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Support For Political Change: Is Self-Interest The Whole Story?

When exploring levels of support for political transition, scholars often look to factors of individual economic self-interest. They ask, for instance, how income is related to attitudes regarding support for specific political principles or rules. In such a context, there is a good reason for relying on self-interest assumptions. Calculations of self-interest probably do matter a great deal of the time. However, are we missing something by focusing so sharply on self-interest? Are there other factors that can override self-interest when dealing with attitudes toward political change? If so, what are these factors? To what extent are they capable of superseding calculations of self-interest? Finally, how valuable are alternative explanations as constructs for understanding popular support for transitions in post-communist societies?

The purpose of this chapter is to explore alternatives to the self-interest-based explanations. I focus on the effects of party-family identification and protest participation on support for the democratic transition. I answer the following questions: (1) How powerful are factors of self-interest as predictors of transition support? (2) What do we miss when we base our explanations on self-interest calculations? (3) To what extent are the alternative explanations useful? To determine whether self-interest tells the whole story, I use ordinary least squares techniques to regress individuals' support evaluations on income and its increase, together with party-family identification and protest participation. I also use basic demographic variables – sex and age – as controls.

Theoretical Background

In this section, I briefly review the state of the research on transition support, beginning with the literature on self-interest. After describing a few relevant pieces of research, I claim that past predictions involving self-interest assumptions do not seem to hold in Poland. Insofar as this demonstrates the need to explore alternative explanations, I next look to the literature on political-party identification and protest participation to ask how they might help in telling the story of support for political transition.

Since Anthony Downs (1957) wrote the classic *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, economic models of political behavior have been steadily gaining popularity. One area in which these models have been applied is in the study of post-communism. The main idea behind this type of research is that systemic transformations result in a demarcation between "winners" and "losers." This dichotomy, it is argued, affects attitudes toward reform and democratic transitions, with the "winners" supporting change and the "losers" opposing it.

Joel Hellman's (1998) article, "Winners Take All," alerts us to the concern that reforms generally make things worse before they get better. Moreover, he argues that the costs of reform are borne by the majority of the population, while any benefits are concentrated in a small subgroup of the population. According to many researchers, the "losers," or those who bear the costs without enjoying the benefits, are less likely to support the reforms (Powers and Cox 1997: 617; Fidrmuc 2000; Gross 1992). The argument is that this tendency can be attributed to calculations of economic self-interest in which support for reform is positively related to having benefited from the changes. In consequence, we are left with the possibility that those who oppose democratic transitions would make up a larger segment of the population than would those who support the reforms.

Another possible scenario is that people who initially supported the transition may change their minds. Adam Przeworski (1991: 169) notes this phenomenon when he writes that " … support will erode … because actual costs are being experienced." He adds that the support often erodes "drastically." Thus, one would expect that even ideologues who were committed to reform at the beginning of the process might in fact alter their stances once they have experienced economic hardships attributable to the transition.

Denise Powers and James Cox (1997: 627–629) note that while evaluations of personal economic situations do influence attitudes toward support for reforms, there are other, noneconomic, issues than can be more salient to Poles. Inspired by this article, I consider party-family identification and protest participation as alternative salient issues.

Young democracies typically experience turbulent periods during which political parties are forming. Parties fade out, emerge, consolidate with other parties, lose support, or are reborn under new names. Often, the number of political parties at any given time is quite high, although they cluster with respect to their ideological stances. For this reason, it is useful to look at groupings of parties that share similar objectives and electorates. Following Goldie Shabad and Kazimierz Slomczynski (1999; see also chapter 8 in the present volume), one can construct a four-bloc schema consisting of liberal/social democrat, populist, nationalist/Christian, and post-communist parties.

These party families have identifiable positions toward the transition. Liberal democratic parties are likely to support the transition because of their commitment to marketization and other classically liberal ideas (Smolar 1998). Populist and agrarian parties tend to oppose the transition, largely because of hesitations concerning privatization and fears of subsidy losses, although cultural variables are also at work here (Markowski 1997: 224; Szczerbiak 1999). Nationalist and Christian Right parties are supportive of the transition from communism "on moral grounds," as Elizabeth Osborn (2000: 125) writes. Finally, post-communists, for ideological reasons, tend to oppose the reforms but, as Shabad and Slomczynski (2000: 37) point out, it depends on the kinds of reforms.

It is no great leap to imagine that people who support these party families will hold the corresponding attitudes toward the systemic change in Poland. It is, of course, a possibility that people gravitate to parties that best represent their economic self-interests. Thus, party preference may be merely a proxy for self-interest calculations. If this is the case, I would expect a high correlation between self-interest variables and party vote.

Enough researchers have pointed to cultural factors regarding party preferences, however, that it is worthwhile to raise the possibility that something more is at work here (see Zarycki and Nowak 2000; Markowski 1997). Obviously, past routines and practices can shape people's attitudes toward current events. In Poland, one experience that cannot be ignored is the role of political protest.

Political protest, largely but not exclusively in the form of strikes, played an undeniably important role in the movement away from communism. In fact, Grzegorz Eckiert and Jan Kubik (1998: 91) write that "in no other Eastern European country was popular protest more instrumental in bringing down state socialism than in Poland." Studies that concentrate on calculations of self-interest either downplay or ignore the possibility that protest participation might influence people's attitudes toward the transition.

Those who participated in strikes or other forms of protest prior to the transition may be more likely to support the change because they were opposing the actions of the communist government. They had firsthand experience with the ways in which the government dealt with the protestors. However, even those who participated in post-transition forms of protest may be more likely to be supportive of the change because the very rights and freedoms established during the transition made protest less dangerous and more acceptable than it had been before.

There is also reason to believe that certain demographic variables affect people's attitudes toward political change. For example, males are generally more supportive of the changes than are females. Younger people are expected to be more supportive than older people are. Because much of the reason for this is tied to personal economic situation, I control for effects of these variables.

A Model of Support for Political Change

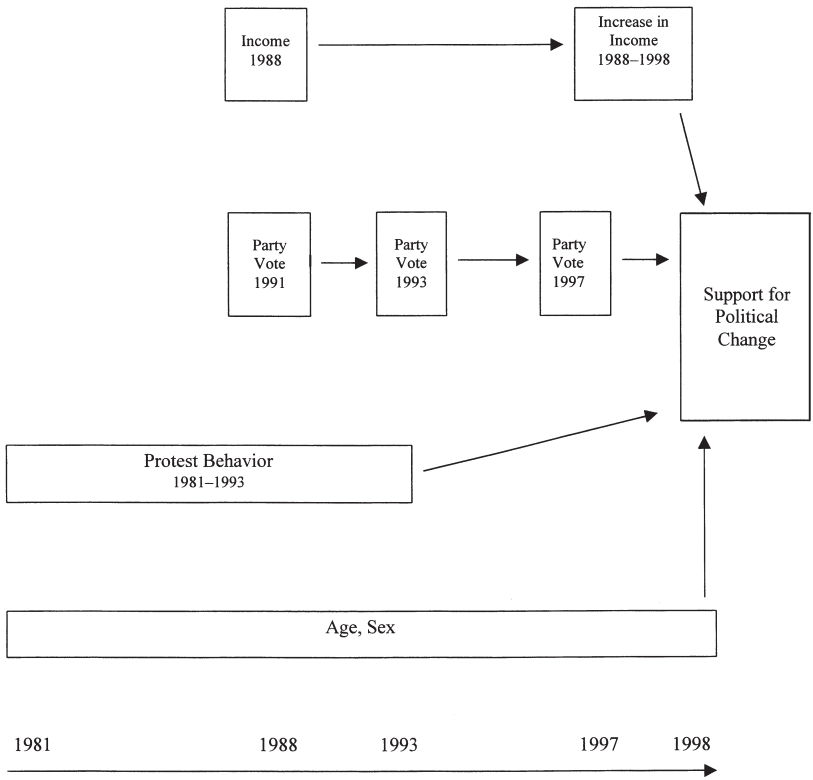
Building on the literature, I develop a general model of support for political changes in Poland from 1998 to 1993, from 1993 to 1997, and after 1997. The model includes both structural and attitudinal determinants of support for the transition. In it, I use an objective measure of self-interest – income and its increase over time. In addition, I include the effects of party identification and protest participation on evaluation of the political changes, controlling for sex and age. Figure 11.1 illustrates the model.

Tested hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1. *Self-interest*: In terms of income and its increase, "winners" are more likely than "losers" to be supportive of the political changes. However, self-interest variables are not the most powerful predictors of how people retrospectively evaluate political changes in the initial phase of transition (1988–93) or in more advanced phases (1993–97 and after 1997)

Hypothesis 2. *Party-family identification*: All else being equal, voters for liberal democratic and nationalist/Christian parties are more likely to be supportive of the political changes than are voters for populist and post-communist parties.

Figure 11.1. Theoretical Model of Support for Political Change



Hypothesis 3. *Protest participation*: All else being equal, people who have participated in protest activities are more likely, on average, to be supportive of the political changes than are people who have not participated in such activities.

Measurement

In 1998, respondents were asked to evaluate the political changes for three periods: 1989–93, 1993–97, and after 1997. For the first panel, this question was asked: "Do you think that the changes introduced in Poland from 1989 – that is, since the fall of the Communist regime – to 1993 – that is, when the government of the Democratic Left Alliance was being formed – brought Poland only gains, more gains than losses, equal gains and losses, more losses than gains, or only losses?" The second panel was asked: "Do you think that the changes introduced in Poland in 1993–97 – that is, during the governance of the Democratic Left Alliance – brought Poland only gains, more gains than losses, equal gains and losses, more losses than gains, or only losses?" The third panel was asked: "Do you think that the changes introduced in Poland after 1997 – that is, when Solidarity Electoral Action and Freedom Union formed the government – brought Poland only gains, more gains than losses, equal gains and losses, more losses than gains, or only losses?" The five-point scale ranged from "losses only" (coded as 1) to "gains only" (coded as 5). I included "don't know" responses in the category "equal gains and losses" because respondents giving such responses did not have strong opinions one way or the other, and they fit into the middle of the scale.

For my main dependent variable, I use the evaluations for 1989–93, 1993–97, and after 1997, separately. However, I also analyze models with the index constructed on the basis of factor analysis, "summarizing" evaluations for the three time periods together. Table 11.1 provides the mean, standard deviation, and factor loading for each questionnaire item. I have also included the eigenvalue, percent of variance, and the Cronbach alpha for the index.

Table 11.1. Assessment of Political Change in 1989–1993, 1993–1997, and 1997–1998, According to Income in 1988 and Increase in Income in 1988–1998

Questionnaire items	Mean value	Standard deviation	Factor loading
Evaluation of political change, 1989–1993	2.89	0.854	0.811
Evaluation of political change, 1993–1997	2.98	0.768	0.259
Evaluation of political change, 1997–1998	2.79	0.889	0.783
Eigenvalue = 1.551, Percent of variance = 51.7, Cronbach alpha = 0.521			

Generally, we learn that support for political changes for all three periods is close to the mid-point of the scale, but, nevertheless, below that value (3). For each period, we observe a similar, relatively high variation of responses, around one-third of the mean. Factor loadings are high, indicating that assessment of political change in a given period has much in common with assessment of political change in other periods. The lowest factor loading pertains to 1993–97, when the post-communists returned and exercised their administrative power. However, the factor loading for this period is still much higher than the usual threshold value of 0.3. Thus, one can claim that the factor capturing the overall assessment of political change is salient. The Cronbach alpha, although within lower limits, supports this claim.

Independent Variables

Income and its change. I constructed a variable for change in per capita monthly income from 1988 to 1998. First, I used the reported monthly household income from the 1988 survey and divided it by the number of people in the respondents' households as reported in the same wave of the survey. I performed the same operation for the 1998 survey. Once I created these indicators, I saved them as standardized *z*-scores. This allowed me to examine an individual respondent's relative position. I then computed change over time by subtracting the 1988 per capita monthly income (*z*-scores) from the 1998 per capita monthly income (*z*-scores). Thus, this variable measures relative winning and losing in the economic domain.

Political-party identification. In 1993, respondents were asked for what party they had voted in 1991; in 1998, they were asked about their vote in elections conducted in 1993 and 1997. Shabad and Slomczynski (2000, and chapter 8 in this volume) divided all parties into four categories: (1) liberal/social democratic, (2) Christian/nationalist, (3) populist, and (4) post-communist. I use this division to assess whether the most recent party affiliation has an impact on assessment of political change in each of the three periods: 1989–93, 1993–97, and 1997–98. In addition, I construct a set of variables to capture the strength of affiliation with a given type of party family. For each party family, I compute the number of times the respondent voted for specific parties belonging to this family. Thus, for each family this variable ranges from 0 to 3.

Protest participation. In 1993, respondents were asked if they had ever participated in a strike. In another question, they were asked whether they had ever participated in manifestations, demonstrations, or other forms of open public protest. In addition, on the basis of a series of questions about membership in trade unions, I selected those respondents who joined Solidarity in 1981–93, that is, at the outset of or during martial law in Poland. For an indicator of protest participation, I used a summation function to combine these three dichotomous variables.

Self-Interest and Support for Political Transition

Table 11.2 illustrates the impact of self-interest on an assessment of political transition in 1989–93 (Panel A), 1993–97 (Panel B), and 1997–98 (Panel C). In this table, I include four levels of income in 1998 and two categories of changes in income in 1988–98: negative change ("losers" – those whose income relatively decreased) and positive change ("winners" – those whose income relatively increased). To avoid any ambiguities, these categories are defined for the tails of the distribution and correspond to upper and lower quartiles.

The results are clear and support the self-interest hypothesis. For each level of income in 1988, winners – in terms of relative income increase – perceive more gains due to political changes than losers do. To illustrate, the average assessment of the political changes for 1989–93 among the low-income category is 2.70 for those respondents with income loss, compared to 3.11 for those with income gain in the same category. For respondents in the high-income category, losers give an average evaluation of 2.89 while winners give an average assessment of 3.33.

Not only do we see this pattern for all income levels, we also see it for all time periods. Low-income losers' average assessment of the changes in 1993–97 is 2.89, while winners' average assessment is 3.27. High-income losers' average evaluation for this time period is 2.83, and winners' assessment of the changes is an average value of 3.22. For the changes in 1997–98, the low-income losers' average value is 2.68, as compared to the low-income winners' average value of 3.06. High-income losers' average assessment is 2.68, while high-income winners' average assessment is 3.14.

A second pattern emerges: as income in 1988 increases, so does support for political change. For example, winners' assessments of the political change in 1989–93 range from an average value of 2.27 for respondents with low income to an average value of 3.60 for respondents with very high income in 1988. This relationship holds for the evaluations of political changes in 1989–93 and 1997–98. The intermediate period of assessment for 1993–97 is a notable exception to this pattern. Here, there is no discernible pattern. High-income losers' average evaluation is 2.83 while low income losers' average assessment is greater at 2.89. Additionally, the highest income winners' average evaluation is 3.05, which is less than the low-income winners' average evaluation of 3.27. The disruption of the regularity of the relationships between increase in income and increase in support for political change is explained by the fact that during this period of 1993–97 the post-communists were in power.

Table 11.2. Assessment of Political Change in 1989–1993, 1993–1997, and 1997–1998, According to Income in 1988 and Increase in Income in 1988–1998

		Increase in income, 1988–1998	
	Total income, 1988	negative[b] (losers)	positive[c] (winners)
Income categories, 1988[a]	Average value of the scale of assessment of political change		
A. Assessment of political change in 1989–1993			
Very low	2.74	—	2.27
Low	2.88	2.70	3.11
High	2.99	2.89	3.33
Very high	3.04	2.92	3.60
B. Assessment of political change in 1993–1997			
Very low	2.89	—	2.96
Low	3.05	2.89	3.27
High	2.97	2.83	3.22
Very high	3.01	2. 99	3.05
C. Assessment of political change in 1997–1998			
Very low	2.68	—	2.73
Low	2.80	2.68	3.06
High	2.81	2.68	3.14
Very high	2.92	2.84	3.16 [d]

[a] Quartiles of the 1988 family income per capita.
[b] Lowest quartile of the variable constructed as the difference between standardized family income per capita in 1998 and family income per capita in 1988.
[c] Highest quartile of the variable constructed as the difference between standardized family income per capita in 1998 and family income per capita in 1988.
[d] Due to the small number of cases for this category, the average for the two highest quartiles of income increase is provided.

Despite the deviation from the pattern in 1993–97, the results support the self-interest hypothesis. As expected, for all income levels and for each time period, economic winners perceive more gains due to the political change than do economic losers. This is in line with the research in support of economic models of political behavior. Indeed, my goal in this chapter is not to dispute the validity of such models. My aim, rather, is to suggest that these models do not tell the whole story. Next, I explore alternatives to determine if they provide us with more explanatory power.

The Impact of Party Identification and Political Protest

In general, the results for party-family identification conform to the expected pattern. For 1988–93 and 1997–98, liberal/social democratic voters are most likely to give positive evaluations, followed by Christian/nationalist voters. Populist voters constitute the next group, and post-communist voters are least likely to rate the changes favorably. For the 1993–97 evaluation, we see a deviation from the pattern. Here, post-communist voters are the most likely to give favorable evaluations, and nationalist voters are least likely. Not only are voters for post-communist parties more likely to give positive evaluations but they are overwhelmingly more likely to do so. To illustrate, 43.8 percent of people who voted for post-communist parties in 1997 gave favorable evaluations for the time period between 1993 and 1997. This contrasts with 16.1 percent of people who voted for Christian/nationalist parties. The reason for this difference is simple: the 1993–97 period is the period when post-communists were in power.

Table 11.3 shows, however, that the other two-time periods largely conform to the expected pattern. For the 1989–93 assessment, liberal/social democratic voters and Christian/nationalist voters are more likely to be supportive of the political change, with 49.0 percent and 37.7 percent, respectively. Contrast this with 22.2 percent of populist and 19.0 percent of post-communist voters. The 1997–98 assessment period illustrates a similar process. Once again, liberal/social democratic and Christian/nationalist voters lead in support with 31.9 percent and 40.1 percent, respectively. After these respondents, 17.3 percent of populist voters rate the changes favorably. Post-communist voters fall far below, with only 8.2 percent giving positive evaluations of the change.

The results for protest participation (see Table 11.4) largely follow the expected pattern. For 1989–93 and 1997–98, respondents who have participated in strikes, demonstrations, or other forms of public protest are more likely to give positive assessments than are those with no protest experience. Further, the more experience a respondent has with protest, the higher the average evaluation of the political change. For the 1989–93 period, 23.6 percent of respondents with no protest experience rate the changes favorably. This is far less than the 44.0 percent of respondents with extensive protest experience who view the changes positively. The 1997–98 assessments show a similar pattern. Of respondents with no protest experience, 20 percent give favorable assessments, while 37.3 percent of respondents with extensive experience do so.

Table 11.3. Assessment of Political Change in 1989–1993, 1993–1997, and 1997–1998, According to Party Identification in 1997

Party identification	Scale of assessment of political change: mean value	Scale of assessment of political change: standard deviation	Percent of persons providing positive assessment
A. Assessment of political change in 1989–1993			
Liberal/social democratic	3.34	0.789	49.0
Christian/nationalist	3.15	0.829	37.7
Populist	2.83	0.838	22.2
Post-communist	2.73	0.833	19.0
B. Assessment of political change in 1993–1997			
Liberal/social democratic	3.11	0.729	28.8
Christian/nationalist	2.82	0.747	16.1
Populist	2.87	0.765	18.5
Post-communist	3.35	0.719	43.8
C. Assessment of political change in 1997–1998			
Liberal/social democratic	3.16	0.728	31.9
Christian/nationalist	3.23	0.842	40.1
Populist	2.69	0.914	17.3
Post-communist	2.49	0.791	8.2

Once again, the 1993–97 assessment period deviates from the pattern. Here, those having extensive experience with public protest are less likely than respondents having little or no protest experience to give positive assessments. Of respondents with no protest experience, 23.6 percent rate the changes favorably. This contrasts with 18.7 percent of respondents with extensive experience who give positive evaluations. As with the previous deviations, this is attributable to post-communist rule during the 1993–97 period. Many protest participants had been in contention against the communist regime, so those with the most protest experience should be expected to be less in favor of the political changes during the era of post-communist rule.

Results of Regression Analysis

The results of the regression analysis largely support my hypothesis that persons with high income in 1988 and "winners" in terms of income increase between 1988 and 1998 are more likely to support the political changes than persons with low income at the end of the communist era and the "losers" in the transition. However, neither indicator is among the strong predictors, as documented in the self-interest model in Table 11.5.

Table 11.4. Assessment of Political Change in 1989–1993, 1993–1997, and 1997–1998, According to Political Protest

Political protest	Scale of assessment of political change: mean value	Scale of assessment of political change: standard deviation	Percent of persons providing positive assessment
A. Assessment of political change in 1989–1993			
No experience	2.85	0.851	23.6
Some experience	3.02	0.837	32.5
Extensive experience	3.20	0.885	44.0
B. Assessment of political change in 1993–1997			
No experience	2.99	0.765	23.6
Some experience	2.97	0.811	25.9
Extensive experience	2.87	0.704	18.7
C. Assessment of political change in 1997–1998			
No experience	2.75	0.899	19.9
Some experience	2.92	0.842	24.2
Extensive experience	3.05	0.943	37.3

My hypothesis concerning party identification is supported by the regression results. Looking at the regression tables, we can see that there is a consistent pattern in the relationships between party-family identification and support for political change. For the periods 1989–93 and 1997–98, being a liberal/social democratic, Christian/nationalist, or populist voter means that the respondent is more likely to support the political changes. Being a post-communist voter, however, decreases support. The table illustrates that being a liberal/social democratic voter increases the likelihood of supporting the changes more than being a Christian/nationalist voter. In turn, being a Christian/nationalist voter increases support more than being a populist voter. Post-communist voting is negatively related to support of the political changes, as was expected. With these results, I am able to reject the null hypothesis that party-family identification is unrelated to evaluations of political changes.

Table 11.5. Regression of Assessment of Political Change in 1989–1993, 1993–1997, and 1997–1998 on Self-Interest, Party Identification and Political Protest

Independent variables	Self-interest model			Extended model		
	B	SE	beta	B	SE	beta
A. Assessment of political change in 1989–1993						
Sex (Male = 1)	0.081	0.042	0.047	0.031	0.042	0.018
Age (Years)	–0.007	0.002	–0.086**	–0.007	0.002	–0.087**
Income, 1988	0.134	0.026	0.151**	0.079	0.026	0.085**
Increase in income, 1988–1998	0.090	0.023	0.111**	0.055	0.023	0.067*
Liberal/social democratic				0.253	0.029	0.224**
Christian/nationalist				0.188	0.034	0.139**
Populist				0.101	0.029	0.090**
Post-communist				–0.010	0.028	–0.010
Political protest				0.074	0.038	0.048*
Constant	3.183	0.098		2.980	0.038	
Adjusted R^2		0.023			0.091	
B. Assessment of political change in 1993–1997						
Sex	0.053	0.038	0.034	0.047	0.038	0.030
Age	–0.002	0.002	–0.027	–0.003	0.002	–0.043
Income, 1988	0.070	0.023	0.088**	0.030	0.024	0.038
Increase in income, 1988–1998	0.046	0.021	0.063*	0.039	0.021	0.054
Liberal/social democratic				0.073	0.027	0.072**
Christian/nationalist				–0.033	0.031	–0.027
Populist				0.013	0.026	0.013
Post-communist				0.242	0.025	0.257**
Political protest				–0.056	0.034	–0.041*
Constant	3.052	0.089		2.997	0.089	
Adjusted R^2		0.005			0.072	
C. Assessment of political change in 1997–1998						
Sex	0.032	0.044	0.018	–0.013	0.043	–0.007
Age	–0.003	0.022	–0.032	–0.002	0.022	–0.029
Income, 1988	0.085	0.027	0.093**	0.043	0.027	0.046*
Increase in income, 1988–1998	0.074	0.024	0.088**	0.041	0.024	0.049**
Liberal/social democratic				0.217	0.030	0.185**
Christian/nationalist				0.238	0.035	0.169**
Populist				0.092	0.030	0.079**
Post-communist				–0.103	0.029	–0.095**
Political protest				0.087	0.039	0.055*
Constant	2.930	0.103		2.720	0.102	
Adjusted R^2		0.007			0.095	

*$p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

The regression results partially support my hypothesis that people who have participated in protest activities are more likely to be supportive of the political changes than are people who have not participated in protest activities. For 1989–93 and 1997–98, engaging in political protest increases support for the changes. As with other measurements, we see that this pattern is broken for the 1993–97 period. Here, protest participation is negatively related to support. As we saw earlier, this is attributable to the post-communist rule during this period.

Finally, we can see from Table 11.5 that the explanatory power of the extended model is greater than that of the self-interest model. For all time periods, the adjusted R^2 of the extended models is higher than that of the self-interest models. Adding party identification and political protest behavior to the self-interest model, then, significantly increases the explained variance of the dependent variable, support for political change.

Determinants of the Overall Assessment of Political Change

Table 11.6 presents the results of the regression of the overall assessment of political change on self-interest, party identification, and political protest behavior. The coefficients show that income in 1988 and increases in income from 1988–98, as expected, are positively associated with support for the changes. Party identification is also significantly related to support. Thus, these results support my first two hypotheses. Age is also a significant variable, and we can see that the older one is, the less likely one is to perceive the changes favorably. While experience with political protest is positively related to support, it is not statistically significant.

Self-interest variables, then, are neither the only nor the best explanations for support of the political changes. As income increases, respondents are more likely to support the changes. But being a liberal/social democratic voter does more to increase the likelihood of support. Being a Christian/nationalist voter or a populist voter also makes one more likely to view the changes positively than do either higher income or experiencing an increase in income. Experience with political protest, on the other hand, does increase the likelihood of support, but self-interest variables increase support more.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter has been to answer this question: Is self-interest the whole story? Contrary to previous research, this analysis has shown that it is not. As suspected, gains in income lead to increased support for the political changes in Poland. At the same time, income and its increase are not the most powerful predictors. Party-family identification and protest participation play an important role in individuals' assessments of the political changes, even if self-interest variables and demographic characteristics are controlled.

Table 11.6. Regression of Overall Assessment of Political Change on Self-Interest, Party Identification, and Political Protest

Independent variables	Extended model		
	B	SE	beta
Sex	0.032	0.048	0.016
Age	–0.006	0.002	–0.075**
Income, 1988	0.083	0.030	0.081**
Increase in income, 1988–1998	0.074	0.026	0.078**
Liberal/social democratic	0.310	0.034	0.236**
Christian/nationalist	0.235	0.040	0.149**
Populist	0.120	0.033	0.092**
Post-communist	0.045	0.032	0.035
Political protest	0.070	0.044	0.039
Constant	0.003	0.114	
Adjusted R^2	0.090		

** $p < 0.01$

Liberal/social democratic and Christian/nationalist voters are among those more likely to support the political changes. For these groups, this support can be attributed to ideological reasons. These voters place a high value on individual rights, and the transition is seen as a movement toward the attainment of these rights. In addition, nationalist voters remember the communist regime as suppressive of their ideals. Populist and post-communist voters, in contrast, often are the least likely to support the transition. These groups generally oppose the transition because of the privatization process and its consequences that accompany the political changes.

I provided some evidence that protest participants are more likely than nonparticipants to support the transition. Protest was a critical tool in Poland's path away from communism. Those who protested against the communist government are likely more supportive of the changes precisely because they were protesting *against the communist government*. Their grievances arose from communist policies, so it is plausible that they saw democratization as a way to address these grievances. Furthermore, post-transition protesters are likely to be more supportive of the changes because the right to protest was established during the transition.

Returning to the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter, three points should be made. First, self-interest calculations are not decisive factors for individuals formulating opinions about the transition – they are weak predictors of the evaluation of political change. Second, political opinions are formed on the basis of multiple factors, some of which are noneconomic and pertain to party identification and political experience with protest actions. Third, extending the economic model does not capture the range of elements that individuals consider when forming opinions about the transition. There is still room for a better explanation.

Summarizing, we should not be satisfied with explanations that focus on self-interest. In Poland, at least, it is clear that self-interest does not answer all of our questions. Individuals' attitudes toward support of political change play a vital role in the successful consolidation of democracy. Without a better understanding of the processes that lead to this support, we cannot begin to claim that we understand why some democracies consolidate while others do not. Until we move beyond self-interest, we are not able to tell the whole story.