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PARTISAN PREFERENCES AND DEMOCRATIC COMMITMENTS*

Does partisanship matter for individuals' support for democracy in post-communist Eastern Europe? If so, what might such a relationship imply for democratic consolidation? Despite the considerable attention paid to the determinants of mass-level regime support in these new democracies (see, for example, Dalton 1994; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Gibson 1996a; Miller and White 1998; Miller, White, and Heywood 1998; Mishler and Rose 1999a; Reisinger et al. 1994; Rohrschneider 1999; Waldron-Moore 1999), very few studies have systematically examined the question of whether partisan cleavages reflect or structure commitment to democratic principles (but see Miller and White 1998; Miller, White, and Heywood 1998). Such lack of attention is perhaps not surprising, given the widely held view that post-communist party systems are unstable, weak, and non-programmatic. As a result of both the multiple legacies of the communist past and the uncertainties associated with systemic transformation, ordinary citizens, in particular, it is claimed, have found it difficult to form meaningful political identities. Hence, voting decisions in consecutive elections are volatile and only weakly rooted in the individual's position in the social structure,

* The research leading to this chapter was partly supported by a grant from the (U.S.) National Council for Eurasia and East European Research and a grant from the Mershon Center of The Ohio State University. We would like to thank Paul A. Beck and Richard Gunther for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

self-interests, or ideological dispositions (Bruszt and Simon 1992; Bunce and Csanadi 1993; Cirtautas 1994; Evans and Whitefield 1993; Mair 1996; Ost 1993; Schopflin 1991; Sztompka 1992; Wesolowski 1996).

In contrast to this argument, in previous work on the relationship between political identities and support for economic reform in Poland in the initial period of systemic transformation, we showed that there is more “structure” to post-communist politics than meets the eye (see also Duch 1998; Kitschelt 1995a, 1995b; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Markowski 1997; Miller and White 1998; Miller, White, and Heywood 1998: ch. 16 and 17; Toka 1996, 1997; and Tworzecki 1996). Despite the fluidity of party politics at the elite level, weak party links with social groups and secondary organizations, and a high degree of electoral volatility, individuals do make conscious political choices when casting (or not casting) their ballots. In new democracies especially these choices are best understood as pertaining to political families or tendencies *rather* than to specific political parties *per se* (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Converse and Dupeux 1962; Deutsch, Lindon, and Weill 1966).

Although the types and number of political families may vary across democracies, each of these families is composed of a distinct set of political parties with similar ideologies, programs, or electoral appeals to the public. If understood in terms of preference for a political family, voting choices in the new democracies of Eastern Europe reflect individuals’ fundamental political and economic orientations and self-interests as shaped by their experience during both the communist era and the present period of profound societal change. Taken together, the distinct options provided to the electorate and the choices that voters have made during the first decade of competitive politics in post-communist societies constitute partisan cleavages that embody differentiated ideological stances, self-interests, and policy preferences at both the elite and mass level (Duch 1998; Kitschelt 1995a, 1995b; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Markowski 1997; Miller and White 1998; Miller, White, and Heywood 1998, ch. 16 and 17; Toka 1996, 1997; Tworzecki 1996).

In the following analysis we extend our research on mass-level politics in post-communist Poland by addressing two basic questions. Do partisan preferences structure support for democratic values and practices? If so, what is it about these choices that account for varying levels of democratic commitment? If we conceive of expressed preferences for political families primarily as reflections of ideological dispositions and self-interests, which aspect of such attachments carries greater weight in explaining normative support for democracy?

We focus our analysis of partisan differentiation in support for democracy in terms of commitment to core democratic principles and practices *rather*

than evaluations of the performance of the current regime in Poland. We base our analysis on a broad concept of liberal democracy as it is usually contrasted with authoritarianism (Dahl 1971, 1989; Held 1987; Sorensen 1993), and thus consider support for *all* key principles of democracy: majority rule and the protection of minority rights, competitive elections, constitutional power, political equality, voters' competence, freedom to run for office, the rule of law, mutual concessions, freedom of the press, the right to protest and the legitimacy of interest-group politics, and a multiparty system.

It has been argued that the ubiquitous distinction between "diffuse" and "instrumental" regime support (Easton 1965) is theoretically and methodologically flawed (Craig 1993; Kornberg and Clarke 1992; Mishler and Rose 1999: 3–6; Muller and Jukam 1977), and that, in any case, it is particularly problematic when applied to analyses of political support in new democracies (Mishler and Rose 1999b; Rose and Mishler 1994). Like many others (Evans and Whitefield 1993; Gibson 1996a, 1999; Morlino and Montero 1995; Montero, Gunther, and Torcal 1997; Waldron-Moore 1999; Weil 1989), however, we contend that there are theoretically and empirically sound reasons to maintain the distinction between endorsement of the fundamental principles of democracy and evaluation of the performance of a particular democratic regime. Most important, by maintaining this distinction one can examine how the two are related and assess whether their determinants are the same. This is especially crucial in the case of new democracies, particularly those that are experiencing severe economic difficulties. Were support of democracy to be conceptualized as satisfaction with the functioning of the "actually existing" democracy in these societies, then widespread negative assessments might be (wrongly) construed as a threat to regime consolidation (Linz and Stepan 1996; Przeworski 1991) and leave unanswered the more crucial question of the sources and consequences of varying levels of commitment to democratic principles and practices. Although our main purpose here is to address the issue of the partisan structuring of democratic support, we do take satisfaction with the current regime into account in our analysis and thus engage this debate as well.

In this chapter, we show that attachment to a particular political family, as expressed through voting for liberal/social democratic, Christian/nationalist, populist, or post-communist parties in parliamentary elections, is associated with an individual's degree of principled support for democracy. We also demonstrate that the ideological and instrumental components of partisanship have rather similar effects on democratic commitments. Thus, our study makes a number of important substantive contributions to the understanding of democratization in Poland, and, by implication, in other post-communist

societies. First, it provides evidence for the existence of partisan cleavages that are reflective of voters' fundamental ideological dispositions and self-interests, with respect not only to the establishment of a market economy but also to the desirability of democracy as such. Second, it lends strong empirical support to the claim that principled support for democracy and satisfaction with the functioning of a democracy are distinct orientations that should not be equated with each other. They are weakly related empirically, have different antecedents, and most likely have different consequences for democratic politics. Lastly, our study of the relationship between partisanship and democratic commitments is based upon different measures of both the independent and dependent variables, which, in our view, represents improvements upon those most often used in empirical analyses of mass politics in post-communist Europe.

Measurement of Partisan Preferences and Political Families

A common presumption in the literature on post-communist societies is that relatively few ordinary citizens, especially in the initial period of systemic change, are able to make meaningful voting choices among political parties. This is attributed to three main reasons. First, fluid and fragmented party systems, in which there is a surfeit of electoral options, do not provide clear referents for the formation and adequate representation of voters' ideological and policy preferences. Second, more than forty years of communism had eroded or suppressed fundamental societal cleavages on which diverse group interests, and, in turn, partisan alignments could be based. Third, although the establishment of democracy 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, the possibility of making meaningful voting choices. In sum, because of the inchoate nature of the new party systems and the "flattened landscapes" of post-communist societies, partisan preferences are only weakly anchored in individuals' social characteristics and their lived experiences of state socialism and systemic transformation and only weakly associated with their ideological predispositions toward politics and the economy. Instead, the voting decisions of a free-floating electorate are influenced by the exit and entry of leaders and would-be leaders, the promises of challengers and the failed promises of incumbents, and the issues of the day. Hence, there are high levels of electoral volatility in Eastern Europe, as measured by the net

percentage of voters who change their party preference from one election to the next.

The validity of these assertions – what Kitschelt has called the “*tabula rasa*” hypothesis – has increasingly been put to empirical test and been found wanting. First, mass-level orientations during the period of late state socialism were neither homogeneous nor unrelated to position in the social structure (Kohn and Slomczynski 1993; Shabad and Slomczynski 1999; Shabad and Slomczynski 2000; Slomczynski and Shabad 1997; Slomczynski and Shabad 2000). Second, although many East Europeans did hold ideal or “mythic” views about democracy and the market (Kolarska-Bobinska 1990), 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 with regard to the pros and cons of the new political and economic order. Third, despite having had to be built largely from scratch and however diverse they may be across the East European landscape, the new party systems are increasingly characterized by meaningful and consequential cleavages that link party elites and their partisan supporters (Duch 1998; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Markowski 1997; Miller and White 1998; Miller, White, and Heywood 1998; Toka 1996; Tworzecki 1996). Finally, if one makes the distinction between volatility *within* blocs or political families of parties with similar ideologies and programmatic appeals and volatility *across* party blocs, post-communist electorates are less free-floating and magmatic than measures of inter-party switching would suggest (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 400–401).

Like many other studies of partisanship, the starting point of our operationalization of partisan preference is the *reported voting behavior of individuals in a given election*. In the specific case of Poland, we begin with respondents’ reported voting behavior in the 1989 and 1991 parliamentary elections (according to the 1993 wave of the panel study) and in the 1993 and 1997 legislative contests (according to the 1998 wave of the survey).¹ But in

¹ Basic interview questions regarding partisan preferences are as follows:

- 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.
- 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?
- Parliamentary elections in 1993: Did you vote in the parliamentary elections in October 1993? If yes: From which political party or political group was the person for whom you voted?
- Parliamentary elections in 1997: Did you vote in the parliamentary elections in October 1997? If yes: From which political party or political group was the person for whom you voted?

accordance with our contention that the more meaningful referent of voting choices in post-communist societies is a political family or tendency or bloc rather than a *particular* political party *per se*, for each of the parliamentary elections of 1991, 1993, and 1997 we aggregated all declarations of voting choice by assigning them to one of four political families (with a residual category of “other”).² Our typology of political families is similar to that of others (Gebethner 1993; Kitschelt 1995a, 1995b; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Schopflin 1993; Tworzecki 1996; Wesolowski 1996; Wiatr 1993) and consists of the following: (1) *liberal/social democratic* parties and political groups, (2) *Christian/nationalist* parties and political groups, (3) *populist* parties and political groups, and (4) *post-communist* parties and political groups. We have assigned parties to these four political families based on our own examination of party programs and their electoral appeals (Słodkowska 1995; Paszkiewicz 1996; Gebethner 1997). In addition, we used data gathered from thirty-nine in-depth interviews with leaders of politically significant parties and interest groups, as well as with political scientists and sociologists in Poland.

To give but a few examples to illustrate the way in which we made our assignment, Freedom Union (formerly Democratic Union), the political party among whose leaders are Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jacek Kuron, Leszek Balcerowicz, and Bronisław Geremek, has been placed in the liberal/social democratic family, together with the more explicitly social democratic Union of Labor. The Polish Peasant Party (PSL) has been categorized as belonging to the populist political family. Solidarity Election Action (AWS), Center Alliance (PC), and Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN) have been assigned to the Christian/nationalist bloc. At the core of the post-communist political family until 1999 was the Social Democrats of the Polish Republic (SdRP), the offshoot of the Polish United Workers Party that ruled Poland for more than forty years.³

² We begin our assignment of parties to political families with the 1991 parliamentary election because by that time Solidarity had already splintered and the number of political parties had proliferated. These developments signaled the erosion of dichotomous political identities (Party versus non-Party or Solidarity versus non-Solidarity) and made possible the partisan expression of competing and multiple interests and ideological dispositions (Grabowska 1992; Wnuk-Lipinski 1993). 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 make their voting choices on the basis of an attachment to a political family rather than to a political party.

³ For the 1991, 1993, and 1997 parliamentary elections the following parties were assigned to each of the political families: Liberal/social democrats – UD (Democratic

In Table 8.1, we show the presence of party preferences among respondents in the 1998 panel study according to their assignment to the four political families. As can be seen, the percentage of the Polish electorate who declared *any* preference at all fluctuates across elections. It declined precipitously between the 1989 semi-competitive election that initiated the democratic transition and the 1991 fully free parliamentary election. As one might 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 number of respondents who declared a partisan preference increased substantially in the 1993 election and remained steady in 1997.

The data presented in Table 8.1 suggest that, on the whole, the level of partisanship is rather low in Poland if we look at individual 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 of 1989–97, more than eight out of ten Poles expressed a preference in at least one parliamentary election; 27.8 percent did so on all four occasions. The total lack of declared preference is quite low – displayed by only 11 percent of the sample.

Union), KL-D (Liberal-Democratic Congress) in 1991 and 1993, UW (Freedom Union) in 1997, and UP (Union of Labor) in all elections; Populists – PSL (Polish Peasant Party) and all other agrarian parties, Solidarity, Solidarity 80, and Self-Defense parties in all elections, BBWR (Non-Party Block for Reforms) in 1993, and KPEiR (National Coalition of Pensioners and Retirees) in 1997; Christian/nationalists – various Christian parties in all elections, PC (Center Alliance), KPN (Confederation of Independent Poland), SN (National Party) in 1991 and 1993, and AWS (Solidarity Election Action) in 1997; 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 percent of all those who expressed a party preference in the 1991, 1993, or 1997 elections). The 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 1997 elections.

Table 8.1. Presence and Absence of Party Preferences in Parliamentary Elections in 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1997 According to Retrospective Declarations in 1993 and 1998

Party preferences	Proportion	N
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1989</i>		
Presence of party preference	0.763	1,301
Solidarity	0.596	1,018
Non-Solidarity	0.166	283
Absence of party preference	0.237	399
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1991</i>		
Presence of party preference	0.446	789
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.170	298
Christian/nationalist parties	0.073	130
Populist parties	0.148	258
Post-communist parties	0.043	76
Other parties	0.012	17
Absence of party preference	0.554	975
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1993</i>		
Presence of party preference	0.594	936
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.098	170
Christian/nationalist parties	0.048	84
Populist parties	0.250	439
Post-communist parties	0.188	326
Other parties	0.010	17
Absence of party preference	0.406	716
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1997</i>		
Presence of party preference	0.619	1,074
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.092	158
Christian/nationalist parties	0.238	414
Populist parties	0.092	159
Post-communist parties	0.194	337
Other parties	0.003	6
Absence of party preference	0.381	669

Measurement of Normative Support for Democracy

Our dependent variable is a measure of support for liberal democratic principles. It is derived from responses to thirteen items included in the 1998 panel study pertaining to all the key principles of liberal democracy broadly conceived: majority rule, the protection of minority rights, the necessity of elections and a multiparty system, the rule of law, universal suffrage, inclusive right to run for office, the peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiations and compromise, freedom of the press and mass media, the representation of group interests, and the right to protest. Hence, unlike many measures of democratic support (see Finkel, Sigelman, and Humphries 1999), our dependent variable is a comprehensive, multi-item index that explicitly gauges endorsement of fundamental values and norms of liberal democracy (Dahl 1971, 1989; Held 1987; Sorensen 1993).

In Table 8.2, we list all dimensions of principled support for liberal democracy on which we focus, the proportion of respondents who expressed agreement with each of these core liberal democratic values, and their factor loadings resulting from principal component analysis. For all but one of the thirteen items we have categorized the pro-democratic response as either “strongly agree” or “agree” or “strongly disagree” or “disagree,” depending on the way in which the statement was worded.⁴ Hence, according to our conceptualization of liberal democracy, a pro-democratic orientation is understood to mean *agreement* with the principles of majority rule, protection of minority rights, and compromise as the best means to settle disputes. Similarly, a pro-democratic response is also understood to mean *disagreement* with the notions that ordinary people are incapable of making sound voting decisions, certain political groups should be excluded from competing for elected office or some people should not be given the right to vote, majority preferences should limit freedom of the mass media, those who pursue group interests should be constrained from participation in public life, elections are not necessary if the right person governs the country well, and the right to demonstrate should be limited.

As can be seen from the data presented in Table 8.2, adult Poles were far more supportive of certain liberal democratic principles than they were of others. For example, substantial majorities endorsed the notions of minority rights, constitutionalism, and the desirability of negotiation and compromise

⁴ Insofar as the question pertaining to majority rule was the first in the set and the responses were concentrated in the middle categories, we made an exception for this item and treated only „strongly agree” as the pro-democratic response.

to settle political conflicts. Other values, like interest-group pluralism, the competency of ordinary people to choose their representatives, universal suffrage, and freedom of the mass media, received the endorsement of only a minority. Still other principles generated substantial polarization, most notably the right to protest, the necessity of a multiparty system, the inclusive right to run for office, and application of the rule of law to ordinary citizens. In short, there was considerable variation among the public as a whole in their level of support for this array of core democratic values.

Table 8.2. Measurement of Normative Support for Democracy

Questionnaire items ^a	Proportion of pro-democratic answers	Factor loadings ^b
A. Majority rule Democracy means that after the elections the minority must yield to the majority (SA)	0.286	0.219
B. Minority rights In politics the minority should have an unlimited right to criticize decisions made by the majority (SA+A)	0.724	0.379
C. Necessity of elections Elections are not necessary if political leaders well represent the interests of citizens (SD+D)	0.367	0.649
D. Constitutional power If a good person actually governs, he or she need not obey the law (SD+D)	0.781	0.553
E. Universal voting rights Some groups of people should be stripped of their voting rights (SD+D)	0.316	0.499
F. Voters' competence Most people do not understand politics well enough to make a reasonable choice in electing deputies of the Sejm (Parliament) (SD+D)	0.111	0.263
G. Inclusive right to run for office Former communists should not be allowed to be named as candidates for various elected high offices (SD+D)	0.442	0.346
H. Rule of law One need not obey laws with which the majority has ceased to agree (SD+D)	0.447	0.459
I. Principle of negotiation and compromise In politics, mutual concessions are the best way of making difficult decisions (SA+A)	0.806	0.313

J. Freedom of press / mass media		
Those TV programs that are not liked by most society should be banned (SD+D)	0.316	0.398
K. The right to protest		
The authorities should not allow every group or lobby to demand its rights (SD+D)	0.595	0.561
L. The promotion of group interests		
Those who represent only the interests of their own voters should not be involved in politics (SD+D)	0.200	0.443
M. Multiparty system		
In Poland, one good political party would be enough and then other parties would not be needed (DS+D)	0.493	0.653

a Originally, all responses were expressed on a five-point scale, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with neither agree nor disagree in the middle. In this table, SA means strongly agree, A means agree, DS means strongly disagree, and D means disagree.

b Principal component analysis. Eigenvalue = 2.76. Proportion of variance = 0.212. Cronbach alpha = 0.676.

Expectations

Our contention is that voting choices, as expressed in terms of support for a political family, are influenced primarily by distinct, albeit related, characteristics of individuals, namely, their ideological dispositions and self-interests. In our previous work on voting decisions in Poland (Shabad and Slomczynski 1999), we found consistent differences among supporters of the four political families with respect to their orientations toward state paternalism and a market economy. In general, liberal/social democrats, and, to a lesser extent, Christian/nationalists were strong proponents of a limited state and a market economy. Populists were similar to those who consistently abstained from electoral participation in their strong preference for state paternalism and negative stance toward the market. Post-communists tended to be internally divided, and, on average, were neutral in their views toward a market economy and somewhat opposed to state paternalism. Thus, they fell between the two polar opposites of liberal/social democrats and Christian/nationalists, on the one hand, and populists, on the other.

Our expectations are somewhat different with regard to the positioning of the four political families in terms of the degree of their normative support for democracy. We assume that, because of their programs and electoral appeals, the four political families attract voters with differing ideological dispositions that incline them toward greater or lesser support for democracy.

We also assume that the four political families attract voters with differing perceptions of how well or poorly their self-interests are being met by democratic institutions and practices (see Evans and Whitefield 1995; Przeworski 1991; and Waldron-Moore 1999 in this regard). Finally, we assume that the effects of ideology and perceived self-interest will be mutually reinforcing for some families but contradictory in the case of others. For reasons of both ideology and self-interest, we expect that liberal/social democrats and populists will be polar opposites with regard to the extent of their democratic commitments. The political and social values as well as advantaged position in the social structure of liberal/social democrats coincide and should make them the most supportive of democratic principles. The illiberal and majoritarian tendencies of populists, as well as their socioeconomically disadvantaged position, should rank them as the least supportive of democracy, if not hostile to it.

In the case of Christian/nationalist and post-communist party supporters, our initial hypothesis is that their ideological dispositions and self-interests do not coincide, and, thus, we expect that both groups will fall somewhere in between the polar opposites. Because Christian/nationalists are only somewhat less socioeconomically advantaged than liberal/social democrats, their self-interests ought to promote a relatively high level of support for democracy. In their case, however, ideological and cultural values rooted in traditionalism and the teachings of the Catholic Church (Wenzel 1998) militate against their adherence to certain core aspects of the democratic creed. Thus, we expect that Christian/nationalists will be more supportive of democracy than populist voters but less so than liberal/social democrats.

Post-communist identifiers are very similar to liberal/social democrats in terms of their socioeconomic profile, and their relatively high level of educational attainment, in particular, should promote pro-democratic views. But the programs and rhetoric of parties belonging to this political family are similar in some respects to those of the populists (Paszkievicz 1996). This, together with the fact that the political biographies of many supporters of the post-communist bloc include long-time membership in the former Communist Party (Shabad and Slomczynski 2000), should incline them to be less democratically committed than would be indicated by their demographic profile alone. Given the contradictory effects of ideology and interests, we expect that, like Christian/nationalists, they will be more supportive of democracy than populists but less so than liberal/social democrats. But whether both groups are closer to the one or the other of the polar opposites will depend in each case on the relative weight of ideology versus interests.

Finally, due to the emphasis placed on evaluations of regime performance in explanations of mass-level support for democracy, we also consider the possibility that partisan groups express varying levels of normative commitment to democracy *because* they differ in a similar manner in their degree of satisfaction with the existing regime. This might be the case if perceived self-interests co-vary with evaluations of regime performance or if political satisfaction is strongly influenced by being on the winning or losing side of an election (Anderson and Guillory 1997). Whether evaluations of the functioning of the regime ultimately matter depends, of course, on whether these are related to support for democracy *per se*.

Partisan Preferences and Normative Commitment to Democracy

As we have seen, there is significant variation among ordinary Poles in the degree to which they express normative commitment to democracy. What accounts for such variation in support of democratic principles at the individual level? In particular, are individuals' partisan preferences (in terms of their support for parties comprising distinct political families) related to their overall level of normative commitment to democracy? To answer this question, in the following analyses we make use of a composite index based on the results of principal component analysis shown in Table 8.2. In Table 8.3, we present an analysis of variance of our measure of principled support for democracy with respect to voting preferences in four parliamentary elections, beginning with the 1989 semi-competitive contest to the Sejm, which initiated the democratic transition in Poland, and ending with the most recent legislative election of 1997. Although the relationships between voting choice and democratic orientations are weak, in all four electoral periods the differences in mean scores on the index of support for democracy are statistically significant. Moreover, the pattern of differences across political families is consistent across all elections.

As expected, beginning with the 1991 parliamentary election, liberal/social democrats were consistently the most supportive of democratic principles and were significantly more so than all other partisan groups. As hypothesized, populists expressed the weakest commitment to democratic values; indeed, over time, they increasingly resembled the most anti-democratic segment of the electorate – that is, those who expressed no partisan preference whatsoever. But contrary to our initial expectations, post-communists consistently ranked second (and substantially higher than

Christian/nationalists) in their mean level of support for democracy (for similar results for Hungary, see Miller, White, and Heywood 1998: 348; see also Rose 1995a, 1995b). Equally surprising is the finding that those who cast their ballot for the Communist Party or its allied “puppet” parties in the first semi-competitive election of 1989 were more pro-democratic than voters for the democratic opposition *Solidarnosc*.

Table 8.3. Normative Support for Democracy in 1998, According to Party Preferences in Parliamentary Elections in 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1997: Analysis of Variance

Party preferences	Mean	Standard deviation	N
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1989</i>			
Solidarity	0.041	0.977	1018
Non-Solidarity	0.285	0.987	283
Absence of party preferences	-0.296	1.000	399
F = 30.835	Eta = 0.187	Eta ² = 0.035	
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1991</i>			
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.563	0.912	298
Christian/nationalist parties	0.238	0.941	130
Populist parties	-0.005	0.950	258
Post-communist parties	0.432	1.032	76
Absence of party preference	-0.236	0.957	975
F = 47.070	Eta = 0.313	Eta ² = 0.098	
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1993</i>			
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.782	0.867	170
Christian/nationalist parties	0.125	0.940	84
Populist parties	-0.084	0.907	439
Post-communist parties	0.236	0.976	326
Absence of party preference	-0.256	0.982	716
F = 48.129	Eta = 0.316	Eta ² = 0.100	
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1997</i>			
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.676	0.890	158
Christian/nationalist parties	0.013	0.958	414
Populist parties	-0.221	0.862	159
Post-communist parties	0.242	1.012	337
Absence of party preference	-0.238	0.973	669
F = 37.307	Eta = 0.282	Eta ² = 0.079	

An identical pattern of support for democracy was evidenced among those who identified *exclusively* with one political family versus another

across the three elections between 1991 and 1997. By exclusive identification we mean reported vote for parties belonging to the same political family in one, two, or three elections *and* with no expressed preference for parties belonging to different political families in other elections. The mean score of support for democratic principles among Poles who cast a ballot for parties belonging to the liberal/social democratic camp in all three parliamentary elections was 0.876, whereas for three-time populist-party voters it was 0.118. The mean scores for post-communist and Christian/nationalist party supporters were 0.600 and 0.572, respectively. It should be noted, however, that it was *only* among three-time voters for populist or Christian /nationalist parties and among two-time voters for the post-communist camp that the mean level of principled support for democracy was positive. In contrast, even one-time liberal/social democratic partisans were on average democratic in their orientations (and even more so than strong populist identifiers).

Although these findings indicate that partisan preferences are related to overall levels of support for democratic values, they do not reveal whether there are similarly systematic differences among political families in the *particular* principles that they endorse or reject. To address this issue, in Table 8.4, we present the proportion of political family supporters in the 1997 parliamentary election who gave a pro-democratic response to each of the thirteen items used to construct the composite index. What is especially interesting about these data is that, in general, all four partisan groups tended to endorse *and* to reject the same set of democratic principles. Substantial majorities (two-thirds and above) of all four groups expressed agreement with the principles of constitutionalism and minority rights and with the desirability of compromise. The right to protest was endorsed by at least 60 percent of all four groups. Common to all was their overwhelming *disagreement* with the idea that ordinary citizens are sufficiently competent to select their representatives. In addition, all but liberal/social democratic voters were alike in their widespread rejection (70 percent and above) of the principles of interest-group pluralism and majority rule. Moreover, just as there was considerable division among adult Poles over the necessity of a multiparty system and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the necessity of holding elections, such polarization also characterized Christian/nationalists, populists and post-communists. Only liberal/social democrats overwhelmingly endorsed the key democratic principle of a multiparty system, and only this group gave majority support to the necessity of holding elections even if “good rulers” governed.

One additional finding in Table 8.4 merits some discussion. This is the singularly strong support given to the inclusive right to run for office by

voters of parties belonging to the post-communist political family (the ones most likely to be the target of whatever limitations might be placed on such a right). That this partisan group stands out from the rest in their endorsement of this right is not surprising. But it does raise the question of whether our finding that post-communist party supporters consistently rank second in their mean level of commitment to democratic principles stems from their position as the democratic “outlier” on this item. To check for this possibility, we constructed a measure of normative support for democracy that omitted the question pertaining to the inclusive right to run for office and replicated the analysis of variance presented in Table 8.3 using the twelve-item scale. Very little changes. Although the mean scores for liberal/social democrats and post-communists decrease somewhat and those for Christian/nationalists and populists increase slightly, in each electoral period the ranking of the four partisan groups remains the same and the differences among them continue to be statistically significant. Thus, we are confident that our initial findings are not an artifact of divergence on this particular item, and in the analyses to follow we make use of our thirteen-item measure of support for democracy.

Table 8.4. Pro-democratic Responses in 1998 Among Supporters of Different Political Families in 1997

Questionnaire items ^a	Liberal/ social democrats	Christian/ nationalists	Populists	Post- commu- nists
	Proportions of pro-democratic responses			
A. Majority rule Democracy means that after the elections the minority must yield to the majority (SA)	0.331	0.273	0.210	0.251
B. Minority rights In politics the minority should have an unlimited right to criticize decisions made by the majority (SA+A)	0.858	0.767	0.689	0.742
C. Necessity of elections Elections are not necessary if political leaders represent the interests of citizens (SD+D)	0.636	0.397	0.248	0.398
D. Constitutional power If a good person actually governs, he or she need not obey the law (SD+D)	0.907	0.795	0.765	0.839

E. Universal voting rights				
Some groups of people should be stripped of their voting rights (SD+D)	0.571	0.388	0.358	0.447
F. Voters' competence				
Most people do not understand politics well enough to make a good choice in electing deputies of the Sejm (Parliament) (SD+D)	0.160	0.121	0.068	0.111
G. Inclusive right to run for office				
Former communists should not be allowed to be named as candidates for various elected high offices (SD+D)	0.457	0.273	0.383	0.713
H. Rule of law				
One need not obey laws with which the majority has ceased to agree (SD+D)	0.549	0.469	0.429	0.534
I. Principle of negotiation and compromise				
In politics, mutual concessions are the best way of making difficult decisions (SA+A)	0.871	0.808	0.833	0.836
J. Freedom of press / mass media				
Those TV programs that are not liked by most society should be banned (SD+D)	0.417	0.221	0.210	0.425
K. The right to protest				
The authorities should not allow every group or lobby to demand its rights (SD+D)	0.736	0.610	0.617	0.605
L. The promotion of group interests				
Those who represent only the interests of their own voters should not be involved in politics (SD+D)	0.350	0.199	0.142	0.211
M. Multiparty system				
In Poland, one good political party would be enough and then other parties would not be needed (DS+D)	0.810	0.557	0.401	0.553

a Originally, all responses were expressed on a five-point scale, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with neither agree nor disagree in the middle. In this table, SA means strongly agree, A means agree, DS means strongly disagree, and D means disagree.

Does the pattern of differentiation across political families in terms of their *overall* level of normative commitment to democracy persist in each election period when we take into consideration voting choices at other times? In Table 8.5, we present the results of a regression analysis of the index of principled support for democracy on partisan preferences in each election. In virtually all instances, the relationships between voting choices in any single election and support for democracy in 1998 are statistically significant, even when voting

choices in other elections are taken into account. Especially interesting in this regard are the persistent and sizable effects of partisan preferences in the first truly competitive election of 1991. In addition, with only one exception, the relationships between voting choices and democratic orientations are positive, that is, participation in even one election (irrespective of the political family for which one cast one's ballot) is associated with increased support for democracy (for similar findings, see Evans and Whitefield 1995). Nonetheless, the positive impact of voting varies, depending on the particular election and the political family with which one identified. For example, voting for a party belonging to the liberal/social democratic camp in the parliamentary elections of 1991, 1993, and 1997 had the strongest net effect on support for democracy. In the same three elections, populist-party supporters were the least pro-democratic, and, by 1997, had become marginally less democratic than those who expressed no partisan preference whatsoever.

Table 8.5. Regression of Normative Support for Democracy in 1998 on Party Preferences in Parliamentary Elections in 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1997

Party preferences	B	SE	Beta
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1989</i>			
Solidarity	0.038	0.102	0.017
Non-Solidarity	0.271	0.114	0.110***
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1991</i>			
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.499	0.072	0.205***
Christian/nationalist parties	0.349	0.094	0.099***
Populist parties	0.166	0.070	0.062***
Post-communist parties	0.318	0.122	0.073***
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1993</i>			
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.589	0.110	0.188***
Christian/nationalist parties	0.206	0.127	0.046*
Populist parties	0.064	0.077	0.029
Post-communist parties	0.148	0.098	0.060
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1997</i>			
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.289	0.112	0.090***
Christian/nationalist parties	0.085	0.078	0.038
Populist parties	-0.010	0.104	-0.003
Post-communist parties	0.213	0.096	0.087***
Constant	-0.405	0.099	

F = 18.321, R = 0.396, Adjusted R² = 0.148

*** p < 0.01 ** p < 0.05 * p < 0.10

Explanation: Ideological Dispositions Versus Self-Interest and Political Satisfaction with the Regime

Having demonstrated that partisan preferences structure individuals' degree of principled support for democracy, the question is: what accounts for this differentiation among political families at the mass level? One possible explanation is that partisan attachments reflect fundamental ideological dispositions that promote greater or lesser commitment to democratic principles and practices. A second possibility is that the four groups of voters express varying levels of normative commitment to democracy *because* they come from different social and economic backgrounds and differ in their assessments of how well they have fared or will fare under the new system. A third possible explanation is that partisan groups evaluate the performance of the new democratic regime differently and it is their level of political satisfaction that accounts for variation in principled support for democracy.

To test these propositions, we constructed two additional variables, both of which are based on the results of principal component analyses. The measurement of individuals' evaluation of their economic well-being, presented in Table 8.6, is our proxy for perceived self-interest. It is based on answers to three questions in the 1993 study that asked respondents to assess the extent to which their living conditions had improved over the course of five years, whether they were optimistic about the quality of their life in the near future, and whether they were hopeful about the possibility of achieving their goals under present circumstances. As the mean score of each item indicates, in 1993, Poles were neither overly sanguine nor overly disheartened about their life chances in the initial period of systemic change.

Our measure of satisfaction with the current regime in 1998 is also based on answers to three questions. As can be seen in Table 8.7, one question dealt directly with respondents' overall evaluation of the functioning of the current regime; the two other items addressed the extent to which they believed that the government is responsive to citizens' concerns and that it can be influenced by ordinary citizens' preferences – both crucial attributes of the quality of any democracy. (Evans and Whitefield [1995] use a very similar measure of political satisfaction in their cross-national analysis of support for democracy.) The data in Table 8.7 show that, although there was no groundswell of support for radical change of the regime itself, ordinary Poles expressed rather low levels of satisfaction with its openness and responsiveness to ordinary citizens.

Table 8.6. Measurement of Evaluation of Economic Well-Being in 1993

Questionnaire items	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor loadings ^a
A. In your opinion, for people like yourself, is life in Poland better now, or it will be better in five years? Scored from 1 for better now to 3 for better in five years, with don't knows in the middle.	2.420	0.752	0.700
B. Many people expect that the present opportunities will allow them to realize their plans. Are you one of these people Scored from 1 for no to 3 for yes, with don't knows in the middle.	1.568	0.828	0.745
C. Within the past five years have your living conditions significantly improved, improved a little, remained unchanged, worsened slightly, or significantly worsened? Scored from 1 for significantly worsened to 5 for significantly improved.	3.147	0.813	0.4763

^a Principal component analysis: Eigenvalue = 1.269. Proportion of variance = 0.423. Cronbach alpha = 0.567.

As one might expect, those who were more positive in their evaluations of their socioeconomic situation in 1993 – that is, those who believed that their economic self-interests were or would be adequately met under the new system – were more likely to express greater satisfaction with the performance of the current regime in 1998 (Pearson r of 0.201). Perceived self-interest, and, to a lesser extent, political satisfaction are also positively related to our index of support for democracy (Pearson r of 0.205 and 0.138, respectively). Thus, on its face, it may very well be that the relationship between partisan preference and principled support for democracy can be explained, to a certain extent at least, by systematic differences among political family supporters in their perceptions of how well the new system performs, both economically and politically.

Do partisan groups differ in their economic and political assessments? If so, do such differences resemble the pattern found for normative commitment to democracy? The data in Table 8.8 address these issues. In Table 8.8, we also present data on the gender composition and the average age and years of schooling of each partisan group for each electoral period. Numerous studies indicate that men, younger and middle-aged people, and the more educated have tended to fare better during the transition to a market economy. These

same groups also repeatedly have been shown to be more democratic in their orientations than women, older people, and those with less schooling.⁵ They also tend to participate more frequently in elections.

Table 8.7. Measurement of Satisfaction with Current Regime in 1998

Questionnaire items	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor loadings ^a
A. Which statement reflects your opinion – the political system in Poland (a) is basically good and needs no changes, (b) is good but some minor changes are needed, (c) has a lot of deficiencies and needs substantial changes, (d) the entire system should be replaced by a different one? Scored in a reversed order, from 1(d) to 4 (a)	2.390	0.764	0.662
B. Do you agree or disagree that Poland is a country where politicians are not concerned with citizens' good? Scored from 1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree	1.904	0.986	0.742
C. Do you agree or disagree that Poland is a country where citizens have enough influence on government's policies? Scored from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree	3.541	1.179	0.643

^a Principal component analysis: Eigenvalue = 1.402. Proportion of variance = 0.467. Cronbach alpha = 0.521.

Of the three social background variables, only education is significantly related to partisanship. Liberal/social democrats are consistently the most educated and populists the least, with the latter closely resembling those who declared no partisan preference in an election. In the 1991 election, post-communists were virtually identical to liberal/social democrats in their mean level of education, but in subsequent elections they were tied for second with Christian/nationalists. Insofar as the relationship between education and principled support for democracy is strong, there is good reason to suppose that such differences in average years of schooling among political family

⁵ Using our 1998 data, the Pearson *r* for the bivariate relationships between the index of principled support for democracy, on one hand, and gender, age, and years of schooling, on the other, are 0.219, -0.108, and 0.322, respectively.

Table 8.8. Gender, Age, Education, Evaluation of Economic Well-Being, and Satisfaction with Current Regime, According to Party Preferences in Parliamentary Elections in 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1997: Analysis of Variance

Party preferences	Gender	Age	Education (years of schooling)	Evaluation of economic well-being in 1998	Satisfaction with current regime
	Proportion of men	Mean value			
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1989</i>					
Solidarity	0.49	45.7	11.1	0.116	0.063
Non-Solidarity	0.60	48.4	11.9	-0.032	-0.097
Absence of party preference	0.50	47.7	10.4	-0.231	-0.088
F	—	8.1	28.9	24.3	5.0
Eta	—	0.097	0.160	0.147	0.076
Eta ²	—	0.009	0.025	0.022	0.006
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1991</i>					
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.54	46.1	13.2	0.413	0.341
Christian/nationalist parties	0.52	45.7	11.7	0.209	0.096
Populist parties	0.61	45.4	10.6	0.097	-0.010
Post-communist parties	0.59	44.1	13.3	-0.093	-0.227
Absence of party preference	0.43	47.5	10.2	-0.167	-0.094
F	—	3.2	116.3	29.6	12.5
Eta	—	0.085	0.413	0.223	0.167
Eta ²	—	0.007	0.171	0.050	0.028
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1993</i>					
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.55	47.0	14.0	0.507	0.429
Christian/nationalist parties	0.53	46.5	11.4	0.150	0.026
Populist parties	0.51	45.7	10.4	0.043	0.115
Post-communist parties	0.53	45.5	11.6	-0.140	-0.036
Absence of party preference	0.44	47.7	10.6	-0.060	-0.154
F	—	3.2	66.8	15.0	14.4
Eta	—	0.085	0.325	0.161	0.178
Eta ²	—	0.007	0.106	0.026	0.032
<i>Parliamentary elections in 1997</i>					
Liberal/social democratic parties	0.58	48.0	13.5	0.533	0.369
Christian/nationalist parties	0.51	45.9	11.2	0.170	0.245
Populist parties	0.49	44.6	9.8	-0.138	-0.155
Post-communist parties	0.51	45.1	11.6	-0.104	-0.046
Absence of party preference	0.44	48.1	10.6	-0.086	-0.177
F	—	6.0	52.5	19.1	19.1
Eta	—	0.116	0.292	0.181	0.204
Eta ²	—	0.013	0.085	0.033	0.042

supporters may help to explain why it is that they differ in their level of democratic commitment. Gender and especially age do not significantly distinguish one partisan group from another. Beginning with the 1991 election, however, there is a significant gender gap in rates of electoral participation. Thus, in contrast to education, these two social background variables are not likely to go far in accounting for partisan differences in support for democracy.

The four partisan groups do differ in their perceptions of economic well-being and levels of satisfaction with the current regime. However, our analyses of variance show that the relationships between partisan preference, on one hand, and each of these two measures, on the other, are much weaker than that between voting choice and the index of support for democracy (see Table 8.3). Moreover, the patterns of differentiation among the four groups in their mean levels of subjective economic well-being and political satisfaction are *neither* consistent across elections *nor* similar to those found with respect to mean levels of normative commitment to democracy. Although it is the case that liberal/social democrats are always the most sanguine in their political and economic outlook, post-communist family supporters in 1991 and 1993 are the most negative, despite their relatively advantaged socioeconomic position. Thus, these findings cast some doubt on the hypotheses that perceived self-interest and instrumental support for democracy account for differences among partisan groups in terms of their democratic commitments.

Table 8.9 presents the results of regression analyses of normative support for democracy on partisan preferences, in which we cumulatively take into account frequency of voting (Model I), gender, age, and education (Model II), perceptions of economic well-being (Model III), and political satisfaction (Model IV). Rather than examining the direct impact of voting choices in each election separately, we have constructed four variables that measure *exclusive* affiliation with a particular political family across the 1991, 1993, and 1997 elections. Again, by exclusive affiliation we mean reported vote for parties belonging to the same political family in one, two, or three elections *and* with no expressed preference for parties belonging to a different political family in other elections. Thus, each of the four independent variables ranges from 0 to 3.⁶ By introducing frequency of voting (ranging from 0 to 3) as a control variable, we can partial out both rate of electoral participation and inconsistent voting choices.

⁶ According to our broad definition, 64 percent of the sample reported having voted exclusively for one political family. Twenty-five percent declared a preference for the same political family in at least two elections, and 10 percent in all three.

Table 8.9. Regression of Normative Support for Democracy on Strength of Attachments to Political Families and on Basic Control Variables, Evaluation of Economic Well-Being, and Satisfaction with Current Regime

Independent variables	Model I ^a			Model II ^b		
	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta
<i>Affiliation with political families</i>						
Liberal/social democrats	0.248	0.038	0.167***	0.160	0.036	0.108***
Christian/nationalists	0.025	0.054	0.011	0.037	0.050	0.017
Populists	-0.138	0.038	-0.105***	-0.082	0.036	-0.063***
Postcommunists	0.039	0.037	0.028	0.057	0.035	0.041*
<i>Basic control variables</i>						
Frequency of voting	0.492	0.057	0.242***	0.347	0.055	0.171***
<i>Sociodemographic variables</i>						
Gender				0.416	0.043	0.208***
Age				-0.009	0.002	-0.108***
Education				0.635	0.060	0.245**
Constant	-0.283	0.038		-0.959	0.096	
				Model III ^c		
				Model IV ^d		
<i>Affiliation with political families</i>						
Liberal/social democrats	0.145	0.036	0.094***	0.142	0.037	0.095***
Christian/nationalists	0.021	0.050	0.010	0.025	0.050	0.011
Populists	-0.086	0.036	-0.066**	-0.083	0.036	-0.063**
Postcommunists	0.063	0.035	0.045*	0.068	0.035	0.049**
<i>Basic control variables</i>						
Frequency of voting	0.330	0.055	0.162***	0.314	0.056	0.154***
<i>Sociodemographic variables</i>						
Gender	0.406	0.043	0.203***	0.407	0.043	0.203***
Age	-0.008	0.002	0.096***	-0.008	0.002	-0.097***
Education	0.597	0.061	0.231***	0.592	0.061	0.228**
<i>Self-interest variable</i>						
Evaluation of economic well-being	0.085	0.023	0.084***	0.077	0.023	0.076***
<i>Political satisfaction</i>						
Satisfaction with current regime				0.055	0.022	0.055***
Constant	-0.882	0.098		0.883	0.098	

^a F = 39.2, R = 0.319, Adjusted R² = 0.099

^d F = 47.7, R = 0.466, Adjusted R² = 0.212

^b F = 56.4, R = 0.455, Adjusted R² = 0.203

***p < 0.01 **p < 0.05 *p < 0.10

^c F = 52.0, R = 0.462, Adjusted R² = 0.209

The results of the first regression analysis (Model I) confirm our earlier findings. An exclusive attachment to the liberal/social democratic political family has a statistically significant and positive impact on support for democracy, whereas an exclusive affiliation with populist parties has a negative effect. As expected, the inclusion of age and especially of gender and education adds substantially to the explanation of variation in normative commitment to democracy (Model II). Controlling for the effect of education, in particular, diminishes the positive and negative direct impact of exclusive affiliation with the liberal/social democratic and populist political families, respectively. Nonetheless, both types of partisan preference continue to have statistically significant effects on support for democracy. The positive impact of affiliation with the post-communist bloc reaches statistical significance in Model II, implying that (high) educational attainment in the case of this partisan group is not the primary explanation of its commitment to democracy.

What happens when we introduce the measures of perceived economic well-being (our proxy for self-interest) and political satisfaction in our regression analyses (Models III and IV)? The addition of these variables contributes little to an explanation of variation in commitment to democratic principles. The beta coefficients between these two variables, on one hand, and the index of support for democracy, on the other, are much smaller than their respective Pearson correlation coefficients of 0.205 and 0.138. Clearly, these economic and political judgments affect principled support for democracy largely through individuals' decisions to vote or not to vote, and, if they participate electorally, the voting choices they make. Thus, our results lend support to the argument that in post-communist societies and elsewhere, neither economic evaluations nor assessments of regime performance have strong direct effects on democratic commitments (for example, see Gibson 1996b; Montero, Gunther, and Torcal 1997; Vassilev 2000; Waldron-Moore 1999).

The magnitude of the direct effects of exclusive affiliation with a political family changes very little in Models III and IV from that in Model II. The positive impact of exclusive affiliation with the liberal/social democratic camp diminishes somewhat when this group's relatively favorable economic and political assessments are taken into account. The negative impact of exclusive affiliation with the populist political family is lessened slightly while the positive effect of post-communist partisanship is strengthened when we control for these two groups' relatively unfavorable views about their economic situation and the functioning of Poland's democracy.

Taking all variables into account, the magnitude of the direct effects of perceived economic well-being and political satisfaction is weaker or only

slightly greater than that of affiliation with three of the four political families. Put simply, neither economic self-interest nor instrumental support for the regime “trumps” the ideological dispositions associated with partisanship in explaining individuals’ commitment to democratic principles. Political cleavages in Poland structure normative support for democracy. They do so in a manner that is independent of partisans’ socioeconomic characteristics and their direct experiences of economic and political change.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to determine whether voting choices in post-communist Poland are associated with principled support for democracy, and, if this is the case, to assess which of the two main dimensions of partisanship – ideology or self-interest – has the greater effect. The basic premise on which our analysis is based is that in democracies individuals’ partisan preferences represent meaningful political choices that are formed on the basis of their ideological dispositions and their perceived interests, as well as through political learning in response to the repeated signaling cues provided by party elites over the course of repeated elections (Converse 1969; Kitschelt 1995b). We assume, in counter to the *tabula rasa* hypothesis, that this is the case for the new democracies of post-communist Europe as well. However, we also assume that in the case of Poland, as in other new or old democracies with similarly fragmented and unstable party systems, such voting choices can best be expressed in terms of preferences for one or another political family rather than for a specific political party *per se*. With these assumptions in mind, we categorized political parties and political groups that competed in parliamentary elections in Poland between 1989 and 1997 into four political families: (1) liberal/social democratic, (2) Christian/nationalist, (3) populist, and (4) post-communist. We also hypothesized that, because the ideological dispositions and self-interests of liberal/social democrats and populists are mutually reinforcing with respect to normative support for democracy, they would be polar opposites in terms of their degree of democratic commitments. Because we hypothesized that these two components of partisanship do not coincide for supporters of the Christian/nationalist and post-communist political families, we were less certain about their placement relative to the other two partisan groups.

Straightforward conclusions can be drawn from our analysis of the relationship between partisan preferences and democratic commitments in Poland. There is no support for the argument that partisan preferences are

unrelated to individuals' political orientations, including their support for democratic principles and practices. Partisan groups vary in terms of their democratic commitments. As we expected, supporters of parties belonging to the liberal/social democratic political family were the most pro-democratic, and populists were the least pro-democratic. Our findings indicate that, despite their relatively high level of educational attainment and generally positive evaluations of their economic situation and regime performance, Christian/nationalists more closely resembled populists than they did liberal/social democrats in terms of their level of support for democracy. When these and other variables were taken into account, the positive relationship between attachment to the Christian/nationalist political family and democratic support became statistically insignificant. Post-communist bloc voters consistently ranked second to liberal/social democrats in their overall level of normative support for democracy. This was the case, *despite* their harsh assessments of their economic situation and poor judgments of the functioning of Poland's democracy. Furthermore, unlike in the case of liberal/democratic supporters, controlling for educational attainment does not diminish the positive relationship between attachment to the post-communist family and endorsement of democratic principles. Thus, although both post-communist party elites and voters have been portrayed by their opponents and by certain observers of Polish politics as being anti-democratic, our findings reveal quite the opposite. In sum, different (and, in the case of post-communist voters, unexpected) admixtures of ideology and self-interest account for variations among partisan groups in the degree of their democratic commitments.

What, if anything, do our findings imply for democratic consolidation in Poland? Two points can be made in this regard. First, the fact that partisan groups differ in their level of support for democracy is not unique to Poland or other new democracies. Even in long-standing democracies partisan cleavages may reflect differences with respect to both the overall degree of democratic support and the particular principles that are strongly endorsed or deemphasized (for example, see Dalton 1994; Inglehart 1987; McClosky and Zaller 1984). That partisan groups may differ in this regard should not be surprising, insofar as liberal democratic principles and practices represent a delicate balance of majoritarianism versus protection of minority rights, the legitimacy of conflict versus maintenance of lawful order, or effective and efficient governance versus responsiveness to the public.

Although Poland may not be atypical in this regard, one might still argue that partisan divisions pertaining to the legitimacy of democratic principles and practices are more politically significant – and problematic – when such

principles and practices are still in the process of being institutionalized. The prolonged and rancorous debate among parties belonging to the different political families over the drafting of a new constitution, which was publicly ratified in a referendum only in 1997, and subsequent partisan clashes over anti-pornography legislation (which pitted liberal democratic and Christian/nationalist parties in the governing coalition against each other) testify to the continued political salience in Poland of issues concerning the rules of the game. Still, it should be emphasized that, although partisan groups differed in the degree of their democratic commitments, *all but one* partisan group were pro-democratic in their orientations. Moreover, the behavior of party elites matters. They may choose to appeal to the less democratic dispositions of their supporters or they may choose to temper them because of their own ideological predilections and calculations of self-interest.

The second implication for democratic consolidation that can be drawn from our findings is that evaluations of one's economic well-being and of the performance of the new democracy are only weakly related to endorsement of democratic principles. That being the case, our analysis provides further refutation of the argument that widespread negative economic and political judgments in response to systemic transformation inevitably pose a formidable threat to democracy in Eastern Europe. At least in the case of Poland, democratic commitments appear to be rather independent of and impervious to individuals' direct experience of democratic capitalism.

Although it has not been our intention here to provide a full account of mass-level support for democracy in post-communist societies, our empirical results do speak to this issue as well. First, our findings serve as a cautionary reminder that in empirical research, satisfaction with democracy should not be equated with principled support for democracy. Second, although our analysis of democratic support has focused on our main explanatory variables, the effects of our control variables – in particular, frequency of voting and gender – are interesting in their own right. For example, electoral participation *per se* is among the strongest determinants of principled support for democracy in Poland. The more frequently one votes, the more supportive of democracy one becomes (even among populist family identifiers).

It would seem that through repeated cuing, adherence to democratic rules of the game over the course of successive elections, and “symbolising political values in the public imagination, parties fulfilled an important democratic role despite their weakness in leadership, organization, membership, participation and even popular identification” (Miller and White 1998: 198). Our analysis also presents a puzzling finding that merits

systematic empirical attention. Women in Poland and in other post-communist societies are significantly less supportive of democracy than are men (see chapter 9 in this volume). Their weaker commitment to democracy does not appear to be explained either by their more negative experiences of systemic transformation or by their higher level of religiosity. These particular findings, as well as those presented here, strongly suggest the need to pay greater systematic attention to basic systems of values, that is, to ideology, as well as to sociopsychological attitudes, in order to better understand mass-level support for both democracy and the market in post-communist societies.