHASE OF SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION IN POLAND A Test of the Tabula Rasa Hypothesis

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**A**re political cleavages developing among the electorates of the new democracies of East-Central Europe? Recent empirical research points to the emergence of differentiated patterns of partisan support that, in turn, are linked to the crystallization of both group-based interests and political

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preferences (Kitschelt, 1995a, 1995b; Toka, 1996; Tworzecki, 1996). However, in a number of these studies, the assumption is made—explicitly or implicitly—that the structuring of both group interests and political preferences only began *after* the initial phase of systemic transformation was completed, that is, after 1993 (Linz & Stepan, 1996; Toka, 1996; Wnuk-Lipinski, 1993). This assumption accords with most earlier studies in which the period between 1989 and 1993 also is characterized as one of political disarray, even chaos (Bruszt & Simon, 1992; Bunce & Csanadi, 1993; Cirtautas, 1994; Sztompka, 1992; Schopflin, 1991).

The presumed weakness of political identity formation among post-Communist electorates in the years immediately following the demise of the old order usually is attributed to the combined effects of the instability of the newly emergent party systems, the multiple legacies of the Communist past, and radical systemic transformation. According to this line of argument, fluid and fragmented party systems do not provide adequate and meaningful referents for the formation of political identities and preferences. Moreover, 40 years of communism had eroded or suppressed fundamental societal cleavages on which diverse group interests and, in turn, political alignments could be based. In addition, although the establishment of democratic rule and the transition to a market economy made possible the (re)emergence of pluralistic political identities, the uncertainties and dislocations associated with rapid systemic change have, in and of themselves, inhibited the formation of group-based interests, and hence, of political identities (Bunce & Csanadi, 1993; Cirtautas, 1994; Evans & Whitefield, 1993; Wesolowski, 1996).

This line of reasoning implies that in the first years of constructing a democratic regime and a market economy, political identities at the mass level were not only blurred but also were neither determined by social characteristics of individuals nor associated with their orientations toward politics. Following Kitschelt (1995a, p. 451), these interrelated assertions constitute what we call the *tabula rasa* hypothesis. We test this hypothesis on 1993 survey data from Poland that pertain to respondents' retrospective and current voting choices, as well as their views regarding various aspects of political and economic life during the initial phase of systemic transformation, that is, between 1989 and 1993. Specifically, we address three questions implied by the *tabula rasa* hypothesis:

1. Was the formation of political identities really weak in the initial phase of systemic transformation in Poland? Plentiful *prima facie* empirical evidence has been offered in support of a positive answer to this question. Emblematic of such empirical evidence has been the fluidity and fragmentation of the party system. Parties have changed their names, splintered, fused, coalesced, emerged, and disappeared, elite behavior that has been largely

motivated by reasons of personal rivalry and perceptions of short-term electoral advantage rather than of ideological or programmatic concerns (Cirtautas, 1994; Wesolowski, 1996). The labels and slogans of various parties have been similar and were designed to solicit support from a presumably undifferentiated electorate on the basis of broad appeals to society or the nation. Moreover, party elites have done little to forge organizational linkages with social groups and secondary associations or with electoral constituencies at the local level (Agh, 1993; Wesolowski, 1996).<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that because of this political environment, party membership rates are insignificant, distrust of parties is widespread, voter turnout rates have declined since the first competitive elections of 1989 or 1990, and electoral volatility between parties is high (Cotta, 1996; Mishler & Rose, 1995; Rose, 1995; Toka, 1996). In short, it was concluded that ordinary citizens, lacking clear partisan referents, found it difficult to construct distinct political identities of their own.

We contend, however, that political identities refer to stable political tendencies and preferences and, as such, pertain to alternative political programs rather than to specific parties per se (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Converse & Dupeux, 1962). In recognition of the fact that attachment to particular parties was low and that interparty electoral volatility was high in all post-Communist societies, we conceptualize political identity as the aggregate pattern of electoral choices that an individual makes among coherent groupings or blocks of political parties during the course of successive national elections. Our basic premise is that distinguishable political identities—or political cleavages—can be found at the mass level and that the referent of these identities is “political families” or tendencies (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Deutsch, Lindon, & Weill, 1966). Each of these political families is composed of a distinct set of political parties with similar ideologies, programs, or electoral appeals to the public.

2. Were political identities structured in the first phase of the post-Communist transformation? Many argue that the weak determination of political identities was especially typical of Eastern Europe in the early 1990s because of the negative imprint of communism (Schopflin, 1993; Sztompka,

1. The failure of parties to develop linkages with secondary associations and social groups in the electorate was mentioned by virtually all leaders of politically significant parties, trade unions, and business groups in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland whom we interviewed in the summers of 1993, 1994, and 1995 as part of a larger research project funded by the National Council for Soviet and East European research on the politics of inequality in East-Central Europe. A total of 83 in-depth elite interviews were conducted, 39 of these in Poland in June of 1993 and 1994.

1992). The normative division between “us” and “them,” to which the mass public and opposition activists had grown accustomed, ill prepared voters for the ideological and interest-based pluralistic environment that followed the first competitive elections of the post-Communist period (Bruszt & Simon, 1992; Cirtautas, 1994; Jowitt, 1992; Ost, 1993). Moreover, due to the suppression of civil society during the Communist era, the paucity of institutionalized intermediary organizations, which could serve as social anchors for political parties and as channels of mobilization for voters, also contributed to the lack of association between social- and economic-group-based interests and political identity (Evans & Whitefield, 1993). More generally, it is argued that in the context of the transition from “real existing socialism” to “democratic capitalism,” it was exceedingly difficult for people to figure out what their self-interests were, let alone to decide which of the multiple political options available to them best fit those interests (Bauman, 1994; Bunce & Csanadi, 1993; Evans & Whitefield, 1993; Kolarska-Bobinska, 1991; Mokrzycki, 1991; Ost, 1993; Staniszki, 1991; Wnuk-Lipinski, 1991).

Political identities, we argue, are shaped by individuals’ experiences under communism and the self-interests generated by their position in the transforming social structure. Of course, the range of political options offered to the electorate by the existing party system itself provides the framework in which these identities are formed. But within these limits, our view is that—beneath the magmatic quality of political life in post-Communist societies—there is more structure than first meets the eye (see also Kitschelt, 1995a, 1995b; Toka, 1996; and Tworzecki, 1996, in this regard). We will show that political identities are, in fact, related to occupational position, education, and other social characteristics of individuals, as well as to their “political biographies” during the last decade of Communist rule.

3. Are political identities in post-Communist societies associated with views toward political and economic issues? The presence of a discernible degree of dissonance between ideal (accepted) and practiced (realized) norms, and between values of the public and private spheres, has been widely considered to be an important feature of state socialist societies (Adamski, 1993; Nowak, 1981; Wedel, 1986). Empirical research also demonstrated that at the mass level, relationships among attitudes toward the role of the state in political and economic life were relatively weak (Kolarska-Bobinska, 1994; Mason, 1985). It has been argued that the inchoate nature of public opinion characteristic of the last decade of communism contributed to the lack of attitudinal cohesion at the beginning of the post-Communist period,

and consequently to the weak relationship between political identities and political orientations (Cirtautus, 1994; Evans & Whitefield, 1993).

We have serious reservations about the validity of the lack of association between political identities and mass-level orientations in the first phase of systemic transformation in East-Central Europe. First, there are reasons to doubt the degree to which attitudes in the 1980s were weakly correlated, at least with respect to certain sets of social orientations (Kohn & Slomczynski, 1993). Second, although many individuals did hold ideal or "mythic" views about democracy and the market (Kolarska-Bobinska, 1990) because these were abstract models during the Communist period, after 1989, when certain core features of democratic capitalism were quickly put into place, people began to experience directly these new rules of the game and therefore could form more realistic or well-grounded preferences. We show that political identities are associated with differentiated stances toward fundamental issues of post-Communist politics—the legitimacy of the past regime, support for systemic change, endorsement of a market economy, and the proper role of the state.

Should our findings prove to be contrary to the *tabula rasa* hypothesis, we will have provided an important benchmark against which to assess continuity and change in the structure of political cleavages in Poland. Furthermore, our research will have raised serious questions about commonly held assumptions regarding the impact of the Communist legacy on mass political behavior and orientations. Finally, our research will have pointed to an alternative, and perhaps more appropriate, way to conceptualize political identity and to gauge stability of partisan choice, both in the fluid political context of new democracies and in the more stable setting of older democratic regimes (Bartolini & Mair, 1990, p. 64).

In this article, we examine all three questions implied by the *tabula rasa* hypothesis. We proceed in the following manner. After describing the panel survey data on which our analysis is based, we present the conceptual rationale for our construct of political identity. This is followed by a typology of political identities (derived from survey data gathered in 1993), which incorporates the wide range of patterns of attachment to distinct political families currently found among Polish adults. In the next section, we consider the effects of various determinants of political identity that stem from individuals' experiences under communism and during the initial period of systemic change. We then assess the degree to which diverse political identities are, in fact, associated with differing orientations toward certain fundamental issues that deeply divide both political elites and voters alike.

## DATA

This study is based on survey data that are uniquely suited to address the issues we pose, particularly with regard to the formation of political identities. These data are derived from a panel study conducted in Poland in 1993. The random sample, consisting of 2,268 men and women aged 26-65, was drawn from a sample of 5,854 respondents surveyed at the end of 1987 and the beginning of 1988. The 1987-1988 study, called here for short the "1988 study," included a large set of questions pertaining to involvement in political organizations (in particular, the Polish United Workers Party [PUWP] and Solidarity) and attitudes toward state welfare provisions, distribution of income, and the socialist political system (Slomczynski et al., 1989).

The 1993 panel study, *Social Changes in Poland* (Domanski & Slomczynski, 1994), focused primarily on attitudinal and behavioral aspects of radical social change in the period between the two studies. New questions also dealt with assessments of ongoing changes and prospects for the future. However, the questionnaire consisted of a large number of items identical to those asked in the 1988 survey. We use both new and repeated questions in our analysis.

## CONSTRUCT AND TYPOLOGY OF POLITICAL IDENTITIES

The common presumption in the empirical literature on post-Communist societies is that relatively few ordinary citizens, especially in the initial phase of regime change, have political identities; among those who do, their political identities are weak and unstable. However, the term *political identity*, although widely used, is rarely defined. Instead, it is usually operationalized as attachment to or identification with or preference for a particular political party or, alternatively, as self-placement on the Left-Right continuum. Moreover, such indicators of political identity are usually derived from cross-sectional survey data and represent respondents' answers to questions about their partisan preferences or locations on the Left-Right scale at a single point in time. Operationalized in this way and given the instability of parties, it is hardly surprising that the empirical evidence tends to substantiate the presumption that few people in the new democracies of East-Central Europe appear to have developed political identities.

Our understanding of political identity within democratic settings is that it is constructed on the basis of successive choices that individuals make during

important political events, namely, elections. Hence, our notion of political identity is a dynamic one. Moreover, insofar as political identities are formed on the basis of successive political choices, it is the particular pattern or combination of choices that constitutes one's political identity.

The starting point of our operationalization of political identity begins, therefore, where most others end: the reported voting behavior of individuals in a given election. In other words, the building block of our construct of political identity is declared vote or preference (or lack thereof, since this too indicates a political choice) for a particular party or political group in a parliamentary election and for a particular candidate in a presidential contest. In the specific case of Poland, we begin with individuals' reported voting behavior in the 1989 and 1991 parliamentary elections to the Sejm, the 1990 presidential contest, and their intended vote in the 1993 legislative election, which was held shortly after the 1993 panel study was completed. (See Part 1 of the appendix for actual wording of survey questions.) Since our focus is on subjective political identity, it should be noted that we are not concerned here with whether these reports of past or hypothetical choice are accurate reflections of actual voting behavior.

In Table 1, we show the presence and absence of party preferences among respondents in the 1993 panel study. First, the percentage of the Polish electorate who declared *any* preference at all declined precipitously between the 1990 presidential race and the 1991 parliamentary election and decreased yet again in 1993. As one would expect, this dramatic change coincided with the splintering of Solidarity, the subsequent proliferation of political parties, and the onset of severe dislocation resulting from the dismantling of the state socialist economy. However, the oft-noted weakness of political identities, understood here in the typical fashion as partisan preference, was not a uniform phenomenon across the Polish electorate. The sharp decline in the declaration of partisan preference was far more pronounced among women than men.

The implication of the results presented in Table 1 is that, on the whole, the level of partisanship is rather low in Poland if we look at particular elections. However, a somewhat different conclusion can be drawn when we examine the total number of declarations of voting preferences made by respondents across all four elections. During the period 1989 to 1993, almost 9 out of 10 Poles expressed a preference in at least one election; 1 out of 5 did so on all four occasions. The total lack of declared preferences is quite low—displayed only by about 13% of the sample.

Table 1 also presents the distribution of voting choices among respondents in the 1993 panel study. As can be seen, for each of the parliamentary

Table 1  
*Presence and Absence of Party Preferences in Actual Elections in 1989, 1990, and 1991 (according to retrospective declarations) and for Hypothetical Elections in 1993 (according to concurrent declarations), for Men and Women Aged 25-65*

Presence or Absence of Party Preference <sup>a</sup>	% Distribution <sup>b</sup>		
	Men	Women	Total
Parliamentary elections in 1989			
Presence of party preference <sup>c</sup>	76.3	70.0	73.1
Solidarity	58.2	57.7	57.9
Non-Solidarity	18.1	12.3	15.2
Absence of party preference <sup>d</sup>	23.7	30.0	26.9
Presidential elections in 1990			
Presence of party preference <sup>e</sup>	76.5	73.5	75.0
Democratic Union (Mazowiecki)	14.2	15.6	14.9
Solidarity (Walesa)	44.8	42.5	43.6
Party X (Tyminski)	9.9	10.9	10.4
Identification with other parties	7.6	4.5	6.0
Absence of party preference <sup>d</sup>	23.5	26.5	25.0
Parliamentary elections in 1991			
Presence of party preference <sup>f</sup>	50.2	36.1	42.9
Liberal/social democratic parties	18.5	15.1	16.7
Populist parties	17.9	10.6	14.2
Christian/nationalist parties	7.1	6.3	6.7
Post-Communist	4.7	2.9	3.8
Other parties	2.0	1.2	1.5
Absence of party preference <sup>d</sup>	49.8	63.9	57.1
Hypothetical parliamentary elections in 1993			
Presence of party preference <sup>f</sup>	40.3	24.1	32.0
Liberal/social democratic parties	13.4	9.7	11.5
Populist parties	13.5	5.8	9.5
Christian/nationalist parties	3.9	2.4	3.1
Post-Communist	7.6	5.4	6.5
Other parties	1.9	0.8	1.4
Absence of party preference <sup>d</sup>	59.7	75.9	68.0
Total for four elections			
Presence of party preference in at least one election	89.5	85.8	87.1
Presence of party preference at four elections	26.8	15.3	20.9
Absence of party preferences	11.5	14.2	12.9

a. For interview questions, see text and the appendix.

b. *N* for men = 1,100, for women = 1,168, with total = 2,268.

c. We treat the distinction between Solidarity and non-Solidarity as analogous to the party distinction.

d. Includes *didn't vote/will not vote, no answer, do not remember*, and other responses given alone or in combination with *didn't vote/will not vote*.

e. Indication of vote for presidential candidates.

f. See text and the appendix for categorization of parties according to political families.

elections of 1991 and 1993, we aggregated all declarations of partisan preference by assigning them to one of four political families (with a residual category of "other"). The four political families consist of the following: (a) liberal/social democratic parties, political groups, and candidates; (b) populist parties, political groups, and candidates; (c) Christian/nationalist parties, political groups, and candidates; and (d) post-Communist parties, groups, and candidates. We have grouped parties into these four political families, based on our own examination of party programs and their electoral appeals (Paszkievicz, 1996; Slodkowska, 1995). In addition, we used data gathered from 39 in-depth interviews with leaders of politically significant parties and interest groups, as well as with political scientists and sociologists in Poland.<sup>2</sup>

To give but a few examples to illustrate the way in which we made our assignment, Democratic Union (now Freedom Union)—the political group among whose leaders are Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jacek Kuron, and Bronislaw Geremek—has been placed in the liberal/social democratic family, together with the more explicitly social democratic party, Union of Labor. The Polish Peasant Party (PSL) has been categorized as belonging to the populist political family. Center Alliance (PC) and Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN) have been assigned to the Christian/nationalist political family. At the core of the post-Communist block is Social Democrats of the Polish Republic (SdRP), the offshoot of the PUWP, which ruled Poland for more than 40 years. (Part 2 of the appendix summarizes the assignment of specific parties, candidates, and political groups to one of the four political families.)

The rationale for the use of political family, rather than a specific party or presidential candidate, as the ultimate referent of our construct of political identity pertains to the political context of the initial period of systemic transformation in Poland. There was a proliferation of parties in the 1991 parliamentary election, which was foreshadowed and, in fact, precipitated by the bitter competition between Lech Walesa and the then incumbent prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki in the 1990 presidential race. Beginning with that contest and certainly by 1991, the mutually exclusive or dichotomous

2. Grouping parties according to ideological blocks or cleavages is frequently done in analyses of whole party systems and party system structuring in long-lived democracies and now in Eastern Europe as well. Such clustering usually is based on party programs, electoral appeals, or party elites' orientations toward a variety of issues (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Bozoki, 1990; Gebethner, 1993; Gunther & Montero, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995a, 1995b; Schopflin, 1993; Tworzecki, 1996; Wesolowski, 1996; Wiatr, 1993). Some of these analyses of post-Communist party systems, particularly those in East-Central Europe, often conclude that beneath their visible fluidity and instability, there are discernible programmatic differences among parties or groups of parties along one or more axes of competition (see especially Kitschelt, 1995b; Tworzecki, 1996, in this regard).

political identities (party versus nonparty or Solidarity versus non-Solidarity) that had been useful in organizing and interpreting political life in Poland became far less so with the splintering of Solidarity. This made the emergence of a multiplicity of competing political identities not only possible but likely (Grabowska, 1992; Wnuk-Lipinski, 1993). But, at the same time, the ensuing fragmentation and shifting composition of the party system from 1991 on (Gebethner, 1993; Wiatr, 1993) made it easier for individuals to form political identities on the basis of an attachment to a political family rather than to a particular political party per se.

As can be seen in Table 1, between the 1989 to 1990 period and the 1991 parliamentary election, there was considerable slippage of support for post-Solidarity parties, but this primarily was due to the dramatic increase in the rate of abstention rather than to vote switching. Between the 1991 and 1993 parliamentary elections, the percentage of identifiers with the liberal/social democratic, populist, and Christian/nationalist political families declined further, whereas expressed support for the post-Communist block increased more than 1.5 times. Just as men and women differed in the proportions expressing a partisan preference, the two groups also began to diverge in their attachments to political families after the 1990 election. For example, among those who declared a preference for a party in the upcoming 1993 parliamentary contest, women were more likely than men to express an attachment to the liberal/social democratic camp (40% versus 33%) and far less inclined to identify themselves with the populist political family (24% versus 33%).

To construct our typology of political identities, we have used the building blocks presented in Table 1 and for each respondent combined his or her preferences across all four successive elections. A few of the "decision rules" we employed in the construction of our typology should be highlighted. First, we have divided the time span between 1989 and 1993 into two electoral periods: (a) the 1989 and 1990 elections and (b) the 1991 and 1993 elections. The latter electoral period was quite different from the former because of the presence of political parties as the objects of voter choices. In 1991 and 1993, the electorate could express partisan preferences; in the first two elections of the post-Communist period, however, movements and leaders (who were often independent of any political group) were the main political options. Insofar as voters were far more able to express party preferences in the second period than in the first, a second decision rule we adopted in the formulation of our typology of political identities was to begin with respondents' current preferences for one party or another in 1993 and 1991 and work backward to their voting choices in the 1990 and 1989 elections.

Third, we regarded the absence of a declared party preference or voting choice in one election as a neutral decision, neither congruent nor

incongruent with an attachment to a particular political family in another election. Lack of declared choice only becomes significant in the classification of respondents under one condition: when there is lack of choice on all four electoral occasions, thereby implying a total lack of political identity. Otherwise, when lack of declared choice is combined with attachment to one political family *only* in other elections, it can be used as an indicator of strength of identification with that particular political family. Finally, we took into account whether the resulting combinations of vote choices during the four elections are internally consistent in terms of such attachments. It should be noted that identification with *any* of the three post-Solidarity political families (liberal/social democratic, populist, and Christian/nationalist) was regarded as being equally congruent with support for the opposition movement in the 1989 election and for particular sets of candidates in the 1990 presidential contest. For example, attachment to either the liberal/social democratic or Christian/nationalist political family in 1991 to 1993 was considered to be equally compatible with a declared preference for Mazowiecki in 1990 and for Solidarity in 1989. However, we categorized the first pattern as a liberal/social democratic political identity and the second, a Christian/nationalist one. (A complete description of how each kind of political identity was derived can be found in Part 3 of the appendix.)

On the basis of this construction, our typology consists of 13 kinds of political identity, including two residual categories characterized by internally inconsistent patterns of partisan preference (i.e., a declared vote for a Christian/nationalist party in 1991 and a populist party in 1993) and one characterized by the total absence of partisan choice across all four elections (either because the respondent did not vote or did not remember his or her party preference). As can be seen in Table 2, our typology of political identities runs the gamut from loyal supporters of each of the four basic political families to those who lack any political identity whatsoever. It also includes Poles who joined a political family in 1991 or 1993 after having identified with another political family in the first electoral period, as well as those who expressed a consistent voting choice either for Solidarity or non-Solidarity political groups in 1989 and/or 1990 but who declared no preference at all in the second electoral period when the array of choices was greater and more varied.

With the exception of the two small inconsistent categories, each type of political identity represents a well-defined pattern of electoral choices in the initial phase of systemic transformation in Poland. And, for the most part, each type of political identity pertains to a sizable proportion of the Polish electorate. It is especially worth noting in this regard that there are more than twice as many loyal supporters of one political family or another than there

Table 2  
*Patterns of Political Identity Among Persons Aged 25-65*

Patterns of Political Identity	N	% Distribution		
		Total	Men	Women
Active current attachment				
Liberal/social democrats				
Loyal supporters	166	7.3	7.4	7.3
Joiners	208	9.2	10.9	7.9
Populists				
Loyal supporters	278	12.3	14.5	10.2
Joiners	73	3.2	4.5	2.0
Christian/nationalists				
Loyal supporters	110	4.9	4.8	4.9
Joiners	23	1.0	1.5	0.6
Post-Communists				
Loyal supporters	75	3.3	3.7	2.9
Joiners	51	2.2	2.5	2.1
Inconsistent current attachment	193	8.2	11.3	5.9
Inactive current attachment				
Past supporters of Solidarity	565	24.9	18.9	30.6
Past supporters of non-Solidarity	122	5.4	4.0	6.7
Inconsistent past supporters	112	4.9	5.0	4.9
Lack of current attachment				
Lack of political identity	296	12.9	11.5	14.2
Total	1,268	100.0	100.0	100.0

are Poles who lack a political identity altogether. Indeed, if we consider only that portion of the sample who expressed a partisan preference in the second electoral period, the vast majority were consistent rather than inconsistent in their electoral choices between 1991 and 1993.

We have demonstrated that a multiplicity of political identities were present among the Polish electorate in the initial stage of systemic transformation. Moreover, there does not appear to be an inordinately high degree of instability of such identities. The next question that ensues from these findings is, On what basis did individuals form their political identities?

### DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL IDENTITIES

There is ample research demonstrating that both in the period of "real existing socialism" and in the initial phase of systemic transformation in East-Central Europe, class divisions not only were present but also affected

individuals' preferences toward social inequality, the role of the state, and economic reform (Shabad & Slomczynski, 1994; Slomczynski & Shabad, 1997). But the question remains as to whether social and economic divisions served to structure political identity formation among the electorates of these new democracies. Are individuals' political identities anchored in their social and economic group memberships? In addition, did individuals' political experiences under communism also shape their political attachments in the initial period of systemic change?

We address the question of the social anchoring of political identity by first considering whether the occupational positions that individuals held in 1988 help to account for their current attachments to a political family. As can be seen in Table 3, one's location in the social structure—as indicated by occupation—does indeed affect the likelihood of identifying with one political family as opposed to another. For example, Poles who were advantaged in 1988 in terms of their occupational position—officials and managers, as well as professionals—were significantly more likely to identify themselves with either the liberal/social democratic or the post-Communist political family than with other political families. Owners of private businesses tended to support either the liberal/social democratic group of parties or Solidarity in the 1989 to 1990 period. Those who occupied positions in the military or police forces of the old regime were far more likely to identify with the post-Communist camp than with any other political family, especially the Christian/nationalist camp. In contrast, skilled and unskilled workers—those who have borne much of the social and psychological costs of economic transformation—were much less inclined to identify with post-Communists or liberal/social democrats, and they were far more likely either to be supporters of Solidarity in the first electoral period or to have an attachment to populist parties. Not surprisingly, farmers, who also ranked among the least socioeconomically advantaged occupational groups, were significantly more likely to support populist parties, most notably the PSL.

As the data presented in Table 4 show, such characteristics of individuals as education, religiosity, place of residence, gender, and age also influenced whether an individual acquired a political identity of one kind or another or, in contrast, had no psychological involvement in partisan politics. In our logistic regression analysis, the lack of political identity is the referent category. Thus, the predicted value refers to the logarithm of the ratio of two terms: the probability of representing a given type of political identity and the probability of representing the lack of any political identity. Regression coefficients (B) show the change in this predicted value attributed to a given variable. Exp (B) can be interpreted as the conditional increase in the odds of

*(text continues on p. 706)*

Table 3  
*Occupational Groups in 1988 and Political Identity in 1989 to 1993*

Occupational Group	% Distribution							
	Political Families <sup>a</sup>				Past Supporters			
	Liberal/Social Democrat	Populist	Christian/Nationalist	Post-Communist	Solidarity	Non-Solidarity	Other <sup>b</sup>	Lack of Political Attachment
Officials and managers ( <i>N</i> = 42)	28.6	16.7	2.4	26.2	4.3	0	14.2	7.1
Professionals ( <i>N</i> = 274)	41.6	8.4	5.1	12.4	8.0	1.1	17.9	5.5
Technicians ( <i>N</i> = 238)	29.8	9.7	8.0	5.0	19.4	4.2	16.0	7.6
Clerical workers ( <i>N</i> = 182)	17.0	9.9	7.7	6.0	24.2	9.3	14.9	11.0
Sale and service workers ( <i>N</i> = 184)	10.9	13.0	2.2	4.9	33.2	9.2	9.8	16.8
Crafts and operative workers ( <i>N</i> = 566)	12.0	17.8	8.3	4.4	25.6	4.9	13.4	13.6
Laborers ( <i>N</i> = 259)	5.0	14.3	6.2	3.5	37.5	4.6	8.8	20.1
Farmers ( <i>N</i> = 327)	3.1	30.0	2.8	0.9	32.1	6.4	10.6	14.1
Owners of private business ( <i>N</i> = 100)	23.0	10.0	6.0	5.0	20.0	5.0	19.0	12.0
Army and police ( <i>N</i> = 31)	12.9	12.9	6.6	16.1	6.5	9.7	25.6	9.7

a. Includes loyal supporters and joiners.

b. Includes inconsistent current attachment and inconsistent past attachment.

Table 4  
*Determinants of Political Identity Patterns Among Persons Aged 25-65*

Independent Variables <sup>b</sup>	Logistic Regression <sup>a</sup>		
	B	SE	Exp(B)
Liberal/social democrats—loyal supporters			
Age	.056	.016	1.058
Gender	.351	.347	1.420
Community size	.230	.078	1.258
Education	.543	.078	1.721
Religiosity	-.413	.159	.662
Communist Party	-.337	.533	.714
Solidarity	-.196	.396	.822
Liberal/social democrats—joiners			
Age	.038	.010	1.039
Gender	.436	.224	1.547
Community size	.061	.047	1.063
Education	.384	.048	1.468
Religiosity	.187	.096	1.206
Communist Party	-.188	.307	.829
Solidarity	.512	.245	1.669
Populists—loyal supporters			
Age	.047	.009	1.048
Gender	.781	.198	2.183
Community size	-.190	.047	.827
Education	.160	.044	1.174
Religiosity	.478	.096	1.613
Communist Party	-.195	.307	.822
Solidarity	.240	.236	1.272
Populists—joiners			
Age	.015	.012	1.015
Gender	1.079	.304	2.941
Community size	-.155	.071	.856
Education	.238	.061	1.269
Religiosity	.240	.138	1.272
Communist Party	-.381	.461	.683
Solidarity	-.181	.372	.835
Christian/nationalists—loyal supporters			
Age	.031	.011	1.032
Gender	.464	.258	1.591
Community size	.125	.054	1.133
Education	.177	.053	1.194
Religiosity	.408	.123	1.504
Communist Party	-1.290	.472	.275
Solidarity	.679	.279	1.973
Christian/nationalists—joiners			
Age	.047	.022	1.048

Table 4 Continued

Independent Variables <sup>b</sup>	Logistic Regression <sup>a</sup>		
	B	SE	Exp(B)
Christian/nationalists—joiners			
Gender	.797	.517	2.218
Community size	-.018	.114	.983
Education	.290	.095	1.336
Religiosity	.040	.206	1.041
Communist Party	.346	.548	1.413
Solidarity	.847	.491	2.333
Post-Communists—loyal supporters			
Age	.042	.013	1.043
Gender	.230	.318	1.258
Community size	-.137	.071	.872
Education	.407	.063	1.503
Religiosity	-.120	.126	.887
Communist Party	.514	.377	1.671
Solidarity	-.312	.404	.732
Post-Communists—joiners			
Age	.054	.016	1.055
Gender	.037	.373	1.038
Community size	-.055	.082	.947
Education	.402	.070	1.495
Religiosity	-.145	.150	.865
Communist Party	.619	.423	1.856
Solidarity	-.175	.450	.839
Inconsistent current supporters			
Age	-.025	.006	.976
Gender	.386	.199	1.471
Community size	-.108	.045	.897
Education	.116	.029	1.122
Religiosity	-.096	.084	.908
Communist Party	.336	.279	1.399
Solidarity	.432	.233	1.540
Past supporters of Solidarity			
Age	.024	.007	1.024
Gender	-.019	.162	.981
Community size	-.029	.035	.971
Education	.087	.035	1.091
Religiosity	.369	.072	1.446
Communist Party	-1.100	.286	.333
Solidarity	.073	.203	1.076
Past supporters of non-Solidarity			
Age	-.012	.011	.988
Gender	-.252	.239	.778
Community size	-.154	.055	.857
Education	.144	.056	1.154

(continued)

Table 4 Continued

Independent Variables <sup>b</sup>	Logistic Regression <sup>a</sup>		
	B	SE	Exp(B)
Past supporters of non-Solidarity			
Religiosity	.038	.106	1.038
Communist Party	-.078	.379	.925
Solidarity	-.546	.350	.579
Inconsistent past supporters			
Age	-.003	.011	.997
Gender	.292	.243	1.340
Community size	-.139	.060	.871
Education	.091	.057	1.095
Religiosity	.313	.118	1.367
Communist Party	-.221	.415	.804
Solidarity	.253	.293	1.288

a. Computed from a maximum likelihood solution of the following equation:

$$\log(p/q) = a + b_1X_1 + \dots + b_nX_n,$$

where  $p$  denotes the probability of representing a given pattern of political identity,  $q$  denotes the probability of representing a lack of political identity,  $X_1, \dots, X_n$  refer to independent variables and  $a, b_1, \dots, b_n$  are estimated parameters of the equation.

b. Age: years from birth; gender: 1 for male, and 0 for female; community size: from 1 = small (2,000 or less) to 9 = large (300,000 or more); education: years of schooling; religiosity: 0 = absent (not attending any religious services) to 4 = high (attending religious services once a week or more); Communist Party: 1 = belonging to PUWP (Polish United Workers Party) in 1980 or 1988 and 0 = otherwise; Solidarity: 1 = belonging to Solidarity in 1980 or 1988 and 0 = otherwise.

representing a given type of political family to representing the lack of any political identity.

Various individual-level characteristics differ in their significance, depending on the particular political identity in question. Other things being equal, with each level of education, the chances of being a loyal supporter or a joiner of the liberal/social democratic or post-Communist political family increase by at least 1.5 times. Thus, education is a potent determinant of loyal support for the liberal/social democratic political family and for the post-Communist block (either as a loyalist or joiner). It also has a strong effect on being a loyal supporter of the Christian/nationalist camp. However, education has a much weaker effect in distinguishing between populist or Christian/nationalist joiners and those who lack a political identity altogether. In the case of supporters of Solidarity and non-Solidarity in 1989 to 1990, as well as in the case of the two inconsistent categories, the impact of education is still positive and significant, although weak.

As expected, religiosity makes it more likely that one will be a loyal supporter of either the Christian/nationalist or populist political family; interestingly, however, post-1990 joiners of the Christian/nationalist block are no more apt to be religious than those who lack a political identity. Religiosity has a negative and significant effect on the chances of being a loyal supporter of the liberal/social democrats; it also has a negative effect, albeit not statistically significant, on being a loyal supporter or joiner of the post-Communist block.

The impact of rural residence on attachment to the populist camp, inasmuch as the PSL and other agrarian groups constitute its core, is not surprising. However, post-Communist self-identifiers also tended to be drawn from smaller communities. Finally, as previously noted, having a current political attachment to a political family, especially as a joiner of the Christian/nationalist or populist group, is a male phenomenon. Women were far more likely than men to have opted out of electoral politics altogether or to have withdrawn from active involvement after the 1989 to 1990 period. Finally, age also is a significant determinant of political choice: Older Poles were slightly more likely than the young to express a current attachment to a political family of whatever kind.

Just as East-Central European societies were not *tabulae rasae* socially and economically at the outset of their systemic transformations, neither were they blank slates politically. Certainly Poland was not, due to the decade-long conflict between the party/state and *Solidarnosc*. Whether and when one was a member of the PUWP and whether and when one belonged to *Solidarity* in the 1980s were indicative of critical choices that individuals made regarding the nature and degree of their involvement in the prevailing order of the time; as such, individuals' political biographies reflected fundamental orientations toward state socialism (Shabad & Slomczynski, 1995). Moreover, certain political experiences under communism, namely, those that involved continuous or recent affiliation with the PUWP, were associated with a privileged position in the social structure of state socialist societies. For the most part, such socioeconomic advantages acquired under communism did not disappear when state socialism met its demise. Conversely, although large numbers of *Solidarity* members were white-collar workers and professionals, the core of former *Solidarity* members were blue-collar workers situated primarily in the heavy industrial sector of the state-socialist economy that has been most negatively affected by systemic change (Adamski, 1993).

There is no reason to think that one's political biography under communism would cease to matter after the demise of real existing socialism and that it would have no effect on the acquisition of new political identities in the

context of emergent competitive politics. Certainly, one might expect that former members of the Communist Party would be far more likely than others to identify with the legatees of the PUWP. But what about those who had been involved in Solidarity in the 1980s? With which political family would they be most likely to identify after the splintering of the movement in 1990 to 1991?

The findings presented in Table 4 address these questions concerning the impact of political biography under communism on the formation of political identities in the post-Communist period. First, former membership in the Communist Party is negatively related to an attachment to all political families, save the post-Communist block. Past membership makes it particularly unlikely that one has become a loyal supporter of the Christian/nationalists. However, the impact of a pre-1989 Solidarity biography is less clear-cut. It is more determinative of attachment to some post-Solidarity political families (i.e., Christian/nationalist) than others. It also variously affects whether one is a loyalist or joiner of a particular family. For example, having been active in the opposition movement is positively related to being a liberal/social democratic joiner, but negatively related to being a loyal supporter of that political family; the reverse pattern holds for the two populist groups. Particularly interesting, with respect to the impact of political biography, are the very weak relationships between involvement in either the PUWP or the opposition movement on one hand, and support for Solidarity or non-Solidarity groups/candidates in the 1989 to 1990 period on the other. Neither former members of the Communist Party, because of the demise of the old order, nor former Solidarity activists, because of disillusionment with the new, were particularly prone to disengage themselves from active involvement in competitive politics.

We have shown that both existing social cleavages and the political divisions of the past influenced the formation of new political identities in the post-Communist period. The issue that remains to be addressed is whether the various types of political identity that exist among the Polish electorate are themselves associated with differentiated stances toward fundamental issues confronting the new democracy.

### **POLITICAL IDENTITIES AND ORIENTATIONS TOWARD SYSTEMIC CHANGE**

Does our typology of political identities coincide with a structure of political preferences among the Polish electorate? Or do political identities, albeit rooted in social group memberships and past political experiences, exemplify

random patterns of electoral choice in terms of individuals' orientations toward vital political and economic issues? In particular, does our typology differentiate between those who support the changes that have taken place in Poland since 1989 and those who are nostalgic for the past and desire to see the core features of state socialism remain?

We focus on four political orientations: an assessment of socialism, stance toward state paternalism, approval of systemic change, and support for a market economy. The exact wording of the questions, together with separate measurement models, is presented in Table 5. In the case of assessment of socialism, we rely on a single question, whereas for the other three political orientations, we use a principal component analysis and construct scales on this basis.<sup>3</sup>

The arithmetic means of each of the four measures for our various patterns of political identity are shown in Table 6. There are few surprises with regard to retrospective judgments of socialism. Self-identified post-Communists were the most positive in their views of the past. Those attached to the liberal/social democratic and Christian/nationalist political families were all negative, although to varying degrees depending on whether they are loyalists or joiners. In contrast, populist self-identifiers were more internally differentiated, with joiners on average expressing more positive views toward the old regime than their post-Communist counterparts. What is most interesting about these data is the stance taken by previous Solidarity supporters, inconsistent past supporters, and those lacking a political identity whatsoever. None of the three groups took a pronounced position toward socialism; if anything, they were all very slightly favorable in their judgments.

A somewhat different structure of orientations can be found with regard to state paternalism versus individualism. Once again, both liberal/social democrats and Christian/nationalists (of both kinds) were quite similar in their

3. We do not claim that such latent variables *cause* the distribution of possible indicators. Rather, we assume that indicators *cause* latent variables. Hence, the principal component technique is more suitable than the principal axis method or other versions of factor analysis. Substantively, our scales are valid. They also have various other desired properties. In the case of all multi-item scales, factor loadings are above .4, the eigenvalues are greater than 1, and the items share around 50% of the variance. Thus, from a formal point of view, the scales meet standard requirements for a successful principal component analysis. However, the overall measures of reliability—both the traditional coefficients (like Cronbach's alpha) and the new coefficients (like the squared correlation of an indicator and the latent variable)—are lower than usually expected. We should note that in principal component analysis, the questionnaire items are treated as so-called cause indicators for which "the traditional and new definitions of reliability do not work well" (Bollen, 1989, pp. 222-223). We have confidence in our scales because they are reliable in the most fundamental way (i.e., they are internally consistent), as indicated by an eigenvalue above 1 as a criterion for internally consistent measures.

Table 5  
*Measurement of Assessment of Socialism, Stance Toward State Paternalism, Approval of Systemic Change, and Support for the Market Among Persons Aged 25-65*

Constructs and Indicators <sup>a</sup>	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading
<b>Assessment of socialism</b>			
In your opinion, did the socialist system bring most people in Poland only losses (1), more losses than gains (2), the same amount of gains and losses (3), more gains than losses (4), or only gains (5)? <sup>b</sup>	2.927	0.914	—
<b>Stance toward state paternalism</b>			
If economic difficulties are to be avoided, the authorities should not lose control over society (3), or society should not lose control over authorities (1), or both conditions are equally important (2).	1.914	0.651	0.310
There should be an upper income limit that no one is allowed to exceed: No (0), Don't know (1), Yes (2).	0.464	0.502	0.803
The state should provide jobs for everyone who wants one: From 1 ( <i>strongly disagree</i> ) to 5 ( <i>strongly agree</i> ). (eigenvalue: 1.33, percentage of variance: 44.2)	4.297	1.041	0.799
<b>Approval of systemic change</b>			
Do you think that changes carried out in Poland in recent years are headed in the right direction? From 1 ( <i>definitely not</i> ) to 4 ( <i>definitely yes</i> ).	2.219	0.832	0.425
Have the changes in the past 4 years brought most people only losses (1), more losses than gains (2), the same amount of gains and losses (3), more gains than losses (4), or only gains (5)? <sup>b</sup>	2.401	0.830	0.805
For people like yourself, was life better in Poland 4-5 years ago, or in Poland today? 4-5 years ago (1), Don't know (2), Today (3). (eigenvalue: 1.45, percentage of variance: 48.5)	1.359	0.480	0.791
<b>Support of the market</b>			
Do you think that state enterprises should be privatized? Neither unprofitable nor profitable state enterprises should be privatized (0), only unprofitable state enterprises should be privatized (1), all state enterprises should be privatized (2). <sup>c</sup>	1.025	0.595	0.421
Do you think that there should be a limit on who can buy state property: From 9 ( <i>no limits</i> ) to 5 ( <i>five groups excluded from buying a state property</i> ). <sup>d</sup>	2.101	1.654	-0.311
Do you think that there are groups of people who should be protected from layoffs? 0 ( <i>from no such group mentioned</i> ) to 3 ( <i>three groups mentioned</i> ). <sup>e</sup>	1.610	0.622	-0.587

(continued)

Table 5 Continued

Constructs and Indicators <sup>a</sup>	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading
Support of the market			
Do you think that prices of basic foodstuffs should be determined by the market? From 1 ( <i>no, they should be controlled by the government through set prices, paying extra to producers, and offering food stamps</i> ) to 5 ( <i>they should be determined by the market alone</i> ).	2.548	1.327	0.633
Should exactly the same clothing cost exactly the same in different stores (1), or should different prices not go beyond an established level (2), or should differences in prices be as large as the shop owners decide (3)?	2.046	0.804	0.691
(eigenvalue: 1.552, percentage of variance: 51.1)			

a. For all indicators we provide numerical values of responses used in our analysis.

b. In original formulation the scale was reversed.

c. A combination of answers for two questions: "Do you think that *profitable* state enterprises should be privatized?" and "Do you think that *unprofitable* state enterprises should be privatized?"

d. Respondent was asked about specific groups: people who are inexperienced in running a company, people representing foreign capital, the former (Communist) political elite, the present political elite, and "other people."

e. Respondent was asked about specific groups: those who are in a difficult financial situation, those who have political responsibility for changes in Poland, and those who will not be able to find any work.

rather strong endorsement of a limited state. In contrast, populists, but especially joiners, supported state paternalism and, therefore, a key element of the socialist system of the past. Current adherents of the post-Communist political family were the most divided in the sense that they were to be found on both sides of the issue regarding the proper role of the state. Even so, post-Communist loyalists were less collectivist than either type of populist self-identifier. In fact, apart from populist joiners, the two other groups most strongly imbued with collectivist and egalitarian views were Solidarity supporters and those lacking any political identity.

As one might expect, the pattern regarding approval of systemic change is, in most respects, the mirror image of that for the assessment of socialism. Post-Communist self-identifiers, including supporters of non-Solidarity, were negative in their evaluation of the changes that have taken place in Poland. Arrayed with the post-Communist political family in their disapproval of systemic change were the two groups whose views thus far have been strikingly similar, namely, demobilized 1989 to 1990 Solidarity supporters and those without any political identity.

Table 6

*Scale Means of the Assessment of Socialism, Stance Toward State Paternalism, Approval of Systemic Change, and Support for the Market for Patterns of Political Identity Among Persons Aged 25-65*

Patterns of Political Identity <sup>b</sup>	Scales <sup>a</sup> and Arithmetic Means			
	Assessment of Socialism	State Paternalism	Approval of Systemic Change	Support for the Market
Liberal/social democrats				
Loyal supporters	-.234	-.766	.659	.754
Joiners	-.267	-.517	.509	.450
Populists				
Loyal supporters	-.046	.188	.101	-.262
Joiners	.363	.287	-.188	-.133
Christian/nationalists				
Loyal supporters	-.293	-.149	.240	.056
Joiners	-.210	-.495	.297	.566
Post-Communists				
Loyal supporters	.766	.114	-.479	.039
Joiners	.271	-.124	-.298	.049
Inconsistent current supporters	-.145	-.306	.318	.231
Past supporters of Solidarity	.036	.313	-.226	-.182
Past supporters of non-Solidarity	.239	.112	-.572	-.237
Inconsistent past supporters	.067	.059	-.214	-.242
Lack of political identity	.035	.287	-.244	-.157

a. All scales are standardized  $N(0,1)$ .

b. For description, see text and the appendix.

Support for a market economy shows a reversal of the pattern found with regard to state paternalism. Liberal/social democrats and Christian/nationalist joiners strongly endorsed the establishment of a market economy. Populists of both types stood in opposition. Joining the populists against the market were not supporters of the post-Communist block (who were rather neutral in their views) but rather those who lacked a political identity or who had withdrawn from active involvement in electoral politics after 1990.

Amid the detailed findings presented in Table 6, identifiers of the four political families exhibited rather distinctive patterns of orientations. Overall, Christian/nationalists and especially liberal/social democrats were the strongest proponents of all aspects of systemic change. Populists, even though internally divided in their stances toward socialism and systemic change, were both among the strongest advocates of state paternalism and among the strongest opponents of the market. Finally, post-Communist self-identifiers, although expressing nostalgia for the past and disapproval of the changes of the post-1989 period, did not strongly oppose the core elements of

the emergent democratic capitalist order. Vehement opposition to a limited state, individual responsibility, income inequality, and the practices of a market economy did not come from the quarters of the post-Communist family.

Table 7 shows that political identities have a substantial impact on these four political orientations. To a very great extent, the results presented in Table 7 tell the same story as those in Table 6. Unstandardized regression coefficients, however, are interpretable in terms of change in political orientations associated with the possession of particular political identities. For example, being a loyal supporter of the post-Communist bloc increases one's favorable assessment of socialism by .730 on the normalized scale  $N(0,1)$  in comparison with the reference category (those completely lacking a political identity). In contrast, being a loyal supporter of the Christian/nationalist political family decreases to a great extent one's positive evaluation of socialism (-.328). More than half of the regression coefficients in Table 7 are statistically significant, thus demonstrating the importance of political identity as an explanatory variable. Political identities explain about 4% of variance in the assessment of socialism, 9% in support for the market, and more than 10% of variance in stance toward state paternalism and approval of systemic change.

Certainly, previously held political orientations, political biographies under communism, and post-1989 political identities and views are mutually related. To assess the relative impact of political identities on current political orientations, in Table 8, we provide panel regressions of assessment of socialism and stance toward state paternalism on political identities. First, neither the assessment of socialism nor stance toward the role of the state is very stable over time. The correlations between 1988 and 1993 evaluations of socialism are .148, and .433 between pre-1989 and post-1989 stances toward state paternalism. Second, age, gender, size of community, education, religiosity, and especially prior membership in the Communist Party and/or Solidarity (with regard to assessment of socialism) add substantially to the explanation of orientations held in 1993 (Model 1). Third, the impact of political identities on these 1993 orientations is considerable, even when we take into account both views held in 1988 and other control variables (Model 2). Adding political identities to the previous set of explanatory variables increases substantially the explained variance of both assessment of socialism and stance toward state paternalism.

In general, identifying with the post-Communist block increases one's positive assessment of socialism, whereas being attached to the liberal/social democratic or Christian/nationalist political family decreases such assessment—in all cases independently of whether one is a loyal supporter or current joiner. However, among populists, there is a clear difference between

Table 7

*Regression of Scales of the Assessment of Socialism, Stance Toward State Paternalism, Approval of Systemic Change, and Support for the Market on Patterns of Political Identity Among Persons Aged 25-65*

Patterns of Political Identity <sup>c</sup>	Scales <sup>a</sup> and Regression Coefficients <sup>b</sup>			
	Assessment of Socialism	State Paternalism	Approval of Systemic Change	Support for the Market
Liberal/social democrats				
Loyal supporters	-.270*	-1.053*	.903*	.911*
Joiners	-.302*	-.804*	.752*	.607*
Populists				
Loyal supporters	-.081	-.099	.345*	-.105
Joiners	.327*	.003	.056	.024
Christian/nationalists				
Loyal supporters	-.328*	-.436*	.484*	.213*
Joiners	-.245	-.782*	.540*	.723*
Post-Communists				
Loyal supporters	.730*	-.173	-.235	.196
Joiners	.235	-.411*	-.055	.206
Inconsistent current attachment	-.180*	-.592*	-.561*	.388*
Past supporters of Solidarity	.005	.027	.018	-.026
Past supporters of non-Solidarity	.204*	-.174	-.329*	-.080
Inconsistent past supporters	.032	.227	.030	-.085
Lack of political identity <sup>d</sup>				
Constant	.036	.287	-.244	-.157
Multiple <i>R</i>	.214	.353	.347	.308
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.041	.114	.115	.090

a. All scales are standardized  $N(0,1)$ .

b. From regression equation  $Y = a + b_1X_1 + \dots + b_{n-1}X_{n-1}$ , where  $Y$  is given scale,  $X_1$  to  $X_{n-1}$  refer to  $n - 1$  patterns of political identity (since  $X_n$  is a reference category),  $a$  is an intercept (constant), and  $b$ s are regression slopes.

c. For description, see text and the appendix.

d. Reference category.

\* $p < .05$ .

loyalists and joiners. The former are closer to liberal/social democrats, whereas the latter resemble post-Communist self-identifiers. To a great extent, these results are paralleled by those for stance toward state paternalism—with one exception. In comparison with the reference category (those lacking a political identity), the impact of all types of political identity on stance toward state paternalism is negative. In particular, post-Communists do not stand out as defenders of an interventionist state.

Table 8  
*Panel Regression of Assessment of Socialism and Stance Toward State Paternalism  
 on Patterns of Political Identity, and Control Variables, for Persons Aged 25-65*

Variable <sup>b</sup>	Regression Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			
	Assessment of Socialism		Stance Toward State Paternalism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Panel variable				
Assessment of socialism, 1988	.123*	.115*		
State paternalism, 1988			.232*	.236*
Political identity patterns				
Liberal/social democrats				
Loyal supporters		-.176		-.511*
Joiners		-.250*		-.586*
Populists				
Loyal supporters		-.128		-.481*
Joiners		.300*		.089
Christian/nationalists				
Loyal supporters		-.265*		-.490*
Joiners		-.268		-.724*
Post-Communists				
Loyal supporters		.679*		-.194
Joiners		.178		-.240
Inconsistent current attachment		-.158		-.385*
Past supporters of Solidarity		-.003		-.297*
Past supporters of non-Solidarity		.210*		-.076
Inconsistent past supporters		.030		-.194
Control variables				
Age	.004*	.005*	.013*	.015*
Gender	.009	.025	-.124	-.099
Size of community	-.026*	-.020*	-.061*	-.054*
Education	-.026*	-.021*	-.092	-.080*
Religiosity	-.013	-.003	.095*	.118*
Communist Party	.261*	.233*	.083	.063
Solidarity	-.165*	-.120*	-.036	.013
Constant	.241	.083	.240	.594
Multiple <i>R</i>	.227	.294	.513	.562
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.048	.078	.254	.292

a. For a metric of control variables, see Table 5.

b. For description, see text and the appendix.

\* $p < .05$ .

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article has been to test empirically three related assertions of the *tabula rasa* hypothesis regarding the weakness of political identities among the electorates of post-Communist societies in the initial period of systemic transformation. The basic premise on which our analysis is based is that in democracies, individuals' political identities are expressed through their party preferences and voting choices in consecutive elections. We assume that political identities are formed through time as a result of individuals' direct experiences, as well as through political learning in response to the repeated signaling cues provided by political elites during the course of several elections (Converse, 1969; Kitschelt, 1995b). We also assume that in the case of Poland, as in other democracies with similarly fragmented and unstable party systems, political identities can best be expressed in terms of an attachment to one or another political family rather than identification with a specific political party *per se* (Bartolini & Mair, 1990).

With these assumptions in mind, we constructed a typology of political identities in Poland, using 1993 survey data on the electoral behavior of the adult Polish population. Specifically, we derived 13 types of political identity on the basis of the aggregation of respondents' declared voting decisions in the 1989 parliamentary election and 1990 presidential race, as well as their expressed party preferences in the 1991 and 1993 parliamentary contests.

Three straightforward conclusions can be drawn from the analysis based on our typology of political identities. First, there is no support for the argument that there was a widespread lack of political identities in Poland. Contrary to such a thesis, we show that if political identities are understood as formed through time during consecutive elections and in terms of attachment to a political family, the majority of the adult population in Poland had some form of political identity. Less than 15% were so withdrawn from political life that they consistently failed to declare a preference for one party or another. Second, there is no support for the argument that in the initial phase of systemic change in Poland, political identities were undetermined by other salient characteristics of individuals. Contrary to such a thesis, we show that political identities were rooted in the social structure as well as in individuals' political biographies. In Poland, the relationship of political families to occupational groups is moderately strong, and particular political identities are shaped by a combination of sociodemographic characteristics such as age and gender, size of community, education, and religiosity, as well as former membership in the Communist Party or Solidarity.

Third, there is no support for the argument that in the early years of post-communism in Poland, political identities were unrelated to individuals'

political orientations. Contrary to such a thesis, we show that political identities were closely connected to individuals' assessments of socialism, stances toward state paternalism, approval of systemic change, and support for a market economy.

Our conclusions are drawn from a study of a single country. How generalizable are our empirical findings to other post-Communist societies of East-Central Europe? One might plausibly argue that if political identities were to be widely present anywhere during the initial period of systemic change, they would be most evident in Poland. Poland was characterized by a more liberal form of Communist rule than the former Czechoslovakia, for example. It had a more autonomous church and an independent peasantry, as well as the exceptional presence (whether aboveground or in clandestinity) of an opposition social movement in the 1980s. Although these elements distinguished the Polish regime from others in the region, the ideologies or political messages conveyed to the public by the Communist Party, the church, and Solidarity were by no means clear nor always distinct from one another. Moreover, after 1989 the influence of these sociopolitical entities changed considerably as did their relative appeal to various segments of the Polish public.

We are inclined to regard Poland as representing a hard test of the *tabula rasa* hypothesis. Given the extreme fragmentation and instability of its party system, one would expect empirical findings from Poland to conform well to the prevailing view that electorates of the new democracies lacked or had weak political identities, electoral choice was undetermined by social structure, and political identities were weakly related to political orientations.

Our findings from Poland suggest that one ought to exercise some caution in making claims about the unique impact of the Communist legacy on certain aspects of mass-level political behavior. In comparing the early years of competitive politics in Poland with the same stage of democratic rule in Southern Europe, one finds more similarities than differences in terms of the level and stability of political identity formation. For example, in a two-wave panel study of the Spanish electorate conducted by Barnes, McDonough, and Lopez Pina (1985, p. 70) in 1978 and 1980, a total of 40% of respondents did not express a partisan preference in either of the two time points. Only 23% declared a preference for *any* party in both waves of the study, as compared with 29% of the Polish sample who claimed to have made a voting choice in two out of the four elections. Although these data from Poland and Spain are not strictly comparable, they suggest that political identity formation was no more difficult in post-Communist democracies than in other postauthoritarian democratic settings with similarly unstable party systems. Moreover, whereas Spain (1979 to 1982), Italy (1992 to 1994), and especially Poland

(1989 to 1993) exhibited extraordinarily high levels of overall electoral volatility, in all three cases, the degree of interblock fluctuation was far lower and comparable to more long-lived democracies with more stable and less fragmented party systems (Gunther & Montero, 1994, p. 474). In this regard, too, Poland's electorate did not appear to show a discernibly greater propensity toward unstable political identities than did certain other West European electorates.

In addition, according to his comparative examination of the roots of partisanship per se, Toka (1996) concludes that "whichever social background variables we look at, its correlation with party choice tends to show as much variation and a similar average among Western countries as in [post-Communist] East-Central Europe" (p. 115). Thus, given the declining impact of social structure on partisan preferences in long-lived democracies in recent decades (Dalton, 1996; Franklin, MacKie, & Valen, 1992), there appears to be more convergence than divergence between the democracies of Western and East-Central Europe with regard to the relationship between political identities and individual-level social characteristics.

We have shown that political identities were present among the electorate of post-Communist Poland. Persistence and change in the pattern of political identities over time, as well as their determinants and attitudinal correlates, deserve systematic investigation if we are to make sense of post-Communist politics and to understand better the prospects for democratic stability in East-Central Europe.

## APPENDIX

### Summary of Basic Interview Questions, Assumptions Regarding Political Families, and Operational Definitions of Types of Political Identity

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#### 1. Basic Interview Questions Regarding Partisan Preferences

*Parliamentary elections in 1989:* Did you vote in the elections to the Sejm and Senat in June 1989? If yes: Did you vote for Solidarity? Yes/No. *Presidential elections in 1990:* Did you vote in the 1990 presidential elections? If yes: For whom did you vote in the first round of the 1990 elections? Walesa, Mazowiecki, Tyminski, or another candidate? *Parliamentary elections in 1991:* Did you vote in the parliamentary elections in October 1991? If yes: From which political party or political group was the person for whom you voted? *Hypothetical parliamentary elections in 1993:* If there were to be new parliamentary elections in the near future, would you vote? If yes: Which party would your candidate represent?

## APPENDIX Continued

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### 2. Assumptions Regarding Political Families

For the 1991 and 1993 parliamentary elections, the following parties were assigned to each of four political families: *Liberal/social democrats*—UD (Democratic Union), KL-D (Liberal-Democratic Congress), and UP (Union of Labor); *Populists*—PSL (Polish Peasant Party) and all other agrarian parties, Solidarity, Solidarity 80, BBWR (Nonparty Block for Reforms), and Self-defense; *Christian/nationalists*—all Christian parties, PC (Center Alliance), KPN (Confederation of Independent Poland), SN (National Party); *Post-Communists*—SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) and SdRP (Social Democrats of the Polish Republic).

The proportion of respondents who indicated support for parties outside of these four political families is very small (less than 5% of all those who expressed a party preference in the 1991 or 1993 elections). This residual category includes minority parties (e.g., Party of Belarus Minority) or small single-issue parties (e.g., Ecological Party). There were no stable preferences for these parties between the 1991 and 1993 elections.

The vast majority of respondents declared that in the first round of the 1990 presidential elections, they voted for one of the three main candidates: Mazowiecki, Walesa, or Tyminski. We assume that support for a candidate other than Mazowiecki was incongruent with identification with the liberal/social democratic political family, support for a candidate other than Walesa or Tyminski was incongruent with identification with the populist camp, support for a candidate other than Walesa or Mazowiecki (or Moczulski) was incongruent with the Christian/nationalist self-identity, and support for a candidate other than Tyminski (or Cimoszewicz) was incongruent with identification with the post-Communist block.

For the 1989 parliamentary election we assume that the non-Solidarity vote was incongruent with a liberal/social democratic, populist, and Christian/nationalist political identity, whereas the Solidarity vote was incongruent with attachment to the post-Communist block. We also assume that a declaration of “no vote,” “don’t remember,” or “don’t know” in any of the four elections is neutral with respect to attachment to the basic political families.

### 3. Operational Definitions of Types of Political Identity

*Consistent attachment to liberal/social democrats, populists, Christian/nationalists, or post-Communists.* No preferences in the 1991 and 1993 elections for parties assigned to two different political families. Within each political family, we distinguish the following:

1. *Loyal supporters:* Current attachment to one political family combined with past voting choices that are congruent with it. This denotes the following configuration: In 1993 and 1991, at least one party preference indicating attachment to a given

(continued)

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### APPENDIX Continued

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political family; no party preference indicating attachment to another political family. In 1990 and 1989, no voting choices that are incongruent with attachment to a given political family.

2. *Joiners*: Current attachment to one political family combined with past voting choices that are incongruent with this political family. This denotes the following configuration: In 1993 and 1991, at least one party preference indicating attachment to a given political family; no party preference indicating attachment to another political family. In 1990 and 1989, one or two voting choices that are incongruent with attachment to a given political family.

*Inconsistent current political attachment*. Preferences in the 1991 and 1993 elections for parties assigned to two different political families or for two different parties not included in the four basic political families.

*Past supporters of Solidarity*. Absence of current (1991 and 1993) party preferences combined with consistent support for Solidarity in the 1989 and 1990 elections.

*Past supporters of non-Solidarity*. Absence of current (1991 and 1993) party preferences combined with consistent support for non-Solidarity in the 1989 and 1990 elections.

*Inconsistent past supporters*. Absence of current (1991 and 1993) party preferences combined with support for both Solidarity and non-Solidarity in the 1989 and 1990 elections.

*Lack of political identity*. Absence of current party preferences and absence of voting choices in the past: complete lack of preferences in all (1989, 1990, 1991, and 1993) elections.

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