This chapter serves as a foreword to a volume devoted to studying the structural determinants of political experience in the initial phase of transition from a communist system to democracy and a free market economy. The "initial phase of transition" in Poland refers to the period when the institutional framework for both a democratic regime and a free market economy was established. This period began with preparations for the Round Table negotiations between the communist authorities and opposition representatives in mid-1988, and ended with the September 1993 election in which the post-communist forces won an open electoral competition.\(^1\)

Why is looking back at the interplay of social structure and political experience during the initial phase of the post-communist transformation still of interest to social scientists? What guided our selection of topics to study? What kinds of benefits did we have in analyzing social change on the basis of nationally representative panel-survey data collected in 1988 and 1993? Do our new findings allow us to clarify and reinterpret theoretical assumptions about people's reactions to radical social change? What theoretical arguments are relevant in this respect? Is Poland a good case for

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\(^1\) The initial phase of the post-communist transition in Poland should be conceptualized so that the immediate causes of the June 1989 elections are included (Paczkowski 1995). In this sense the initial phase began with the strikes of May 1988 which ultimately resulted in the Round Table negotiations and the June 1989 elections.
a study that could broaden and systematize our knowledge about societal transformation in East Central Europe? If so, why?

Addressing these questions in this chapter, I will comment first on the issue of why it is still important to study the initial phase of post-communist transition in Poland. What follows is a brief review of individual contributions to this volume. The next section is devoted to a description of the data used by all contributors to this volume. I then focus on certain theoretical issues pertaining to the study of the socio-structural underpinnings of mass-level politics. The chapter ends with both cross-national and historical perspectives on the Polish case.

The Initial Phase of the Post-Communist Transformation: Why Look at It Again?

The collapse of real socialism in Poland in 1989 was fundamentally instigated by economic failure in the preceding decade. The relative prosperity that marked the Polish economy in the first half of the 1970s was propelled by increased productivity and a rational use of economic inputs. The rate of investment averaged 21.9 percent a year from 1971 to 1975 (Fallenbuchl 1981). However, since 1975, economic expansion had actually been fueled by the import of Western capital. Without appropriate changes in institutional arrangements, the influx of foreign capital gave a temporary illusion of prosperity, while the economy became increasingly dependent on assistance from the West. Industrial output began to decline in 1978 and continued to fall through the 1980s. This decline was accompanied by a deteriorating standard of living. Social discontent provided fertile ground for the birth of Solidarity in August 1980, a movement which became well established in Polish society despite periodic repression by the government. The most dramatic crackdown took place on December 13, 1981, when Wojciech Jaruzelski’s government declared martial law.

Economic failure triggered a series of events that resulted in a loss of confidence among the Polish people in the efficacy of the party-state to orchestrate continued economic growth and to bring about material well-being. The crisis expressed itself in an open challenge to the legitimacy of the communist political regime in Poland and the party-state’s control over the economy. It was in this context in the beginning of 1989 that the

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2 Kaminski (1991) distinguishes three phases of the “post-martial law” period of normalization: (1) the state of war (1981–1983), (2) the “illusion of stabilization” (1983–1986), and (3) the “belated search to break the deadlock” (1987–1989).
Round-Table talks between the party leaders and the opposition began. The communists lost the partially-free elections of June 4, 1989; Tadeusz Mazowiecki formed the first Polish non-communist government after the Second World War on September 12. Since then, Poland has moved toward creating a democratic political system and a market economy. However, the stabilizing and deflationary policies of the Balcerowicz Plan’s “shock therapy” were complicated by growing energy costs attendant on the Gulf crisis and falling Soviet deliveries. The gross domestic product continued to go down. In interpreting the 1988–1993 period in Poland and its significance for later developments, we should bear in mind that the hardship brought about by socioeconomic transformation made an ever-increasing number of people critical of systemic change.

There are three main reasons to examine the initial phase of the post-communist transition in Poland from a combined sociological and political science perspective. First, not all important developments of the initial phase of this transition have been thoroughly explored. We still do not fully understand how the communist legacy shaped individuals’ post-1989 biographies, the new system of values and mentalities, patterns of political participation, including protest behavior, and the significance of social class for political life. The topics selected for this volume include these important yet still largely neglected areas for investigation.

The second reason pertains to the competition among theoretical interpretations of post-communist social and political developments. After the fall of communism, emerging post-communist societies were portrayed as flattened landscapes in terms of their social structure and civil society. In this volume we challenge these interpretations and offer competing views.

Third, understanding the past allows us to better understand the present. The post-communist transformation operates with its own specific sequence of social and political learning in which the earlier political experiences of the public to a great degree determine the outcomes of future political processes. Many observers of political life in East Central Europe were mentally unprepared for the possibility that post-communists could win free elections so soon after the demise of the old system.

They were equally unprepared for the possibility that post-communist elites could support radical changes of the political and economic system, including Poland’s membership in NATO and entry into the European Union. Yet all this has actually happened — and not only in Poland. These circumstances can be understood much better if we pay careful attention to the socio-structural framework of people’s behavior and attitudes during the initial phase of post-communist transformation.
What is New in This Volume?

This volume focuses on four general topics: (1) individuals' biographies shaped under communism; (2) political attitudes, including perception of social conflicts, anti-egalitarianism, support for state paternalism, and views about privatization; (3) political participation and protest behavior; and (4) social class and political experience. My descriptions of individual contributions stress the most interesting new questions they pose.

Individuals' Biographies Shaped under Communism

Analyzing Polish data from 1978 and 1987 Slomczynski and Lee (1993) introduced the term "political segmentation of the labor market" which refers to the fact that during the communist era both managerial positions and membership in the communist party divided the labor market with respect to career prospects and economic advantage. In his chapter, Bogdan W. Mach asks the following questions: Can the imprint of state-socialist political segmentation of the labor market be seen in the post-communist world of entrepreneurship and in changes in individual incomes? Do state-socialist managers and former members of the communist party show a higher propensity to become entrepreneurs than the rest of the population during the initial phase of the post-communist transition? After controlling for several important variables such as gender, education, and pre-transition income, do former state-socialist managers show a different pattern of income dynamics from that found in non-managerial occupational categories? Is this effect an "across-the-board" development or are there significant differences among top, middle, and lower managers?

Goldie Shabad and Kazimierz M. Slomczynski examine the impact of ordinary people's political experiences under Communism on their present-day support for systemic transformation. They demonstrate that, depending upon the timing, duration, and exclusivity of membership in the Polish communist party and/or Solidarity during the 1980s, individuals' political biographies have a variable effect on their retrospective judgments of socialism, their assessments of systemic change, and their orientations toward state paternalism. These findings raise serious questions about the way in which the "cultural legacy of communism" has been conceptualized and about its posited negative impact on prospects for the successful consolidation of democracy and a market economy in post-communist societies.
Perception of Social Conflicts, Anti-Egalitarianism, Support for State Paternalism, and Views about Privatization

It has been noted that "transformation is ... a delicate complexity of sociopolitical and psychological change, a switch of values and 'public spirit.' History is driven by 'hard' economic and 'soft' mental-spiritual factors that are directly or indirectly interrelated" (Berend 1993: 185). Indeed, these mental-spiritual factors are important since they not only depend on real material gains and losses but also help determine those gains and losses. In this volume we focus on four sets of orientations central to the value system of capitalism: perception of social conflicts, pro- or anti-egalitarianism, support for state paternalism, and views regarding ownership of property.

In her chapter, Krystyna Janicka examines the awareness of social conflicts and its determinants. The central question is to what extent do social-stratification position and political experience explain the shifts in attitudes toward such social divisions between rich and poor, non-manual versus manual workers, supervisors (managers) versus supervisees (employees), and rulers (authority) versus ruled.

Wojciech Zaborowski's chapter is devoted to a detailed analysis of pro- and anti-egalitarian orientations in Polish society. He pays special attention to individuals' market positions and economic successes as crucial determinants of views toward egalitarianism. He also examines how political affiliations of the past influence distributional preferences.

Sheri Kunovich analyzes the social bases of support for state paternalism, which is understood as the involvement of the state in determining the social and economic well-being of its citizens. In her chapter, a person who supports state paternalism believes that it is the state's responsibility to provide additional resources to poor families in order to facilitate their children's access to higher education, decrease economic inequality, and provide jobs to those wanting them. Persons who were in a position to profit from the shift to a free market were clearly opposed to a perpetuation of paternalistic policies.

Elizabeth Osborn examines support for the transfer of ownership of the means of production and distribution from the state to the private sector. Her analysis focuses on the beginning of the privatization process when ideas of an "egalitarian market economy" and "privatization based on social justice" were widely discussed. Her study shows that support for privatization was weakly determined by position in the social structure. However, by distinguishing liberal/social democratic, populist, Christian/
nationalist, and post-communist stances Osborn is able to assess whether these political orientations significantly affect support for privatization.

Political Participation and Protest Behavior

Robert Kunovich studies the determinants of political participation in the initial phase of post-communist transition. He develops a model emphasizing psychological and structural sources of political participation. Specifically, he examines the effects of political distrust and income – both in dynamic terms – on changes in participation in national elections and membership in political organizations.

Brian Martin studies the institutional sources of industrial strike mobilization in pre- and post-transition Poland. By elaborating on political process theories of collective action, he is able to argue that state socialist and market-democratic environments generate distinctive forms of political opportunities, grievances and mobilizing contexts. Martin constructs two conceptual models of strike mobilization at the individual level. The pre-transition model seeks to explain attitudinal support for strikes, while the post-transition model centers on sources of actual strike participation. Are there significant effects of anti-regime attitudes on strike approval? Is strike participation more frequent among those who work in the unstable heavy industrial sector, identify with left-parties, and reveal class consciousness?

Social Class and Political Experience

In the final chapter, Kazimierz M. Slomczynski and Goldie Shabad elaborate on a class schema that takes into account features of both the “old” system, a command economy, and the “new” regime, a free market economy. According to their view, the structural salience of class in the early stage of the transition stems from the fact that the class structure of post-communist societies has grown more complex and has become a hybrid formation composed of still strong remnants of old classes, reconstituting classes, and newly emergent classes. These classes have increasingly differentiated internal “interests” insofar as they are variably advantaged or disadvantaged by the process and outcome of rapid social change. Should one expect to find growing polarization among class groups in terms of their orientations and behavior?
Data

All contributions to this volume are based on survey data uniquely suited to address issues related to the initial phase of the post-communist transition in Poland. These data are derived from two waves of a panel study conducted in Poland in 1987–1988 and 1993. Both waves were based on personal interviews. The interview schedule used in the 1987–1988 study, called here the 1988 study, included an extensive set of questions pertaining to involvement in political organizations (in particular, the Polish United Workers Party and Solidarity) and pertaining to 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 and 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 many items identical to those asked in the 1988 survey.

Sampling

In the 1988 study, the target sample consisted of 6,000 men and women aged 21–65 drawn from the central register of Polish citizens (PESEL), maintained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. If a respondent from this sample was unavailable, then a substitute from the auxiliary sample (N=3,167) was used. The auxiliary sample consisted of randomly selected cases which matched those from the basic sample with respect to sex, age, place of living, and education.

For the basic sample, the rate of response was 71%, that is 4,373 cases. In addition, 1,505 cases were obtained from the auxiliary sample, resulting in a total of 5,878 cases. Since some cases were discarded due to missing data, the final number of cases in the file of the 1988 study is 5,854.

In 1993, 2,500 cases were randomly selected from the 5,854 cases of the 1988 study. The response rate for this new random sample was 84%, yielding 2,102 cases. In addition, in 1993 an over-representation of two categories of the 1988 respondents was applied: (1) self-employed and employers, and (2) professionals and experts. The total number of cases in the file of the 1993 study, including this over-representation, is 2,268. In this volume, the authors use both the representative sample and the over-represented sample, depending on the particular kind of analysis.
Theoretical Context

One of the leading Polish sociologists has assessed various types of theory pertaining to the post-communist transition and characterized structural theories in the following manner:

*The main point of reference is an image of social structure, localization of an individual within the structure and collective behavior.... Theories of this type usually start with an assumption stating that social structure constitutes a set of "empty places" (social positions) filled up by people on the basis of unique system selection mechanisms.... Also, it is assumed that every individual is conditioned, to some degree, by the social position that he or she occupies. The degree of the structural determinism is the question of empirical studies.* (Wnuk-Lipinski 1995: 12)

This volume is based upon a structural theoretical approach and represents an attempt to empirically assess its validity. The authors of subsequent chapters demonstrate their conviction that social structure matters more than is frequently reported in recent sociological and political science literature. Particular contributions should be considered in the contexts of two theoretical debates which I shall here briefly highlight.

"Tabula Rasa" versus Communist Imprint Hypotheses

The *tabula rasa* hypothesis states that the structural and attitudinal foundations of democratic capitalism were largely absent in post-communist countries during the initial period of systemic change. According to this argument, forty years of Communism created flattened landscapes due to the erosion or suppression of major social divisions upon which group identities and interests could be based. In addition, although the establishment of democratic rule and the transition to a market economy made possible the emergence or re-emergence of differentiated social and political identities, the uncertainties and dislocations associated with rapid systemic change inhibited the formation of group interests with distinctive socio-political attitudes (Bunce and Csanadi 1993; Kolarska-Bobinska 1994).

This line of reasoning implies that in the first years of constructing a democratic regime and a market economy, political and social opinions at the mass level were not only blurred but also weakly determined by social characteristics of individuals. Following Kitschelt (1995), these interrelated

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3 A formulation of this hypothesis is borrowed from Shabad and Slomczynski (1999).
assertions constitute what is called the *tabula rasa* hypothesis (Shabad and Slomczynski 1999). In the context of the communist legacy, some researchers refer to the “mentality problem in the transition process.” Specifically, as Gumpel (1993: 191) writes, “The transformation of a socialist planned economy to a market economy is hampered by many obstacles. One of the most important is the way of thinking, something like a special socialist mentality, created during decades of communist rule and ideological manipulation.”

An alternative hypothesis states that people’s orientations during the communist era were not homogeneous but rather were differentiated depending on individuals’ locations in the social structure. In this volume we show that the individual’s experience of the communist past matters and has influenced political behavior and attitudes during the initial phase of the post-communist transition.

"Death of Class" versus Salience of Class Hypotheses

According to the “death of class” thesis (Pakulski and Waters 1996), individuals’ locations in the social structure have no impact on their orientations and behavior. Is this so? Does class have little salience in this current period of systemic transformation? Contrary to this hypothesis, if social classes and the new inequalities and conflicts they generate “matter,” what effects will such social divisions have on mass politics in the new Polish democracy?

Class formation has important consequences. In this volume we focus on the effect of class membership on various aspects of individuals’ orientations toward systemic change. We discuss not only variables describing class structure but also a range of variables related to social stratification.

Poland as a Case for Cross-National and Historical Comparisons

Matilda A. Vachudova and Tim Snyder (1997: 32) stated that there were two types of political change in East Central Europe: “In the first, former dissidents seized the state and set the terms of political debate after 1989; the economy is relatively prosperous; and ethnic minorities are scarce. In the second ideal type, no strong group ever took power; the economy is weak; and ethnic minorities are substantial.” Poland, along with Hungary and the Czech Republic, belongs to the first type. The second type is represented by Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia.
Comparisons of Poland with Hungary and the Czech Republic belong to the “most similar systems” design, using Przeworski and Teune’s (1970) classical terminology. To examine contrasts in structural patterns of being political, researchers may choose to compare Poland with Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia. Researchers who want to go further in the direction of the “most different systems” design could compare Poland with the non-European countries that gained independence as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The 1988–1993 period is important as a benchmark for dynamic analyses of the post-communist transformation. In studying the post-communist transformation, path dependence implies the importance not only of particular institutional arrangements of the communist past but also of the “starting point” of the transition itself. The 1988–1993 period in Poland is this starting point for the long-lasting processes of democratization and further development of a free market economy.

Cross-national and historical comparisons can be combined; however, doing so raises the problem of the temporal-processual equivalence of what is being studied. It is debatable whether cross-national analyses should focus on the same calendar time or whether the time period should be the same phase of transition in each country. To be specific, is Bulgaria in 1993 a better analytic equivalent of Poland in 1993, or should we look at Bulgaria in the late 1990s? Comparative sociology has paid increasing attention to problems of temporal-processual equivalence (Skocpol, 1984; see also Sztompka, 1988).

As a final point, research presented in this volume should be examined in a broader context of economic, political, and social change in Poland and in East Central Europe. Literature on the initial phase of the post-communist transition in Poland includes Connor and Ploszajski 1992; Poznanski 1992; Taras 1995; and Slomczynski et al. 1999. For a broader framework on East Central Europe the reader is encouraged to consult such sources as Przeworski 1991; Banac 1992; Ringen and Wallace 1993; White, Batt and Lewis 1993; Millar and Wolchik 1994; Bryant and Mokrzycki 1994; Kovacs 1994; Barany and Volyges 1995; Linz and Stepan 1996; Campbell and Pedersen 1996; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998; and Elster, Ofte and Preuss 1998.