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HOW THE PUBLIC EVALUATES THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE IN THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The situation in Poland since the dismantling of the communist system provides an example of how institutional changes related to the multifaceted transition manifest themselves in public opinion. While the future prospects of democracy and a capitalist economy encouraged many citizens in Central and Eastern European nations, including Poland, to assess the impending transformation favorably, difficulties associated with it abound in public opinion polls conducted in the 1990s.

Toward the end of the decade, researchers began to argue that, over time, the transformations start to diverge. For example, it was said that political changes – such as establishing a constitution, guaranteeing minority rights, and instituting free elections – occurred more rapidly. In contrast, economic changes – such as privatization, the introduction of free markets, and the removal of price controls – were seen as occurring at different, usually slower, rates (Linz and Stepan 1996). Studies of public opinion over the 1990s have taken a similar approach, typically examining public opinion toward political changes (e.g., support for democracy) and economic changes (e.g., views on market liberalization)

separately.¹ Yet, it is feasible that in the minds of Polish citizens, these system-level changes, while comprising distinct constructs, are in fact related conceptually.

Against this background, the present research involves two stages. First, I explore attitudes toward specific features of a society that encompass past, present, and future evaluations. I develop and test a theoretical model proposing that evaluations of political and economic dimensions are distinct, yet related, aspects of the public's assessment of transformations. I also examine how people's views of the political and economic system, expressed in 1993, are related in the three time frames – past, present, and future.

The second stage of this research addresses the winners-and-losers hypothesis, according to which some social groups gain from the changes while others stand to lose. I investigate differences between specific social groups: men and women, age categories, urban and rural residents, educational categories, and income groups. Group differences in assessments of the political and economic systems are identifiable and have potential consequences for attitudes about the changes. Therefore, I examine correlations between the political and economic views of society in 1993 and citizens' attitudes in 1998. I conclude by addressing the implications for research on democratic transitions.

Characteristics of Society in the Social Consciousness

Broadly, the general population's evaluations of society can be either positive, negative, neutral, or somewhat mixed, depending on the facet of the system about which one is asked. It is also possible for response patterns to vary when these indicators are assessed over time, that is, when the present and future systems are compared with the institutions prevailing during communist times. Relations between indicators of specific aspects of the political and economic systems can approximate a linear pattern. A nonlinear pattern is also conceivable, where the current system is evaluated quite differently than retrospective and prospective system components, graphically resembling more of a v-shape or an inverted-v.

¹ A notable exception is the work of Gibson (1996), who examines connections between attitudes toward democracy and the market economy in Russia and Ukraine. This study differs slightly, however, in that it focuses on system evaluation rather than on values supportive of democracy or the market economy. In addition, attitudes are explored over a ten-year period that includes major systemic transformations (e.g., the shift from communism).

In 1993, respondents were asked to evaluate the past (1988), present (1993), and future (1998) society based on twelve indicators that I refer to here in a general sense as “system evaluation.” These indicators were arranged on a continuum, from -5 to -1 for negative appraisals and from +1 to +5 for positive appraisals, with neutral 0. Respondents were asked to use this eleven-point scale to evaluate the extent to which Poland as a society was approaching the characteristic given on one side or the other. The adjective pairs were as follows: (1) impoverished population vs. well-off population, (2) possible unemployment vs. assured work, (3) government inefficiency vs. government efficiency, (4) societal conflicts vs. consensus, (5) nationalization vs. privatization of economy, (6) corrupt authorities vs. honest authorities, (7) political repression vs. political freedom, (8) social anarchy vs. order, (9) centrally planned vs. free market economy, (10) imposed government vs. free elections, (11) exploitation vs. rightful treatment of workers, (12) extent of lawlessness vs. lawfulness.

The questionnaire items used for system evaluation span a range of societal assessments. Included are political aspects of the system such as laws, governance, elections, freedom, authorities, social order, and societal consensus. Other characteristics gauge economic aspects such as guaranteed work, the material well-being of the population, the treatment of workers, privatization, and the market economy.

Table 7.1 shows descriptive statistics for each of the twelve indicators assessed in 1993 for 1988 (past), 1993 (present), and 1998 (future). For each indicator, negative values indicate a characteristic that more closely approximates the former communist system (e.g., authoritarian regime and command economy), while positive values approximate characteristics of a democratic regime and a market-based economy (e.g., free elections and privatization). These values demonstrate some variation with respect to the evaluations of the system for specific time frames.

As indicated by mean values, when asked in 1993, Polish citizens rated the political aspects of the former communist system around 1988 somewhat consistently. In brief, the former communist system was inefficiently governed, had corrupt authorities, was repressive politically, did not have free elections, and was characterized by lawlessness. The system was fairly orderly, with a stronger perception of general societal conflicts than of societal consensus. The economy was nationalized and centrally planned, with assured work and a relatively well-off population. There was some ambivalence, however, about how well workers were treated.

Turning to the system in 1993, at that time, Polish citizens saw their current system as different from the previous regime. Politically, there were

Table 7.1. Descriptive Statistics of System Evaluations for Past, Present, and Future (N = 873)

Questionnaire items	Past	Present	Future
	Mean Standard deviation		
Impoverished versus well-off population	0.412 2.303	-1.748 2.006	-0.254 2.723
Unemployment versus assured work	3.133 2.175	-2.966 1.832	-1.450 2.583
Inefficiently versus efficiently governed	-0.835 2.735	-1.525 2.461	0.436 2.533
Social conflicts versus social consensus	-0.792 2.868	-1.723 2.359	-0.112 2.586
Nationalization versus privatization	-2.842 2.120	1.535 1.884	2.630 2.067
Corrupt versus honest authorities	-1.875 2.472	-2.016 2.279	-0.316 2.575
Political repression versus freedom	-1.633 2.657	2.012 2.229	2.172 2.265
Social anarchy versus social order	0.299 2.667	-0.766 2.331	0.719 2.487
Centrally planned versus market economy	-2.734 2.288	1.533 2.031	2.315 2.154
Imposed authority versus free elections	-1.951 3.079	2.503 2.254	2.721 2.297
Exploitation versus rightful treatment	0.007 2.959	-1.749 2.349	-0.671 2.919
Lawlessness versus lawfulness	-0.482 2.791	-0.725 2.498	0.935 2.629

free elections and political freedom rather than repression. Yet, Poles evaluated the system as inefficiently governed and characterized by lawlessness and societal conflicts. Authorities were considered even more corrupt as compared to communist times, and there was social anarchy rather than social order. Economically, more people were likely to be impoverished, there were increased possibilities of unemployment, and workers were likely to be exploited rather than treated rightfully. But, there were clear shifts toward privatization and a market-based economy in the evaluations of

citizens. Variability in responses likely reflects the general chaos evident in transition societies during the early stages of the process.

In terms of prospective evaluations, a shift in public sentiment is evident. These assessments rate characteristics of the future system, with respondents being asked in 1993 to evaluate what the regime would be like in 1998. With respect to mean values, prospective evaluations for each of the twelve indicators were higher than evaluations of the present (1993) system. While Poles as a population may have been more divided in a general sense in their evaluation of the current system, it appears that future prospects were in fact quite optimistic. The system was likely to be lawful and efficiently governed, orderly, less conflictual, have political freedom and free elections, and have less corrupt authorities. Citizens continued to see shifts toward privatization and a market economy. Employment prospects were better, and the general well-being of the population was expected to improve.

The results presented in Table 7.1 provide an answer to the question about internal consistency with regard to systemic evaluation in post-communist Poland. The results suggest considerable variation with respect to retrospective, current, and prospective system appraisals. Of greater interest, however, is how these individual questionnaire items cluster together in people's consciousness. Are there in fact separate dimensions underlying people's retrospective, current, or prospective evaluations of society? I turn to factor analysis to address this question.

Evaluation of the Political and Economic Systems

It is likely that individuals perceive economic and political changes in relation to one another. Politics and economics, while distinct entities, are at the same time linked cognitively in the general population. Economic discontent, for example, may lead individuals to reject the political regime. Yet, we cannot be certain how people's evaluations of politics and economics "hang together" over time.

How do citizens conceptualize the political system over time? How is the economic situation perceived in the past, present, and future? Are these two dimensions in fact linked in social consciousness to one another, both within a specific time point as well as across time? Or more generally: are there identifiable patterns to people's retrospective, current, and prospective evaluations of political and economic aspects of the social system?

Because of the probing nature of this research, exploratory factor analysis is an important initial step. Clear factors for past, present, and future,

however, are not easily detected from the patterns of loadings produced by principal components analysis. Rather than being uni-dimensional, system evaluation seems to be bi-dimensional. Results imply a two-factor solution, with political and economic dimensions underlying the broad concept of system evaluation. To some extent this structure corresponds to dual transition research (Przeworski 1996, 1991).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In exploratory factor analysis, the relationship between the indicators and the latent construct is not specified in advance, and the indicators are allowed to determine the number of latent constructs. In contrast, in a confirmatory factor analysis, a pattern of the relationships between indicators and the latent constructs is specified in advance. Also, the directional coefficients can be set to a specified value, and measurement errors allowed to correlate. Confirmatory factor analysis is thus more theoretically driven than the exploratory version.

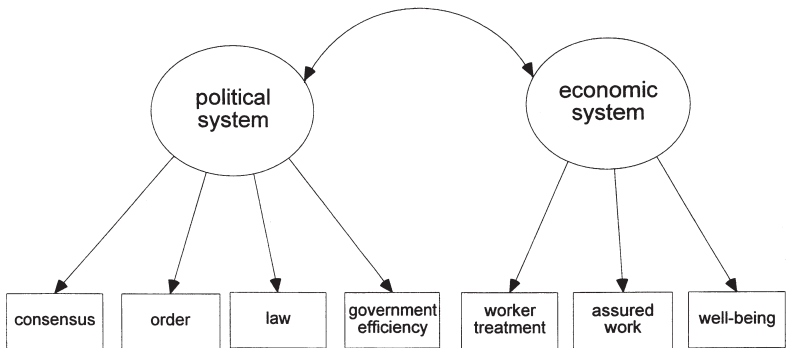
Although a number of indicators potentially describe political aspects of the social system, some of them define the basic features of an authoritarian regime or democracy and can hardly be used for time comparison in a transition society. Questions that asked respondents to rate Poland in terms of imposed authority and the extent of political repression or free elections are good examples of indicators that produce some obvious results, which were already mentioned in the description of Table 7.1. Arguments raised in the research on transition to democracy suggest reevaluating indicators of political aspects of the system. For example, it is possible that individuals' assessments of people in positions of power are distinct from their appraisals of the institutional aspects of the system (Mishler and Rose 1999; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). Moreover, while people may not trust authorities, they can have positive appraisals of the norms regulating political competition. Note also that perceiving corrupt authorities can taint the assessment of both elections and freedom.

In my analysis, theoretical justification for selecting indicators is based on the concept of *political performance*. Law and order, consensus, and an efficient government signify a good system that is conducive to the development of civil society. I intend to test the extent to which such a construct functions in social consciousness as a separate dimension of societal appraisals. Thus, the indicators for political system evaluation are: lawlessness vs. lawfulness (λ set to 1), social anarchy vs. order, societal conflicts vs. consensus, and government inefficiency vs. government efficiency.

Social costs associated with economic changes that individuals are expected to incur in the early stages of the transition make questions about privatization and assessments of an emerging market economy likely to produce unstable indicators (Przeworski 1996, 1991). Poland's economic situation in 1993, the year of the survey, was a particularly tumultuous time in economic terms. In this chapter, an appraisal of economic systems deals with the concept of *welfare of individuals* – how they are treated by the system in terms of work conditions and the standard of living. For the measurement model I have chosen three indicators: exploitation vs. rightful treatment of workers, unemployment vs. assured work, and impoverished population vs. well-off population (lambda value set to 1).

Using confirmatory factor analysis, I specified a two-factor solution, where the political and economic dimensions of system evaluation are linked to indicators as depicted in Figure 7.1. This figure shows the relationships between observed variables and unobserved variables. The indicators described earlier are observed or measured variables, while the political and economic dimensions of system evaluation are unobserved or latent variables. Following the conventions of structural equation modeling, boxes indicate measured variables, while ovals depict latent variables. Causal relationships between latent and measured (indicator) variables are represented by straight arrows. Curved arrows between variables indicate a covariance between them that is accounted for but unexplained in the model. Measurement error is included for each observed variable in the model.

Figure 7.1. Measurement Model of Political and Economic System



In Part A of Table 7.2, all coefficients refer to time specific models – that is, models estimated separately for past (1988), present (1993), and future (1998). Summary statistics indicate a good fit for these models at each time

Table 7.2. Time-Specific and Over-Time Measurement Models of the Political and Economic Systems for the Past, Present, and Future (N = 873)

A. Time-specific measurement models^a			
Indicators and constructs	Past	Present	Future
	standardized path coefficients		
<i>Political system</i>			
Extent of lawfulness	0.592	0.509	0.639
Government efficiency	0.587	0.637	0.698
Societal order	0.623	0.533	0.661
Societal consensus	0.595	0.597	0.696
<i>Economic system</i>			
Population well-off	0.529	0.630	0.739
Assured work	0.258	0.578	0.723
Treat workers rightfully	0.592	0.437	0.566
B. Over-time measurement model^b			
<i>Political system</i>			
Extent of lawfulness	0.585	0.582	0.634
Government efficiency	0.575	0.597	0.699
Societal order	0.641	0.578	0.667
Societal consensus	0.588	0.565	0.703
<i>Economic system</i>			
Population well-off	0.524	0.633	0.740
Assured work	0.338	0.560	0.731
Treat workers rightfully	0.562	0.440	0.551

^a Past: correlation between latent constructs is 0.570

Past: $\chi^2 = 61.98$ df = 12 Ratio (χ^2 /df) = 5.16 p = 0.000 AGFI = 0.96 IFI = 0.94 RMSEA = 0.07

Present: correlation between latent constructs is 0.595

Present: $\chi^2 = 30.49$ df = 10 Ratio (χ^2 /df) = 3.05 p = 0.001 AGFI = 0.97 IFI = 0.98 RMSEA = 0.05

Future: correlation between latent constructs is .737

Future: $\chi^2 = 62.39$ df = 12 Ratio (χ^2 /df) = 5.19 p = 0.000 AGFI = 0.954 IFI = 0.97 RMSEA = 0.07

^b $\chi^2 = 402.58$ df = 154 Ratio (χ^2 /df) = 2.61 p = 0.000 AGFI = 0.94 IFI = 0.95 RMSEA = 0.04

point. The ratio of the chi-square test statistic to the degrees of freedom for each model ranges from 3.05 in the present to 5.19 in the future, which is within acceptable guidelines (Miller, Slomczynski, and Schoenberg 1981). I also present other fit statistics to provide a more comprehensive assessment of this model (Tanaka 1993). The Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are other widely utilized fit

statistics. Their values suggest a good fit for each of the time points. For the RMSEA, the closer to zero, the better the fit, with .08 and below considered an acceptable model fit (Browne and Cudeck 1993). For the IFI, the closer to 1.000, the better the model fit (Bollen 1989).

All of the factor loadings are significant. In addition, the r-square values for the parameters are for the most part in an acceptable range. They are between 0.191 and 0.406 for 1993, between 0.321 and 0.547 for 1998, and between 0.279 and 0.388 for 1988. The only exception is the indicator assured work in 1988, which has the value of 0.066.

Each model includes correlated measurement errors, whose omission results in a decline in model fit. These errors differ for each time considered and were introduced on the basis of diagnostic statistics. Because they were introduced only for pragmatic purposes, they are not shown in the model.²

Table 7.2, Part B presents the cross-time model, a six-factor solution that incorporates the two-factor solutions at each time point. In the fully specified model, the political and economic dimensions of system evaluation are linked at each time point and across past, present, and future. I include correlated errors for certain indicators over the three time points because the residual components of respondents' answers to the questions over time proved to be significantly related.

Table 7.3. Correlations^a Among Constructs of Evaluation of Political and Economic System in the Past, Present, and Future (N = 873)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
Past					
1. Political system, 1988					
2. Economic system, 1988	0.548				
Present					
3. Political system, 1993	-0.195	-0.449			
4. Economic system, 1993	-0.222	-0.367	0.587		
Future					
5. Political system, 1998	-0.243	-0.219	0.491	0.294	
6. Economic system, 1998	-0.208	-0.265	0.302	0.443	0.727

^a All are significant at .01 or above, except between political systems 1988 and 1993.

² For the past (1988) model, a correlated error is included between law and worker. The model of the present (1993) includes correlated errors between law and worker, and order and law. For the future (1998) model, error terms for order and law are correlated.

Summary statistics, presented in Table 7.3, indicate a good model fit for the cross-time model. In terms of the fit and factor loadings, this model resembles the time-specific model. Thus, the hypothesis about a crystallized image of the political and economic systems, an image that applies to different periods, is confirmed.

Relationship Among Constructs Within and Between Periods

In each time point, political and economic factors are positively linked with one another (0.548 for past, 0.587 for present, and 0.727 for future). The strength of the correlations increases over time. Thus, the political and economic aspects of system evaluation are distinct, yet complementary.

In terms of attitudinal consistency across time, the results of this analysis offer some interesting insights. Associations between past and both present and future evaluations of the political system are negative, suggesting that citizens perceive quite different features of the political system in communist times as compared with both the current situation and future prospects. Yet, present and future political evaluations are positively correlated, signifying that after the fall of communism people considered the evolution of the political system in similar terms.

As far as the economic system is concerned, the pattern is no different: evaluations of the past situation are negatively correlated with analogous evaluations for both the present and future, while evaluations for the present and future are positively associated. There is evidence, then, for a tendency to perceive a disjuncture between economic aspects over time, with the communist period being radically different from the other two periods.

Distinct attitudinal clusters are apparent in each time point, and, importantly, are linked cognitively over very different political and economic realities. Citizens tend to see a positive relationship between the present economic dimension and future political potential. In addition, citizens see the present political situation positively in relation to future economic circumstances.

These results support the hypothesis suggested in the literature on countries experiencing a double – political and economic – transition. According to this hypothesis, citizens tend to evaluate the past situation, in both the economic and political aspects, quite differently than they evaluate either the present or the future. When comparing the present and the future,

in both political and economic terms, their positive assessment of the current situation influences an optimistic outlook on future possibilities.

Differences Between Groups

Support for democracy and assessment of the market economy are likely to ebb and flow with fluctuations in economic circumstances and political changes. Such variability leads researchers to argue that some groups may be more likely to be supportive of the changes. Groups that stand to gain from the changes are more likely to evaluate the political and economic systems positively. Existing research suggests that males, the young, those residing in urban areas, individuals with higher education (i.e., some college or university), and those economically privileged are more likely to be supportive of the system during the early stages of the transition to democracy (Duch 1995; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Kolarska-Bobinska 1994a; Przeworski 1996; Waldron-Moore 1999).

To address the winners-and-losers hypothesis, I examine group differences in the system evaluation. To what extent do those individuals who have the most to gain from the transition evaluate the system differently? To test this, I compare five groups: males and females, young and old respondents, urban and rural residents, education (college versus primary), and high- and low-income respondents.

In order to determine if the same model holds across different groups, I apply a nested model strategy. Following Bollen's (1989: 356–365) discussion, I have created the hierarchy of invariance H_{form} , H_L , H_{LP} , and H_{LPT} where invariance is conceived as a continuum. The least restrictive element of this hierarchy, H_{form} , is a baseline for group comparison. Next, H_L tests whether the pattern of factor loadings is the same across groups. A more restrictive test is H_{LP} , which allows one to evaluate the variances and covariances of the latent constructs, in addition to the factor loadings. The most restrictive test then is H_{LPT} , which adds the variances and covariances of the error terms to the other criteria. Proceeding from more lenient to more stringent requirements of invariance, I can check whether compared groups pass the test of being more and more alike. Table 7.4 presents a summary of chi-square difference test results for the hierarchy of invariance for all groups.

In determining whether the same model holds across different groups, the results from Table 7.4 provide interesting insights. With respect to factor loadings, four of the five groups are invariant in this specification. This

means that the common concept of political and economic systems is shared across various segments of society, with the exception of extreme education groups. In terms of the variances and covariances of latent constructs, only two divisions meet the criterion of no difference: men and women and income categories. With respect to the final invariance test, the error structure, only one group meets the chi-square value requirement at .05 significance. However, it is important to note that the error structure of income categories is significant at the 0.10 level, which offers, at best, inconclusive results (Bollen 1989). Based on the results in Table 7.4, it is permissible to assume that the same model holds across both sex and income categories.

Table 7.4. Hierarchy of Invariance Results for Group Comparisons: Sex, Age, Urban/Rural, Education, and Income

Compared groups	Cumulative sources of significant differences		
	Factor loadings	Variance/covariance of latent constructs	Error structure
Sex			
Men vs. women	No	No	No
Age			
Young vs. old	No	Yes**	—
Urbanization			
Urban vs. rural	No	Yes**	—
Education			
College vs. primary	Yes**	—	—
Income high vs. low	No	No	Yes*

** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$

Table 7.4 also demonstrates group differences in some segments of Polish society with respect to the model of system evaluation. There are differences between age categories and urban and rural residents with respect to the variance and covariance of the latent constructs ($p < 0.05$). For educational categories, in particular, it is useful to examine the standardized path coefficients for the indicators of political and economic factors in the past, present, and future. These values are shown in Table 7.5. From these coefficients, it is apparent that educational categories have quite different retrospective evaluations, particularly in terms of assured work and government efficiency. In terms of current evaluations of political and

economic systems, the coefficients diverge less sharply (e.g., similar levels of government efficiency and to a lesser degree assured work). Prospective evaluations are even more similar in value, suggesting that group differences may decrease over time. The winners-and-losers hypothesis thus received mixed support in terms of the aforementioned groups.

Table 7.5. Group Differences in Evaluation of the Political and Economic System in the Past, Present, and Future: Educational Categories

Construct and Indicators	Standardized path	
	college (N = 133)	primary (N = 259)
<i>Political aspects of the system, 1988</i>		
Extent of lawfulness	0.666	0.568
Government efficiency	0.787	0.496
Societal order	0.559	0.742
Societal consensus	0.517	0.582
<i>Economic aspects of the system, 1988</i>		
Population well-off	0.578	0.432
Assured work	0.142	0.430
Treat workers rightfully	0.599	0.618
<i>Political aspects of the system, 1993</i>		
Extent of lawfulness	0.543	0.548
Government efficiency	0.697	0.646
Societal order	0.534	0.610
Societal consensus	0.469	0.612
<i>Economic aspects of the system, 1993</i>		
Population well-off	0.649	0.622
Assured work	0.445	0.614
Treat workers rightfully	0.380	0.529
<i>Political aspects of the system, 1998</i>		
Extent of lawfulness	0.610	0.628
Government efficiency	0.671	0.642
Societal order	0.616	0.642
Societal consensus	0.733	0.793
<i>Economic aspects of the system, 1998</i>		
Population well-off	0.745	0.758
Assured work	0.826	0.785
Treat workers rightfully	0.453	0.507

Implications of System Evaluation Differences

In this section, I investigate the implications of the 1993 political and economic system evaluations by extending the results of factor analysis to the next wave of the panel survey, 1998. I am interested in determining whether the crystallized image of society evident in the coherent structure of past, present, and future political and economic systems in 1993 affects later political and economic attitudes. I explore the idea that people create certain images of the system that are stable over time and across different aspects of the system. Briefly, there are four possible relationships among these evaluative images over time. The pattern may be consistently linear, where current and future assessments progress in a linear fashion from their evaluation of the past. A second possibility is that an individual may view the current system as a step down from the previous system, with the future ranking higher than the present. In addition, citizens may rank the present system higher than the past and see a decline in future terms. Finally, the fourth possibility is that respondents may view the past system more favorably than the present and future.

I examine four categories of respondents based on the past, current, and future political and economic factors described earlier. These groups conform to the four possible patterns outlined above, which I label optimists, those who saw things declining and then getting better (“worse/better”), those who saw things improving then getting worse (“better/worse”), and pessimists. I am interested in exploring how individuals’ assessments of the changes as of 1993 are associated with their opinions about aspects of the system five years hence. To what extent are 1993 system evaluations related to later views of political and economic issues? I examine correlations among these groups based on 1993 data and questionnaire items gauging political and economic attitudes from 1998. The results are presented in Table 7.6. I emphasize results from four groups: political optimists, political pessimists, economic optimists, and economic pessimists, respectively.

The results in Part A of Table 7.6 provide information about connections between attitudes over time, particularly in light of differences among the four groups investigated here. In 1998, political optimists are likely to evaluate the current economic system negatively, express the belief that changes in general bring more threats than opportunities, and accept the idea that former communists should be allowed to hold office. At the other end of the spectrum in 1998, political pessimists are not likely to prefer democracy, agree that former communists should not be in office, and are likely to have voted for the post-communist party in the 1997 elections. Political

evaluations from 1993 thus have potential implications for subsequent attitudes about the system.

Table 7.6. Correlates of System Evaluations

1998 questionnaire items	Optimists	Worse/better	Better/worse	Pessimists
A. Political system evaluations				
Preference for democracy	0.002	-0.045	0.037	-0.110 **
Former communists should not be in office	-0.089 *	0.051	-0.044	0.091 **
Individual future if Poland joins EU	0.068	-0.084 *	-0.009	-0.055
Changes bring more threats (than opportunities)	0.112 **	-0.066	-0.043	-0.038
Negative evaluation of current economic system	0.120 **	-0.098 *	0.000	-0.001
Voted for nationalist-Christian parties in 1997	0.076 *	-0.065	-0.086 *	-0.067 *
Voted for post-communist party in 1997	-0.040	0.098 **	-0.069	0.098 **
B. Economic system evaluations				
Preference for democracy	0.014	0.055	-0.077	0.106 **
Former communists should not be in office	-0.043	0.070 *	-0.029	0.100 **
Individual future if Poland joins EU negatively impacted	0.083 *	-0.043	-0.020	-0.092 **
Vote against Poland joining EU	-0.027	0.029	-0.007	0.107 **
Minority should have the right to criticize majority in politics	-0.114 **	0.029	-0.031	0.035
Systematic elections are unnecessary if rulers are good	0.102 **	0.018	0.036	-0.047
More losses than benefits politically after 1997	-0.068	0.099 **	0.013	0.116 **
Joining the EU would be bad	-0.046	0.064	-0.010	0.118 **

**p < 0.05, *p < 0.10 (two-tailed tests)

Table 7.6, Part B presents correlates between the economic evaluations from 1993 among the four groups and later attitudinal items. In 1998, economic optimists are likely to express a preference for democracy, disagree that the minority should have the right to criticize the majority in politics, and

disagree that systematic elections are unnecessary if rulers are good. Based on 1998 indicators, economic pessimists are likely to agree that joining the European Union would be bad for Poland, would likely vote against Poland joining the EU, see more losses than benefits politically after 1997, are likely to see a better life in Poland in 1998 compared with 1988, and are likely to agree that former communists should not be in office. These results demonstrate a separation between both political and economic optimists and pessimists over time. In addition, they suggest that prior system evaluations carry over, where 1993 assessments potentially impact attitudes and political behaviors (e.g., voting) at a later date.

Conclusion

The general public's response to the changes evident since the events of the late 1980s has implications both for studies of public opinion and for research on democratic transition. How Poland's public evaluates the political and economic changes, both in relation to one another as well as over time, has consequences for future political and economic institutions, and democratically elected leaders. Democracies require vibrant civil and political societies in order for democratic institutions and values to succeed and thrive. Yet, support for democracy is often considered to be dependent on the institutional performance of the economy (Barnes 2001). Understanding how evaluations of political and economic dimensions of the system operate in tandem and over time is important in societies undergoing a dual transition.

In the first stage of this research, I developed a model proposing that citizens' evaluations of political and economic dimensions contain distinct, yet related, aspects of transition processes. This model provided an accurate depiction of the structure of citizens' evaluations of the system in Poland in past, present, and future terms when they were asked in 1993. That is, how people view political aspects of the system in the past, present, and future related both to one another and to views of economic dimensions of the system over time. I then explored group differences on the cross-time model of system evaluation. Briefly, education, age, and urban/rural residence emerged as potentially persistent cleavages in Polish society, while gender and income groups did not differ as much as previous research suggested. I also explored the implications of the 1993 political and economic evaluations for 1998 political and economic attitudes among four groups. Results indicate that there are potential consequences for later attitudes from the prior system evaluation.

The attitudinal coherence in Poland's general population in terms of system evaluation has implications for democratic transitions. Establishing the link between the political and economic dimensions of the regime – both within a specific time frame (e.g., the present) and linked to the past and future – points to a collective memory within the general public that can serve to reinforce institutional shifts. Public opinion persists over time in a coherent structure that considers both political and economic aspects of system-level changes. This research demonstrates that evaluations of the former regime are linked both to evaluations of the current situation and to future possibilities. Furthermore, evaluations from 1993 have subsequent attitudinal consequences, including future support for democracy. Understanding the relationships between evaluations of the political and economic aspects of the system, in addition to how these operate over time in the minds of citizens, is important for nascent democracies and democratic consolidation processes.