Polish Sociology and Investigations into Social Class and Stratification since 1945

Introduction

Robert Bierstedt, a student of Florian Znaniecki, writes in his classic sociological reference book: “There is nothing like Russian genetics, English mathematics, Chinese chemistry, African botany or republican philosophy, socialist meteorology, catholic physics or finally protestant sociology. The empirical regularities discovered in sociology are true or false independent of their origin and independent of the race, religion, nationality or political views of the scientist who discovers these laws (1970:19). In a footnote, though, he adds: “Of course this does not mean that there are not different in the problems studied or the methods used in different countries” (1970: footnote 10). The opinion that sociological research is partly universal, while other parts are country-specific is well-taken in the literature.

When one refers to the uniqueness of Polish sociology, this is primarily because of its understanding of given problems in certain times, and not because the research occurs in Poland. Polish sociology, like all other national sociologies, discovers images of social problems as well as societal patterns in a historical perspective. Since the early 20th Century, social scientists in Poland contributed rich research on social change, investigating the transformation of the social class structure and the stratification system. These studies, while grounded in major theoretical traditions, such as those Marx, Weber, and Durkheim initiated, also developed in reaction to the series of major conditions and events embedded in Polish history: Integrating a society that regained independence after the First World War, with problems typical for European backward societies of the 1920s and 1930s; the Second World War; the introduction of State Socialism with its wide-ranging consequences (agrarian reform, “forced” industrialization, and
accompanied urbanization); the post-Stalinist period and late socialism; the sweeping political, economic and social change following the end of State Socialism in 1989 and finally, the European Union era.

In this chapter, we present, in historical context, an overview of the main contributions of Polish sociology to social class and stratification research. This is not intended as a detailed account of the history of Polish sociology, which is well documented elsewhere (Borowski 1983, Sztompka 1984, Wysienska and Szymatka 2000, Mucha 2002; 2003; see also Walaszek 1977). We try to link our overview of the research on social class and stratification to political and economic conditions of Polish society, focusing on contributions that are mostly relevant for this book.

**Origins: 1920s and 1930s**

In 1914 Poland’s three occupying powers, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia went to war, with the first two on one side, and Russia and its Western allies on the other. The reshaping of Europe in 1918, following Austria-Hungary’s and Germany’s loss, brought about Polish independence, after 123 years of foreign occupation. For Poland, this represented a tremendous achievement, but also enormous social problems, dealing with territorial integration of regions previously under different occupation powers, ethnic conflicts among Poles and minorities of Ukrainians, Jews, Byelorussians, and Germans, political instability, and economic backwardness.

In 1921, the Central Statistical Office conducted the first Polish census, revealing territorial differences in the basic socio-demographic characteristics, ethnic background described in terms of nationality, language and religion, as well as sources of income and housing conditions. Although the 1921 census was criticized for methodological shortcomings –
too complicated questions and poor training of interviewers – it provided a lot of useful information for social scientist (Łukasiewicz 2009). Sociologists used data about occupational status in 1921 and 1914 to analyze achievement, especially educational achievements measured by schooling and actual ability to write and read.

Interwar Poland was largely an agrarian society seeking to modernize. In the early 1930s, nearly 61 percent of the labor force was self-employed in agriculture, while a little over a quarter were manual workers outside of agriculture (Zagorski 1977: 67). Polish social scientists were concerned with the ‘tension’ between the traditional peasantry and the growing working class in the process of social change. On the one hand, overpopulated rural areas with peasantry on small plots and inefficient farming were seen as an obstacle for the process of industrialization. On the other hand, the growing working class was considered a sign of modernization.

Intense studies of the Polish class structure were carried out through the Socio-Economic Institute in Warsaw, founded in the 1920s and headed until his death during the Second World War, by Ludwik Krzywicki, a prominent Marxist scholar. The Institute had many famous collaborators, including Michał Kalecki (well-known economist for his theory of business cycles and conditions of economic development), Ludwik Landau (eminent social researcher studying the division of the gross national product among social classes) and Sanislaw Rychlinski (sociologist, writing on social stratification) and produced research with a lasting impact on Polish sociology.¹ Many empirical investigations done under the auspices of the Institute were founded on Marxist assumptions, especially those which dealt with the composition of the labor force, unemployment and the standard of living of the working class. The empirical studies

¹ An extended description of the activity of the Socio-Economic Institute can be found in the book by Szturm de Sztrem (1959).
conducted in the Institute, as well as in the Central Statistical Office, were influenced by work of Jerzy Neyman, the Polish mathematician and statistician who first introduced the modern concept of ‘confidence interval’ into statistical hypothesis testing.\(^2\)

Although the Lwow-Warsaw School, the most important movement of Polish philosophy, founded in 1985 by Kazimierz Twardowski, did not influence inter-war Polish sociology in terms of theoretical ideas, it shaped a methodological framework within which a considerable group of sociologists was working at the Socio-Economic Institute, Central Statistical Office, and the University of Warsaw. Stanislaw Ossowski from the University, at that time an active follower of the school, was very successful in adopting the school’s style, paying much attention to the methodological qualities of empirical research (Mokrzycki 1974).

After publishing, with William I. Thomas, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-1920), Florian W. Znaniecki returned to Poland. His work, based on personal documents, was considered in Poland as fundamental contribution to empirical sociology. In Poznan he established the Polish Institute of Sociology, the fifth-oldest sociological institute in Europe. In 1930 the Institute began publishing the first Polish sociological journal, *Przegląd Socjologiczny* (The Sociological Review), with Znaniecki its chief editor from 1930 to 1939.

In the mid-1930s, to study the problems of, and prospects for, change and modernization of the Polish peasantry, Józef Chałasiński, a student of Florian Znaniecki, and colleagues established the Institute of Social Problems of the Village. Acute agrarian problems, such as fragmentation of the land among the peasantry, concentration of the land in landlords’ estates, overpopulation of villages and primitive living conditions of peasants, prompted sociologists to

\(^2\) Neyman’s advising on sampling was essential for social sciences in pre-war Poland. His biography and contributions to statistics are presented in Reid 1982.
study these issues, seeking to reconstruct the social world as seen by the peasantry. The Institute collected over 1500 life-histories of young peasants, where peasants described their life and work conditions, perception of social reality, and cultural and political aspirations. The analysis yielded a four-volume study, *The Young Generation of Peasants*, published just before the outbreak of World War II (1938). A recurrent finding was peasants’ perception of a severe division of Polish culture into “lords” and “peasants,” where “lords” comprised not only landlords, but also the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Young peasants felt that the upper classes limited their chances for advancement. They saw their own position as that of an “underclass,” yet, at the same time, they viewed themselves as a class which played an essential role in the economic and political survival of the nation.

**The Second World War**

The start of the Second World War suspended social research, as Nazi Germany closed down all Polish research institutions. However, some inquiries were conducted as clandestine or private activities. A noteworthy example is Ludwik Landau, an eminent social scientist, who kept a diary written in Warsaw from 1939 to 1944 (when he was arrested by the Gestapo and probably killed). His diary contains information on the political and economic situation in Poland, the conditions of Jews in the occupied country; it also contains statistic material, such as indicators of cost of living in the country, and other. Published in three volumes after the war, Landau’s work became an important source of understanding life conditions during the Second World War from a social science perspective.³

**After War: State Socialism, Industrialization and Urbanization**

³ See Landau and Tomaszewski (1962)
Following the end of World War II in 1945 and the realignment of international political influences in Europe, across countries of Central and Eastern Europe Communist regimes seized power and pursued modernization and social rebuilding via forced rapid and radical urbanization and industrialization. Mass movements from rural areas to the cities, abrupt shrinkage of the peasantry paralleled by the rise, in both size and prominence, of the manual unskilled working class were part of these revolutionary processes, which produced tremendous societal upheavals in already war-torn countries.

This was clearly Poland’s case, were transformations also involved another very extensive border modification, following the outcome of the Potsdam Conference (July 17 – August 2, 1945). For Polish sociologists, the immediate aftermath of the war, 1945-1949, meant an all-encompassing crisis: staff had been drastically reduced, resources were scarce, and organizations were difficult to establish. As such, large scale empirical investigations were not possible. Priority was given to teaching as a prerequisite for the future development of sociology, and to organizational rebuilding. The older generation of professors and the younger generation of students pitched in to reconstruct universities, organize departments, and fill out the teaching staff. With the communist Polish Worker’s Party’s growing political power, Marxist theory in the social sciences, already present between 1918 and 1939 in the works of Krzywicki and others, became de rigueur. Adam Schaff’s academically popular *Introduction to the Theory of Marxism* (1947) included a chapter on Marx’s theory of classes, and another, which explained some specific features of the revolutionary changes in Poland. Schaff examined the class structure in pre-revolutionary Polish society and highlighted agrarian reform and political alliances between the working class and peasant parties.
The works of Józef Chałasiński, professor at the newly created University of Łódź, were highly influential at that time. His study, *The Social Genealogy of the Polish Intelligentsia* (1946), which applied the same theoretical assumptions of class formation as in *The Young Generation of Peasants*, provoked nation-wide discussion on the Polish intelligentsia, its social origin—genealogical and cultural descendants of Polish nobility—snobbery and exclusiveness.

**The Stalinist Period**

The Stalinist period severely curtailed the nascent expansion of Polish sociology, due to an unfavorable climate towards sociology in general and empirical sociological research in particular (see Szacki 1993). Yet, some empirical projects on class and stratification were continued and others began. In the second part of the 1940s at the University of Warsaw, Stanislaw Ossowski and Stefan Nowakowski (1947) began empirical investigations on Polish peasant communities of the Western territories given to Poland as a result of Germany’s surrender in World War II. These investigations were primarily aimed at explaining the survival of Polish folk culture and national identity in communities that for centuries had been under German domination.

The Jagiellonian University in Krakow, under the direction of Kazimierz Dobrowolski, an ethnographer who moved to sociology, produced a series of empirically oriented monographs on the class structure and social and cultural change in the villages and small towns of southern Poland. Dobrowolski (1952) developed historically oriented method of fieldwork. He and his students examined government policies to improve the material and cultural well-being of the working class in the well-known mountain resort of Zakopane. In 1949 and 1950, in Zakopane, the trade unions took over privately owned hotels that, before the war, had been resorts exclusive
to the intelligentsia and other white-collar workers. Following the government encouraging members of the working class to spend their vacations in this formerly exclusive vacation spot, workers adjusted to a new style of leisure. They experienced new patterns of free time, rising aspirations, anxieties, and fresh relations with members of the white-collar classes.

Julian Hochfeld and Stefan Nowakowski (1953) reconstructed the formation of working class consciousness on the basis of memoirs of nearly 5,000 people. These authors investigated class transformations of both the working class and intelligentsia, including their life and work conditions, and their political attitudes. By the mid-1950’s Poland was becoming a consolidated socialist country, with a sizable working class whose importance was tied to industrialization as well as to the ideology of the party-state.

The Post-Stalinist decades: from the late 1950s to the late 1970s

The death of Stalin in 1953 loosened Soviet pressure on Poland, including its academic life, allowing Polish sociology to resurge. Intense progress in empirical investigations of class and stratification followed, concentrated initially at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN), created by Adam Schaff in 1956. With time, more and more scientific organizations, mainly institutes of sociology at major universities, were conducting empirical studies: relevant examples are the Institutes of Sociology at Warsaw University (later, University of Warsaw), University of Łódź, Jagellonian University (Krakow), and University of Adam Mickiewicz (Poznan).

An important sign of sociology’s growth as a discipline was the creation of the Polish Sociological Association: in 1957, Stanislaw Ossowski transformed a sociology section within the Polish Philosophical Association into the Polish Sociological Association (PSA). Ossowski was president of the association until 1963 (for a history of PSA, see Sulek and Krasko 2002).
Jan Szczepanski, became the President of the International Sociological Association in 1966 for the term that ended in 1970. He was essential for institutionalization of Polish sociology and for establishing its links to sociological centers over the world.

Empirical studies of the early 1960s, devoted to social structure, were based on the rich tradition of Polish sociological theorizing represented by Stanislaw Ossowski, Jan Szczepanski, and Julian Hochfeld (see Wesolowski and Slomczynski 1977). Studies were carried out by Wlodzimierz Wesolowski (1968), Adam Sarapata (1965), Stefan Nowak (1968), Stanislaw Widerszpil (1965), Jan Malanowski (1967), and Michał Pohoski (1964), exploring various aspects of social inequality, from access to education to social mobility and its psychological consequences. Some of the major achievements of this period were well summerized by Michael Kennedy:

Empirical sociological research blossomed under the direction of Szczepanski, with 28 monographs on the working class and intelligentsia being produced between 1955 and 1965. This is the first period of major empirical research on inequality in post-war Poland. In Szczepanski's general framework, class structure was understood and explained in terms of the relationship between historical foundations enabling continuity and the changes wrought by industrialization and revolutionary transformation. These general themes were taken up by examining how specific groups within each of these larger classes experienced the dramatic changes Poland faced in this period. Inequality was not studied so much as class provided the point of departure for examining the consequences, both intended and unintended, for everyday attitudes and behavior of socioeconomic and political changes. (Kennedy 1990:2-3).

By the late 1960s, a major current in social science research developed on the topics of social class, stratification and social structure, in line with the continuing focus on the division of people into occupational categories. Yet Polish scholars were keenly aware that occupational divisions in Communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe differed from the West in key areas. First, the State played a leading role in allocating people to jobs. Second, state socialist economies were full employment economies, meaning that unemployment – the situation of
looking for, but not finding a job – did not officially exist. Instead, there was increased bureaucracy and redundant positions, as the government had to create jobs for everyone.

It was, therefore, necessary to develop operationalizations of key stratification concepts that fitted the realities of countries like Poland, where the Communist ideology, coupled with the centrally-planned economy, significantly altered the make-up of society, compared to Western capitalist countries. Włodzimierz Wesolowski, undertook, in the mid-1960s, the first attempt in Poland to create a classification of occupations for sociological needs that was appropriate to the Polish situation (Słomczyński and Wesolowski 1973). The resulting classification performed well in empirical tests, fitting the data better than the division of society into working class, peasantry and intelligentsia. It was used continuously (with a revision in the 1970s) in a wide range of analyses of communist Poland, including the so-called Szczecin-Koszalin-Łódź, and then Łódź, studies (Janicka 1987; Slomczynski, Janicka, and Wesolowski 1994).

Wesolowski (1964) also contributed important insights into the theory of social inequality in socialist countries. Conflict of interest becomes an important element of analysis at the level of socio-economic categories. In a socialist society, the system of remuneration for workers in the public sector is based on the principle “to each according to his work”. Therefore, the allocation of goods for white-collar and blue collar workers depends on their work and occupational qualifications. Since many goods are in scarce supply, the system of distribution is bound to produce conflicts between various socio-occupational groups among which goods are unevenly distributed. Wesolowski suggests that this situation is endemic to the socialist system and gives rise to “structural contradictions of interest” within the system. In connection with this,
he has developed several hypotheses concerning the conditions under which objective contradictions of interest lead to articulated conflicts.

As early as 1958, Wesolowski and Adam Sarapata carried out the first Polish survey on the evaluation of occupations and jobs according to three criteria: income, job security and prestige. This type of investigation continued during the sixties and seventies. Results have been used for testing theoretical hypotheses on “the decomposition of social position attributes” under the impact of revolution and industrialization.

By “decomposition of social position attributes” it is understood that education, income, prestige, authority and other characteristics of social position, do not show a consistent pattern. While this references Gerhard Lenski’s (1957) article on status inconsistency and the discussions it prompted in sociology, the theoretical interpretations here have a different orientation than those found in contemporary sociology. Two new directions of interpretation are particularly noteworthy. First is the stated hypothesis concerning the positive functions of status inconsistency – both for the social system as a whole, and for the individual. To this corresponds the suggestion that policy makers consider adopting measures aimed at reducing social inequality by promoting status inconsistency, at least among some attributes of social position.

Wesolowski argued that a socialist system has a basic dilemma: "The decomposition of the attributes of status," as Wesolowski calls it, i.e. the status incongruence, is a result of departure from the Marxist principle of "for each according to his work" in the name of social justice. Yet fully applying the principle also creates problems: it leads to status consistency, and ultimately, to inequality, because people rewarded most generously acquire the means to perpetuate their privilege in the next generation.
Another key thesis stratification scholars in Poland developed at this time referred to the salience that control over the labor process had for differentiating social classes in socialist societies. The main assumption was that control of the economy by the state and minimal private ownership reduce the importance of ownership of the means of production for class distinctions. Instead, they increase the role of those social classes that are responsible for overseeing the working process, that is, how economic state directives are being implemented to achieve centrally-planned economic goals. This approach to social class enabled sociologists to develop a more complex and accurate mapping of socialist societies than the widely-employed Marxist-inspired tripartite schema of the working class, the intelligentsia and the peasantry.

Given Marxist teachings, it was expected that after the Revolution, in the so-called early period of Communism, some social classes based on the criterion of ownership of the means of production would survive. In Soviet Bloc countries, the remnants of capitalism – classes that survived the Socialist revolution but were expected to lose their significance as Communism consolidated – were the working class, white-collar workers, commonly called the "intelligentsia," and the peasantry. This notion of a simplified class structure was not confined to Marxists, or to the Eastern Bloc. Sociologists analyzing class and stratification in socialist countries often employed these few classes in their empirical work. In Poland, historians, sociologists, political scientists and economists of various persuasions who looked at East European societies through the prism of the past, accepted it as standard knowledge.

Whereas class self-identification does not presume a gradation scheme, the situation with self-evaluation of social position is different: individuals place themselves on higher or lower levels of the social hierarchy. In surveys carried out in Poland, to determine self-evaluation of social position, the following question was generally asked: “In your opinion, what position do
you occupy in society?” Suggested possible answers ranged from “very high position” to “very low position”.

Although the term “social position” is very often used in the mass media, it is not univocal. The common understanding of this term was reconstructed on the basis of evaluation criteria used by respondents.

*Respondents most often mentioned factors related to their own work […]. These answers referred both to the requirements which had to be met in order to take up employment in a particular occupation, as well as to the qualities of the job itself or the benefits it gives. Only 20% of the individuals did not notice this kind of factor […]* (Slomczynski and Wesolowski 1972: 258)

Other analyses confirmed that social position is commonly understood as investments and rewards connected with one’s place in the division of labor. Therefore it is not surprising that the higher the education, the greater the prestige of the occupation, and the higher the income, the higher is the self-evaluation of social position. Stefan Nowak (1966: 89) writes:

*These factors can be complementary, can substitute or cancel each other, shaping into something on the order of a synthetic gradation of a subjective social ladder. Taken together, they account for a substantial part of the variance of social position evaluation.*

Like in other countries, in Poland social mobility is studied in the occupational dimension. It is worth noting, however, that due to social transformations the hierarchy of occupational groups is not stable over long(er) periods of time. To adequately determine intergeneration, or even intra-generation, movement between occupational groups in terms of “upward” and “downward” mobility requires caution. Since some occupational groups undergo movement as a whole, in many studies the concept of group mobility is used in addition to the concept of individual mobility (Pohoski 1964).
The first data on the rate and pattern of intergeneration mobility come from a survey on the adult population in Poland conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Studies, at the beginning of the sixties (Nowak 1966). In the years 1968-1972 the Central Statistics Office conducted three important surveys (Zagorski 1974, 1976). The biggest included a large sample (N = 72,179) of men and women, aged 15-69. The purpose of the study was to obtain accurate information on occupational position, formal education, and the place of residence of respondents not only at the time of the study but also at the time of their first employment. In addition, information was collected on the social background of respondents, that is, on occupation and education of both their parents. A variety of demographic characteristics were also gathered: the place and the year of birth, the year of initial employment, the marital status and the year of completing education. The author of this study describes the essence of mobility patterns in the 1970s as follows:

*Despite the natural tendency to “inherit” social position, one can ascertain a high degree of social mobility from the group of individual farmers to groups of both manual and white-collar workers, and from the manual group to white-collar workers. The flow between the two latter groups is far from one-way and the following should be stressed as a symptomatic fact of the overlapping of borders between groups: every fourth professionally active person, originating from families belonging to the sphere of white-collar workers, works manually at present’* (Zagorski 1976: 3).

In the 1970s one could observe stabilization and even a decreasing outflow from worker and peasant groups to the intelligentsia. Simultaneously, there was a growing tendency of outflow from the intelligentsia to the working class. This indicated that the “extensive” increase of employment in white-collar occupations had ended with this stage of industrialization.

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4 The data from this survey have been thoroughly analyzed in two of Zagorski's books (1976 and 1978). They have also been used in some two-country comparisons (e.g. Andorka and Zagorski, 1979; 1980; Zagorski, Meyer and Tuma, 1978; Haller and Mach, 1984) and other other cross-national analyses (e.g., Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1985; Sawinski and Domanski, 1986).
Moreover, barriers dividing the working class and intelligentsia, especially between skilled workers and middle or lower office and technical staff diminished.

Until the 1970s there was little scientific coordination, and no government policy of centralizing social science research. At the beginning of the 1970s, the government gave more subsidies to investigations of social structure and its transformation. They encouraged coordination of research themes and methods, and much of this coordination was entrusted to the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN). To create more possibilities for cumulative findings, IFiS PAN attempted, and was largely successful at, the standardization of the key stratification variables of occupation, education, income and living conditions.\(^5\) The quality of data obtained by using recommended questionnaire items had been assessed (Danilowicz and Sztabinski, 1986). By the 1970s, the separation of class and stratification was the norm for Polish sociologists working in this field (Slomczynski and Krauze 1986: 4).

**Late socialism**

For Poland in 1989, the collapse of State Socialism was a result of both enduring economic failures and social movement pressure. Industrial output began to decline in 1978 and continued to fall through the 1980s. It was accompanied by deteriorating standards of living. Social discontent in August 1980 fueled the creation of Solidarity, initially as a nation-wide trade union, which then became a full social movement (Ash 1999 for a history of Solidarity). The most

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\(^5\) For early work on standardization of sociological variables, see Wesołowski 1974; Pohoski, Slomczynski and Milczarek 1974; Daniłowicz and Sztabinski 1977a; 1977b; Daniłowicz, Sztabinski and Lutyński 1978; Pohoski and Slomczynski 1978; Slomczynski and Kacprowicz 1979; Daniłowicz, Lutyński, Sianko and Sztabiński 1980).

Political events of the 1980s – birth of Solidarity in 1980 and introduction of the martial law in 1981 – led to a change in Polish sociologists' theoretical perspective on social structure and mobility. The change manifested in greater focus on social conflict, including the formation and articulation of group interests. Social classes, defined on the basis of real conflicts, were treated at least as important as social stratification – the unequal distribution of goods and opportunities. Scholars claimed that a proper understanding of social structure was not possible without considering class formation and class mobility.

In terms of the theory of social structure, late socialism brought important contributions. Leszek Nowak (1983) argued that economic, political, and spiritual spheres - each generate their own division of the society into two basic and opposite social classes: owners and direct producers, rulers and citizens, and priests and those who are indoctrinated by priests, respectively. He viewed socialism as a tripartite class system in which owners, rulers and priests united. According to Nowak, real socialism is an oppressive social system, since power is concentrated in the hands of triple-masters. Nowak’s work on social classes is built into “non-Marxian historical materialist” theory of socialism. However, its implications are hardly testable. In contrast, Stanislaw Kozyr-Kowalski’s (1987) narrower theory of macro-classes, micro-classes and other types of ownership-labor differentiation of society have been subject of empirical application in his papers on class relationships in contemporary Poland (Kozyr-Kowalski, 1990). Theoretically, Jadwiga Staniszkis’ (1989) conceptualization of class is similar to that of Kozyr-Kowalski’s, since both rely on analyses of ownership and its implication for economic activity.
Beginning with the early 1970s, a number of surveys on national samples were conducted, with the aim of investigating various features of social structure. Among them are the *Survey on Attitudes towards Social Inequality* (1984);\(^6\) *Career Mobility Surveys* (1972, 1987, 1991);\(^7\) *Survey on Job Conditions and Psychological Functioning* (1978-1980, 1992);\(^8\) *Living Conditions Survey* (1975, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1991).\(^9\)

By the 1980s, central planning in social science was well established. Since social structure and mobility were on the priority list of government-sanctioned studies, it prompted research teams to focus on, and submit proposals for funding for, these topics. The history of the *Polish Panel Survey POLPAN*, as it began in the late 1980s, is emblematic of the dynamic relationship between government, society and social science investigations into stratification, class and mobility during those times. In 1987, a research team at IFiS PAN, led by Kazimierz M. Slomczynski and Henryk Domanski proposed to the government to do a large-scale, nationally representative, survey study of working-age Poles, to investigate stratification and mobility.

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\(^6\) Principal investigator Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski. The survey focuses on self-identification, popular images of social differentiation, social bonds and deprivation. It was part of a larger project on subjective aspects of social structure and mobility, which contained (1) an extensive questionnaire for interviews with highly qualified engineers, and with skilled workers and farmers, as well as (2) a more concise version of the questionnaire, for a national survey. (Wnuk-Lipinski 1987).

\(^7\) Long-lasting research project on career mobility, carried out by the Social Mobility Research Group of the Institute of Sociology at the University of Warsaw, under the direction of Michal Pohoski. The study dealt with the "life history" of persons who began their occupational career after the World War II, with detailed information on consecutive jobs of the respondent and on schooling and housing conditions (Jazwinska-Motylska 1982, Pohoski (1986, 1991).

\(^8\) This is a replication of Kohn-Schooler (Kohn, 1969) study conducted in the United States in 1966 and 1974 (Kohn and Schooler 1983) on psychological concomitants of social inequality. Polish replication (Slomczynski, Miller and Kohn 1981) included the distinction between social class and stratification; see, Slomczynski and Kohn 1989 and Kohn and Slomczynski 1990). See also, Miller, Slomczynski and Kohn, 1985; Kohn, Naoi, Schoenbach, Schooler and Slomczynski 1987.

\(^9\) Survey conducted under the auspices of the IFiS PAN, with Lidia Beskid as principal investigator. Although the survey focused on living conditions, it includes a number of variables usually used in the analysis of social structure and mobility (Beskid 1989, 1991). In the last survey (1991) the same people were interviewed as in 1989 (panel sample. The other surveys are cross-sectional.
mobility in contemporary Poland. The research team included Ireneusz Białecki, Krystyna Janicka Bogdan W. Mach, Zbigniew Sawinski, Joanna Sikorska, and Wojciech Zaborowski - experienced researchers with strong publication records.

Since there were many methodological issues that needed clarification to ensure the highest quality of such an ambitious project, the IFiS PAN research team also applied for state funding for a large pilot study (N = 2000). The government financed both the pilot research (“Social structure I”) and the main survey, “Social structure II” – currently known as POLAPN 1988 (N = 5884). Based on the pilot research, POLPAN 1988 included questions to facilitate measurement of major class and stratification concepts, including school career, occupational history, income, inter- and intra-generational mobility, household composition, consumer durables in the household, housing conditions, membership in organizations, as well as religion.

Both the pilot study and POLPAN 1988 were carried out under the auspices of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), a prestigious and largely independent academic institution. Social scientists specializing in stratification, mobility and survey methodology from the United States and from across Europe were on POLPAN’s advisory board. The project’s fieldwork started in 1987 and was completed in 1988. At the time of its design, POLPAN 1988 was thought of as a cross-sectional survey. In 1993 this Polish survey became the first wave of what is currently the longest-running panel survey on national samples of adult population in Europe, spanning 1988-2013 in five-year intervals.

The unrest in Poland since the Martial Law in the early 1980s, including the repression of Solidarity in the mid-1980s, are reflected in the 1988 POLPAN survey. Respondents were asked about people’s beliefs in the leading role of the party, a core tenant of State Socialism, about
inequality, and about the role of government intervention in society and economy. From the beginning of POLPAN’s design phase, principal investigators were aware that these were all sensitive issues, and held intense discussions of what should and not be asked. They wondered whether respondents would answer honestly. As sociologists, they thought of the interview as a social process, in which researchers, interviewers, and respondents have particular expectations. They concluded that people would answer as honestly as they would do in semi-official situations, when one knows there is the possibility of being overheard.\footnote{The POLPAN team even included a question for the interviewer, whether they felt that the respondent was answering only in official role. The correlation with respondent answers, however, is weak.}

The Fall of Communism: Democratic Capitalism and Economic Restructuring from the 1990s to the 2010s

The Solidarity movement survived despite periodic repression by the government and became a major political force that defeated the Communist Party in the June 1989 elections. This was not an instant event, but the culmination of prolonged economic failure, which resulted in people losing confidence in the efficacy of the party-state to orchestrate continued economic growth and to bring about material well-being. Internationally, it was facilitated by the new internal and external policies of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev.

The fall of the Communist Party from power and the ushering in of the democratic capitalist revolution in Poland and in other Eastern European countries alike, brought new problems to solve. As Eastern Europe moved from a centrally-planned to a free-market economy, basic questions needed to be answered, and quickly: Who has the knowledge, expertise and connections to run private businesses? Which businesses run by the state should be privatized, and which should be kept under state ownership? How will pensions be honored?
How will taxes be collected? What elements of the social welfare state be kept, and how strong should those programs be? How will the national economies link to the rest of the world?

Post-communist states considered two main approaches to restructuring their economies, each about to have huge structural effects on the labor market and the relationship between class and stratification. One was “Shock Therapy” and the other was the “evolutionary approach.” In shock therapy, the state withdraws quickly and wholesale from the economic market, and allows the market to dictate immediately what is needed to produce, and for how much. Shock therapists favor radical economic liberalization as the means to generate foreign and domestic investments, accumulate capital and grow the economy. They oppose heavy state regulation of the economic market and privilege the private sector. The evolutionary approach slows down this process, with the state slowly, gradually allowing the market to evolve and correcting problems along the way.

Both methods have problems. In shock therapy, the conditions for an efficient market are largely absent: there is little information about the market, and the economic institutions that assess and manage risk are not in place. Therefore, the quality of life, especially in the short run, is dramatically changed for the worse, as people are forced to make quick and uninformed economic decisions, resulting in mass unemployment and high-turnover in fortunes. Economic inequality is high as the economy quickly separates “winners” from “losers.” In the evolutionary approach, the economy is slow to change, and cannot quickly adapt to the rapidly changing, globalized economy. On advice from the West, many countries, including Poland, chose the shock therapy approach.

The end of state socialism and the radical socio-economic and political transformation Poland embarked on in 1989 made many class and stratification research topics highly salient.
The composition of social classes changed, and so did the stratification structure. Social inequality rose sharply. The initial transition period created an emerging class structure ‘typical’ for market and democratic societies, with new social categories including career politicians, full-fledged capitalists, financial and managerial specialists, and professionals in banking, public relations, and electronic information management. At the same time, this emerging class structure had to incorporate the elements of the old state-socialist one, including the *nomenklatura*, who enjoyed special privileges in the political segmentation of the socialist labor market (Slomczynski and Lee 1993); the heavy-industry working class, who were an important political force in the communist regime; the peasantry, who were defined by their individual ownership of arable land, yet were dependent on state controlled access to agricultural equipment and were involved in the state distributive system of agricultural products; employees in redundant bureaucratic positions, who represented a hidden form of unemployment; and the active organizers of the informal economy.

Arguments about changes in the Polish social structure in the 1990s have their origin in the pre-transition period. As early as at the beginning of the 1980s, Jacek Kurczewski (1982), analyzing the consciousness and interests of intelligentsia and skilled workers in the context of membership in, and support of, the Solidarity movement, came to the conclusion that both these segments of the social structure form the “new middle class”. Empirical evidence of this class alliance rested in inter-group similarity with regards to support for democratic values, and pro-market rules, especially remuneration according to qualifications. In the 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, one can read about the intelligentsia – working class alliance in the series of studies called *Poles*, although without explicit reference to the “new middle class.” According to supporters, the structural basis for the alliance of intelligentsia and part of the working class are
specialized qualifications, which become more important than traditional divisions of non-manual and manual work.

This thesis about the class alliance between intelligentsia and skilled workers for the 1989s was refuted (Domański 1998) on empirical grounds. Analyses for 1995 show that the “manual - non-manual” dichotomy remains clear cut, with regard to income inequality, social mobility as well as social attitudes. In the income hierarchy, the gap between workers and non-manual strata widened in time; mobility barriers remained basically intact in the 1980s and 1990s. As far as social attitudes were concerned, members of the working class tended to support state paternalism – that is, strong involvement of the state in labor and consumer markets, while members of intelligentsia tended to oppose such government intervention. Based on these results Domański (1998: 395) concluded that in the 1990s social stratification in Polish society approached patterns typical for contemporary capitalism. The same thesis is exposed in the recent book of Domański (2015) *Are there social classes in Poland?*

In the early 1990s interest in studying social classes and stratification processes dealt with both theoretical and empirical issues. A main theoretical contribution is the edited three-volume *On Social Differentiation*, with Part I, *Critique and Defense of Class Analysis* (Kozyr-Kowalski, Przestalski, Tittenbrun, Chmara, and Heyman 1992), Part II: *A Contribution to the Critique of Marxist Ideology* (Kozyr-Kowalski and Tittenbrun 1992), Part III: *Modern Capitalism: Between Class Struggle and Class Consensus* (Kozyr-Kowalski, Chmara, and Heyman 1992). By providing a variety of approaches represented by renown scholars from
Poland, other European countries and the United States, this study generated discussions on changes of the class structure during the transition period from socialism to capitalism.  

At that time, a large part of published books and articles was based on data gathered still before the 1989 regime change. Titles reveal this message, *U Progu Zmian* [The Treshold of Change] or *Zmierzch Socializmu Państwowego* [Dusk of State Socialism]. In 1991 *Przegląd Socjologiczny* [Sociological Review] published a special volume (39) devoted to social inequality, with several articles referring to the 1970s and 1980s, or even earlier. The articles show the wide range of topics: genetic and social determinants of social inequalities (Anna Firkowska-Mankiewicz), inequalities in access to education (Ireneusz Bialecki), intergenerational social mobility (Bogdan W. Mach) and status attainment (Krystyna Janicka), the impact of political and economic system on social inequality (Andrzej Rychard), inequalities in consumption (Joanna Sikorska), and cultural participation (Elzbieta Skotnicka Illasiewicz).

The great interest in studying social classes and stratification processes was visible at the IX Congress of the Polish Sociological Society, in 1994. A partial list of the papers presented at one of the plenary sessions is emblematic for this interest (Sulek and Styk 1995: 6): “Processes of class formation in a theoretical perspective” (Wlodzimierz Wesolowski); “Classes, estates, quasi-classes and under-classes in Polish society” (Stanislaw Kozyr-Kowalski); “Social inequalities – continuity and changes in the period of regime change” (Michal Pohoski); “Recomposition of social stratification and value reorientation” (Henryk Domański), “Redistribution and class interest” (Edmund Mokrzycki), “Formation of new elite - how much

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11 The interest in Marxist and neo-Marxist interpretation of the social structure continued in the 2000s; see, Kochan 2011.
nomenklatura is alive” (Jacek Wasilewski), and “Old and new middle classes” (Jacek Kurczewski).

One can easily understand why academics and politicians alike were concerned with Poland’s emerging social structure, including inter- and intra-generational mobility patterns, the role of ascription vs. meritocracy, exposure to risk of unemployment, among others. It is in this context that the research team of POLPAN 1988 recognized the value of continuing – as a panel survey – the 1988 class and stratification study. Although funding was difficult to secure, Slomczynski and his team succeeded in conducting, in 1993, a second wave of POLPAN, to observe social structure and its change during the post-communist transformation. POLPAN 1993 was based on a random sample of 2,500 respondents from the 1988 survey, who were interviewed face-to-face. Over time, funding agencies saw the value of continuing the Polish Panel Survey POLPAN, which currently comprises six waves, administered in 5-year intervals. The 2018 round is in preparation.

In analyses of Poland’s 1990s and early 2000s market transition, many use the terms “winners” and “losers” (Domański 1999; Slomczynski and Shabad 1996; Jarosz 2005, Verhoeven et al 2009). Winners successfully navigated and even prospered in the early stages of the economic restructuring; losers did not. Reality is rarely a simple dichotomy, but the winners and losers divide showed (a) the growing economic inequality after 1989, and (b) that some classes that were winners during the Communist era became losers afterward.

Generally, after 1989 winners were people who possessed the skills and capital needed to jumpstart a modern capitalist economy: high education, experience in how to manage people and ideas, connections with investors and contacts with key government officials, and experience with Western ideas. The losers in early post-communism were those who had benefited from the
generous social safety net provided by the communist system: low and unskilled workers, women, the youth and the elderly, and the peasantry. The division of the population into winners and losers of the post-communist transformation may result in the marginalization of some specific groups of losers (Verhoeven et al 2009). In general, marginalization is a process by which a group is either denied access to important positions and desired goods, or a group imposes upon itself various restrictions on its participation in the life of a society. In rapidly transforming societies, it is likely that unequal shares of the rewards of success lead to marginalization.

Between “winners” and “losers” are various categories of socio-economic groups that some researchers equate with the middle class. It has been suggested that a stable and sizable middle class is a source of new entrepreneurial spirit, transmits ‘middle class values’ associated with increased savings and promoting human capital, and creates demand for quality consumer goods. Domanski (2002) performed an extended research on “middle class” in Poland for the initial phase of the post-communist transformation. The topic has preoccupied researchers at the beginning of this century and in its second decade, in the context of class-based life styles (Kurczewski & Jakubowska Branicka 2002, Leszkowicz-Baczyński 2007). Recently Krytyka Polityczna [Political Critique], an important journal of leftist orientation, devoted a special issue (2015, vol. 42) to the middle class, presenting opposite views of the usefulness of this concept. We agree with the position that the concept is vague and confuses social class with stratification.

In recent years, the discussion on class structure is vivid in Poland, especially on the issues of culture and life styles (Gdula and Sadura 2012, Żuk 2007, 2010) Class analyses focusing on life style, based on Bourdieu’ (1979) theory, not only unveil inequality but brings to light difference, distinction and dissent, both between and within social groups. However, recent
analyses have met strong criticism, mainly on the grounds that in discussing life styles Bourdieu’s theory is not framed in sociological tradition and that the applied class scheme is too simplistic (Gorlach, Fryś and Jasikowska 2014). Recently, social classes have also been discussed in terms of inequalities framed in the political discourse (Woźniak 2012).

Of particular concern to Polish scholars was the fate of members of the former Communist Party, including the nomenklatura. In the 1980s nomenklatura consists of 360,000 job titles in the central and local governmental administration and all state enterprises (Tarkowski 1996: 330; see also Slomczynski and Lee 1993) and therefore far more people occupied these specific slots since two or more people could work in jobs with the same title. Some people worked in the party controlled positions without knowing that their job tile is on the nomenklatura list. Although being on nomenklatura positions was statistically linked to the membership in the Polish United Workers’ Party the correlation was at most moderate.¹²

In analyses by Slomczynski and Shabad (1996) in the early 1990s, former membership in the Polish United Workers’ Party did not have a direct effect on individuals' occupational fates in the post-1989 period (see also Mach 2000). Definitely, a certain segment of the nomenklatura, particularly the political elite “landed well” and continued to be in the privileged position from the beginning of the transformation (Tarkowski 2011). On mass scale, those who were middle managers, rather than top or lower managers, were able to exchange the political capital they acquired under the old system into an advantaged position within the new one. Thus, the widespread perception, particularly among the mass publics of Eastern Europe, that nothing changed, in terms of people privileged before the systemic transformation successfully retaining their advantageous position afterwards was only partially confirmed by the evidence for Poland.

¹² We return to discussing nomenklatura in chapter two.
Generally speaking, the *nomenklatura* positions were differentiated and so were their effects. Old *nomenklatura* is not associated with the upper class anymore (Goryszewski 2014).

In line with developments in sociology across the world, Polish scholars of class, stratification and mobility increasingly turned their attention to gender (e.g. Wong 1995; Glass and Marquart-Pyatt 2008; Simienska 2005; Krymkowski and Domański 1997). Findings show that Polish women are disproportionately among the unemployed, receive lower wages in comparison with men, face structural barriers that have continuities with the communist past, and have lost policy battles in the post-communist era. These studies indicate that women in general are losers of the market transition.

Class and stratification research in Poland after 1989 would not be possible without the boom of quantitative sociological surveys on these topics. Polish sociology, with its prominent, oftentimes Western-trained scholars, including survey methodologists, was early on well positioned to join international social science survey projects, and to create many of its own: the 1990s saw Szelenyi and Treiman's 1993 six-nation survey of Social Stratification in Eastern Europe, and Poland’s further participation in the International Social Survey Programme; since its start, in 2002, Poland is in the European Social Survey (winner of the 2005 Descartes Prize). At the same time, we see the continuation of national studies devoted social structure, as is the case of the POLPAN survey, which currently provides 25 years-worth of panel data (Slomczynski and Tomescu-Dubrow 2015).

**Conclusion and Discussion**

In this chapter, we presented some of the main contributions to investigations on class and stratification by Polish scholars and their collaborators throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.
Poland has developed a rich tradition of these studies that, in itself, is a testament to the enduring nature of inequality.

Polish studies of class and stratification have been in concert with the radical social change of their times, and often involved collaboration between governments and academics. Polish social scientists of the 1920s and 1930s contended with problems of agrarian society in an age of industrialization and urbanization, and the growth of the working class. With public funding, they established research centers in Warsaw on these topics. In Poznan, the Polish Sociological Institute, one of the first in Europe, was created. World War II destroyed Europe and forced Polish social scientists to rebuild their social science research infrastructure.

When the communist regime came to power, Marxist theory dominated the study of class and stratification. During the Stalinist anti-social science era, Polish sociology itself faced an existential threat. After Stalin died, Polish sociology, and class and stratification studies, surged anew. State socialism forced a rapid industrialization and urbanization, instituted centralized economic planning, and in so doing radically changed the class structure and the system of stratified rewards. Generations of Polish social scientists were schooled during the communist era, and while they were not academically free as their Western colleagues, they had access to Western research and training, and were successful in producing high-quality research. From the 1960s to 1989, the government funded numerous projects that led to key developments in Polish studies of class and stratification, including the framework for distinguishing these two concepts from one another, on theoretical and empirical grounds.

Still, state socialism showed that government intervention into social science can curtail academic freedom. While the Polish Communists enabled social scientific analysis of class and stratification, they placed their ideological stamp on it. Marxist theory of class dominated Polish
social science long after it fell out of fashion in the West. For political-ideological reasons, the more neutral-sounding term “social stratification” was preferred over the more polemical term, material deprivation. Some Polish scholars experienced restrictions on their freedom of travel and speech, which placed limitations on the creation of knowledge.

A pertinent question related to academic life in the People’s Republic of Poland is the extent to which scholars had freedom of expression. While Polish social scientists did not have the level of independence that their Western counterparts enjoyed, they were not completely curtailed, either. And, there were important changes in time. In the late 1950s:

*The leitmotiv of that time was to make sociology “scientific”- alias “empirical”. At that time those words had a tremendous appeal and were used in defense against dogmatic mumbo-jumbo. This was one of the most important reasons why the new trend won general support so surprisingly quickly among the most brilliant and energetic young sociologists and why prominent representatives of the old sociological schools adopted for a long time an attitude of “friendly-neutrality”* (Mokrzycki 1974: 50).

Marxist sociology, no matter its exact definition, remained the Polish United Workers Party’s preferred social science ideology. Jerzy Szacki (1993) argues of Polish sociology from the 1960s to the end of Communism,

*The political authorities changed their methods of exerting pressure on the scientific community. In particular, the pressure became increasingly ideological. This enabled relative freedom of scientific research as long as the conclusions did not question the foundations of the current political system and the ideology which - less and less efficiently - legitimated it. Of course this was only possible at the cost of self-censorship of the non-Marxist sociologists who limited themselves to more or less fragmentary studies or else focused only on such theoretical and methodological topics which, due to their highly abstract and specialist nature, guaranteed (at least spuriously) that this condition would be fulfilled. Marxism was still to remain the only privileged general theory* (Szacki 1993: 172).
During the State Socialist era, the language of the State can be found in some of the English language publications on class and stratification. For example, Stanislaw Widerszpil (1974) began his important monograph on class and stratification in State Socialist Poland, published in the *International Journal of Sociology*, with a paean to the communist party: “It is one of the principal goals of the workers' party and of the socialist state to create the conditions for the abolition of all social classes and the gradual elimination of social inequality” (5). He goes on to cite and quote Lenin at length. Later in his monograph, Widerszpil discusses changes to the class structure. Of classes, he wrote that, “There are also some relics of exploiting classes, so called capitalistic and parasitic elements, in towns and in the countryside” (57). It is hard to imagine a Polish social scientist nowadays writing similarly.

The end of state socialism and the tremendous changes it ushered prompted Polish social scientists to devote significant efforts to studies of social structure. The graduate students schooled under Communism became post-communist professors. They combined their Western training with their long-standing interests in occupations, mobility and educational attainment to analyze the features of the new Polish class and stratification systems. The opening of the political climate and a newfound focus on the social laboratory that Central and Eastern Europe was in the 1990s encouraged more scholars from outside of Poland to collaborate with colleagues in the country. Early on, Poland was able to be part of major international social survey projects and other data collection efforts. Through long-standing collaboration of government and academia, and with new sources of outside funding, at the outset of the post-communist era, Poland enjoyed a modest but serviceable social science research infrastructure. Polish sociology was able to meet the challenge of asserting itself internationally.
As early as the 1960s, Polish sociologists studying social inequality were publishing in the two leading peer-reviewed journals: *American Sociological Review* (Nowak 1960) and *American Journal of Sociology* (Sarapata and Wesolowski 1961). The pattern of publishing in these two journals continues for decades, adding sporadic publications in *European Sociological Review*, *Social Forces* and other journals with particularly high impact factor. In recent years, three publication outlets stand out with respect to bringing Polish class and stratification research to English-speaking audiences. One is the *International Journal of Sociology* (*IJS*), published until recently by M.E. Sharpe (as of 2014, it is published by Taylor and Francis). Under the lead of Tadeusz Krauze, general editor of *IJS* from the 1990s to the early 2010s, and with the support of the editorial board, *IJS* successfully published several Special Issues devoted to empirical analyses on Soviet Bloc countries, Poland especially. Another outlet is the *Polish Sociological Review* (*PSR*), the flagship English language publication of the Polish Sociological Association. *PSR* was first published as the *Polish Sociological Bulletin* in 1961, reflecting the resurgence of Polish sociology. *International Sociology*, a flagship journal of the International Sociological Association, is a third major outlet. In 1986, the first year of the journal, Wesolowski and Mach published a series of articles on a theory of how class and mobility operate in socialist Poland.

In current times, Polish sociology is intricately intertwined with the European Union (EU). With EU monetary help, Poland has allocated millions of Zlotys into social science research, funding an impressive number of high-quality projects. The result is a social science research infrastructure more and more in line with Western standards, and with European Union specifications. Polish social science is increasingly international, with the government demanding that parts of funding applications be in English. Polish social scientists regularly attend major international conferences and workshops.
The future of Polish studies of class and stratification will undoubtedly retain familiar characteristics, including the mapping of larger societal concerns with scholarly interests, and the continuing collaboration of government and academia. Phenomena of class and stratification survived successive eras of radical social change, even when there was a concerted effort to eliminate them. Polish social scientists will certainly continue to document and explain these powerful social forces for decades to come.