Communism's Shackles: Post-Communist Legacies and their Impact over Gender Identity Relative to the Conditions of Women's Movements in Poland

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of historical legacies, more specifically the role of institutional legacies, in post-communist states, and their impact on the conditions of women's movements in Poland. This research is motivated by an existing literature gap in terms of understanding the potential relationship between legacies and women's movements in post-communist states. It explores such a relationship by focusing on identity construction and the importance of oppositional and collective identities in shaping the conditions of a women's movement in Poland. The aim is to understand the consequences of the relationship over the overall dynamics of a women's movement, specifically in terms of its ability to prosper in time and to achieve its desired goals. The research hopes to contribute to academia by implying that the influences of historical and institutional legacies should be explored furthermore if we want to handle more appropriately the complexity of women's movements in in the shared, specific socio-cultural and historical contexts of European post-communist countries. It additionally aims to contribute to the study of women's movements by analyzing the influential role communist legacies play over gender collective identity, which in itself plays an influential role in the characteristics of women's movements.

Introduction

Women's movements worldwide have brought upon substantial improvements in social justice in regard to gender equality and women's rights, relative to the advantages which were most often historically bestowed upon men. These movements have been increasingly significant since the mid-twentieth century, with a common basic aim to change the status of women in society (Fuszara, 2005). They have additionally contributed to other challenges around sexual abuse and intersections of race, class, and gender. Its frames, discourses, and

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collective identity were enormously influential in mobilizing and regrouping individuals in terms of shared grievances and issues (Whittier, 2007).

In Poland, feminist movements have been slow to develop despite the seemingly favorable conditions for their development (Bystydzienski, 2001). An overwhelming majority of Poles consider the situation of women in Poland to be an important subject, nonetheless it is very rarely taken up as well as being an issue seldom raised in parliament (Fuszara, 2005, p. 1061). In a conducted survey, it is curious to observe that only one-half of the women who mentioned women's struggles were prepared to engage in movements to solve the problem, proving the weak level of willingness to be active on the part of women in general (p. 1073). One might wonder what factors account for the conditions of such movements.

The evaluation of Polish women's movements is not yet extensive. Up until now, literature on this subject has generally focused on the relationship between women and religion, contextually in other words the Catholic church. Academics have also researched the distinction between traditional and more feminist movements and organizations in Poland, and their different stances on issues such as abortion and women's roles in society (Baldez, 2003; Fuszara, 2005). Additional literature looked at Poland's democracy or democratization and the relationship it holds with the advancement and evolution of women's movements and the rights they stand for (Mishtal, 2015). This research aims to add to the literature by exploring the relationship between historical legacies and the study of women's movements conditions relative to these legacies, a relationship which has not yet been properly explored. This paper hence formulates the following question : **what influence might communist institutional legacies play over the conditions of women's movements in Poland?**

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distinction between traditional and more feminist movements and organizations in Poland, and their different stances on issues such as abortion and women's roles in society (Baldez, 2003; Fuszara, 2005). Additional literature looked at Poland's democracy or democratization and the relationship it holds with the advancement and evolution of women's movements and the rights they stand for (Mishtal, 2015). This research aims to add to the literature by exploring the relationship between institutional legacies and the study of women's movements conditions relative to these legacies, a relationship which has not yet been properly explored. One might wonder in what ways institutions of the past might have influence over the overall behavior of Polish society, given that it has already been argued that institutional legacies in the country have resulted in a weak civil society (Howard, 2003). It could be that the power of legacies rests on their ability to alternate behavior, which would consequently have repercussions over the conditions of social movements. In order to explore what forms of discontinuity or continuity with the past exist and its particular relevance to women's movements in Poland, we need to proceed with a step by step process which will allow us to hopefully, methodically figure out the answer to our question, or in the other hand find an alternative result. Through the interpretation of a causal chain consisting of various mechanisms, we wish to hopefully shed light on the idea that particular communist legacies play a crucial role in the identity construction of Poles, in this particular case the construction of gender identity. This in turn would have important consequences for the conditions of a women's movement given the particular importance of collective identity over the strength of a social movement, as it will be discussed extensively in the literature review.

One might wonder how the identities involved in women's movements might affect their present conditions, and we would like to contribute to such a substantial subject by taking a unique stance which involves linking this factor to the socio-historical legacies of Poland, in

particular post-communist legacies which additionally involve other countries of the Eurasian region.

Women's Movements, Collective Identities & Institutional Legacies

What do we know about causes and conditions of women's movements? The literature review will consist of empirical and theoretical literature which will focus on the concepts of communist legacies and women's movements, more specifically how they work together, and the consequences of their combination.

1. Women's Movements

Social movements function as important vehicles for the articulation of collectivities' interests and claims. Literature makes a distinction between old and new movements, as the former involves social groups acting as interest groups whilst the latter acts on behalf of broader interests (Fuszara, 2005, p. 1058). Defining women's movements as a new movement sounds appropriate as the issue of women's rights can be labeled as a worldwide issue. Literature additionally makes a distinction around the different strategies utilized by women's movements to meet their needs. A local range women's movement is primarily focused on national objectives, compared to a global range women's movement that would focus on transnational objectives (Britannica, 2020). In relation to the research question, the general frame of understanding which should be applied for Poland's women's movements is that it is a local range movement with the desire to demand change at a state-level, such as reforms in national legislation.

More specifically, women's movements have conflicting definitions: for some authors, women's movements contain feminist characteristics, otherwise defined as challengers to patriarchy. This type of women's movement uses a gendered power analysis to contest socio-

political arrangements of domination based on gender (Gouws, 2021). The research will take the position of establishing women's movements in Poland as feminist and challengers to patriarchy, as it allows us to look at the movement through the lens of gender, which create deeper understandings and new concepts. We can assume that gender shapes the ways individuals experience women's movement interactions, as well as potentially influencing the opportunities and constraints for movement emergence (Siemenska, 1994).

We have primarily established the nature and characteristics of women's movements which were deemed most appropriate to handle the research question. It is now important to review the general conditions of women's movements, such as what drives them to have certain characteristics.

2. **Conditions of Social Movements**

For the purpose of this study, the following theoretical framework will shed light upon the contextual and dimensional factors of social movements, eventually narrowing it down to women's movements according to the views which could be most appropriately applied to the case study. The former references the structural and cultural conditions that facilitate or constrain a social movement, whilst the latter focuses on the consequences of characteristics of social movements such as emotions and collective identity.

2.1 Social Movement Theories

A generalized acknowledgment has been established which argues that social movements are in the business of seeking or halting change, however there is a lack of consensus as to the locus and level of changes sought (Snow et al., 2004). Various theories have been established to understand these dimensions. The resource mobilization social movement theory and the relative deprivation theory focus on the micro-level conditions which would tell us whether a movement will succeed or fail. The former focuses on the resources available at a certain time

whilst the latter looks at the way people feel motivated to join social movements because they feel deprived in some way compared to others (Brett & Scott Lewis, 2014). These are not useful in order to understand the impact of legacies over the conditions of women's movements as they do not encapsulate the influence of societal factors over collective identity. The New Social Movement (NSM) theory tells us about the origins of the emergence of social movements by focusing on the macro-level and the bigger picture of its conditions (Buechler, 1995). Rather than being one specific theory, it is more of a perspective that revolves around understanding movements as they relate to politics, identity and social change (ibid.).

We focus on this NSM theory rather than focusing on the other existing ones due to its ability to see the bigger picture. It additionally encapsulates most appropriately the source of actions and the emergence of ideologies which are conducive to women's movements. The NSM theory argues that there are now new logics of action based on politics and ideology as a root for collective action, and they look at sources of identity such as gender as the definers of collective identity (Buechler, 1995, p.442). Driving actors in social movements share norms and values through collective identity (Melucci, 1998). This theory potentially helps us to better understand the question and guides us into its resolution by introducing a root for the emergence of social movements. One might therefore conclude from the theory's contribution that a social movement effectively emerges through the bias of the formation of collective identities.

Additionally, by focusing on the role played by a movement's ideology and the concerns motivating its participants, the theory elaborates on the way both ideology and concerns shape an arena of collective action, which is based itself on shared norms, identities, and grievances (Williams, 2004, p. 92). These in turn allow for a social movement to hopefully be long-lasting, given a strong basis for collective action. One might wonder if the lack of a component such

as shared grievances as a basis for collective identity might have a role to play in the inability for a social movement to prosper.

2.2 Influence of Collective Identity

Melucci's (1998) contribution relative to the NSM theory brings about another condition which influence the characteristics of social movements. This involves the incapacity for some people to define a collective identity in the first place, which initially is meant to be an influential factor for the involvement of people in social movements. This view would focus on how collective identities are socially constructed and would end up interrelating combinations of identities which will then shape movement participation. (Williams, 2004). If applied to women's movements, this argument would imply that if too many participants and actors are incapable of defining a shared collective identity based on gender, the social movement would be incapable of shaping meaningful movement participation and would hence be relatively weak.

Focusing on identity enables us to see how interests for social movements emerged rather than taking them as given (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 284). Identity doesn't come from fixed categories such as gender or race, but from common positions such as political affiliations (p. 288). It is for this reason that it is always crucial to take into consideration the macro-historical context within which movements emerge and prosper, as they will highly influence the conditions of their existence. There are particular historical and structural legacies which might influence the arena of collective action and therefore additionally be influential relative to the movement's structure and mobilization capacities (Williams, 2004, p. 92).

These findings are particularly relevant to the research revolving around the question of the conditions of women's movements in Poland, as they would generally imply that Poland's socio-cultural context might play an influential role when it comes to the evolution of collective

identities in the country. Since it has been grounded that collective identity influences the involvement of individuals in movements and hence their participation, one might wonder what status collective gender identity holds in the country. By asking ourselves this question, it would be easier to then assume the conditions of a women's movement, according to the relative absence or presence of a specific collective identity such as gender, which in itself encapsulates the features of a women's movement.

2.3 Institutional Legacies & Social Movements

Other authors have focused on the institutional contexts within which new identities are forged. They argue that individuals can collectively seek to alienate themselves from the physical and ideological control of authorities in power by developing oppositional identities (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 288). In their study of Estonian nationalist opposition, Johnston and Snow (1998) imply that oppositional identities provide the fertile soil for the development of social movements. Their formation is most likely due to the existence of a free space between the public and private sphere (p.492). It's precisely under authoritarian rules that strong socio-cultural ties and a feeling of shared identity will create a required shared distinction from the "others" in the form of oppositional identities, which will consequently preserve the success of social movements across changing political environments (Pollack & Wielgohs, 2004, p. 49). Once again it is in such states that the split between public and private spheres arises due to intense state monitoring of ideological correctness of what should be said and done, hence inciting individuals to distance themselves from the government (Johnston & Snow, 1998, p.493).

Howard (2003) adds to this literature by exploring collective action and identity in post-Communist states, arguing that behavior is merely shaped by the prior experiences of individuals with institutions, and how they interpret those experiences. Support for the regime

is initially shaped by early socialization and evolves continuously throughout life as initial beliefs are reinforced. It would argue that the prior experiences that people have with organizations may influence the willingness for individuals to participate or not in social movements.

For example, the legacy of mistrust in political institutions stems from the alienating experience of decades of communist rule (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011, p. 383). Society is deprived of a sphere of independent institutional intermediation, which results in a pervasive and growing mistrust of institutions as a whole (Lubecki & Szczegola, 2007, p. 19). This naturally implies a lack of involvement and implications in any political action which would support the institutions in power. Given that common purposes enrooted in social movements are meant to reach a political sphere if they are to prosper and get the change they desire, it can be assumed that mistrust may result in the absence of collective identities which correlate with ideological views of the institutions in power.

By combining the two theoretical arguments explored above, it could be assumed that the legacy of mistrust as a consequence of authoritarian ruling would result in the creation of oppositional identities. Social movements which do not possess motives rooted in these oppositional identities might be expected to be weaker compared to the ones with a strong collective identity based on shared grievances.

These theoretical arguments are connected to the research question as they suggest that legacies, in particular those which develop following an authoritarian regime, can have important consequences on identity construction, in this case by giving way to the unique case of oppositional identities. Given that Poland is concerned with legacies of an authoritarian state with communism, it would be ideal to assume consequences from particular legacies in terms of identity building, and the repercussions of this particularity in relevance to women's movements.

Hypothesis

One can piece together the various arguments relevant to the question we ask ourselves relative to women's movements, and come up with a hypothesis which would hopefully answer our research question. Sources of identities such as gender can be definers of a collective identity which will produce new logics of action. Collective identity can be hindered by institutional legacies which might impede the collective construction of certain sources of identities. The following hypothesis is formulated in relation to the matter of the condition of women's movements in Poland:

Prior experiences with communism hinder women from constructing a shared collective identity of gender, which would later on result in a Polish women's movements incapacity to prosper in time.

This hypothesis offers the possibility for a complex causal chain which would explore the relationship between collective identity and the conditions of women's movements. Firstly, it can be expected that the prior experiences with forced participation in authoritarian organizations may initially impede the formation of certain collective identities due to two main consequences of communism. The first consequence is supported by the assumptions of Polletta and Jasper (2001) and Pollack and Wielgohs (2004), as they suggest that oppositional identities are constructed as a response to ideological control of those in power, especially when faced with an authoritarian rule. This assumption contributes to academia by wondering whether the lack of a strong collective gender identity stems from the fact that it did not develop as an oppositional collective identity in response to communism. Furthermore, Western research on social movements has given sporadic attention to the development of opposition in state-socialist societies of Eastern Europe (Pollack & Wielgohs, 2004, p. 42), and this research is willing to explore this field more extensively.

The second consequence is initially discussed by Pop-Eleches & Tucker (2011) as they explore the effects of distrust in post-communist institutions. This will additionally contribute to academia through its applications to Polish society, as well as exploring its influence over collective identity.

To illustrate this assumption through the case study of women's collective identity, it is predicted that women go through social constructions of identity which don't involve or ignore gender as a cause for collective identity due to its non-categorization as an oppositional identity, which themselves result from mistrust of institutions. From this point on, the hypothesis would assume the condition of women's movement in Poland to be influenced largely by the absence of participation of women with a shared collective identity based on gender.

More concretely, the communist legacy of oppositional identities and mistrust in formal organizations function as intervening variables which would explain the observable relationship between collective identity and condition of women's movements in Poland. The legacies' influential effects would explain why some women find themselves unable to socially construct a collective identity based on gender. This in turn produces a lack of interest for logic of actions such as feminist ideology as a root for collective action, which would finally lead to an unwillingness to participate in social movements. The following causal chain model presents the step-by-step process which should hopefully lead us to the hypothesis:
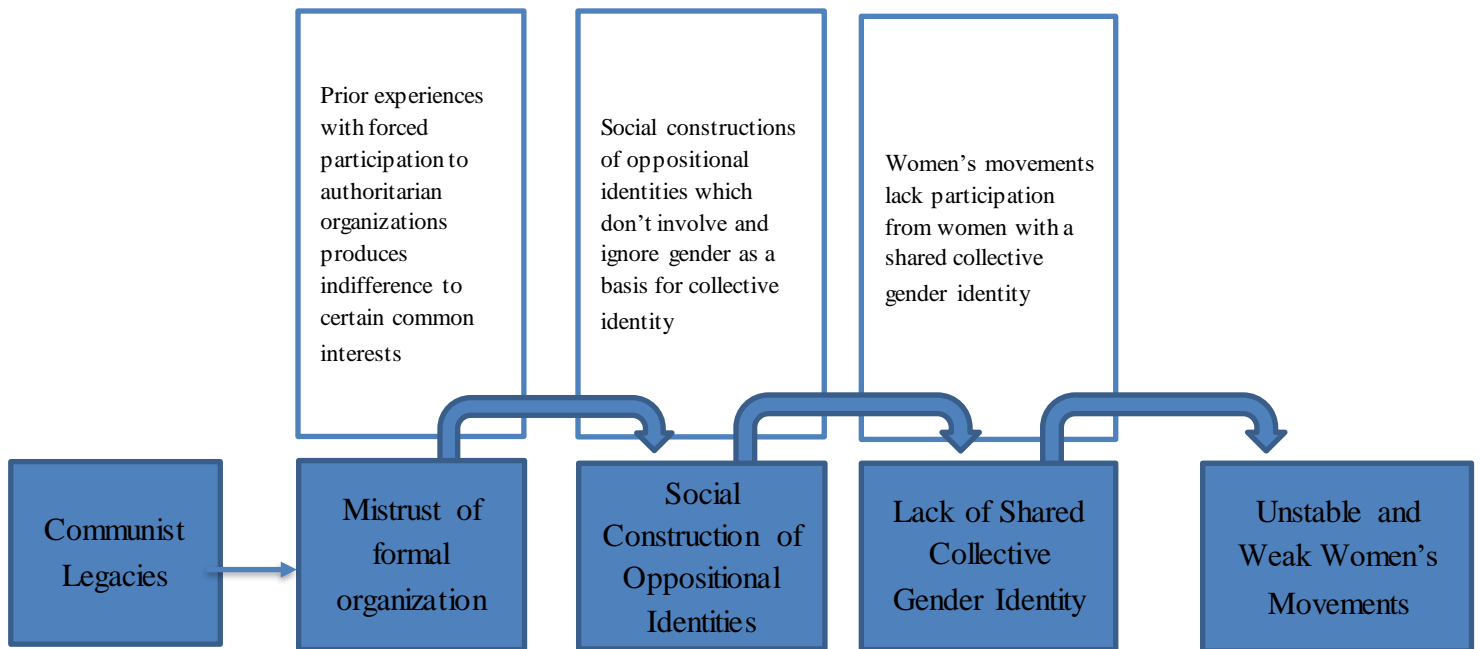
Since we test this hypothesis, it will either be validated or falsified by the evidence we will critically analyze further on. This is why we also have a null hypothesis asserting the opposite of the proposition I am testing. This null hypothesis would assert that argue that the condition of women's movements in Poland cannot be explained by an influence of communist legacies, but rather due to other outcomes.

Methodology

1. <u>Research Design</u>

This research is conducting a qualitative single case study. One could argue that a generalization of the conditions under which women's movements prosper can exist, however situating the analysis within specific socio-political and historical contexts runs the risk of inappropriate universalizing, as well as only suggesting one way of conceptualizing the conditions of a women's movement (Tripp, 2000). It prioritizes internal validity rather than external validity in order to establish a causal chain unique to the case of Poland. Secondly, since the research is interested in the whole causal chain relationship between two variables, a

qualitative approach will allow for a deeper interpretation of the issues at hand as well as explore nuances related to the relationship. Concretely, this research aims at understanding and making sense of the mechanisms that unfold from communist legacies, especially in terms of social construction of identity and its consequence on social movements.

Regarding the method of data analysis, the research needs to apply an approach which would give meaning through interpretation of social phenomena such as the construction of a gender collective identity. Subsequently, the analysis will proceed with the process tracing method. The method captures how an issue evolves when the case is subject to dynamics of change and time. It will attempt to capture a causal link between mistrust and the construction of oppositional identities as long-term effects of communism, and the subsequent condition of women's movements. However, this causal chain can only be possibly valid if accounting for a micro step-by-step process which would shed light on the mechanisms allowing for a relationship between cause and effect. Hopefully we will be able to conclude that one of the conditions accounting for the condition of women's movements is the role played by legacies of communism.

By way of rapidly exemplifying the analysis that will be conducted, the following paragraph will demonstrate a simplified version of the causal chain and its mechanisms. First off there will be a collection of evidence which would support the idea that mistrust of formal organizations is a reality stemming from communist legacies. This evidence should be able to suggest that Poles lack trust in the state, as well as anything interlinked to this suggested observation. Secondly, the chain will require evidence that women construct social identities that do not predominantly involve gender. In other words, this mechanism will focus on the relationship between mistrust and oppositional identity formation. This would involve analyzing data observing that women are more interested in other identities such as religious and maternal identity. The last mechanism involving the lack of shared collective gender

identity will be analyzed by collecting information on women's opinions about women's movements and their gender roles. However, the analysis section will not be limited to such observations and will explore any other factors which might support the hypothesis. For example, women's opinions on whether social movements should engage in activities that promote gender equality, and the consequent level of participation, could potentially support the mechanisms at hand through a final analysis of the dynamics of women's movements.

2. <u>Women's Movements in Post-Communist Poland</u>

Poland is the selected single case study for the testing of the research's hypothesis. The country was deemed ideal to test the hypothesis given its particular socio-historical context. In general, social movements have played an influential role in Communist European countries. Anti-communist street demonstrations in these countries have brought about the fall of the Communist regimes as well as the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union (Giugni, 1998). Poland was unique in the sense that it initiated a nation-wide anti-communist movement in the 1980s which revived Polish identity in order to overthrow the communist regime as a result (Sabatovych, 2017). This clearly goes in line with our study by demonstrating that Poland has a history of mobilizing collective identities in order to initiate change through social movements. However, what about women's movements particularly?

Women in Poland's communist regime did not have a singular or ceaseless position in society (LaFont, 2001, p. 204). Communist ideology visualized women as crucial instruments to reach their goals, however as the agenda shifted given the increasing resistance to the authoritarian regime, the perception of women's rights changed as well (LaFont, 2001, p. 205). Bystydzienski (2001) adds to this in her study of the historical, political, economic and social conditions that posed obstacles to the formation of a strong women's movement in Poland. The author insinuates that a communist past may affect the organization of women's movements,

as oppositional identities resulting from mistrust may bring about a form of indifference towards any gender-based collective identity.

Understanding the nature of women's movements in Poland could potentially allow for a clearer comprehension of the conditions necessary to strengthen their capacities to initiate change when faced with state-imposed regulations in regard to women's reproductive rights, which has been a current issue in 2020.

3. <u>Data Sources & Collection</u>

Data utilized for the qualitative analysis will consist of a variety of secondary data which take the form of documents such as newspaper articles, academic papers, as well as surveys. The data will be collected from the Leiden University Catalogue database, as well as from search engine databases. We need to analyze these sources in order to evaluate whether the causal chain is at play. To do so, the secondary data needs to be treated critically, by examining the representativeness of polls and surveys, their design, the question wording, and their significance. We cannot ignore the fact that this secondary data takes the risk of not being entirely reliable in validating the causal chain, however we will try our best to evaluate the relevance of the data given the theoretical framework, as well as assessing its credibility. The content of the data will be categorized in themes. The textual content of the documents will be coded in order to provide evidence for the following themes:

1. evidence & consequences of the legacy of mistrust in Poland

2. origins of oppositional identities in Poland

3. sentiments regarding collective gender identity in Poland

4. description of women's movements in Poland

The first theme will attempt to justify the existence of mistrust of formal organizations as a communist legacy. The second theme will explore oppositional identities and will be

interpreted in a way to hopefully link it to the first theme, hence proving the influence of mistrust on the emergence of oppositional identities. From this point on it is hoped that the analysis will demonstrate the absence of collective gender identity in this process. Afterwards, the third theme focuses on the third mechanism of the causal chain. Its interpretation should be able to demonstrate that the formation of oppositional identities has led to the potential weakness of collective gender identity in Poland. Finally the fourth theme portrays the result of the causal mechanism chain, and should hopefully validate the step-by-step process by relating to each of the mechanisms implied.

Interpretation of the data sources collected will make sense of the relevant coded text, and statistical inferences from previous research will contribute to the question by assigning specific meaning. For example, we will select evidence of mistrust in institutions in Poland through previously conducted surveys in order to assume the consequent formation of oppositional identities without necessarily taking all evidence as confirmatory.

The Legacy of Mistrust in Post-Communist Poland: Evidences & Consequences

To explore this area of the research, this theme looked specifically at evidence of institutional legacies, evidence of mistrust in institutions in Poland, and consequences of Poland's mistrust in institutions. These three types of evidence are related by the theoretical assumption which sees the current level of mistrust in a population as a consequence of institutional legacies and the mistrust accumulated for such institutions in the past. By understanding the impact of communist institutional legacies on individuals, one can get a better idea of its consequences at the Polish societal and state level.

When taking an institutional approach to legacies of communism, one can observe that institutions have the power to drive individuals to behave in a distinctive manner. In Poland during communist rule, the political institutions were rooted in a peculiar communist ideology

which could subsequently shape political behavior in the future (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011, p. 381). A political behavior we notice in Poland is evidence of present mistrust in institutions, reflected by the fact that political institutions are held in a particularly low esteem. In 1997, an article published data whose original purpose was to evaluate the trust, distrust and skepticism of civil and political institutions in post-communist societies. The data reports the means and standard deviations of popular trust in institutions for nine post-communist countries as a group. It indicates that there is very little positive trust in any civil or political institution in any of the post-Communist societies (Mishler & Rose, 1997). On a seven-point scale where seven is the maximum citizen trust and one the maximum citizen distrust in institutions, Poland scored an average of 3.5 for trust in government and 2.6 for parties (ibid.). The issue with this data is that it could be outdated, but this is fixed when we observe that twenty years later, this mistrust is still noticeable when it comes to public trust in politicians. On a similar seven-point scale, an executive opinion survey held by the World Economic Forum in 2017 observed that the average score of Polish respondents regarding public trust in politicians was 2.26 (Govdata360). Counterfactually, one is left to wonder whether this distrust stems from the legacies of communist institutions, or rather from other factors irrelevant to the study. Some authors argue that the main reason for this mistrust would stem from the Poles' feeling of not being represented by their government (Walker, 2009). This mirrors a general feeling felt by Poles when faced with communist institutions, a feeling of being powerless and voiceless in front of authoritarian institutions (Lubecki & Szczegola, 2007). Interpreted in relation to our causal chain's theoretical framework, we can assume that a mistrust in institutions could possibly be traced back to the legacy of communist institutions, and curiously the lack of improvement in trust since the collapse of the communist regime in Poland in 1991 could be interesting to analyze minutely in another study in order to validate more exactly the relationship between mistrust and legacies of communism.

One can observe from this analysis that a lot can be theoretically deduced in academia about the relationship between the legacy of mistrust in communist institutions and political participation in Poland, in the shape of public mistrust of politicians as well as mistrust in political institutions (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011; Walker, 2000; Lubecki & Szczegola, 2007). This relationship however does not succeed in assessing whether institutional legacies of mistrust result in the formation of oppositional identities. The following paragraphs will explore whether the mistrust has incited Poles to focus instead upon other interests. This is something which could be suggested as literature suggests that citizens who rejected communist institutions might end up adopting opposing preferences in terms of both ideology and regime preferences (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2019). Interpreting this statement according to our case study, Siemenska (1994) asserts that the way in which women were mobilized in Poland during Communism gave rise to the feeling of having too much equality, as noisy propaganda emphasized gender equality whilst forgetting to account for women's additional burden of taking care of their homes and children. As a result, women tended to focus on oppositional views, such as creating conditions allowing them to better fulfill their traditional roles (ibid.).

So far, we have therefore been able to observe mistrust in present political institutions, which when interpreted critically, could be traced back to legacies of communist institutions. It has also been hinted that Poles can ignore the repressive institutional conditions of the communist regime by adapting alternative interests. This contributes to the research by validating the first step of the causal chain, which established that there needs to be initially a relationship between legacies of mistrust and an alienation to the institutions. We would now like to see whether Polish people attempt to compensate for mistrust in communism and consequently post-communist institutions, by retreating to the private sphere and creating

oppositional identities. We will now magnify the last possible consequence of this mistrust: the adoption of opposing preferences and ideologies.

Origins of Polish Oppositional Identities

For this section the text collected is once again organized in three separate categories which include the description of communist and anti-communist identities, motivations for the construction of the former, and the shape they take in Poland. Understanding the motivations behind the identities as well as looking at their shapes will allow us to critically assess whether or not there is a creation of oppositional identities relative to legacies of mistrust in communist institutions. For this study, gender identity is conceptualized as an inner feeling of belonging to the female gender, and an inherent willingness to advocate for the emancipation of this feeling, in the shape of feminism for example.

The first opposition to communism which can be identified is the construction of national consciousness. This identity emerged in Poland as the communist regime was regarded as an alien imposition from the outside designed to serve the interests of outsiders, hence undermining values of trust and reciprocity (Tworzecki, 2008). This manifestly refers back to the existence of mistrust explored beforehand, given the growing alienation between the government and the society as explored by Pop-Eleches & Tucker (2011). This feeling consequently impeded feelings of shared civic pride and responsibility for the communist common good (Tworzecki, 2008). Instead, the alienation generated a clear dichotomy of "us" versus "them" in the shape of Polish nationalism. This observation doesn't directly assume the formation of oppositional identities since it merely focused on the feeling of opposition in general, however national consciousness can be framed as an oppositional identity in Poland since it has been found that oppositional identities are those that seek to alienate themselves from the control of authorities in power (Polleta & Jasper, 2001). Nationalism can be viewed

as an identity created to form a distinction from the "others" (Pollack & Wielgohs, 2004), "others" clearly correlating with the idea of the "us" versus "them" dichotomy. Counterfactually, it could be noted that this oppositional identity might be a playing factor in the causal chain, which we might have not taken into consideration. This should be explored in other studies.

Another consequence of mistrust in terms of the origins of oppositional identities in Poland comes from Communism's ideology of gender to pursue a range of political projects (Kościańska & Owczarzak, 2009). Socialist regimes attempted to erase gender differences in the pursuit of the socialist utopia. The ideology encapsulated a belief that the emancipation of women would only be achievable with the emancipation of labor from capital (ibid.). Kenney (1999) adds to this by arguing that in general, gender identity has been virtually ignored in the history of European communist states (p. 401). This evidence can surely suggest the instrumentalization of gender, however it does not tell us anything about its relationship with mistrust in institutions. Findings could suggest such a relationship when Baldez (2003) argued that feminism smelled like a communist ideology in Poland, and people have had their fill of communist ideology here. Critically analyzed, it could be interpreted that Poles could have easily linked back feminism to the communist institutions, that they did not trust in the first place. Therefore, in line with the assumption that oppositional identities are formed in response to Communist ideology and mistrust in the institutions, one can assume that gender and feminism would not be considered as oppositional due to their appropriation by Polish communist institutions. On the other hand, we could observe that another oppositional identity formed in response to communism was attachment to Catholicism, as it supported anti-communist activities which motivated women to get involved in religious collectivities rather than being associated with a communist vision of women's emancipation (Baldez, 2003, p.256). The church promoted a traditional definition of the role of women, one of equality of

women relative to men in the eyes of God, rather than their liberation and equality relative to men in terms of basic rights (Fuszara, 2005). Analyzed critically, we can observe a convergence in the oppositional identities of nationalism and religion. Nationalist and religious political parties attempted to promote the traditional role of women in response to the population's dislike towards communist ideology. Women were implicated in nationalism as biological reproducers of the nation as well as symbols of difference (Kościańska & Owczarzak, 2009).

Let's now critically analyze the evidence laid out, and look at the rising proliferation of religious identity in Poland. This is important to show in order to suggest a deviance from the causal chain, which would see that the absence of gender identity was not only possibly due to legacies of mistrust, but also directly from the importance of religious identity for Polish people. According to an opinion poll conducted in a representative group of 1,000 people by the Center for Public Opinion Research, published in 2015, 39% of Poles claim they are "believers following the Church's laws", while 52% answered that they are "believers in their own understanding and way", and 5% stated that they are atheists (Chrzczonowicz, 2017). This is also accompanied by the observation that people in post-Soviet republics generally see religion as rising in importance (ibid.) which hence goes in line with the assumption that religion might have taken the shape of an oppositional identity in response to Communism.

This section has hence argued that religious identity developed as a refuge for Poles, in response to the alienating mistrust they have built against communist institutions and their appropriation of gender. This goes in line with the definition of an oppositional identity, and sheds light upon the consequences of such identities over current shared beliefs. Nevertheless, even though it is suggested that gender identity has not developed into an oppositional identity the way religion has in Poland, we have not explored yet the position it holds overall in society Indeed, it is now crucial to analyze whether gender identity is virtually absent or non-existent in Poland, or on the other hand if it is negatively viewed. If this is the case, it might confirm to

us the assumption that gender identity is neither an oppositional identity nor a root for collectivity.

Polish Sentiments over Gender Identity

It is now necessary to demonstrate the extent to which a collective identity based on gender is relatively absent in Poland, especially compared to other countries. For this section, the information is organized into two separate categories which focus on the opinions of Polish people over firstly, the position of gender in society, and secondly on feminism and women's movements, with a particular focus on women's opinions. These categories are related as they both allow us to understand better whether gender identity in Poland is based on shared values or grievances, which are both bases for collective identity. To the contrary, it could be that the concept of gender in Poland is viewed divisively, which would hence suggests an absence of collective identity based on gender.

In a survey based on a national sample conducted in 2019 on 100 respondents, 69% of Polish people declared that it was very important that women have the same rights as men in their country. Although this number might not seem too shocking, it is worth noting that the survey was conducted in 14 European countries, and Poland ranked third to last before Slovakia (67%) and Lithuania (62%) in terms of the percentage of people who believed that gender equality is very important (Pew Research Center, 2019), hence demonstrating a lower interest in gender issues in these post-communist countries relative to other European countries. Interpretation of these findings could suggest that gender identity is a divisive issue in Polish society, but it does not tell us whether it developed as a collective identity. Collective identities usually stem from shared grievances, issues, norms and values (Whittier, 2007). In these terms, feminism as a definer of gender identity is considered by Polletta and Jasper (2001) as a collective identity as it is "an individual's moral and emotional connection with a broader

community" (p. 285). An online panel conducted in 2018 with approximately 500 Polish respondents in between the ages of 16-64 looked at the attitudes towards gender equality. When asked whether they defined themselves as feminists, only 35% of women respondents and 22% of men respondents agreed (Ipsos, 2019). This result shows that the relationship Poles share with gender identity does not seem to evolve into a rationale for collective identity, as the low percentage of identifiers to feminism confirms. This data is limited for our study as it doesn't tell us whether older respondents were less likely to identify as feminists compared to younger respondents. This could have told us whether experience with communist institutions played a role in opinion towards feminism, and instead we have to think counterfactually that other factors such as religion influence gender collective identity rather than communist legacies. The critical analysis contributes to the hypothesis by demonstrating that gender identity is less likely to develop as a collective identity, which is one characteristic of a women's movements.

From the previous analysis, it was concluded that one of the reasons as to why gender identity did not evolve into an oppositional identity was because of the instrumentalization of gender ideology by communist institutions. Legacies of mistrust resulted in the formation of anti-communist identities such as religious and nationalist identities. Gender identity seems absent from identity construction relative to legacies, and we critically assessed this could have an influence over the current divisive position of collective gender identity. However, the absence could also simply be due to the prioritization of religious identity and the influence of the Catholic church, which would hence require another causal chain to be elaborated.

Dynamics & Takeaways of Women's Movements in Poland

We will now explore the current characteristics of women's movements in Poland. We are most interested in the influence of these characteristics on the ability of women's movements to prosper in time. We are attempting to interpret the conditions of women's

movements in Poland in relation to the legacy of mistrust, oppositional identities, and opinions over gender identity as we explored them beforehand. The data is coded into three categories which define themselves as the characteristics of women's movements, conditions of participation in public protests, and takeaways of women's movements in Poland. These themes all explore origins of identities involved in such movements, which would allow us to understand whether these identities include the presence of a gender collective identity, which has been confirmed to influence the conditions of a women's movement in terms of its capacity to prosper in time.

The situation of women's movements in Poland is complex, as there are clear differences between their principles. Some women's movements are affiliated to the Catholic church, and on the other hand there are less traditional movements based on feminist ideology. The major differences accounted for between the traditional and less traditional groups is the stance over gender issues such as abortion, family models, and the roles played by women in the family unit (Fuszara, 2005). Given that the research defined women's movements as a feminist tool to challenge patriarchy and socio-political arrangements based on gender (Beckwith, 2000), the circumstances of women's movements in Poland demonstrates a heterogeneity in terms of ideals for a gender collective identity. It makes it hard to assume that a common ground could be reached among Polish women when it comes to defining their interests.

Nevertheless, it is not sufficient to assume that the heterogeneity of ideals and identities in women's movements necessarily suggests an incapacity to generate an important gender collective identity in Poland, or simply that it has been influenced by communist legacies of mistrust. What needs to be reminded however is that gender identity did not develop into an oppositional identity in response to the communist legacy of mistrust. It can then be expected

to observe a lack of shared grievances and principles based upon gender issues within existing women's movements.

Evidence of this can be seen in the low rates of participation in women's movements in Poland. It is interesting to look at the public protests which have been occurring these past years in relation to the laws established in order to restrict women's rights to abortion. In 2016, according to a Center for Public Opinion Research survey, it was observed that 3% of the Polish population participated in protests against abortion laws, however 52% of the population supported the protests without manifesting (Muszel & Potrowski, 2019). This low level of participation is less surprising when you look back at a representative random sample survey conducted in 2016 on 1506 respondents, which asked Polish women and men how they believed gender equality could be achieved. 51% believed that individuals should by themselves engage in activities, whereas only 14% believed gender equality could be achieved through organizations (Krzaklewska et al., 2016). In this case, it can be critically analyzed that issues revolving around gender seem to be handled individualistically rather than collectively, and this could be related back to the fact that it has not developed as an oppositional identity in Poland in comparison with nationalism and religion which to the contrary sprouted in a collective way (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Regarding the takeaways and outcomes of the actions taken by women's movements, it is interesting to compare levels of participation. If we were to find that levels of participation in time are decreasing, this might suggest a lack of involvement and motivation which itself is a sign of a weak collective identity based on gender. By taking the recent women's movements in Poland in 2020, we observe that more than 430 000 people attended 400 demonstrations across Poland against the abortion ban on the 30th of October 2020 (Mortensen & Smith-Spark, 2020). However, the last massive demonstration held in protest against the same circumstances took place at the end of January 2021 and "thousands" only were declared to have

demonstrated, hence showing an extensive decrease in participation compared to the numbers observed a few months beforehand (Kwai et al., 2021). Unfortunately, data was not found in order to explain why the protests regrouped so many participants at the beginning of the wave of protests in October 2020. Interestingly, since January 2021, no large-scale protests have been organized by women's movements in response to the newly established regulations over women's reproductive rights. The decline in participation could however be interpreted as a lack of collective identity based on gender, which in itself is a condition for the prosperity of a movement. From this, we can assume that women's movements are unable to prosper in time given a decreasing number of participants involved in time. The contribution provided previously in the analysis in terms observed that Poles have not developed a strong collective identity based on gender, and tend to still stand divided over the role of gender as well as the importance of gender issues in the country.

The outcomes of women's protests in Poland these last months shed light on the assumption that gender issues do not succeed in mobilizing people for a large amount of time, which could have been helped if a sense of gender collective identity was strong enough to ensure the endurance of women's movements, and hence the prospering success of their aims and goals in time.

Discussion & Conclusions

The research progressively attempted to trace a causal chain in order to dissect the mechanisms which would argue that communist legacies played an influential role in the current conditions of women's movements in Poland. It has been verified that there is indeed a legacy of mistrust in communist institutions in Poland, and it would seem that Polish people are retreating to the private sphere and creating oppositional identities as one of the consequences of this specific legacy. After the establishment that there was a clear lack of trust

in post-communist institutions in Poland, we focused on the construction of oppositional identities, and we understood through interpretation of opinions, surveys and academic input that gender identity did not develop as a collective identity due to its absence from the category of oppositional identities. To the contrary, collective identities such as religion and nationalism were seen as more predominant in Polish society. Finally, through the analysis of the current situation of women's movements, we concluded that they were struggling to prosper in time. This could finally be traced back to our hypothesis given the collected evidence we interpreted relative to the causal chain.

From the thorough analysis conducted, it can be argued that the paper's hypothesis could be more or less validated, despite the possibility of counterfactual thinking which might prove that the causal chain is not entirely just, and additional factors are at play when it comes to the current conditions of women's movements in Poland. Prior experiences with communism, in terms of legacies of mistrust, could hinder women from constructing a shared collective identity of gender. The hindering of a shared collective identity of gender can be traced back to the construction of oppositional identities which ignored gender given the communist institutions' former use of feminism for ideological purposes. Instead, Polish women were seen to rather focus on their religious and national identity as a way of rebelling and rejecting communist ideology. In time, these oppositional identities could have given rise to divisive opinions in Polish society regarding gender roles and gender equality. This state of things would later on result in a women's movement that is not fueled by a collective identity based on gender.

Limitations & Implications

This paper manifestly has its limitations. Firstly, the study cannot assume that communist legacies are sole influencers for the conditions of women's movements. Other

conditions such as the role of religion and the Catholic Church in Poland beyond their relationship with communist legacies can be very interesting to research in order to understand more thoroughly the relationships between women's movements, religion and the state. In order to make this study more valid and precise, it would have been interesting to engage in a deeper interpretation and assessment of individuals per age group. This would have allowed the research to get a better grasp of the multiple socio-cultural dimensions which might shape women's gender identities, beyond communist legacies. Indeed, this research was most interested in linking past historical and institutional legacies with current conditions, however it would be advantageous and beneficial to look at present decision-making influential factors. Finally, the paper could be highly improved if a comparative analysis could be done with another post-communist country. By comparing Poland to other countries such as Belarus or Lithuania, who have similar institutional legacies, we could have a better grasp as to whether Poland has additional particular factors which might influence the conditions of women's movements, apart from the legacies discussed in this paper. A single case study allowed for a better in-depth understanding of the relationship between legacies, gender identity and women's movements, however in order to improve external validity it is crucial that we go further in the comparative analysis of post-communist countries.

As for the implications, this research hopes to contribute to academic research by shedding light upon the current conditions of women's movements in Poland, and offer insights which would help movement participants, initiators and leaders understand how they could improve movement strategies in order to increase movement participation and hopefully increase their success in achieving their common aims and goals, especially in terms of gender issues. Indeed, this study has highlighted the importance of taking into consideration the historical legacies of a post-communist state, as well as looking into the socio-cultural construction of identity, in order to get a better grasp of current issues at hand. Additionally,

this paper would not limit itself in hopefully bringing insight to Polish individuals and their capacity to build a gender collective identity, it would also try to reach politicians in order for them to take into consideration the role of their country's past institutions and how they can shape identities. Through a better understanding of their influential role, they might possibly take a different stance when attempting to understand the demands and motivations behind women's movements. Finally, understanding the impact of institutional legacies over identity construction could incite individuals to act upon this discovery and alternate their positions over certain matters and subjects such as gender issues, and hence in the process build collective identities which could contribute to the prosperity of women's movements in Poland in the near future.

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