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LIBERALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC SUBJECT
IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND

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Summary

The main issue at stake in my research in Poland on political change in the 1990-93 period was the manner in which an apparently liberating political vision, that of conservative liberalism, became dominant and in fact limiting in terms of democratization. In this paper I explain why policy makers should be concerned with the form of language in which state power justifies itself, and with the effect of this language on citizens. I use this concern to set up the problem of post-communist governments legitimizing their authority and how, in the process, they "created" an ideal citizen. Conservative liberalism succeeded in acquiring and maintaining power in the 1990-93 period by setting out a series of equivalent categories, in which (for example) economic success was defined in terms of political freedom. This chain of equivalences made liberal discourse a totalizing, rather than liberating, project. Liberalism ultimately collapsed when the instabilities inherent in these equivalences were exposed over time, and the former communists were elected to parliament in October 1993.

I then explore the political implications of the construction of the citizen for democracy in Poland. I find that any discourse that presumes a unified, naturalized subject inevitably undermines the possibilities which that subject has to posit her own political claims and to participate in the formation and negotiation of her own status as a subject. I use the case of the abortion debate in Poland to examine these tensions.

I also explain the policy implications of this view of political change and transition in central and eastern Europe. I find that an approach which questions the desirability of ideal citizens leads us to a better understanding of "democratization" itself. In this view, policy makers should focus their efforts on empowering local citizens and in increasing the space for alternative conceptions of political action and identity.
Introduction

In the summer of 1994, political parties in Poland debated yet again the content and form of a new constitution. Each group offered its own version of the document, as well as public justifications for its vision of the ideal democratic polity. One of these groups, NSZZ Solidarity, the trade union successor to the social movement which dominated opposition politics in the 1980's, argued for a concept of the state that emphasized the community of Poles:

Under the NSZZ Solidarity and presidential drafts [of the constitution] the Republic is the common weal of the citizens. This formulation, taken from the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, bids treating all public activities of the government...and of political parties, associations, trade unions, and *individual citizens* as service for the common good represented by the Republic.

Solidarity's view of the state was contrasted by its supporters in the Polish press to the view of two other political parties:

The SLD and UW...drafts are linked by the traditional concept of the state construed positivistically as the guarantor and regulator of laws rather than as a bearer of major moral truths. Under this interpretation, the Republic is owed obedience and respect but cannot be loved.1

Constitutions are, of course, crucial documents in the formation of any democratic polity, in part because they represent the philosophical justification undergirding the relationship between the state and its citizens. One could argue that constitution-writing is an important phase in the "transition to democracy" of the newly independent countries of Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. However, while the existence of the democratic governing institutions of a freely-elected parliament and president are not open to dispute in Poland, the citations above illustrate a fundamental disagreement regarding the basis upon which the Polish government should govern. After a close reading of these excerpts from a Polish newspaper article supporting the Solidarity version of the constitution, it becomes apparent that what is at stake is not as much the form and prerogatives of the *state* as much as the way that the *citizen* is to look upon it. The final sentence of the second quote invokes an ideal citizen who not only obeys and serves the "common good," but who potentially loves the state.

A reconsideration of the very basis for any state—the means by which subjects authorize sovereign institutions to act on their behalf—is, of course, beyond the scope of a policy paper such as this one. However, U.S. policy makers who focus on the post-communist states of
Central and Eastern Europe too often gloss over this fundamental dimension of politics. The capacity of any government to formulate, choose and implement policies is conditioned by the authority of that government and it is the nature of this authority that provides the raw material for the justification of any policy decision. In the cases of central and east European states, the instability and ambiguity of the authority undergirding new governments and new democratic structures affects policies in very concrete ways.

This basic problem of authority can be viewed through the lens of what theorist Michel Foucault calls "governmentality." While in one sense we can look at policies as rational and optimizing choices made by elites competing for influence in a newly pluralistic political field, in a deeper sense all these practices and practitioners cannot avoid engagement with the need to build authority. The outcome or effect of policy making (intended or unintended) is to create and recreate a relationship between the state and the citizen. Specifically, the effect of political struggles in eastern Europe is the construction not only of new states, but of new citizens who will support, obey and authorize these states. Even policy makers who stress the autonomy or freedom of citizens from the state participate in this process, because, in the course of justifying their policies and mobilizing support for them, they must put into play particular conceptions of what the citizen should be for their arguments to make sense. No positive statement is possible without a subject of that positivity, and it is this citizen/subject that is the real outcome of policy.

The practice of democracy-building, then, necessarily presumes a set of citizens (or "subjects") who will derive their rights, duties and even identities from their status as citizens; and the practice of policy making, while superficially only about the redistribution of resources, is also the process of infusing these subject with particular identities. To be intelligible and to succeed, these practices must present the subject, and the relationship of the subject with the state, as unified and coherent, even while competing with other, alternative arguments for state-subject relations. In the cases presented by the quotations beginning this paper, citizens can look to the state for laws regulating and protecting their individual rights, or, in the case of the Solidarity draft, the state can function as the source of morality and even love in the eyes of the subjects.

The questions that arise from this emphasis on the state-subject relationship is not only why some policies win out over others, but what is the overall effect of policy making on the identity of citizens. In other words, policy makers in the U.S. should ask not only, how democratic are the new states in central and eastern Europe? but also, how pluralistic are the standpoints from which to act as a citizen? My research in Poland in 1993-94 finds three main
issues stemming from this view of political change: 1) how did a very particular "liberal" vision of the state and the citizen become dominant in the 1990-93 period; 2) why did this dominant vision apparently fail when the former communists were elected to the parliament in October 1993; and 3) what is the long term legacy of the liberal period for the "democratization" of citizens and subject identities?

The emphasis on the authority of these new states invariably evokes the terminology of "transitions to democracy." The issue of democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe has become its own genre in many ways, characterized by competing schools of thought claiming to explain and predict processes of democracy-building and its success by comparing different polities. Don Chull Shin, in a recent review of the literature, notes that much of this observation has "a sense of optimism that [democracy] can be crafted and promoted in all sorts of places" through elite choices about institutional structures and pacts with members of the old regime. The common thread linking these works is their shared view that the process of state transformation only is the proper object of theorizing and research; indeed, the genre has been labelled "transitology" by some scholars.

Few of these analyses, however, mention the subject of these processes, the democratic citizen. Yet as the debate over the Polish constitution described above indicates, it is the question of the identity of this citizen which seems to be the focal point, or the location, of crucial questions about the nature of the new democracies within the polities themselves. In the democracy-building genre, if this citizen/subject of democratization is discussed, it is as part of a "public" that lacks a political, "civic" culture or as disgruntled unemployed workers unwilling to bear the brunt of "necessary" changes in the economic system. In other words, while transitologists may refer to various types of social actors who may hinder or contribute to elite choices and the stability of the transition, left unconceptualized are the effects of policy making and policy justification on the subject. Where in the justification for democratic institutions in central and eastern Europe is the Hobbesian subject, the Lockean man with God-given natural rights, Mill's heretic and de Tocqueville's individual committed to equality of opportunity? What are the "origin stories" of these new polities?

Part of the explanation for what is at first glance an invisible subject is that this democratic citizen does exist in these elite-choice theories, but the nature of his identity is implicit. It is the identity of a neutral, rational agent responding to the newly-empowering democratic procedures now available to him. Since the way that the citizen votes is not at issue in democratization literature, just the choice of a voting procedure, the voter is a post-hoc actor actually carrying out the system designed for him by playing a rational role. Elite-choice theories specifically, and "transitology" in general, actually neutralize and silence the subject.
by presuming an identity that is natural and that exists "essentially," prior to any political moves by a new state.

I argue that this concept of the citizen as neutral is not in itself neutral, and that its lack of particularizing, even political, characteristics is crucial to the logic of the democratic transition genre. Elite choice approaches obscure these assumptions about the citizen because of the agent-centered, authority-building approach they wish to promote. In their view, constitution-writing, itself the encoding of elite choices, should not reflect old enmities, ethnicities or socialistic habits, but should actively found new democracies based on equal rights. As Ulrich K. Preuss notes, "Constitution making involves the idea of an authority and an author whose willpower is the ultimate cause of the polity." In other words, elite choice theories cannot sidestep the fact that the construction of authority is central to the construction of a state. Even if this "author" is assumed to be a Rousseauvian general will rather than a Hobbesian Leviathan, elite choice approaches argue that a stable transition requires a stable decision-making environment--usually a pluralist "arena" for competing interests--that will ultimately allow for democratic politics but that first must accommodate and shape the intentions of elites from both the new and old regimes. The ideal citizen, then, is a passive receptor of political options already deemed "rational" by the author/engineers of the democratic arena.

This view of the citizen can appear neutral, and thus be left implicit, because of the assumption that the "social contract" legitimating the new governments in Central Europe has already been made, through the "revolutions" of 1989 and 1990. After the collapse of the Communist Party-ruled states and the elections following it, the problem shifted to the particular institutional shape of the (ostensibly new) state. The identity of this implicit, post-contract citizen has, ironically, the potential for de-politicizing and ultimately disempowering social claims. To the extent that Central European elites themselves adopt the standpoint used by the elite-choice theorists, they can dismiss social, "non-elites" claims or pressures as populist obstacles to stable government. Elite-choice theory succeeds as a strong justification for the discrediting of types of political action that lie outside the bounds of the stability requirements of the transition, such as labor strikes, not because that is what "democratization" requires, but because the revolution is over.

Thus, not only east European elites but academic theorists and policy analysts studying state-building participate in the construction and legitimation of an ideal subject of democracy. In the research findings discussed here as well as in my previous reports for the NCSEER, I chose to question the assumptions about subjects dominant in the academic and policy literature
on Poland. In the course of my research I looked for the various conceptions of the Democratic Subject in public justifications of institutional choice within this "transitional" polity from 1990-1993. Specifically, I traced the notion of "citizen," with rights to be protected and interests to be represented, in the discourses of participants in public speech in general and in participants in policy debates in particular, in the post-communist period. I found that the newly evolving notions of the citizen, his interests and his relationship to the government in Poland are the effects of a hegemonic vision of the ideal state and the ideal society articulated by conservative-liberal voices. The category of the citizen is itself political, negotiated for and struggled over from below as well as from above.

Citizen/subject/voter: what to study in democratic transitions

The concept of "citizen" is rooted in a notion of the relationship between the state and its subjects. To be a citizen is to have equal status with others within a larger political community and to have rights and duties stemming from that role. To be a "democratic citizen" means more, however: within this concept is the assumption that the subject has interests which should be "represented," either as part of a greater common interest or as part of a continual competition of particular interests. While this representation can be defined in different ways, the notion of a democratic subject presumes an autonomous, rational agent who is aware of his rights and who can hold the government accountable for its policies. The notion that democratic governing institutions and procedures are the most effective tools for representation and for ensuring individual rights depends on a particular view of the relationship between the state and the public, or the governing and the governed. As Robert Dahl notes in Polyarchy, in order for a government to continue over a period of time to be responsive to the preferences of its citizens...all full citizens must have unimpaired opportunities...to formulate their preferences,

as well as to articulate these preferences and have them taken into account. Note that in this definition of democracy, the "full citizen" already exists, as well as preferences to be acted upon, preferences which constitute that citizen's "interests." Indeed, it is difficult to establish a definition of democratic government that does not presume this type of pre-existing identity, the basis upon which individuals make a "social contract" with a legislative authority. But how does this identity come about and, more importantly, what gives it its unity, its stability and its power?

The problematic status of the identity of the concept of the "citizen" has been explored in a variety of contexts, many of them explicitly feminist in their concerns. In the field of
political science, Carole Pateman has reassessed the assumptions about the social contract at the basis of liberal theory and has demonstrated that a "sexual contract" of the private sphere is necessary to the logic of the social contract of the public one. Marriage contracts are crucial to a liberal civil society and these private contracts are loaded with distinctions among individual rights according to gender. Because of this hidden aspect of the original contract, women's (public) citizenship is contingent upon their (private) subjection. The fully autonomous, contract-making citizen is thus the male citizen and the male citizen is what we mean when we use the term in its liberal theory context.

The meaning of the "individual" remains intact only so long as the dichotomies (internal to civil society) between national/civil, private/public, women/individual—and sex/gender—remain intact. Women's inclusion into civil society as members of a gender, as individuals, is also their inclusion as members of a sex, as women.9

Approaching the same issue in a different way, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has traced the evolution of the meaning of "citizen" in public debates about the United States Constitution during the Federalist period. She finds that the assumptions about the democratic subject embedded within narratives of the ideal forms of the American state were not stable expressions of pre-existing "revolutionaries" or "republicans," but were unstable products of shifting conceptions of what the American state—and the American citizen—should be. Rejecting the identity of the British/European colonizer, on the one hand, and equal status with American Indians and African slaves, on the other, the discourse of the American citizen had to develop alternative, at times contradictory, ways of representing the subject. To get at this process, Smith-Rosenberg asks us to focus not on an essential identity of subjects but on subjectivities, the (constructed) positions from which the subject's claims are made and are made intelligible.

Neither subject positions nor the resultant subjectivities are biologically rooted or psychologically inherent to individuals. Rather, being ideologically constructed and socially normative, they circulate within the popular culture—where they are produced and reproduced in religious sermons, political orations, newspaper articles, and popular fiction—and through social interactions and, ultimately, are enforced by the political power of the state. It is thus as subjects to and of popular and political culture that individuals internalize and affirm a particular subjectivity as "naturally" their own. Neither static nor monolithic, subjectivities change over time.10

In moving the debate from a search for the essential characteristics of the "natural citizen" to a search for the ways that different political cultures allow and disallow different "subject positions," Smith-Rosenberg relocates the main question in examining any democratic
founding. How do very particular subject positions become authoritative identities of a neutral, natural citizen?

Smith-Rosenberg and others concerned with this issue draw on the work of a variety of intellectual historians and social theorists, but most important here are the theories of Michel Foucault. Foucault emphasized not only the power of cultural discourses that construct subjectivities, but their potentially unstable nature, and thus the possibilities for challenging and displacing them. Other scholars have taken up these possibilities to explore the question of how subject positions have been destabilized and challenged in a variety of contexts, including gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, nationalism and technology. But what is remarkable about the case of Poland, and the cases of all the central and east European states, is, first, the apparent stability and authority of liberal-capitalist discourses about ideal citizens in the immediate post-communist years (say, 1989 through 1993 or so) and, second, the successful displacement of these discourses by a democratic socialism carried out by the members of the former communist parties, the very authority structures that these citizens had supposedly "discovered democracy" against.

If it is the "naturalizing" of certain subjectivities and attention to the political implications of this process that endows particular discourses of state and subject with power, what does this mean for the east European case, in which "naturally" democratic citizens have ostensibly been absent, in part due to the legacy of facism and communism, and in part due to the lack of a "Western tradition?" Transitologists and elite-choice scholars claim to offer one solution to this issue: elites, acting on behalf of the polity as a whole, strategically build or "craft" democratic institutions from above. Western-style, rationally individualistic subjects appear implicitly as byproducts of this process. The issues of the extent to which rights are natural, or a citizenship identity is essential, are sidestepped; the contract authorizing state action has already been made on the rubble of the communist party governments. If elites make the proper choices in the proper ways, an accountable government will emerge that is ready to address preferences even if the subjects have not yet articulated them. More important than political changes from below, then, is the manipulation or construction of a proper environment within which elites may compete and may compromise, yet may still behave "rationally."

The problematic status of the subject in elite-choice theories is illustrated in the following excerpt from this genre. This author is addressing public opinion polls in Poland showing disapproval for privatization policies:

Thus, people seem to be reading the current situation [of austerity measures in Poland] symptomatically; they see bad conditions as indicating that the economy
needs treatment; good conditions as a sign that it has recovered. This is not a rational belief. Hence, these findings may indicate individual myopia, albeit with a twist: Continuation of reforms is threatened when the economy shows the first signs of recovery. But they may also indicate a warranted risk posture: If people are highly uncertain whether reforms will make them better off in the long run, it is rational for them to want to avoid short-term deprivations and at the same time to be averse to making additional sacrifices when things are better. Hence, the decision whether or not reforms should be continued depends on whether one believes that the reform program will increase welfare in the long run. This is why the postures of economists and of the population often diverge. 15

The democratic subject is not necessarily an invisible, rational agent here; indeed, he is all too visible, although "myopic" in "seeing" the "conditions" of the economy instead of the long run intentions of the reformers. In addition, the ostensible subject of democratization and his voicing of preferences is what threatens economic, that is, free-market, reforms. The author, Adam Przeworski, seems to realize that making assumptions about the irrationality of the citizens should be questioned and he allows for a "short-term" outlook to explain public opposition to reform. However, he leaves ambiguous whether or not the decision to continue reform is made by elites (the economists) or by the public with their short-term rationality; he implies that he means both.

Przeworski concludes his study by arguing that the "main obstacle to reforms is the people," because the "technocratic" elites had shied away from opening up the form of the economic program to public debate and had thus allowed populist rhetoric to stir up fears of unemployment. He notes that

if a reform strategy formulated in public discussion, concerted among political forces, and duly deliberated by the representative institutions had entailed more inconsistencies...than the technocratic blueprint, it would have strengthened democracy and hence reduced the political space for populism. 16

Here is clearly an implicit democratic subject. If democratic institutions had been more robust, allowing citizens to articulate preferences fully, free-market reforms would have encountered less opposition. The proper choice of decision-making procedure would have allowed the "naturally" rational democratic individual to "see" the benefits of economic reform. Even though this implicit natural citizen contradicts the irrational public Przeworski described earlier, he must exist (somewhere) for the elite-choice approach to make sense.

As the example above illustrates, elite-choice theory is concerned with the question of which choices are the proper ones, given a public of autonomous, rational citizens. However, it is also participating in the very construction of a subject position, one which denies certain
social claims as illegitimate and irrational, while allowing for others. The claim that the autonomous citizen with preferences to be represented is the natural one is itself a discursive move, supported in this case by a strong Western "liberal tradition." This notion of the "natural" democrat is crucial to establishing a standard with which to evaluate these elite choices. The concept of the naturalized citizen, however, does not refer to a concrete group of individuals who exist independently of their contexts; it is a constructed identity that expresses an ideal of democratic theory. It is not, however, only elite-choice theorists that require this subject to justify "democratization" strategies, but also the elites occupying state power themselves.

Theoretical approach

How, then, to best get at this idea that the way the citizen is constructed in discourse matters for politics and for policy decisions? I chose to approach this question by focusing on the major discourses that appeared in public speech in Poland between 1989 and 1993. I concentrated on those ways of talking about politics that referred to struggles among institutional actors, such as labor unions and political parties, and to policy issues, such as privatization. In looking closely at the patterns of argument over time, I found that what appeared to be at first a cacaphony of voices and visions competing for influence in the newly open public arena was actually a discrete set of surprisingly stable discourses. By "discourses," I mean apparently coherent ways of talking about authority in politics, history and systems of thought that are "stable enough to be available for the use of more than one discussant and to present the character of [language] games defined by a structure of rules for more than one player." Discourses are what allow us to argue but also limit us:

The author [or democratic subject in this context] inhabits a historically given world that is apprehensible only in the ways rendered available by a number of historically given languages; the modes of speech available to him give him the intentions he can have, by giving him the means he can have of performing them.

This emphasis on experience as accessible through language is not to deny agency, however. The author is also an "expropriator," "acting upon language from others and using it to his purposes, and the innovator, acting upon language so as to induce...change in the ways in which it is used." The process of expropriating forms of discourse and investing them with new meanings takes place at the level of everyday life, as well as through public, "authoritative" speech. As Michel de Certeau has noted, individuals do not so much "consume" public meanings as they re-produce them through the practices of using them, appropriating
them in fragmented, often invisible, ways.\textsuperscript{21} For the problems of the construction of the
democratic subject posed here, the ability of both elites and non-elites to expropriate Western
and national concepts of who the ideal citizen is forms the very raw material of politics.\textsuperscript{22}

The theoretical approach on which I draw to establish the dominance of one particular
way of talking about politics, the conservative-liberal vision of individual rights protected by a
minimal state, is that of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.\textsuperscript{23} Laclau and Mouffe urge us to
consider the identities of subjects as "ensembles," a fluid mix of "elements" that are never
natural or pre-determined. Visions of political action or philosophies of government then
become attempts to fasten these identities in ways that support or enable those visions in
becoming powerful. These visions, considered here as "discourses," limit, mobilize or
otherwise successfully fasten identities when these discourses appear unified and coherent.
Discourse is not a merely 'cognitive' or 'contemplative' entity; it is an \textit{articulatory practice}
which constitutes and organizes social relations.\textsuperscript{24} The task of democratization, then, is to
unfasten identities by disrupting the coherence of these discourses and exposing their
contradictions.

Discourse is, then, a "structured totality" that inevitably assigns identities in the course
of its articulation. It does this by creating and recreating identities as categories, and then
linking these categories together by defining them in terms of one another. For example, a
person identified as "woman" is then linked by a discourse of, say, feminism, to perhaps
"nature" or "victim of oppression," depending on the form of feminist discourse at hand.
Laclau and Mouffe view these moves of equivalencies as always oppressive because of the
limits they impose on the ability of identities to be recognized as fragmented or fluid, and
because the practice of making these equivalencies renders discourse as totalizing and difficult
to challenge or overturn. These totalizing discourses become hegemonic.

It may seem somewhat jarring to discuss the period immediately after the collapse of the
communist party state in Poland as dominated by a "hegemonic" discourse. How can a battle
against a totalizing state itself result in another totalizing vision of politics? Doesn't the
"opening" of civil society necessarily lead to a pluralization of the political possibilities in the
public imaginary? Doesn't the variety of interpretations of the term "liberalism" in Poland
work against the domination of any one of them?

A close look at the actual possibilities open to the subject in post-communist Poland
affirms the limited nature of the "democratization" that occurred there. The discourse that
emerged as hegemonic in the 1990-93 period was not only "liberal," but a very particular
articulation of "conservative liberalism." This articulation almost completely dominated the
possibilities for political action and for policy by providing a set of "equivalencies," that is, a
series of linked and unified conceptualizations of public values that effectively merged the
decentralization of identities that had begun in the 1980’s into a single identity of the
democratic subject. In other words, I found that these liberals had indeed created new, "post-
communist" ways of thinking about and talking about the possibilities for political change and
democratic government; however, these ostensibly different and democratic visions of the ideal
polity were profoundly and extensively linked, resulting in a view of democratic government
that was of one piece. As the analysis that follows will illustrate, economic freedom was
defined as political freedom, which was in turned defined as private property, which was itself
associated with the idea of "Europe," but a Europe defined by Christian (moral) values. These
equivalencies resulted in a "democratic" citizen who could be democratic in only one way: that
of a conservative-liberal.

The boundaries of this liberal discourse are, perhaps surprisingly, not difficult to
identify, in part because of the extent to which it encompassed the political, the economic, the
social, the ethical. In the words of Laclau and Mouffe, it represented an attempt to "suture the
social," to define without ambiguity the collection of all possible ways to be a subject in
Poland. But as Laclau and Mouffe remind us, attempts to do this can never succeed, because
there can be no limits to "the social," that is, limits to all these possibilities. Every hegemonic
articulation has within it the contradictions and instabilities that it tries to cover up.

From property owner to suspicious citizen: the view of the liberals

The first post-Communist government in Poland was that of Tadeusz Mazowiecki,
established by compromise with the Communist Party in 1989. It was dominated by Unia
Demokratyczna (from now on, "Unia"), a group of former Solidarity activists that evolved into
a political party committed to a free-market economy with a large social welfare component.
The Mazowiecki government’s economic program was a blend of Unia values, forged through
experiences of resistance to the Communist Party government in the 1970’s and 1980’s, of
social welfare and economic rights, especially the protection of private property. Its economic
program was designed to dismantle very quickly the state role in industry as well as popular
expectations about guaranteed employment. The "Balcerowicz Plan," as it was called after the
Economic Minister Leszek Balcerowicz, promoted a forced and rapid recession in which prices
and unemployment simultaneously increased, in order to undercut inflation and alter the state-
socialist rationality of the Polish firm. The severity of the plan’s effect on living standards was
tempered by the Mazowiecki government’s retention of social welfare guarantees.

The successor to Mazowiecki, President Lech Walesa’s prime minister Krzysztof Bielecki,
withdrew many of these limits on the harsher aspects of the Balcerowicz Plan. The plan in
both its versions reduced the standard of living for most people and was very unpopular. The coherent blend of workers' activism, unity and individual rights prominent during the opposition to Communist Party rule in the 1980's was re-narrated by Bielecki as an anti-labor economic policy and became the dominant way of talking about the new Poland for the next three years.

Bielecki was one of the leaders of the Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny (from now on, "Liberals"), a competitor of Mazowiecki's Unia and the party that articulated a more "purely" liberal justification for the Balcerowicz plan in the form of an individual and economic rights argument. This shift involved a self-conscious displacement of the authority behind government from the previous opposition experience of Solidarity (an authority claimed by Unia), to a "neutral," "rational" view of the state as the regulator of property rights and nothing more. The prominence and influence of this liberal discourse was bolstered by other actors such as the United States government, other European governments, U.S. intellectuals and the International Monetary Fund.

Bielecki and Balcerowicz's construction of the liberal state and economy remained dominant long after Bielecki's tenure as prime minister ended. The anti-labor and "privatization" elements of the Liberal vision of post-communist Poland was retained by all successive prime ministers and cabinets until September 1993. For example, Hanna Suchocka, the prime minister appointed in July 1992, broke a large strike by coal miners, retained Bielecki in her cabinet and retained the Liberal Janusz Lewandowski as the minister of "property transformation" (or privatization). The dominance of the Liberals's vision of rights gave way only in the parliamentary elections of September 1993. The winners of these elections were the Social Democrats, who, together with the Peasant Party, slowed privatization and reversed the withdrawal of the welfare state.

The discourse of the Liberals rejected "collectivist" values of the 1980's resistance struggle, which had most often described Poland as a coherent "society" made up of people opposing the state as workers, Catholics, brothers and Poles, values that Unia and Mazowiecki had tried to integrate into a justification for governing in 1989. This "rejection" created a dichotomy between two ways of looking at political action that had previously been considered complementary: social power versus individual rights. In juxtaposing individual rights against a social justice vision of democracy, the Liberals drew on a series of equivalencies that had already gained resonance both in Poland and in U.S. policy making circles, those of "orthodox liberalism."

The most prominent and authoritative orthodox liberals invoked by the Polish Liberals were Milton Friedman, F.A. Hayek and Robert Nozick. It may be difficult for some to
believe that this narrow group of thinkers constituted the basis for a liberal discourse that dominated the political scene so much that other views were effectively excluded. However, the orthodox liberal arguments for private property as the only true basis of individual rights and for a minimal state acting only as a guarantor of individual autonomy—in other words, "freedom from" rather than "freedom to"—were indeed the very threads that made the Liberal discourse so coherent and unified. A glance at my own collection of underground political literature illegally published during martial law and immediately after, in the late 1980's, confirms the extent to which arguments such as Friedman's were considered crucial to an alternative to state socialism. At the very least, it is clear that many individuals risked arrest and lengthy jail terms for the opportunity to publish orthodox liberal ideas.

As stated above, the manner in which this one strand of liberal argumentation came to have such dominance in a newly open political field was the creation of a series of definitional or conceptual links among various sites of subjectivity. The Liberals' program, stated in a series of points printed in its official publication, began with a statement of radical individualism: "freedom" is the primary value of any social order. This view of freedom as prior to, and independent of, any type of community established the Liberals as quite different from the "liberal" elements within other democratic groups in Poland. It clearly articulated the claims to distinctiveness of Liberal politics by asserting individual freedom as the indisputable value of the polity, and leaving all other formulations of freedom or of the status of individuals outside of the realm of the Liberal vision; in effect, it denied the possibility of an alternative definition of freedom from cohering to or integrating with the other aspects of Liberal discourse.

The Liberal conception of the ideal democratic citizen anchored not only freedom, but human dignity, in economic liberty.

Private property is the material guarantee of human freedom and responsibility. Property finds its basis and its limits in freedom. The right to the free disposition of property by individual owners and to the transforming of it for personal use has its limit [only] when it leads to the limit of the freedom of others.

Here, the primary concern of the Liberals is not centered on individual political freedom; indeed, civil rights per se are not mentioned. Nor is this freedom a freedom for a variety of paths to full humanity, for self-determination or for a pluralism of economic forms. Political liberty is realized through economic freedom, specifically private property, and the free subject is identified as a property owner. In the words of the Liberals:
The category of ownership discloses the organic bond of economic freedom and political freedom. Private property creates civil society and is a premise of its economic resources.31

Here, the identity of the owner/citizen exists as a category prior to active participation in the public sphere; indeed, Liberals appear to be more Lockean than Locke himself, implying not only that liberty is impossible without the right to property, but without property itself. Moreover, the "organic" dimension of economic freedom articulates the "natural" status of the citizen as owner. In the logic of this discourse, the radical unemployment and other harsh results of the Balcerowicz plan constituted the necessary prior conditions for an ultimately better way of life: one with greater liberty, and property, in general.

The formulation of economic rights performed another goal: access to political arguments about who is included and who is excluded in the Polish polity. Traditional liberal doctrine treats every individual as an independent bearer of rights and does not distinguish between (male) persons, a stance incorporated into Polish Liberal argumentation. However, refusing to open for debate the category of who belongs in the ideal polity—that is, disallowing any ascriptive characteristics conditioning rights, such as ethnicity—prevented the Liberals from offering a notion of "community." It would seem that an absence of a conception of the community, while keeping the Liberal view coherent, would have disadvantaged the Liberals given the strong communitarian elements in the competing discourse of Unia and, more importantly as will be seen below, the nationalists.

The Liberals addressed this problem with the following principle:

The basic liberal goal is the creation of conditions for a full and worthwhile individual existence as well as for diversity and tolerance in the interactive coexistence of persons. This basic possibility requires nothing short of a free and open society, in which law and justice are not simply assumed as prepared answers, but in which initiative and individual industry augment the common good.32

Here, the Liberals established tolerance as the equivalent of community, a community that is consonant with the unquestioned status of individual (economic) liberty as the primary value of the ideal polity. A "common good" is admitted into the polity, but with little description and only as a result of the exercise of economic rights; the effect, again, is that alternative conceptions of community are situated as hostile to not only individual rights, but to private property, tolerance, law and even hard work.
Once the issue of community was brought into play, the Liberals invested it with a particular meaning that could bring their polity around again to a free-market construct. Their polity was "European." "We judge wisdom as collectively inscribed in the norms and institutions of European civilization, which harmonizes continuity and change." By identifying the ideal community as one with values inherited from the European West, the Liberals offered an interpretation of the Polish nation that rivalled that of nationalists, but was not on the surface a "national" solution. In addition, a "European" Poland was one in which economic rights and private property were guaranteed, church and state were separate, and "Christian" values flourished without hampering tolerance and individualism, largely because these values were characterized as "honesty, honor and law, responsibility and respect for property." The fusion of Christianity, self-determination, truth-telling and economic rights echoed many of the elements of the resistance discourse of Solidarity, yet transformed the meaning of these values by transforming their context. What is more, the conflation of property rights with the concept "Europe" became part of the discourse of almost every participant in the public sphere.

A reading of the Liberal's first programmatic statement as a party would be incomplete without a description of the image on the front cover of the publication. This image is a drawing of Bielecki himself, wearing an elegant business suit, white gloves and a walking stick, stepping across a map of Europe. One foot is back in Poland, caught in a trap, and the other is on its way to territory that would geographically mark Germany and France, but is here labelled simply "Europa." Bielecki's direction is clearly west, although his attention is temporarily captured by the trap of the East. His position in two geographical places at once indicates the basic dichotomy of Poland/Europe represented in the map, and the image indicates a movement from the Poland (left back in the East) to the West. Remarkable also is what is missing from the picture: there is no one else present. Neither past historical struggles nor a collective nation accompany Bielecki on his business trip. The Liberal, individualistic property owner is the persona which will allow passage from Poland to the west, as well as allow Poland itself into the west.

The Liberals, then, rediscovered the protestors of the 1980's as the property owner of the 1990's. In the process, the Solidarity worker's movement was refigured as an anti-labor economic policy, and "Europe" became the new community rewritten as a place where religious piety complemented liberal tolerance. This image plays yet another function: the drawing of the body of Bielecki "embodies" the various possibilities of political alternatives in Poland in one physical, natural and Liberal positivity. In the person/unity of Bielecki, the variety of identites and political stances in Poland were "sutured" into an organic chain of
equivale ncies, which itself in this representation is invested with its own agency: it can walk from East to West.

The problem faced by the Liberals by 1992 was the growing unpopularity of the austerity measures connected to the Balcerowicz economic program. They had difficulty, however, reconciling this public dissatisfaction with the stance toward the state allowed the citizen by their rights discourse, a citizen whose preferences center on ever-greater political and economic rights. The Liberals addressed this tension by constructing another Polish subject, one suspicious of private property and subversive of "real" democracy. More and more common were statements that certain elements in society "could not handle" freedom, that the experience of living under communism had distorted the natural citizen, that now Liberals must fight a "mentality" of a nostalgia for a strong state, and that Poles were not "ready" for rights. Polish subjects were, a Liberal would have said, "myopic" in their apprehension of the economic changes. Here, the contrast of the immature subject with the ideal property owner actually constitutes the latter; identity is difference.

The increasing need to employ the terminology of the suspicious citizen exposed the instability of the links unifying the Liberal discourse, forcing the Liberals to alter their notion of the minimal state. The Liberals were left arguing that the state must intervene in the economy on behalf of laissez-faire economics, and against a citizenry that was now characterized as the mass of the "dissatisfied." Reform—that is, privatization—should continue, in the words of Balcerowicz, even if voters opposed it. His justification was similar to that of the elite choice theorists described above: the democratic citizen’s rationality was imperfect and even distorted.

People have, however, in general a natural tendency to formulate judgements about policies of a given government on the basis of a comparison of their actual situation with their situation in the past, and not with the situation that would have existed if there had not been [any] reform.34

This "natural tendency" is viewed as regrettable because citizens, in this view, should have been taking the accomplishments of the Liberals into account. Balcerowicz also notes that the radical widening of freedom is the main motor of our economy. But only a few people—the young, the better educated...can directly benefit from it, making for themselves economic careers.35

These (newly youthful) owner/citizens, however, did not speak as loudly as the dissatisfied, thus preventing the Liberals from reaping the electoral benefits due them. In this discourse, the ideal democratic citizen, who perceives his rights as best pursued through economic liberty, is somehow silent or not articulating his interests properly.
The citizen as the national: the view of the right

Liberals in Poland after the collapse of communism did not write their new economic order on a blank slate. They had to contend with communitarian conceptions of the good put forth by rival interpretations of the Solidarity experience, and the consequent authority to narrate the ideal polity for Poland. These "communitarians" regarded the community as the ideal setting in which rights and freedom can flourish. In talking about a "natural citizen," communitarians first establish the nature and conditions of the ideal community, without which they have no way of making sensible the merits of individual rights.36 While Liberal discourse achieved dominance in the policy-making sphere by 1990, it did so only by challenging these pre-existing communitarian conceptions of the citizen. Indeed, the contrast with these arguments only made the Liberal discourse more tightly sutured.

In addition to Unia, an important communitarian institution in Poland is the Catholic Church, which embodies a long historical tradition of ethical discourse for many. The Church employed its own notion of the natural citizen, situating him within a christian community and imbuing him with particular ethical characteristics. While an extensive discussion of Catholic Church discourse is beyond the scope of this paper, in comparison with the "christian ethics" of Unia, the Catholic Church in 1990-93 promoted a much more incontestable role for a religious community, the only setting in which the individual can achieve freedom and wholeness.37 Important to this argument is the Catholic Church's establishment of liberal individualism as a threat to true freedom. One Catholic writer states the problem this way:

Democracy, from the point of view of its formalism, is a source of an enduring threat. It is also, however, an enduring possibility, a deep grounding of the genuine common good in the free decisions of all citizens.38

Here is a way of talking about rights typical of the Catholic Church's language. "Citizens" exist naturally; they have preferences and make decisions. But the "common good" is prior to the citizen's right. At first reading, this "common good" seems based on free decisions. However, the text can also be read as a positing a pre-existing common good, which can now be grounded in democratic freedom. Not only is the citizen's freedom contingent on the good, but access to this good is posited as the main goal of subjects.

In addition to the Church's form of community freedom, there were several different political parties and movements in the 1989-93 period that could have been considered "nationalist."39 What these groups had in common was agreement that the Polish nation is the primary and uncontestable value in the ideal polity and the centrality of the concept "nation" as an origin story. For nationalists, "Poland" was conceived as a coherent, pre-political entity,
different from other nations, and the integrity of this Poland is the primary justification for any type of governmental or social arrangement. These groups were not necessarily antidemocratic. Rather, the nationalists articulated a discourse of equivalency in a pattern different from the liberals. They differed on the nature of the nation, on who may participate in it, the best means for achieving it and what threatens it, but the coherence of their view of the state-subject relationship was enabled by linkage of the concept of nation with other values and other arenas.

The authority of the nationalist conception of the good is more than a rhetorical appeal to patriotism or populism. Just as the Liberals' discourse was legitimated as a break from a collectivist past, nationalist discourse claimed unity with such a past. The authority of nationalist conceptions of the citizen comes into play only when actors can successfully invoke it publicly, as (perhaps historically) resonant interpretations of current dilemmas. If discourses are relatively stable reference points that accommodate certain subject positions and exclude others, what is particular—and particularly compelling—about the Polish national subject?

The outcome of parliamentary elections in 1991 both signalled an instability of Liberal hegemony and allowed the Liberals to reassert that hegemony. A nationalist vision of the democratic polity and the democratic citizen was put into play by a collection of nationalist parties and groups, considered by many to represent the "right" on the political spectrum. Jan Olszewski, a prime minister representing this Christian, nationalist right, was appointed in December 1991, in large part due to the inability of a fragmented parliament to agree on either an Unia or Liberal candidate. The suspicious citizens had temporarily triumphed.

The Olszewski government that succeeded Bielecki's in December 1991 did not dispute the economic particulars of its predecessors as much as their privileging of the economic over the political. Olszewski represented a strain of argument that questioned the equation of government with an exclusive focus on distributive issues, and it rather skillfully interwove the establishment of a free market economy with a definition of the common good as the nation.

We want a Poland that gives opportunity and hope to all citizens, in which the division of civilization between town and country is erased, in which citizens will be able to freely choose their place of work and residence. A Poland in which young people will not have to emigrate, because they have found in the fatherland [Ojczyzna] the possibility of starting a life.

We want a market economy which will work in a precisely defined legal framework and in which Christian values of the family and other popular communities will also be defended. In this aspiration we want to take advantage of the experiences of the great European democracies, having rebuilt their states after World War II. This vision of the Polish future, which we must concretely and
expressly introduce for the nation, is not my own or the government's private idea. It is our interpretation of the desire of citizens, expressed in the outcomes of elections...⁴¹

To shift the terms of political debate from the owner/citizen to the Polish citizen who (then) chooses to participate in the market, Olszewski and others on the right acknowledged economic rights but at the same time demoted them to a status secondary to the common good. They achieved this by invoking communities where Liberals had invoked individuals. Indeed, the familiarity of the narrative of citizens living as part of collective identities such as urban or rural, family, Europe and most importantly, "Poland," allowed Olszewski's arguments to occupy completely the space for public language for a short time in 1992.

The emphasis on the national community in early 1992 quickly became a campaign to rid the government, the economy and even society at large of "reds," individuals who had been part of the former regime or who had cooperated with it. The Interior Minister, who had access to the records kept by the secret police during the communist party period, initiated a highly publicized process of identifying "collaborators" through a "secret" evaluation of documents and interrogation of individuals. This combination of publicity and secrecy was achieved by the all-day television filming of a room with a closed door in a government building, through which various suspects entered and left, as well as the "leaking" of lists of names. In this way, an institutionalized process of lustracja (lustration) was launched and the language of conspiracy became the dominant way of talking about public values. The campaign took the form for many of an assertion of Polish nationalism in the face of Soviet infiltration of Polish life.

Lustracja was presented by the right as continuing the work of the Solidarity opposition movement, work that had been left uncompleted. It would restore "justice" to a post-communist Poland and identify who should be excluded from the community of "decent" Poles. It was the "decent Pole" who was the proper citizen, the "interest" represented by the democratic government, the subject whose preferences should be taken into account. As constructed by Olszewski, threatening this community of decent Poles was an amoral, communist enemy existing as a secret network of spies and informers.

It seemed at first that the category, "decent Pole," was open to almost anyone but a former collaborator. However, the lustracja campaign forced almost every participant in public life, indeed, every Polish subject, to reconsider his or her activities during the 1970's and 1980's and to think about how these activities might be judged by the lustracja leaders. In a way, it brought the state more intimately into the lives of more individuals than any
Communist Party policy had previously. The urgency and intensity of the campaign was heightened when, during its initial days of closed hearings, a list of public figures who had files with their names on them in secret police records was officially released. Many people were shocked to see prominent individuals who had participated in resistance activities in the 1980's on the list; included as well was Lech Walesa. In response, Walesa called on parliament to vote "no confidence" in Olszewski's government, ending state-sponsored lustracja. The issue, as well as the conception of the citizen it put into play, continues to function, however, as a potential site of instability for both Liberal and social democratic forms of citizenship.

Citizenship engendered: the case of abortion

The case of abortion legislation in Poland illustrates how the two rival conceptions of citizenship, liberal and right/communitarian, constituted two completely different ways of talking about political identity and allowed for rights claims to be put forth in two different forms, creating different outcomes on the abortion issue, while at the same time keeping the language of rights at the forefront. It also shows the way in which this discourse was gendered: in neither conceptions could women put forth claims for their own rights or privacy regarding the abortion issue. As a result, women who supported legal abortion in Poland constructed an entirely different discourse to challenge the limits of both Liberal/individualist and communitarian/nationalist discourses of democracy.

Abortion was a legally protected practice during the period of Communist Party government and its de-legalization was first raised in 1989. The right introduced anti-abortion legislation to the parliament (Sejm), which at that time was only partially democratically chosen because the Communist Party had been guaranteed a majority of the seats in the transition agreement. Because the issue was so controversial, the Sejm voted against the legislation with the intention of postponing consideration until a more fully legitimate parliament could take up the matter. The debate was marked by considerable political protest. By the 1991 parliamentary elections it was clear that the legality of abortion was a major political issue. The Catholic Church made clear that the banning of abortion was a priority in its vision of the "new Poland," and presented the continued legality of abortion as an obstacle to the construction of a truly moral community. The Church's argument focused on the protection of the "life of children," vehemently asserting that abortion represented an immoral treatment of these individuals. The Church put forth an interpretation of the availability of abortion that presented it mainly as the option chosen by women who were pregnant with
mentally or physically disabled fetuses and who wished to terminate their pregnancies because of this. Thus, Church spokesmen argued that "even the mentally retarded have a right to life" and that it is unethical to distinguish individuals according to their mental or physical capacities. The battle against abortion was a battle in "defense of children" and linked to the fundamental bases of a democracy, rights.

At the same time that the Church was elaborating its justification for an end to abortion, the national organization for physicians met to reconsider its ethical code. At this 1991 meeting, the doctors established a ban on the performance of abortions for all physicians. Abortion was to be permitted only in the cases of rape and if the "mother's" life was at risk. In both this case and in that of the Church's announcements, those supporting abortion rights were cautious about responding critically in public to the calls for de-legalization. A critical commentary on the new ethical code illustrates the hesitation:

No one can force a doctor to perform an abortion against his conscience, ethics or beliefs. But no one can give him the right to decide for the entire society. The right to this lies only with the Sejm.

"Rights," again, are prominent in the justificatory language, but these are not the rights of a woman; the issue is between a doctor and her parliament.

The public prosecutor also voiced some criticism, arguing that a ban on abortion would lead to "underground gynecology," a reference to abortions performed in secret and without adequate expertise or health precautions, and that the frequency would increase given the absence of sex education and contraception in Poland. Indeed, supporters of legal abortion often referred to the absence of alternative means of contraception and the negative economic impact of unplanned births on families and mothers as their justification.

The persistence of the issue throughout the early 1990's shows that many saw the abortion issue as a crucial element in the construction of a "new Poland" and the continued legal availability of abortion as an indication of ethical weakness. The commentary on the role of the doctor's individual conscience indicates that even those who may have been supporters of abortion rights felt compelled to make room for "ethics." In contrast to the forms the abortion debate in the United States has taken, the "choice" in Poland was the choice not to perform an abortion, a choice for the physician. The notion that the new Poland should be a morally proper Poland--and was not yet--dominated the discourse of all participants in the public debate on abortion in 1990-91.

Remarkable in both strains of argument is the absence of any women. Abortion concerns physicians, children, the state, the individual, the economy, the household--but never
women as women, that is, a citizen who is coincidentally pregnant. Whether the argument was about individual rights or community, a pregnant woman as an autonomous citizen was disallowed by both. As a result of the 1989 initiative, several groups constructed alternative discourses that created rights for women to "make decisions about their own bodies." positions not limited to Liberal individualism but linked to a notion of "self-defense." 49

The law banning abortion was passed in February 1993, yet it is an issue that continues to be a site of struggle over what it means to be a Polish citizen. 50

Policy implications

What does this argument about the importance of the language of equivalencies for political power mean for concrete policy choices? First and foremost, the point of departure for any policy analysis of transitions in central and eastern Europe should be the acknowledgement that every government, be it liberal, nationalist or social democratic, relies on a conception of the relationship between state and subject, and that this conception provides the context for all policy. It is clear through this analysis of liberal (and Liberal) discourse that a vision or philosophy of government that assigns individual civil and economic rights to its citizens is not inherently liberating or democratic for those subjects. Rather, any discourse of authority inevitably disciplines those subjects and limits the possibilities for political action, even while its "intentions" may be benign, because it must assume a particular identity for the subject and posit that identity as natural and incontestable.

What are the options for the policy maker then? To answer this question, I turn again to Laclau and Mouffe:

Our thesis is that it is only from the moment when the democratic discourse becomes available to articulate the different forms of resistance to subordination that the conditions will exist to make possible the struggle against different types of inequality. 51

In stressing the possibility of a many (infinite) positions from which a subject may wish to assert her identity, Laclau and Mouffe point the policy maker to the "acceptance...of the plurality and indeterminacy of the social," the impossibility of finding a final consolidation of the relationship between the state and the subject. 52 According to this view, all states are always in the process of "transition."

If we take seriously the idea of democracy, we will focus our policy efforts not on stabilizing state power, but on the local empowerment of individuals. The priority should be on loosening the possibilities for political action and disabling obstacles to local challenges to central government. As William Connolly has noted in his argument for pluralization, such a
view asks politicians, policy practitioners and academics to "come to terms affirmatively with the contingent, relational elements in established cultural identities." In fact, it encourages a purposeful destabilizing of the equivalencies that give discourses of governing so much power. Democratization means allowing for a variety of ways to be a citizen.

What would this destabilization look like? It would certainly emphasize participation, but not participation defined exclusively in terms of, say, voting or running for office. Participation would mean a participation in the fluid location and dislocation of the identities that make us citizens. Indeed, this conclusion is the outcome of any view of politics that views the construction of subject identities as an inevitable effect of policy making, a view with which I began this paper. Attention to the way in which subjects are constructed itself "opens up possibilities of 'agency' that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational or fixed." It is the questioning of the assumptions about the ideal subject that allows for real democratization to occur.

2. Some scholars differentiate between approaches called "democracy-building," "elite choice" and "transition studies." In this article, I treat "elite choice" as the dominant view in current scholarship of democracy-building and transitions from communism or authoritarianism because of the assumption all these views share about the causal importance of intentions and decisions made by individuals with formal powers within the state, the implications of which I explore below.


4. Valerie Bunc, "Should Transitologists Be Grounded?" Slavic Review 54 (1) (Spring 1995), pp. 111-127 and Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidationists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?" Slavic Review 53 (1) (Spring 1994), pp. 173-85. Bunc situates herself as a critic of "transitologists" because of the latter's assumption that "democracy" is the inevitable outcome of post-communist transitions. She shares with them, however, a focus on the processes of the "transition" as the goal of analysis.


11. Many works by Foucault and others address this issue, but a particularly clear statement can be found in Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1978).


15. For example, in his definition of "crafting," Di Palma uses the term "political actors" to mean craftsmen/elites, allowing him to sidestep the problem of the "non-elite" subject:

By "crafting," I mean to describe chiefly four aspects of democratization: (1) the quality of the finished product (the particular democratic rules and institutions that are chosen among the many available); (2) the mode of decision making leading to the selection of rules and institutions (pacts and negotiations versus unilateral action); (3) the type of "craftsmen" involved...and (4) the timing imposed on the various tasks and stages of the transition. Naturally, political actors in the transition may or may not have the objective opportunity—or the subjective ability that transcends opportunities—to make the correct choices. (pp. 8-9, emphasis added)


24. "Participants in public discourse" is an alternative conceptualization to "elites." I use it to refer to voices with access to shaping the dominant ways of talking about politics in the public sphere. In Poland, these voices are often "intellectuals" or "elites," but avoiding those terms allows me to
avoid defining participants by pre-determined social or political categories and instead to define them by their actual practices and power.

25. The problem of the confusion of a liberal doctrine with the trend of "liberalization" is explored in Jerzy Szacki, "A Revival of Liberalism in Poland?" Social Research 57 (Summer 1990), pp. 463-91.


26. The Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny ceased to exist as a formal political party when it joined with Unia Demokratyczna to form "Unia Wolnosci" in 1994. The argument presented here treats the period prior to the creation of Unia Wolnosci, when the KLD was a separate organization.

28. Several Liberals passed muster for Suchocka's cabinet, but the portfolio for labor went to a member of Unia Demokratyczna and for industry to a Christian/nationalist.

29. The primary text that I rely on for this section is the official publication of the Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny, Przeglad Polityczny. The evidence for this section of the paper will also draw from the writings of prominent members of the KLD or those sympathetic to it, such as Donald Tusk, Jan Krzystof Bielecki, Janusz Lewandowski and Ewa Graczyk.

30. "Deklaracja programowa," Przeglad Polityczny 1 (June 1991), inside cover. The exact words are, "Uznajemy wolnosc za wartosc nadrzedna i pierwsza zasade ladu spolecznego."

31. "Deklaracja programowa."

32. "Deklaracja programowa." This view of private property characterized many Liberal texts, both scholarly and "popular." See, for example, Justyna Miklaszewska, "Neoliberalowie w polskiej rzeczywistosci," Tygodnik Powszechny 24 (26 June 1994), p. 15.

33. "Deklaracja programowa."

34. "Deklaracja programowa."


37. I have used a very expansive notion of communitarianism here because in the Polish case, the community at issue is often the nation. For further elaboration of strands of liberalism, see Michael J. Sandel, Liberalism and its Critics (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

38. Examples of policies pursued by the Church that reflect this vision of the community include the institutionalization of Catholic teaching in public schools and the issue of the "Konkordat," a legal agreement on par with the constitution, codifying relations between the Vatican and the state and guaranteeing specific prerogatives for the Church in public life. It has not yet been finalized as of this writing.


40. A shortened list includes nationalist/ethnic groups such as Narodowa Demokracja, Stronnictwo Narodowe and Ruch Narodowo-Liberalny; Christian/nationalists such as Zjednoczenie Chrześcijanski-Narodowe and Chrześcijanski Ruch Obywatelski; and national "independence" groups such as Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej, Solidarnosc Walczaca and Liberalno-Demokratyczna Partia "Niepodleglosc." As we can see from their names, many have liberal and democratic elements to their identities.

41. For example, one of the most popular nationalist parties, the Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej asserted in its founding programmatic statement that "the battle over independence, over the unquestionable, over the most important moral value is not a philosophical dispute, in which the only weapons are arguments..." Malgorzata Dehnel-Szyc and Jadwiga Stachura, Gry Polityczne: Orientacje na dzis (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, 1991), p. 128.

42. The notion of memory here follows that of Paul Connerton in How Societies Remember (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). "Collective memory" denotes a community's
relationship to its history and the process of incorporating the images and narratives of this history into present-day social practices. One can say it is difficult to make oneself understood with absolutely no reference to this "currency of memories." Connerton: "Thus we may say that our experiences of the present largely depend upon our knowledge of the past, and that our images of the past commonly serve to legitimate a present social order...[These images] are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances." (pp. 3-4) I treat language and performance together as "shared practices."

43. In his careful study of worker and intellectual perceptions in the Solidarity movement, Alain Touraine documents the separate democratic and nationalist conceptions of Solidarity's role. Touraine, Solidarity: Poland 1980-81 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). It is important to keep in mind that nationalism has not always functioned as an inherently anti-communist or oppositional discourse. The leaders of the Communist Party in Poland often used aspects of nationalist discourse, at times with great influence on the social and political practices of Poles. One example is the anti-Semitic campaign of Władysław Gomułka in 1968.

44. This excerpt is taken from the expose of the Olszewski government to parliament, as published in the press. Jan Olszewski, "Początek końca komunizmu," Gazeta Wyborcza, 23 December 1991, p. 5. Note the appropriation of the Liberals' conception of "Europe."


46. "Biskupi o aborcji, antykoncepcji i fundamentach demokracji," Gazeta Wyborcza (31 December 1991/1 January 1992, p. 2). The bishops also condemned contraception on these grounds.


50. Fuszara, "Legal Regulation of Abortion in Poland," p. 126.

51. As the public prosecutor's quote above indicates, supporters of legal abortion in 1989 constructed women as potential victims of illegal, and therefore life-threatening, abortions. Thus, "women" as a category was allowed, but only as people who were dead or dying. See Fuszara, "Legal Regulation of Abortion in Poland," p. 126.

52. Fuszara, "Legal Regulation of Abortion in Poland," p. 128. Fuszara argues that the proposed ban on abortion in 1989 actually caused this new conceptualization of women's rights to be voiced for the first time since 1939.