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Preface and Acknowledgment

This book is about the experience of joblessness in Poland that we examine through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses. We employ two main sources of data. The first source is the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN (polpan.org), conducted on a representative national sample of Polish citizens in 5-year intervals since 1988. It provides the frame for selecting individuals for the Joblessness project, our other main data source. It also provides information on these people's labor market outcomes one year after the Joblessness project concluded. Thus, POLPAN enables us to place the experience of the jobless in the context of their social structural conditions prior to and after having lost paid employment.

The Joblessness project was conducted in the framework of the 2010–2013 grant received from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (1353/B/H03/2010/39) and with additional support from the grant *Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN 1988–2013* (National Science Centre, Poland 2011/02/A/HS6/00238). Work stemming from the Joblessness project continued into the early part of 2018. We completed this book under the auspices of a new grant for POLPAN, awarded by Poland's National Science Centre at the end of 2017 (National Science Centre, Poland UMO-2017/25/B/HS6/02697).

Most of the contributors to this volume are members of CONSIRT (Cross-National Studies: Interdisciplinary Research and Training (consirt.osu.edu)), a joint program of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Poland and The Ohio State University in the USA. By organizing scientific meetings that involved Polish and American scholars, and by drawing students from Poland and the USA into analyzing the project's data, CONSIRT was essential for providing an international dimension to both POLPAN and the Joblessness project.

In the course of conducting this long-term inquiry, we accumulated a high degree of debt to a large number of friends, colleagues, and collaborators. We thank all and mention three explicitly. We thank Professor Włodzimierz Wesolowski, whose crucial role in building the foundation of social stratification research in Poland has a lasting impact on subsequent inequality research, the Joblessness project included. We thank Professor Krystyna Janicka, who is always ready to help us solve our research problems. We thank Professor Maria Zielińska, who discussed with us our

initial project of mixed interviewing techniques. Of course, we thank Professor Zbigniew Sawiński, whose role in managing the POLPAN data is invaluable.

It would be difficult to imagine completing this book without the support of IFiS PAN administrative staff. The director of IFiS PAN, Professor Andrzej Rychard, fully supports our team's work. We are grateful to Grażyna Drążyk, chief officer of the Research Division, for managing our team's projects, including the Joblessness project. Ewa Dworniak's administrative help remains invaluable.

The main empirical analyses presented in this book were discussed at various conferences, workshops, and seminars in Poland and Romania. In Poland, Agnieszka Kramm and Anna Jachimiać, from the foundation Miejsce Kobiet [The Women's Place], organized a workshop to disseminate the results of the Joblessness study among interested social actors. This workshop was attended by representatives of local unemployment offices. A portion of this research was presented at the Romanian Academy in Bucharest at the invitation of Professor Bogdan Voicu. We thank the organizers of these events and the attendees.

The research team of POLPAN and the Joblessness study included, in addition to the authors of this book, our colleagues: Anna Baczko-Dombi, Ewa Jarosz, Małgorzata Mikucka, Anna Turner, Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo, Ilona Wymułek, and Danuta Życzyńska-Ciołek. We appreciate their help on various stages of preparing this book. We extend our special thanks to Danuta Życzyńska-Ciołek, who was particularly involved in data processing, spending hours on the interview transcripts, and commenting on the ideas in the book.

Interviewing persons without jobs has been a particularly difficult task. Anna Broniewska and Dorota Laskowska, from the fieldwork unit "ORBS" of IFiS PAN, coordinated and supervised the interviewers involved in the Joblessness project. Their effort in monitoring the fieldwork resulted in high-quality data. We also thank the interviewers, who fanned out across Poland to interview people on sensitive matters.

Sociological studies depend on everyday people who are willing to share their stories. We thank our respondents, who agreed to spend their time for the interviews and to thoroughly answer intrusive questions. We dedicate this book to them.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Experience of Joblessness in Poland



This book describes the experience of joblessness in Poland. By experience, we mean how people perceive and recount a situation that they lived through. By joblessness we mean the absence of paid employment. We investigate women and men who are currently out of work, or have recently been jobless and are now reemployed, and homemakers – what is popularly referred to as “housewives”. The time period of our study is 2011–2013.

We approach joblessness through the theoretical perspectives of inequality and social constructionism. We examine how social class, stratification and demographics – gender, age and their intersections, specifically – influence how people lost their job or became a homemaker, how they look for and find a job, and what their household, social, and political activities are. When we present the social worlds of the jobless, we treat the interview as a social performance in which answers are co-created by interviewer and respondent.

The empirical foundations of this book are two related data sources: the Polish Panel Survey POLPAN (polpan.org) and the Joblessness project 2011–2013. POLPAN is a panel study conducted every five years since 1988. Fieldwork for POLPAN 2018 commenced recently. The Joblessness project was a mixed method study composed of open and closed-ended questions administered to 152 respondents purposively selected from the realized sample of POLPAN 2008. The Joblessness study covers the routes into and out of joblessness and participants’ daily activities. Information from POLPAN 2008 and 2013 allows us to place the jobless’ life and labor market situation within the context of their social origins and previous occupational history, and to analyze participants’ labor market outcomes after the Joblessness interview.

Defining Joblessness

In our approach, joblessness pertains to being out of paid work, and encompasses two different life situations. One life situation refers to involuntary joblessness. The unemployed, traditionally defined, fit here, but so do people who lost their job following layoff or dismissal and eventually stopped looking for employment. The other situation refers to people who are jobless for seemingly voluntary reasons.¹ They opt out of the labor market for shorter or longer periods of time, by quitting and taking on housework full-time, among others.

We understand joblessness and unemployment as conceptually and analytically distinct. Most modern academic and government studies apply the following definition of unemployment: a person is unemployed if they (a) are of legal age to have a paid job, and (b) do not report having a paid job, but (c) are actively looking for a paid job. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor defines unemployment as follows:

“Persons aged 16 years and older who had no employment during the reference week, were available for work, except for temporary illness, and had made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the 4-week period ending with the reference week. Persons who were waiting to be recalled to a job from which they had been laid off need not have been looking for work to be classified as unemployed.”²

This conceptualization largely mirrors the legal requirements that people need to meet to qualify for unemployment benefits. While useful in its own right, it misses the segments of society who could, in principle, work, but have no jobs and either do not declare looking for one, or the information about job search is unavailable. By contrast, the term “jobless” covers both groups.

Another point worth making involves the life situation of individuals who opted out of the labor market for various periods of time. When we refer to them as jobless – they work, but they do not hold paid employment. Certainly, a homemaker works plenty, as does, for example, an unpaid intern.³

In sum, in this study we analyze how a group of jobless Polish men and women perceive major labor market-related experiences. It would be tiresome for the reader to continually read the phrase, “unemployed traditionally defined, jobless and wanting to work but not currently searching for a job, and homemakers” even though these are states we examine. For easier reading, we rely on jobless as a general term and use “unemployment” and “unemployed” to refer to persons who fit the traditional definition (i.e., does not have a job, but is looking for one).

¹ We acknowledge that the distinction between voluntary and involuntary joblessness can be blurry, as apparently voluntary acts of leaving the labor market can be conditioned by contextual forces.

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/bls/glossary> Accessed September 30, 2014. A key nuance is in the last sentence, in which the “looking for a job” requirement is waived for those who are waiting to go back to the same job they were just laid off from. People in this situation are jobless, but likely their experience would be different.

³ The importance of working, even informally or in jobs below one’s ‘level,’ is a common theme that e or age (cf. Chap. 3; see also Chap. 7).

Unemployment in Poland surged after 1989, as the economy transformed from state-socialist central planning to Capitalism and competition-based market rules. Privatization of large state-run factories and companies operating in the industry sector, and, consequently, their downsizing or closing down altogether, together with the loss of state benefits to the farming sector, were key elements of this transformation process and a main drive behind the rise in unemployment.

A short time-line of the Polish labor market sector is informative here. In the late 1940s, the job market in Poland was dominated by jobs in agriculture (64%) as well as by manual jobs: unskilled manual (15%) and skilled manual workers (10%); sales and service workers constituted the same percent (5%) as non-manual workers (cf. Zagórski 1976). By 1989, the effects of industrialization were clear: the share of agriculture (including forestry) had dropped to roughly 27% of employed workers, the share of industry had increased to 29%, and of construction to 7.8%. About 37% of employed workers worked in the service sector. Post-communism brought dramatic change to the Polish economy and labor market. By 1995, industrial employment was about 25%, services remained lower than in developed countries, and employment in agriculture remained more or less at pre-transition levels (Waclaw-Socha and Weisberg 1999, p. 10). In 2013, the distribution of employment by economic sector was as follows: 11.9% in agriculture, 30.5% in industry, and 57.4% in services.⁴

The Data: The Joblessness Study and the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN

In this book, we employ primary and secondary data. The primary data come from the project “Experiences on the Labor Market, Risk of Unemployment and Probability of Returning to Work, 1988–2008: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses,” (hereafter, Joblessness project) that was funded by Poland’s Ministry of Science and Higher Education from 2010 to 2013 (decision number 1353/B/H03/2010/39). The goal was to provide insight into the circumstances of becoming jobless, looking for and finding a job, and the daily lives of people who have recently experienced or are currently experiencing joblessness. To do so, the project used a purposive sample of jobless respondents, who were selected from the 2008 wave of the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN. Put differently, participants in the Joblessness study are nested in the POLPAN study.

POLPAN provides the secondary data for our analyses. The POLPAN study has been conducted every five years since 1988 using face-to-face interviews. The 1988 wave had a national sample of 5817 Poles aged 21–65 years. In 1993, this sample was randomly reduced and 2259 panelists were successfully interviewed. In each of

⁴www.statista.com/statistics/376395/employment-by-economic-sector-in-poland/ Accessed May 10, 2018.

the consecutive five-year waves the goal was to reach the core panel, while also countering attrition and ageing.⁵

The purpose of POLPAN is to give a long-term and overall profile of the social structure of the Polish society, including Poles' subjective perceptions and objective conditions. POLPAN is the longest running panel survey in Europe on the topics of employment, occupations, class, and inequality with individuals as the units of analysis.

The Joblessness study is a rarity in sociological research, because interviewers knew respondents' biographical trajectories prior to approaching respondents. This gave us the opportunity to further analyze these experiences and their outcomes using the 2013 POLPAN survey wave. In this book we make use of the panel data in both their quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Research Design in the Joblessness Project

The Joblessness project was a mixed methods study designed to collect qualitative and quantitative information from Polish men and women who were out of paid work involuntarily and voluntarily, including people whose main work activities rested in the household. Given the economic slowdown in Poland around the time of the study (see Chap. 2) we aimed to also distinguish between the structurally unemployed and people who remained without a job for other reasons than structural.

To identify potential interviewees, we relied on 2008 POLPAN respondents and their occupational histories. Among 2008 POLPAN respondents, we first selected men and women who experienced unemployment or job loss for at least three months prior to 2008, and who would match the characteristics of either of the following four groups:

- Group (1): Experienced structural unemployment (reorganization as part of the transition to market economy) and had not found a job by the time of the 2008 POLPAN interview;
- Group (2): Experienced structural unemployment but found a job within six months, which they were still having by the time of the 2008 POLPAN interview;
- Group (3): Experienced unemployment or job loss for other reasons than structural and had not found a job by the time of the 2008 POLPAN interview;
- Group (4): Experienced unemployment or job loss for other reasons than structural but found a job within six months, which they were still having by the time of the 2008 POLPAN interview.

⁵To counter attrition and aging and facilitate further longitudinal research, since 1998 the core panel is supplemented with additional subsamples involving young adults, aged 21–25 years. POLPAN 2018 is currently in the field.

Altogether, among 2008 POLPAN respondents we identified 171 that fitted our research design. Of those, we successfully contacted 113. For reasons described in Chap. 4, we completed interviews with 110 of the 113 people we reached.

Next, we relied on the 2008 POLPAN sample and their occupational history to identify individuals who in 2008 reported household work as their main activity (and no formal employment). Sixty respondents, all of them women, matched our criteria and were approached in 2012 for an interview. Of those, we realized 39 full interviews. Throughout the book, we refer to these respondents as homemakers and housewives.

The Instrument

The Joblessness project used two versions of the questionnaire, one for respondents who had lost their job because of structural or non-structural factors (Groups 1–4, above), and the other for homemakers. Both consisted of a mix of closed and open-ended questions. Most questions were common across the questionnaire versions, but some questions varied.⁶

In all instances, the interviewers first asked respondents about their current (i.e. at the time of the interview) life situation, to establish, through conversation, the extent to which the classification established in the project's design phase was mirrored in respondents' present accounts. We asked everybody about their participation in household chores, the estimated monetary value (per hour) of the different chores they completed, decision-making concerning the household, sporadic paid work outside of the household, the type of such jobs, the average time per week spent on these odd jobs, and hourly earnings they drew from them. Common across instrument versions were also items on engagement in social and political issues, opinions about social classes and strata in Polish society, the social position of the unemployed, perceived personal socioeconomic status and its determinants, and a vignette presenting a hypothetical family and their financial situation. We further asked all participants about meritocratic attitudes, opinions about the welfare state, and locus of control. Both instrument versions ended with demographic questions about age, additional education since the previous interview (in the POLPAN 2008 study), household composition, and total household income.

The data are rich but they have limits. The research was designed to understand the experience of joblessness: losing a job, looking for and finding a job, and the jobless' household, social, and political activities. It was not designed as a well-being study that reveals, like the classic Marienthal and Lazerfeld studies (Chap. 3),

⁶ Respondents in Groups 1–4 were asked questions related to job loss, including an open-ended question about how they became unemployed. We engage more with this information in Chaps. 5 and 7. For housewives, questions revolved around the process of making household care their main activity, including an open-ended question about the circumstances and main reasons that led to this decision (see also Chap. 6 in this book).

how the jobless cope with the psychological stress that they feel. For example, the Joblessness project reports on the many ways people can lose a job, but not how people feel about losing it. We explore how people searched for a job, but not how they felt about the job search. Well-being is a part of many qualitative projects on unemployment and homemaking, as discussed in Chap. 3, but it was not the focus of the Joblessness project. For us to know the emotions of the jobless, these emotions would have to arrive, welcome but unbidden, from their responses to questions about how they lost their job, how they became a homemaker, and the like. We present these emotions when it is possible to do so.

Data Collection

Data collection for the Joblessness project was carried out in different parts of Poland in Winter 2011/2012 by the Center for Fieldwork (ORBS) at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face, in locations that respondents chose. Conditional on interviewees' consent, responses to the open-ended questions were to be written down verbatim, and the whole interview was to be recorded. Altogether the 149 interviews were carried out by 31 interviewers. The number of interviews per interviewer ranged from 1 to 16. Sixty-six interviews were fully or almost fully recorded.⁷

Theoretical Perspectives

In analyzing primary and secondary data together, we take into account two main perspectives: inequality and social constructionism. Different chapters of the book engage with them to varying extents and in relation to their topical focus. Here, we summarize our main stances.

Social Constructions

Joblessness has real world implications, as an objective state and as a subjective experience. To learn more about the latter, we ask the jobless about how they perceive their situation. In doing so, we presume that people live within socially constructed realities, where interactions with friends, family, acquaintances and strangers determine the meaning of social things (Harris 2016; Lemert 2005). These inter-personal influences will likely color respondents' answers. We explicitly

⁷For more details on interviewers and their training, see Chap. 4.

acknowledge this and hope to allow for actor-led improvements to our analyses (this is a classic issue; see Meltzer and Petras 1970, and Charmaz 1983).

According to survey methodology textbooks, the respondent's role is to tell the story and the interviewer's role is to collect it such that the story mirrors the respondent's views only. Yet, the real-world often departs from textbook scenarios, since interviewers and respondents are human beings who react to one another. In a social constructionist way, the interview is an interactive place where both interviewer and respondent create information (Holstein and Gubrium 2003; Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: see especially pp. 9–12, and Chapter 2.)⁸ As Holstein and Gubrium (2003: 68) argued:

If interviews are interpretively active, meaning-making occasions, interview data are unavoidably collaborative (see Alasuutari 2016; Holstein and Staples 1992). Therefore, any technical attempts to strip interviews of their interactional constituents will be futile. Instead of refining the long list of methodological constraints under which 'standardized' interviews should be conducted, we suggest that researchers take a more 'active' view of the interview and begin to acknowledge, and capitalize upon, interviewers' and respondents' constitutive contributions to the production of interview data. This means consciously and unconsciously attending to the interview process and product in ways that are more sensitive to the social construction of knowledge.

In writing this book, we follow the lead of Holstein and Gubrium (2003) and attempt to apply their advice. When identifying the social world of the jobless, that is, in our reporting of respondents' experiences, we treat the interview as a social performance. The complexity of the interaction – pertaining to what is being said and sometimes where the discussion takes place – warrants this approach. The interviewer, a stranger, asks the respondent personal and sensitive questions about joblessness, itself a situation that many stigmatize. Depending on respondents' preferences, the interview takes place in the respondent's home, or it takes place in public places – cafes, restaurants and other public settings. As Holstein and Gubrium (2003) advised, we feel it is best to acknowledge this interactive environment in our study. We seek to provide an honest account of the context within which respondents' answers take shape, and in doing so, to enhance our analysis.

Social Class and Inequality

Class and inequality perspectives (Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018) play a crucial role in how we analyze the data. We employ ideas from Marx's and Weber's approaches to social class and define classes as groups that control various aspects and varying amounts of social resources that are important for the functioning of the capital, labor, and consumption markets. The main criteria of class subdivisions is control over the means of production and services through ownership, and control of labor processes through managerial and occupational qualifications and skills, as well as

⁸Note that, unlike Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000, we do not employ Conversation Analysis.

the presence of financial resources, which can be used to acquire scarce and valued goods and services.

We define inequality as the existence of structured differences among individuals with respect to scarce and valued goods and services. To the extent to which one's social class position impacts the chances of obtaining such goods, inequality is also a consequence of class structure. Put differently, "who gets what and why" (the key stratification question) depends on "who controls what" (social class). The two concepts, while related, are not identical. Maintaining this distinction, which has direct implications for empirical analyses, is at the core of the analytical approach we refer to as the Warsaw School of studying social class and inequality (see Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018).

At some points in our analyses we attempt a kind of intersectional perspective. Intersectionality continues to be a term of no common definition (for recent discussions, see Anthias 2012; Cho et al. 2013; Collins 2015). Intersectionality refers simultaneously to (a) the individual and group identities and other outward characteristics that serve as signals to others and carry with them advantages and disadvantages, and (b) the structures of power that both shape and are shaped by individual and group interactions (Hughes and Dubrow 2018). Intersectionality is an interrogation of all aspects of society (Hancock 2007, 2016). In various chapters we convey what the intersection of class, age and gender tells us.

Outline of the Book

We structured the book to have three parts. Part I provides the background of the Joblessness project, in terms of social circumstances in Poland that prompted our research (Chap. 2), a summary of the literature that we consider especially influential for this project (Chap. 3), and a description of the data we employ (Chap. 4). Part II presents information about the routes that took our respondents into unemployment (Chap. 5), into homemaking (Chap. 6) and out of joblessness (Chaps. 7 and 8). Part III is about the daily lives of the jobless. We examine respondents' informal jobs and life at home (Chap. 9), and their engagement in social and political activities (Chaps. 10 and 11). We end the book with a brief Conclusion chapter.

Our Contributions

Our intention is to describe, to an English language audience, the experience of joblessness in post-Communist Poland. In doing so we contribute to the work, employment, and inequality literatures in a few ways. One contribution is that we have a broad definition of "jobless" as being both the unemployed and the homemakers, whereas the more typical focus of such books is on the unemployed. Methodologically, our book's mixed methods design and analyses that combine

quantitative and qualitative data allow us to tell a larger story about the jobless' experience and connect it to their labor market outcomes one year later. A rarity in the joblessness literature is our analysis of how, during interviews, meanings are constructed interactively by the respondent and the interviewer.

Finally, our study is a contribution to the post-Great Recession books that, thus far, have not focused much on post-Communist Europe. Indeed, ours is one of the few English language books about the joblessness experience in post-1989 Poland.

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Part I

Background of the Study

Chapter 2

Economic Context, Labor Market Situation, and Employment Policies



In the aftermath of World War Two, capitalist democracy in Poland fell and Communism rose. During the communist era, the Polish government, along with the rest of Eastern Europe, believed that able bodied people have a right to employment and therefore should be guaranteed a job. Communist regimes became full-employment economies, meaning that unemployment – the situation of looking for, but not finding a job – did not officially exist.¹ The State allocated people to jobs. Since the economy had to provide work for every abled-bodied adult, the labor market and the workplace were peculiar: people occupied positions that were, from the point of view of labor market and workplace efficiency, unnecessary or redundant (i.e. could well have been carried out by fewer employees).

In 1989 the Communist Party fell from power, and with it ended the enforcement of the right-to-work policy. In Poland, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the State abandoned its previous role as the protector of citizens' economic welfare. As a result, the era of democratization and market restructuring brought the resurgence of joblessness and unemployment. While the extent of the phenomenon has fluctuated over the last three decades, it remains ever present.

Building a New Society After 1989

The years 1939–1989 left a glaring mark on Eastern Europe, and influenced its economic, political and cultural trajectory afterward. Fifty years of Communism meant that for over two generations, a single authoritarian economic and political system dominated all aspects of society, under the auspices of the Soviet Union. Not

¹ Some argued that guaranteed employment was merely a political game, a way for the Communist Party governments to buy the political acquiescence of the citizenry: in exchange for work, and thus equal chances for attaining an acceptable living standard, the citizenry would not rebel against their political impotence and the stultifying whims of the police state (Baxandall 2017).

surprisingly, as the ‘old’ system finally collapsed in 1989, economically and politically, countries turned their heads from the glare of Russia to the glow of the West. East Europeans chose to build a modern capitalist democracy and borrow elements from Western Europe and the United States to shape their country-specific culture.

As Eastern Europe moved from a centrally-planned economy to a competition-based economy, many problems arose, and basic questions needed to be answered quickly: How should labor markets function? How should the government redistribute economic resources and regulate the labor market? What welfare programs should be enacted to assist the new economic category called, “the unemployed”? How will national economies and labor markets link to the rest of the world?

Polish officials discussed a variety of economic approaches and, on advice from Western economists and politicians, they chose shock therapy. In shock therapy, the state withdraws quickly and wholesale from the economic market such that the market dictates what is needed to be produced, and for how much (see Murrell 1993). Shock therapists favor radical economic liberalization as the means to generate investments, accumulate capital, and grow the economy; they privilege the private sector and favor deregulation of the market.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1989 systemic change, Poland lacked the conditions for an efficient market: there was little information about how markets operate under competitive rules, and the economic institutions that assess and manage risk were not there. As a result, the quality of life, especially in the short run, dramatically changed for the worse, as people were forced to make quick and uninformed economic decisions and the social welfare system was underfunded and overstretched. There was a high-turnover in the labor market and the fortunes of individuals and groups rose and fell along with the rest of the economy.

Waves of Unemployment in Post-communist Poland

Throughout the transition, unemployment rates changed depending on the general economic situation. Figure 2.1 presents data on the unemployment rate and GDP growth in post-communist Poland. Unemployment peaked in two periods: 1988–1993 and 1998–2003. The first peak was in the first years of the transition. This time was marked by economic instability, the collapse of many state-owned companies, and the appearance and quick rise of joblessness.

Government leaders and the citizenry were disappointed in the slowness and pain of the early reforms. In the early 1990s, the Polish Foreign Minister, Andrzej Olechowski, told *The New York Times*²:

If you compare the current situation with our expectations in 1989–1990, I would say we are not satisfied, because we thought things would go faster... If you press politicians in the

²Eastern Europe, Post Communism: Five Years Later – A special report: East Europe’s Hard Path to New Day, Craig R. Whitney, 30 September 1994.

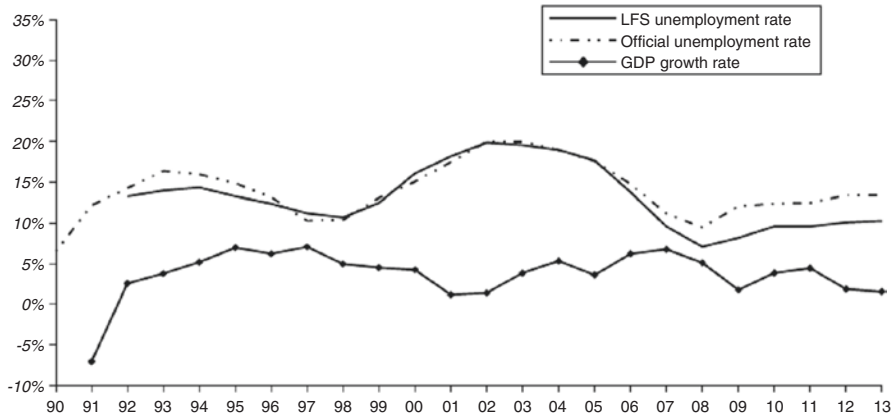


Fig. 2.1 The unemployment rate according to Labor Force Surveys, the registered (official) unemployment rate, and the GDP growth rate, Poland, 1990–2013

Note: LFS unemployment rate among economically active individuals aged 15+ (in 1992–1999 calculated as the average of quarterly estimates). GDP growth rate: annual percentage growth rate of GDP per capita based on constant 2002 prices (in Polish zloty). Data sources: LFS unemployment rate 1992–2012 and the GDP growth rate: the World Bank. 2013 LFS unemployment rate: EUROSTAT. Registered unemployment: Central Statistical Office (GUS)

West, they say yes, you can join us, at the turn of the century, but there is no agreement on a calendar to get there. Perhaps we were naive.

The second peak was during a global economic slowdown. The unemployment rate increased by ten points and in 2002 it reached a record high of 20%. In the relatively prosperous years 1994–1997 and especially 2004–2008, the situation on the labor markets improved. This is illustrated by a systematic fall in the unemployment rate, by 3.3 and 12.5 percentage points, respectively. In 2008–2013, during the economic crisis, unemployment again increased, but not to the extent observed during earlier slowdowns.

In the analysis of 1990s and early 2000s post-Communist economy, many use the term, “winners and losers” (e.g. Domański 1996; Slomczynski 2000, 2002; Heyns 2005; Tomescu-Dubrow, Slomczynski, Domański, Dubrow, Sawiński and Przybysz 2018). Winners successfully navigated and prospered in the early stages of the economic restructuring; losers did not. Winners had high education, experience in how to manage people and ideas, connections with investors and key government officials, and experience with Western ideas. They were in the best position to capitalize on the new opportunities the post-communist environment entailed. This group included primarily entrepreneurs, managers, and experts, a good part of whom, prior to 1989, used to be members of the *Nomenklatura* system (Slomczynski and Lee 1993).³

³The *Nomenklatura* was a structural arrangement through which the Communist Party ensured that “appropriate” people (i.e. those loyal to, and oftentimes members of, the party) were placed in important positions, and that they carried out party directives efficiently and effectively.

Losers in post-Communism were those who had benefited the most from the generous social safety net provided during state socialism: low skilled and unskilled workers, the peasantry, women and the youth. In the 1990s, women lost the labor market protection they enjoyed prior to 1989. Given that their labor-force status was always second to that of men, and that traditional gender roles remained strong throughout the communist period and afterward, this change affected them hard (Bretherton 2001; Pollert 2003). Women's employment rates during the transformation dropped below pre-1989 levels. To this day, women in Poland have higher unemployment rates than men and experience occupational segregation (e.g. Mikucka 2016).

The resurgence and rise of unemployment following downsizing or closing of major state-owned companies, coupled with educational inflation and the reduction of the welfare state, meant that young adults looking for a job had difficulty finding one (e.g. Tomescu-Dubrow 2007). The economic restructuring, which the end of State Socialism ushered, also exacerbated urban-rural inequality. During the communist-era, Polish farmers (i.e. peasants) had private or semi-private ownership of their land, contracts with the state that provided protections from the global agricultural market and economic downturns caused by bad weather, and access to distribution networks for their products. After State Socialism broke down, farmers lost many of the state subsidies, and competition from Western agricultural production became a significant problem (see Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018: Chap. 3).

Unemployment was extremely difficult for workers and their families (e.g. Tomescu-Dubrow 2007). Well before our study, newspapers around the world chronicled the plight of the jobless in early post-communist Poland. *The New York Times* reported the story of Jan Rusin. In 1994, Jan was a jobless coal miner who had worked for 27 years until he was laid off. He had 10 kids. "I meet most of my old colleagues at the unemployment office," Jan said. "I never thought there'd be such unemployment. All the years before 1989 were great. We didn't have to worry about a job."

Also in 1994, Krzysztof Prosowski was a 43-year-old steelworker at a plant outside Warsaw that lost nearly 2000 jobs after an Italian company bought majority shares. Krzysztof said, "Five years ago, I could put money from my salary aside in savings. Now, I live from paycheck to paycheck, but there's not much hope of finding another job under these conditions."

These experiences tie into the dramatic transformation that Poland's economy and labor market underwent after the end of state socialism. As Waclaw-Socha and Weisberg (1999) show, between 1989 and 1995, the number of jobs in the public sector decreased by 40%. In the profit sector, which included both private and some state-run firms, the change was even steeper, involving a drop by almost 60%. At the same time, in the private sector, employment increased by 13% (p. 10).

Poland and the Global Economic Crisis

The global economic crisis of 2008 wrought havoc across Europe. The European Commission called it “the deepest recession since the 1930s” and “unprecedented in post-war economic history.” (European Commission 2009). In that frightful Fall,

Panic broke in stock markets, market valuations of financial institutions evaporated, investors rushed for the few safe havens that were seen to be left (e.g. sovereign bonds), and complete meltdown of the financial system became a genuine threat (European Commission 2009: 8).

The European Union had forecasted that, by 2009, all countries in Europe would experience negative growth, and by 2010, only a handful would grow again. The European Commission also predicted rising unemployment: from 7% in 2008, to almost 11% in 2010.

The EU’s short-term predictions were slightly off: by 2010, unemployment in the EU was not 11%, but around 9.5%. The unemployment rate did dreadfully rise, and reached its awful peak of 10.9% in early 2013. Some countries fared worse than others: in 2013, unemployment was only 5.2% in Germany, but as high as nearly 25% in Spain and Greece.⁴

Across Europe, the impact of the crisis was felt objectively, in terms of falling incomes and rising unemployment; and subjectively, in terms of everyday anxiety over how to cope with economic insecurity. Unemployment jumped, governments fell, and faith in the European Union weakened.

And Poland delighted in its success.

In 2010, then Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk called for a press conference at the Warsaw Stock Exchange (Bartyzel and Espino 2010). He brought with him a color-coded map of Europe. Countries that had a decline in GDP were colored in red. Those that posted economic growth were colored green. Only Poland was green. The press conference came to be known as the “Green Island” speech, and the metaphor has since been used for the uncanny ability of Poland to escape the worst of the economic crisis. After Tusk’s press conference, Poland’s Finance Minister Jacek Rostowski told reporters, “We want to be a green island of low debt in a Europe which, unfortunately, may become awash with red ink.”⁵

In response to the crisis, by the end of 2008 the European Union launched their European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP), a combination of government stimulus – injecting tax-payer cash into the economy – and “austerity.”⁶ The powerhouses of Europe – Germany, France, and the UK, as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – pushed for austerity policies, especially in poorly-performing economies, such as Greece’s. Meanwhile, in Poland:

⁴Youth unemployment (ages 15–24) was the worst. By 2012, it was, on average, 24%. In Spain and Greece, it was over 55%, while Poland was around the EU average, at 26.5%.

⁵www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aCK1mK0Yd8kw, accessed January

⁶Austerity means that the government reduces spending on, among many things, the social safety net.

A series of tax cuts, including a drop in Poland's top rate from 40 percent to 32 percent, took effect just as the crisis's first shock waves were sweeping the world. Meanwhile, the EU budget for 2007–2013—which, among other things, distributes aid from richer countries to the union's poorer members—made Poland the biggest beneficiary of subsidies, showering the country with some €101.5 billion (\$137 billion). Although it was not labeled a stimulus package, Poland's combination of increased spending and tax cuts was half again as large in per capita terms as the U.S.'s \$800 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.⁷ (Faris 2013).

There is no doubt that, in comparison with its neighbors, Poland weathered well 2008's Great Recession. However, any economic downturn, no matter how well-weathered, negatively impacts the labor market and, thus, many peoples' lives. This became apparent by analyzing the intersection of gender and social class: at the onset of the crisis and after, Polish women at the bottom of the class structure, namely manual workers and farmers, experienced significantly and objectively worse economic conditions than men, and were more likely feel economically insecure (Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018: Chap. 10). Qualitative research on Poles who were long-term unemployed during the financial crisis (Binder 2016) showed that financial insecurity and a sense of dependency caused emotional distress and inability to focus on other aspects of life. To cope with the situation of long-term unemployment in small Polish cities, many young people felt compelled to take up illicit forms of work. This may lead to further marginalization of the young unemployed since such jobs do not provide social insurance and documented professional experience (Binder 2016: 198–200).

Migration and the Labor Market

The end of State Socialism and the rise of the European Union era offered Poles a new way to manage the labor market: moving abroad, often temporarily, to find a job (Okólski 2001; Fihel and Grabowska-Lusińska 2014). Early Polish migration has been characterized as “incomplete migration” (Okólski 2001), with people going back and forth between Poland and abroad repeatedly. Though difficult to count, this phenomenon involved perhaps hundreds of thousands of people (Fihel and Grabowska-Lusińska 2014: 22; see also Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008: 602–605). Poland's accession to the EU, in 2004, further spurred this phenomenon, as many legal and bureaucratic constraints to Poles' working in other EU countries disappeared. In 2007, Polish migration lasting for at least 3 months reached a peak of over 2.27 million Poles (Fihel and Grabowska-Lusińska 2014: 23) as part of “one of the most spectacular population movements in contemporary European history” (Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008: 600). To this day, many Poles continue to engage in incomplete migration (Fihel and Grabowska-Lusińska 2014). Nonetheless, after

⁷“How Poland Became Europe's Most Dynamic Economy: How did a poor, gray former communist country become Europe's most dynamic economy?” November 28, 2013 www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-11-27/how-poland-became-europes-most-dynamic-economy

2004 Polish migrants tend to stay in the EU countries longer, often for more than 12 months, which indicates the plans for long-term residence and settlement (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009: 226–228). What Brexit, that is, UK's vote to leave the EU, will mean in terms of consequences for future Polish migration patterns is a question to be explored.

At the same time, fast economic growth in Poland created demand for foreign labor force. The current immigration policy is mostly designed to attract temporary and seasonal workers. Over the last 10 years, Poland is gradually changing from a net emigration to a net immigration country. One implication is a rise in the number of the registered unemployed among immigrants who are eligible to access Polish welfare (mainly long-term or permanent residents in Poland). However, only a small share of immigrants registered as unemployed is entitled to unemployment benefits (e.g. 8% of unemployed Ukrainians, as opposed to Polish citizens, where a higher percent of the registered unemployed have a right to the benefit; see Andrejuk 2018).

Labor Market Flexibility and Its Consequences

The high unemployment rate, especially around the beginning of the twenty-first century, brought increasing pressure on the Polish government to deregulate the labor market. This idea was in accordance with the rather simplistic assumption that lowering employment costs and worker protection against dismissal would make employers more willing to create new job positions (as explained in Esping-Andersen and Regini 2000; OECD 1994). The Polish discourse echoed the discussion throughout Europe at that time, where: “Flexibility seems to have become the catch-all word for everything that employers find desirable and for every recipe prescribed by policy advisors to fight unemployment and the loss of competitiveness” (Regini 2000: 14). Indeed, the popular explanation for the high unemployment rate was by pointing to overly strict regulation of employment and high costs of employment (Winczorek 2003; Kabaj 2006). Leading employers associations, as well as the mainstream economic policy experts readily endorsed this diagnosis.⁸ The following quote from Marek Kaduczak, an expert from a Polish liberal think tank (Adam Smith Center), can serve as an example: “In practice, the stronger the regulation of employment and worker protection against dismissal, the higher the unemployment.”⁹

⁸As illustrated by the Polish Confederation of Private Employers (PKPP) 2002 opinion on changes in the Labor Code. Available (in Polish) at: konfederacijalewiatan.pl/legislacja/opinie/archiwum/46/pkpp_o_przyjeciu_przez_parlament_i_podpisanej_przez_prezydenta_nowelizacji_kodeksu_pracy. Access 12/8/2017.

⁹Quote taken from an article by Jan Piński Jan: Court Socialism, Wprost Magazine, nu 17/2002. Available (in Polish) at: www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/12827/Socjalizm-sadowy.html. Access 12/8/2017. Own translation.

In 2002, the official rationale for legal change to liberalize employment protection laws was that:

The present Labor Code is inflexible, excessively restricting the autonomy of both sides of the employment relation, which in particular makes it difficult to fight unemployment. The draft law aims to reduce labor costs, make work relations more flexible, especially in terms of working time, and reduce administrative burdens for employers, and thus to stimulate entrepreneurship and provide conditions conducive to the creation of new jobs.¹⁰

The narrative attributing Poland's unemployment to overly rigid employee protection was often regarded as obvious in itself. This was despite the fact that, according to OECD indicators of the strictness of the employment protection regulation (EPL), and crossnational comparisons of the costs of employment, the level of worker protection in Poland was actually *weaker* than in many European countries (Kabaj 2006).¹¹ In recent years, the overall value of the OECD summary indicator of EPL for regular contracts has remained close to the EU average. Specifically, the value of the 2013 index of EPL for regular contracts for Poland was 2.39, while the average for 23 EU countries for which data are available was 2.49 (Source: OECD Employment Protection Database).

Some argued that the law offers excessive protection to those hired on regular contracts. A qualitative study conducted in 2011 among employers found that they tend to view the law as precluding the dismissal of undisciplined, ineffective, or incompetent workers who deliberately take advantage of the employment protection laws to keep their jobs (Bednarski 2012). One of the interviewed employers stated, "Please believe me, we have to fight, also in courts, for many months – before we can terminate the employment of those who are completely unfit for the job" (Bednarski 2012: 40).

An earlier qualitative study among employers in small enterprises points to a distrust towards the government and agencies responsible for enforcing the labor law. Some respondents expressed a sense of victimization by the government and corrupt officials who, they claim, create and enforce laws that harm entrepreneurs. Some small firm owners challenge any existing employment protection laws as imposing high costs on employers. "One has to bypass the law," an employer said, "because if I gave someone a regular employment contract, and then fire that person, I would have to provide 3 months severance pay that I cannot afford. I am not Katowice Steelworks" (Gardawski 2003: 208). There had been media accounts of increasing numbers of unjust dismissal cases brought to the courts by ex-employees, and stories of labor courts that favor dishonest workers: "even people who have been fired for stealing from their employer are being restored to work. Cases before

¹⁰Materials prepared for the Parliament: draft bill amending the Labor Code and other Acts, Document no 335 from March 20, 2002. Available (in Polish) at: [orka.sejm.gov.pl/Druki4ka.nsf/0/69C42467A779EA5DC1256B8300461131/\\$file/335.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/Druki4ka.nsf/0/69C42467A779EA5DC1256B8300461131/$file/335.pdf). Access 12/8/2017. Own translation.

¹¹The OECD indicators of employment protection legislation measure the procedures and costs involved in dismissing individuals or groups of workers and the procedures involved in hiring workers on fixed-term or temporary work agency contracts (www.oecd.org/els/emp/oecdindicatorsofemploymentprotection.htm)

the labor court last, on average, two years and cost the employer more than 10 thousand zloty”.¹²

Under these circumstances, apart from pressuring the government to liberalize employment laws, over the past years Polish employers took advantage of any legal opportunity to cut down on employment costs. The most common strategy was to hire workers based on legally mandated limited-duration contracts. For the past several years, Poland has had the highest rate of fixed-term employment in the EU. The fastest growth in the incidence of fixed-term employment in Poland according to the Labor Force Survey (LFS) data took place in 2001–2005, a period of economic slowdown, characterized by high unemployment. During these years, the percentage of fixed-term employment in the total employment increased by more than 20 points. However, after 2005, this percentage remained remarkably stable at around 27%, twice the EU average, regardless of changes in the general labor market conditions (see Kiersztyn 2016a).

In Poland, the level of legal protection of fixed-term employment contracts is relatively low compared to that of other EU countries (OECD 2013, 2014), as reflected by the EPL indicators. The value of the 2013 EPL index for fixed-term contracts excluding temporary work agency employment¹³ in Poland was 1, while the EU average was 1.87.¹⁴ Until the end of 2015, there were practically no restrictions on the use of such arrangements: apart from a trial contract of up to 3 months for newly hired employees, a maximum of two successive fixed-term contracts were allowed, with a minimum one-month period between two such contracts sufficient for them not to be considered successive. In addition, there were no limits with respect to the maximum cumulated duration of fixed-term contracts with a single employer, which enabled the latter to hire workers on a temporary basis over many years.¹⁵

The relatively low level of protection of limited-duration contracts in Poland, coupled with a sense of economic uncertainty, motivated employers to use such arrangements as a way to maintain a cheap workforce serving as a buffer to adjust employment levels to changing product and service demand (e.g., Barbieri and Scherer 2009; EC 2010, 2016). In addition, differences in the level of legal protection between regular open-ended and fixed-term contracts have also encouraged using temporary employment as a way of screening potential candidates for permanent positions. In Poland, practically all workers entering a firm receive fixed-term contracts (Baranowska et al. 2011; OECD 2014), and the standard 3-month

¹² Piński, see above (footnote 10); own translation.

¹³ Which, since 2004, is quite highly regulated but still relatively uncommon.

¹⁴ OECD Employment Protection Database; for more detailed information on protection against dismissal in the case of fixed-term and indeterminate contracts according to the Labor Code, see the next section.

¹⁵ This situation has changed since the introduction of new legal regulation effective from January 2016. Today, the maximum total duration of all fixed-term contracts signed with the same employer is 36 months, regardless of the number of successive fixed-term contracts. However, this restriction does not concern civil-law agreements, which are not covered by the labor law.

probationary contracts are viewed as too short to allow to test new employees (Bednarski 2012). The tendency to assess employee performance through temporary employment is strengthened by the weak vocational orientation of the Polish educational system (e.g., Noelke and Müller 2011) that does not effectively signal worker skills to prospective employers.

Trash Contracts and Junk Jobs

The growth in temporary employment has sometimes been interpreted as a positive development that increases labor market performance and flexibility, and enables employers to adapt more easily to changing market conditions (OECD 2002). In Poland, similar themes were dominant in the public discourse for many years – as shown by a 2008 qualitative analysis attempting to reconstruct the way that non-standard employment was presented in the leading Polish newspapers between 2002 and 2007 (Kazimierczyk 2008).

Apart from the advantages they bring to employers, enabling them to adapt more easily to changing market conditions, temporary contracts were considered beneficial from the point of view of individual workers. For example, they were presented as a convenient way for young workers to experiment with various jobs in order to make more informed career choices. More importantly, fixed-term employment was regarded as a valuable opportunity for the unemployed to enter or reenter the labor market. The common narrative assumed that such opportunities were especially important for low-skilled workers, whose chances of finding employment in the absence of temporary contracts would have been minimal. Such assumptions gave rise to the argument that for such workers, any job was better than unemployment (Kazimierczyk 2008). This is similar to claims made in the literature that flexible employment may be used by workers with a weak labor market position as stepping-stones to more stable employment by offering access to on-the-job experience (see Giesecke and Groß 2003; Gash 2008), especially when employers use such arrangements to screen potential candidates for permanent positions (Boockmann and Hagen 2008; Faccini 2014).

Yet, many scholars also point to the detrimental effect of fixed-term and other temporary contracts for a majority of those working in such arrangements. Studies show temporary employment to be linked to substandard work conditions, such as low pay or short career ladders (e.g., Booth et al. 2002; Comi and Grasseni 2012; OECD 2014). Due to their weaker bargaining position, fixed-term employees have worse access to various employee benefits (Kalleberg et al. 2000; McGovern et al. 2004), employer-funded training and skill development programs (Arulampalam and Booth 1998; O'Connell and Byrne 2012). In addition, they receive significantly lower wages than comparable workers on open-ended contracts (Comi and Grasseni 2012; OECD 2014), an outcome that Polish research has also confirmed (Kiersztyn 2012).

There are concerns that temporary contracts may turn out to be an additional source of insecurity and precariousness for workers: employment flexibility is restricted to labor market outsiders, and it fosters the creation of two-tier labor markets, with a more or less persistent division between a group of privileged, well-protected workers, and the disadvantaged employees on unprotected, temporary contracts (Boeri 2010; Dolado et al. 2002). This argument, with its emphasis on inequalities resulting from the restricted access to insider positions, draws on dual labor market and signalling theories (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Spence 1973), and implies that fixed-term workers are likely to become trapped in a series of short-term, unstable jobs separated by periods of unemployment. Even while labor scholars in other European countries had already acknowledged these negative side-effects of labor market deregulation (Regini 2000, Standing 2011), it is only in the recent years that this issue has emerged in the Polish public debate.

In Poland, however, the public debate was focused not so much on deregulation in general, but on the specific problem of the so called “trash contracts”. To understand this debate, it is important to note that aside from regular fixed-term contracts, which, although offering weaker protection against dismissal than open-ended contracts, are nonetheless covered by employment protection legislation, the Polish law allows other atypical job arrangements that are even less costly to employers, but carry much higher socio-economic risks for employees. The latter include civil-law agreements (contracts for a specific task, contracts of mandate), labelled “trash contracts” by the media. Such contracts are not governed by the Labor Code and offer minimal social protection.

Over the last years, many employers reacted to the economic crisis by attempting to gain even more flexibility than offered by the standard fixed-term contracts. They did so via increasing, in some cases unlawfully, the share of workers hired on the basis of civil-law agreements.¹⁶ This is reflected in data from various sources. For example, according to estimates published by the Central Statistical Office, the number of workers on civil-law agreements without an employment contract (either open-ended or fixed-term), increased dramatically, from 547 thousand in 2010 to around 1.4 million in 2013. The actual number may be even higher, as the data do not cover individuals employed in firms hiring less than 10 workers (more than one third of the workforce according to EU-SILC 2008 data; see Kiersztyn 2016a). Reliable information for earlier years was not collected. Only recently did the problem of the overutilization of civil law agreements on the Polish labor market gain public visibility and extensive media coverage. However, Polish Social Insurance Institution data on the number of individuals paying social security contributions on the basis of contracts of mandate suggest that the growth trend began between 2005 and 2008, and accelerated after 2008.

¹⁶ Such contracts are often used in case of work done on a regular basis, at the employers' headquarters and under the employers' direct supervision. According to the Labor Code, these job characteristics define an employment relationship, so using civil law agreements for such jobs is illegal.

In the context of the debate surrounding the phenomenon of “junk jobs”, Poland’s employment protection has been criticized as weak and ineffective. It is argued that the institution responsible for controlling whether firms abide by the Labor Code (Chief Labor Inspectorate – PIP) does not have the necessary power or resources to ensure legal compliance. At the same time employees, due to their weak bargaining position (especially during an economic slowdown), were pressured to accept jobs which did not offer adequate legal protection. They were reluctant to complain about their working conditions, for fear of losing their jobs.

Public opinion surveys conducted in Poland throughout the past years found that only a very small percentage of respondents agreed with the statement that “one could find an adequate job without any problem” on the local labor market. In the most optimistic period, spring of 2008 – several months before the onset of the economic crisis, only 10% shared such an opinion. Forty-six percent declared that “it was possible to find any job, but difficult to find an adequate one”, and an equally high percentage thought that finding a job in their town or city of residence was difficult or impossible (CBOS 2016). These perceptions are coupled with restricted access to unemployment and welfare benefits, similar to other Central and Eastern European countries (Stovicek and Turrini 2012) that motivates individuals to accept short-term jobs allowing them to become eligible for unemployment assistance (Baranowska et al. 2011).

This weakening of legal mechanisms of employment protection, which some portray as a necessary cost of lowering unemployment, has important implications for the study of subjective perceptions of joblessness in Poland. Drawing on the underemployment literature, it can be argued that the economic and institutional conditions described above render unemployment, understood as a lack of any paid job, inadequate as a single indicator of labor market difficulties. Many people could in fact earn money performing various jobs but remain labor market outsiders if their jobs do not guarantee a minimum acceptable standard of living, or adequate use of human capital (Robinson 1936, see also: Friedland and Price 2003). This notion is well illustrated by Ulrich Beck’s famous depictions of the modern labor market as a

risk-fraught system of flexible, pluralized, decentralized underemployment which, however, will possibly no longer raise the problem of unemployment in the sense of being completely without a paid job. In this system, unemployment in the guise of various forms of underemployment is ‘integrated’ into the employment system... (Beck 1992: 143).

Historically, the underemployment concept was first applied in countries with weak legal protection of labor, and was used to describe low quality jobs, sometimes referred to as “disguised unemployment” (for example: Heath 1911; Robinson 1936).¹⁷ Economically inadequate employment was commonly defined in terms of: low hours or involuntary part-time work, intermittent employment, poverty-level wages, and occupational mismatch, which occurs when there is a substantial gap

¹⁷ In Poland, the so-called “hidden unemployment” among agricultural workers is a case in point. It has long been stated in the economic literature that the official unemployment rate in rural areas overestimates the actual amount of work available for farmers.

between the workers' educational attainment and their occupational status (Dooley and Prause 2004; Jensen and Slack 2003; ILO 1998). More recently, there have been attempts to conceptualize underemployment as a continuum between complete lack of employment and adequate employment (Dooley and Prause 2004). The notion of underemployment continuum reflects the idea that there may be situations in which people who have certain kinds of jobs cannot be considered "fully employed", but remain somewhere between joblessness and "true" employment. Such people are likely to regard themselves as jobless even though they might not be unemployed in the strict sense of the term.

Over-Education and Under-Employment

In addition to job insecurity, the Polish labor market is characterized by a high prevalence and persistence of other employment inadequacies, as the underemployment literature documents. Recent panel analyses of jobs offering below-subsistence wages, and comparative data on the rate of in-work poverty (Kiersztyn 2015) show that in the past decades, the problem of persistent low earnings has increased in importance. As a result, the economic insecurity of workers has become the subject of concern: while in the past, work used to be considered an "entry ticket to the world of provisions" (Dahrendorf 1990 [1988]: 143), nowadays having a job in Poland does not guarantee economic sustenance.

Over-education, which occurs due to a mismatch between the distributions of workers by education and occupation (e.g. McGuinness 2006, see Kiersztyn 2013), undermines the meritocratic faith in schools and universities as guaranteeing access to high status professions. Recent analyses, using various measures of this phenomenon (Kiersztyn 2007, 2013, 2016b), suggest that in Poland over-education is a significant problem, and has been on the rise throughout the period of post-communist transition (see also Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018: Chap. 5). This is due to the massive educational expansion that occurred in Poland over the last 20 years, spurred by the common view that education, at the tertiary level, especially, is simultaneously a safeguard against unemployment and an entry ticket to high-wage jobs. The Polish labor market was unable to accommodate the rapidly growing number of college educated workers (Kiersztyn 2016b).

Underemployment and job insecurity are largely structurally determined, and concentrate among workers with the weakest labor market position. Recent Polish studies provide strong evidence that various forms of labor market insecurity and underemployment are overrepresented in elementary occupations, especially unskilled manual labor (Kiersztyn 2007, 2012, 2016a).

The analyses consistently indicate that fixed-term employment, together with unstable work histories and low wages are more common among the less educated, though in the light of some results, there are also grounds for supposing that a higher education diploma does not protect against job insecurity to a larger extent than secondary vocational education (Kiersztyn 2007, 2012, 2016a). Analyses also

show that characteristics of the respondent's place of residence are important correlates of both job insecurity and underemployment. Over-education and low wages are more common among respondents living far from larger cities, in Eastern Poland, and in former industrial regions that underwent intensive economic restructuring during the first years of the post-communist transition. Living in a large city increased the odds of fixed-term and unstable employment (Kiersztyn 2007, 2016b), *ceteris paribus*. This is consistent with the results of earlier Polish studies of factors encouraging the use of flexible forms of employment by employers (Sobocka-Szczapa 2003) and the literature discussing job insecurity in the context of economic modernization processes (Beck 1992; Castells 2000).

Precarity

As in other countries, young Polish labor market entrants are particularly vulnerable to precarious and inadequate employment. Persons aged 18–29 are considerably more likely to be in contingent employment and to have a record of unstable employment (Kiersztyn 2012, 2014). Similar relationships were found in the analysis of EU-SILC data for fixed-term employment (Kiersztyn 2016a), and of the correlates of overeducation (Kiersztyn 2016b).

The uneven distribution of flexible employment in Poland – in particular its concentration in elementary occupations, among less experienced, easily replaceable, low educated workers – suggests that such job arrangements are likely to be the result of employer attempts to minimize hiring costs at the expense of employees. In such occupations, fixed-term employment entails the highest risk of prolonged labor market uncertainty (Kiersztyn 2016a). Workers in jobs with the lowest level of occupational complexity are potentially the most vulnerable to the negative psychological effects of temporary employment. In addition, some negative psychological effects of uncertainty have emerged with greater strength among the least protected civil law contract workers (Kiersztyn 2016c). In light of such findings, the rise in temporary and civil-law employment in Poland should be interpreted as exacerbating social and economic inequalities, by further undermining the labor market position of the already weak.

Unemployment Law in Poland

Legal regulations of combating unemployment in Poland are characterized by multidimensionality, with several distinct sources of legislation and frequent changes of statutory provisions.

Polish unemployment laws can be distinguished by the international level (ILO and the EU), the national – constitutional level, and the national – statutory level. Poland is a member of the International Labor Organisation and ratified, i.a., one of

its first conventions: Convention no. 2 concerning unemployment that came into force in 1921. The Convention envisaged that ILO member states should establish a system of free public employment agencies under the control of a central authority. Committees, including representatives of employers and of workers, were to be appointed to advise on matters concerning the carrying on of these agencies.

In 1919, soon after Poland's proclamation of independence (November 1918), the government created state employment agencies. In 1931, at the Council of Ministers, the government established a Committee for the Unemployment Issues (Mlonek 1999).

After 1945, under the communist regime, the state promoted policy of full employment. During the Polish People's Republic, unemployment officially did not exist. There was no register of the unemployed and the state aimed at 100% employment of its citizens.

After 1989, in the transition to a market economy, the focus changed from the paradigm of full employability to effectiveness and productivity of workers. Employment levels in many organizations fell and state collective farms that provided employment in rural areas collapsed. In the 1990s, the state faced the problem of unemployment and had to design legal and policy measures to counteract it. At the time of political-economic transition, Poland did not have institutional experience with counteracting unemployment in an open and deregulated labor market. It was therefore necessary to use the experience and achievements of capitalist states and to experiment with various forms of state intervention on the market (Skąpski 2015: 425–426).

In Poland, labor protection and politics of which activate the unemployed are fundamental rules of the state that are guaranteed on constitutional level. As Garlicki (2016) observed, during the works on the Polish constitution of 1997, the approach to regulating state welfare benefits was characterized by caution and restraint. Legislators understood that the state's financial possibilities are limited. In consequence, the designers of the Constitution departed from understanding work as an individual's right. Instead they highlighted the principle of freedom of work, formulating some specific rules of protection of workers (Garlicki 2016).

The Constitution of Poland of 1997 states that work is under protection of the state. The state performs supervision over the conditions of work (art. 24). In art. 65 it stipulates that everyone shall have the freedom to choose and to pursue his occupation and to choose his place of work (with statutory exceptions). Pursuant to art. 65 par. 5, public authorities shall pursue policies aiming at full, productive employment by implementing programmes to combat unemployment, including the organization of and support for occupational advice and training, as well as public works and economic intervention. According to art. 67, a citizen who is involuntarily without work and has no other means of support, shall have the right to social security, the scope of which shall be specified by statute. Individuals shall also have the right to social security whenever incapacitated for work by reason of sickness or invalidism as well as having attained retirement age. The scope and forms of social security are supposed to be specified by statute.

Since Poland's accession to the EU (2004), regulations on the EU level influenced policy of combating unemployment. According to art. 9 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (TFEU), "in defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health". There are several programmes on the EU level, which address the issue of unemployment, in which Poland participates. The unemployment problems are dealt with by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

EU member states regulate their own national employment laws and they have competences in key areas such as establishing minimum wages and the amount of unemployment benefits. They are differentiated across the EU. Expenditure on unemployment-related benefits per person in Poland is below the EU average and among the lowest in the whole EU-28.¹⁸ The lowest level of expenditure is in Croatia and Romania. EU citizens are allowed to travel to other Member States to seek employment (and during that process they retain – under some circumstances – their unemployment benefits obtained in the sending country). However, welfare systems, including measures designed to help the unemployed, are only coordinated within the EU but not fully harmonised across nations. The EU labour law is specific in a sense that it has developed „as a form of market regulation of transnational competition with the goal of governing the plurality and diversity of national social systems in view of their smooth integration into the common market” (Giubboni 2018: 9).

The EU does impact Labour law; it “Europeanizes” the national legal framework through various tools such as directives, recommendations, and ECJ judgments. The European Charter of Fundamental Rights lays down some basic principles of employment and labour law, namely freedom to choose one's occupation and work (art. 15), equality between genders in all areas including employment, work and pay (art. 23), and prohibition of child labour (art. 32). With regard to joblessness, it states in art. 34, that the EU „recognises and respects” the entitlement to social security benefits in cases such, as i.a. loss of employment, in accordance with the rules of the EU and national laws. The EU activities in the area of protection against the unemployment include a Council recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (2016/C 67/01). While it has declarative and non-mandatory character, it sets important goals for European policies of counteracting unemployment. It indicates that Member States should: guarantee the registration of jobseekers and immediate labour-market orientation of integration measures (for example through building closer links with employers); guarantee individual evaluation and analysis of the situation of the registered long-term unemployed; and conclude specific

¹⁸ ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Figure_4_Expenditure_on_unemployment_related_benefits_per_person_ILO_unemployed_and_registered_unemployed_2014_PPS.jpg

job-integration agreements between long-term unemployed individuals and the contact points, with the aim of facilitating a person's activation in the labour market.

The EU instruments to combat unemployment include the European Employment Strategy, developed since 1997. Its objectives are the creation of more jobs and the improvement of working conditions across the EU. It later became a part of the Europe 2020 strategy designed for the years 2010–2020, which cover the timeframe of our study.

Some initiatives concentrate on specific groups of the unemployed. In particular, the Youth Guarantee programme, established in 2013, focuses on activating the young, including via skills training. The programme encompasses the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and Quality Framework for Traineeships (Council Recommendation). Another instrument managed by the DG Employment is the 2014–2020 EU programme for employment and social innovation (EaSI). It encompasses three initiatives aimed at combating unemployment: Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRES), European Employment Services (EURES) and Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship.¹⁹

Polish regulations on counteracting unemployment and its effects are divided into two subcategories. The first one are provisions that regulate protection against dismissal from work (protection of employees). The second type are provisions addressed to those who already are unemployed (counteracting effects of unemployment).

Protection Against Dismissal from Work: Labor Code and Act on Group Dismissals

Some regulations concerning the termination of employment and protection of specific groups against unemployment are placed in the Labor Code. The Labor Code envisages various periods of notice for various employment contracts. In the case of fixed term employment contracts, the parts may envisage that a contract can be finished with a 2-week notice (art. 33). According to the Code, this possibility is only optional. In the case of employment contracts for indefinite term, the period of notice depends on the time of employment of a worker in question (art. 34).²⁰

The employer is obliged to inform a trade union about the intention of giving notice to an employee (provided that a trade union operates in the workplace and the employee is its member). Trade unions can present their reservations if they disagree with the decision (art. 38).

¹⁹Information about the EU initiative combating unemployment are provided on the basis of ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp (website of the DG for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion)

²⁰If the employee has worked for less than 6 months, the period of notice is 2 weeks. If the employee has worked for at least 6 months, the period of notice is 1 month. If the employee has worked for at least 3 years, the period of notice is 3 months.

Worker Protections

An important instrument is the protection of women who are pregnant or on maternity leave. Pursuant to art. 177, the employer cannot dissolve a contract or give notice to an employee who is pregnant or who is on maternity leave (which lasts 20 weeks following the birth of one child, and 31 weeks following the birth of twins). Employment contracts for a fixed term or for the completion of a specific task are automatically prolonged until the day of birth. The prohibition of dissolving contracts also applies to fathers who use paternity leave.

The Labor Code also envisages pre-retirement protection of employees. The employer cannot give notice to an employee who lacks 4 years or less to retirement age (art. 39). If an employment contract was dissolved with (or the notice was given to) an employee who is pregnant, on maternity leave or on paternity leave, or with an employee who benefits from the pre-retirement protection, the employer is obliged to fully compensate the employer (100% of the salary) for the time (s)he remained without work after the illegal termination of contract (art. 47 and art. 57).

Special rules apply in the case of group dismissals, according to the Law on group dismissals (Act of 13 III 2003 on the specific principles of terminating labor relationships for reasons not attributable to employees). Group dismissals are defined as dismissals where the employment contracts are terminated with a group of at least 10 employees - depending on the size of the company. In such cases, the employer is obliged to consult and cooperate closely with the trade unions operating in the workplace in order to ensure that the group dismissal cannot be diminished and to guarantee that workers receive assistance (retraining, indicating other employment options). The employees whose contracts are terminated in the procedure of group dismissal are also entitled to severance pay, in amount of 1–3-month salary.

In practice, employment contracts are often substituted by civil contracts, which are not regulated by the Labor Code, but by the Civil Code. This is more advantageous for employers, but dramatically restricts the rights of workers, especially in the contexts of termination of contracts, protection of rights of pregnant women and mothers, protection of people in the pre-retirement age, and the right to paid holidays. Workers hired under civil contracts are not officially employees (they are contractors), therefore they are not protected by the Labor Code and other provisions concerning the employer – employee relation.

Counteracting Effects of Unemployment: Statutory Provisions

Since the end of the 1980s, there have been a variety of politics of counteracting unemployment in Poland, as reflected by the number of statutory acts on fighting unemployment.

In the period 1989–2014 several acts were implemented, and then either amended, or repealed and replaced by other legislative solutions. Polish legislation developed, from the model of uniform treatment of different groups of the unemployed to the heterogeneous model distinguishing various groups and applying different measures to each of them (Staszewska 2012). The first act on employment (1989), and its replacement - the law on employment and unemployment (1991) envisaged special measures only in the case of school graduates and handicapped persons. It was not until the act of 1994 on employment and unemployment counteraction that the more diversified approach was introduced. The 1994 act finally recognized that there are different groups of unemployed and some of these groups demand more careful treatment.

This approach was repeated and developed in the act of 2004 on promotion of employment and labor market institutions (Staszewska 2012). In art. 49, the act recognizes that there are some groups of unemployed who should have priority in the access to “special programmes” (i.a. trainings, re-trainings, and support of new workplaces). These six groups are: (1) the unemployed who are under 30 years old, (2) the long-term unemployed, that is, people registered as unemployed for over 12 months within the last 2 years), (3) the unemployed who are over 50 years old, (4) the unemployed who use social benefits (other than unemployment benefit), (5) the unemployed who have at least one child under 6 years old or at least one handicapped child under 18 years old), and (6) the unemployed who are handicapped. The 2004 act was amended in 2014.

As of 2004–2019, the main statutory act aimed at counteracting unemployment has been the Act of 20 IV 2004 on promotion of employment and labor market institutions.²¹ It replaced the repealed Act of 14 XII 1994 on Employment and Counteracting Unemployment. Since then the law envisages also additional forms of help directed to groups defined at higher risk of unemployment. They are: the young below the age of 30 years; the elderly above the age of 50; the long-term unemployed; the disabled; the unemployed who take advantage of social assistance in a form of welfare benefits; unemployed with children; unemployed who are primary carers of disabled persons (art. 49). Unemployment immediately after labor market entry may result in long-term labor market exclusion many years afterwards, so providing assistance for the young is especially important to the legislator. In the case of the young unemployed, the act envisages various forms of financial support, most importantly scholarships for continuing education, training schemes, as well as “employment vouchers” (art. 66 m) and “internship vouchers” (art. 66 l). They guarantee partial reimbursement of costs borne by the employer in the cases when (s)he decides to give a job to an unemployed under 30 years old. In return, employers who received internship and employment vouchers are obliged – after the period of financial support is over – to continue employing that person for a period of six (internship) or 18 (employment) months. Analogically, the prefect of a district (*starosta*) can also grant financial support to employers who hire the jobless who are

²¹The new statutory law is currently under preparation but its initial designed date of entry into force was delayed (Ustawa o rynku pracy, Act on the labour market).

over 50 years old (art. 60d). In the case of unemployed parents taking care of a child(ren) below the age of 6 or of a disabled person, their occupational activation is facilitated by temporary refund of the costs of childcare (up to 6 months), as well the system of grants and financial resources ('activation benefits') directed to employers who decide to hire such persons- returnees to the labor market after the period of joblessness due to caregiving obligations (art. 60a, 60b, 61). The Act of 2004 also envisages the system of loans available to individuals from vulnerable groups and designed to facilitate establishment of one's own firm (art. 61e point 2)).

How Poland Defines Unemployment

Art. 2 §1 point 2) of the act on promotion of employment and labor market institutions defines an unemployed person as an individual who does not perform any paid activities, but is capable and ready to become employed full time (or half time in case of disabled persons), who does not study full time, who is registered at an adequate labor office and looks for a job or other economic activity. A person can register as unemployed from the age of 18 years to that of 65 (retirement age for men) or 60 (retirement age for women).

Counteracting Unemployment

There are six types of institutions that implement policies aimed at counteracting unemployment²²: public employment services, Voluntary Labor Corps, employment agencies, training institutions, social dialogue institutions, local partnership institutions. These organizations are set up differently but play complementary functions in counteracting unemployment. Public employment services are district and voivodship employment agencies cooperating with the ministry of work, voivodship governors, voivodship marshals and mayors. Voluntary Labor Corps are a state institution specialized in activating the youth, especially those at risk of social exclusion and the unemployed under 25 years old.

Employment agencies are entities enlisted in a special register that offer services in the area of workers recruitment, temporary jobs, vocational guidance and career counselling. Training institutions can be public or private entities that conduct extra-curricular education activities. Social dialogue institutions are entities which mention among their statutory aims tasks such as promoting employment, occupational activation, and mitigating the consequences of unemployment. Such institutions may have various forms: trade unions and associations of trade unions, employers' organisations, associations of the unemployed, other non-governmental

²² Pursuant to art. 6, the institutions are specified in art. 6 of the Act of 20 IV 2004 on promotion of employment and labor market institutions.

organisations. Local partnership institutions are groups of institutions which implement projects connected with the labor market development on the basis of civil contracts.

The Act of 2004 regulates the functioning of the district employment agencies (*powiatowe urzędy pracy*) that play a fundamental role in organizing help for the unemployed in Poland. They maintain the register of the unemployed in every district (art. 33) and offer them various forms of assistance. Such help includes, pursuant to art. 34, organizing professional trainings, career advice and information, initiating and financing additional workplaces, and granting and paying out unemployment benefits. The district employment agencies also cooperate with companies and institutions, which plan collective redundancies. When the employer plans to dismiss at least 50 employees in a period of 3 months, (s)he is obliged to cooperate with an employment agency regarding assistance for the dismissed employees, trainings and finding new jobs (art. 70).

As Bogusława Puzio-Waławik (2018) indicates, there are two types of labor market programmes. The first type are passive programmes. They have mainly a protective function. Passive programmes include welfare benefits, pre-retirement allowance, and early retirement benefits. The second type are active programmes, active labor market policies (ALMP), which aim to activate and reintegrate the unemployed on the labor market.

Unemployment Benefits in Poland

In Poland, as a general rule, an unemployment benefit can be only paid for 12 months (pursuant to art. 73 of the Act). To be entitled to receive the benefit, a registered unemployed has to meet a set of requirements. The unemployed must have worked for at least 1 year in the 18 months preceding registration with the labor office, and during that period he/she received at least a minimum wage. Apart from paid work, some other types of situations may be counted as fulfilment of the 1-year period, including: obligatory military service, parental leave, period of long-term care over incapacitated person (for example sick family member). Due to strict prerequisites of obtaining the benefit, less than 15% of the registered unemployed are entitled to a benefit of this type. In the second quarter of 2017, 982.8 thousand individuals (85,3% of the total unemployed population) were registered without such entitlement.. In the second quarter of 2016, 1199 thousand unemployed individuals (86,1%) were not entitled to the benefit (GUS 2017: 17).

The second form of assistance and support for the unemployed are active programmes. Those envisaged in the Act include: reimbursement of childcare costs for children aged less than 7 years, or costs of care for a disabled person who needs special help in daily life – equivalent of 6 months costs (art. 61); funding the costs of travel of the unemployed who participate in job fairs (art. 44); reimbursement of costs - borne by an entrepreneur or a farmer - of adjusting the workplace (additional equipment etc) for an unemployed individual who starts a job (art. 46 par. 1);

granting the unemployed or graduates special financial means for the purpose of starting one's own business activities or setting up a social cooperative (*spółdzielnia socjalna*); special loans for setting up own enterprise by an unemployed individual (with a possibility to cancel the debt in the future) (art. 61e par. 2, art. 61p); grants for creating a position where the job would be performed remotely, such as via telecommuting (art. 60a).

Legal Profiles of the Jobless

Since 2014, “profiling” the jobless represents the new instrument that aims to speed up labor market integration of the unemployed and limit the movement of the permanently unemployed into the grey zone, that is, informal labor activities which are not registered and are excluded from the state system of social protection. To better fit the needs of the unemployed, employment agencies conduct a process of “profiling” every person who registered as unemployed. As a result, every unemployed person is classified into one of the following three groups.

Group I includes persons who are not at the risk of permanent unemployment. They are expected to find a job quickly and the task of the unemployment agencies is to find them proper and adequate job offers. Group II includes people who need more additional support, via trainings or internships. In Group III are people at highest risk of long-lasting unemployment and labor market marginalization. They are offered help in the framework of the special Programme “Activation and Integration”, which lasts 2 months and includes specialist advice, participation in support groups, and referral to so-called “socially useful works” arranged in a municipality. Such works aim to give the permanently unemployed at least minimal livelihood and thus restrict their activity in the grey market (art. 33 of the Act on promotion of employment and labour market institutions and the Regulation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of May 14th 2014 on profiling the assistance for the unemployed).

The Activation and Integration Programme may be conducted in cooperation with Social Welfare Centres. Profiling of the unemployed remains controversial, as it interferes with the private lives of the jobless. Of special concern is the fact that the unemployed who do not agree for profiling are deprived of unemployment status of the unemployed and, therefore, of unemployed benefits (art. 33 of the Act.).

Some aspects of profiling the unemployed were declared unconstitutional by the Polish Constitutional Court in 2018. As of 2019, the government works on the new statutory regulation (Ustawa o rynku pracy, “Act of the labour market”) which would no longer envisage the controversial profiling procedure.

In addition to that, the Act of 13 June 2003 on social employment provides specific measures to activate social groups which are particularly prone to the risk of unemployment and labor market marginalization. These groups include the homeless, drug and alcohol addicts, mentally ill persons, long-term unemployed, persons released from a penitentiary, refugees, and persons with disabilities. The law

envisages the development of two types of institutions: centers of social integration and clubs of social integration, which facilitate vocational training and improvement, provide psychological consultation and enable members to do simple jobs. The centers can perform economic activities (manufacturing, trade, services) with the aim of integrating their participants into the labor market. A person may join a center on their own, or following a referral from a social welfare center, drug treatment facility, family support center, non-governmental organization or social integration club. Clubs of social integration may also offer various forms of simple employment, such as socially useful works. Employers have some incentives to hire members of these socially excluded groups, such as salary refunds from the municipal budget for a 1 year period.

The Informal Labor Market, or “Grey Zone”

According to annual reports of the State Labor Inspectorate, a number of individuals registered as unemployed and receiving unemployment benefits perform paid activities in the ‘grey zone’. The Inspectorate emphasizes that such instances decrease over time: while in 2015, 1361 individuals, that is, 8% of the inspected persons, were identified as working despite cashing unemployment benefits, in 2016 the number fell to 816 people (4% of all inspected persons) (PIP 2018: 101).

Most frequently, the unemployed were found to work illegally in construction services, trade and repair, manufacturing (PIP 2018: 101, 94–95). The justification they provided was the lack of any written work agreement, which they could have presented at the labor office. To maintain the right to public healthcare guaranteed by unemployment status, they did not inform the labor office about their economic activities (PIP 2017: 112).

State Programmes to Counteract the Effects Unemployment

The unemployment counteraction programmes since the 1995 display an interesting dynamic. While at the beginning they focused on structural unemployment and fighting the effects of systemic transition, in the twenty-first century they concentrate more on activation of specific groups at higher risk of job loss or lacking job offers (youth, the elderly). Moreover, since 2004, the state programmes of combating unemployment and promoting occupation activation are usually linked with EU-level policies. They implement EU policies and strategies and take advantage of the EU funds in the designed activities. After 1989, but before Poland’s accession to the EU in 2004, they included i.a.: promoting employment of elderly people in the pre-retirement age (50 Plus Programme 2002); Programme of counteracting unemployment and its negative consequences (Program przeciwdziałania bezrobociu i łagodzenia jego negatywnych skutków – 1995); Promotion of occupational activity

of the youth (Program promocji aktywności zawodowej młodzieży), 1995. After 2004, they have included new initiatives for promoting youth employment (The First Job- First Business Programme – 2006; Youth on the labor market programme which included a pilot programme your career- your choice, 2012); and National Action Plans for Employment for years (Krajowy Plan Działań na rzecz Zatrudnienia), the first realised in 2012–2014 and the second in 2015–2017.²³

Legal research indicates that the solutions for counteracting unemployment have several side effects and dysfunctions that may limit their usefulness (Skąpski 2015). The “idling effect” means that the programmes of stimulating employment generate results that would have also appeared if the programmes had not existed. The substitution effect rests on the replacement of workers who are employed pursuant to market conditions by workers who participate in unemployment counteraction programmes, and who are more cost-effective because of limited amount of required welfare contributions. The displacement effect is connected with eliminating from the market those firms that do not participate in state counteracting employment programmes and replacing them with business ventures, which actively participate in such programmes. The consequences are similar as in the case of the substitution effect (Skąpski 2015: 427–428). The extent to which these effects manifest in Polish society require empirical social science research.

Summary

Unemployment laws in Poland are regulated on the constitutional as well as statutory levels. Their formulation started after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. Since then, they have been repeatedly modified and amended, in response to the complexity of the phenomenon they aim to tackle. To combat unemployment, there are two kinds of legal provisions. First, there are laws protecting employees against wrongful dismissal. However, as they cover only individuals who have employment contracts, the rising number of workers employed on contracts regulated by the Civil Code remain unprotected (see section on precarious employment). The second type of legal provisions are laws that fight the consequences of unemployment. They encompass both active and passive programmes.

The limited time that a person is entitled to unemployment benefits (maximum 12 months) and the numerous and diverse active labor market policies indicate that Polish law concentrates more on the activation of the jobless than on providing financial protection during unemployment periods.

²³ For the full list of programmes of counteracting unemployment in Poland before 2008, see: Bogusława Puzio-Waławik, *Polityka Państwa Na Polskim Rynku Pracy*, in: Z. Dach (ed.), *Państwo a rynek*, PTE, Kraków 2008, pp. 36

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Chapter 3

Joblessness Studies Since the 1930s in Poland and Abroad



Antoni Sulek, an eminent Polish social science methodologist who works at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw, traced the lineage of Polish joblessness studies back to the classic *Marienthal* unemployment study of the 1930s (Sulek 2007). We start in Marienthal.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, unemployment surged worldwide, hitting small industrial towns across Europe and the U.S. The story of Marienthal, a small industrial town a little over 70 kilometers south of Vienna, is that of many similar places hit hard by the Depression. In Marienthal, the textile factory was the town's largest employer. In February 1930, the factory closed its doors, leaving many suddenly unemployed and hundreds of families in dire need of public assistance (Cole 2006).

In 1931 and 1932, social psychologists Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld and Hans Zeisel conducted a comprehensive study of the unemployed of Marienthal. They wrote a book, *The Unemployed of Marienthal*, published in 1933. In Austria and elsewhere, unemployment was a popular topic of study. What made *Marienthal* stand out was its careful attention to methodological details and an attempt at a modern scientific standard in observing and recording social facts at a time when social science methodology was only at the beginning of its development. To this day, the book also holds its place as an example of how to turn the scientific analysis of social facts from a staccato style of endless presentation of tables and figures into an enjoyable, readable narrative. Marie Jahoda led the write-up of the project, and rightly takes credit for its endurance as a well-written social science classic.¹

In *Marienthal*, the social psychologists wanted to understand the psychological circumstances of the unemployed by looking at the interplay of social conditions and psychological functioning. Under the direction of Lazarsfeld, the authors conducted what they called a "sociography." As befitting a sociography, they

¹For a useful brief overview, see Reinhard Muller, "The Marienthal Study" 2012, <http://agso.uni-graz.at/marienthal/e/study/00.htm> accessed September 25, 2014.

collected a variety of data, including public records of all families living in Marienthal, essays by school children, observations of the activities in the few stores that remained open and, most importantly for subsequent Polish studies, memoirs written by the unemployed.²

Jahoda et al's main conclusion was that the social life of the town suffered and the condition of unemployment has negative personal, psychological consequences. While some fight against their condition (whom the sociographers called, "the unbroken"), the sheer weight of unemployment crushed the spirits of many, facilitated resignation of their plight and distress over their lives, and generated apathy.

The Enduring Value of *Marienthal* and Polish Unemployment Research of the 1930s

Memoirs of the Unemployed, 1930s

The methodological rigor of the Marienthal study influenced the Polish unemployment studies of the 1930s (Sulek 2007). Due to Lazarsfeld's direct collaboration with Polish researchers, analysis of memoirs was among the first of Marienthal's innovations that Poles adopted. In 1933, Lazarsfeld partnered with Polish psychologist Bohdan Zawadzki to design a partial replication of *Marienthal*, which resulted also in the article "Psychological Consequences of Unemployment" (1935).³ The unemployment study was conducted by the Institute for Social Economy in Warsaw. As part of the data collection process, Lazarsfeld and the Polish team created a "contest," to which the unemployed could submit a written memoir of their experience; winners were paid in a sliding scale, with first prize going for 250 Zł (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 225). They received 774 biographies, and published 57 of them in a book, *Memoirs of the Unemployed* (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 225; Sulek 2007: 4).

In a form of cross-national validation, both the article and the book about Poland confirm the results of Austria's Marienthal: the majority of the long-term unemployed reported that they suffered severe psychological consequences. "From our biographies," write Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld (1935: 235), "it appears that the basic attitudes stated in [the Marienthal study] namely: the unbroken, the resigned, the distressed, and the apathetic, can be clearly seen in our material, a fact indicating that these basic conceptions are sound."

²"A total of about a hundred and twenty working days were spent in Marienthal, and material weighing around thirty kilos was collected." Reinhard Muller, "The Marienthal Study" 2012, <http://agso.uni-graz.at/marienthal/e/study/00.htm> accessed September 25, 2014.

³The article has proven popular, as according to the ISI Citation Database, it was cited over 50 times since its initial publication.

As with the Marienthal study, the Polish study by Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld focused on how the long-term unemployed manage day to day, such as finding sources of income, including doing odd jobs and looking for a job. They noted the physical deprivations of the long-term unemployed and the desperately poor, where some went hungry and cold, dreaming of food and indifferent to death. They noted how the unemployed of their study struggled for a useful way to fill up their time. Their first and foremost activity was to look for a job. "The wish to find work and the longing to be occupied," they remarked, "are the leading notes of all the biographies" (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 235).

These social psychologists were also interested in the emotions and moods of the unemployed. By analyzing the 57 memoirs, the authors developed a 'mood path' along which the unemployed travel (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 235). The first stage of the mood path is "a feeling of injury," in which fear, distress and indignation are common. Next are the first inklings of apathy. Apathy leads to the next stage: a calming down and an adaptation to their new situation. Here, the unemployed begin to perform the activities necessary for their day-to-day survival. They look for a job. They also do "odd jobs," or "fiddly jobs," which can be defined as temporary jobs for small pay, such as fixing a roof, carrying packages, tutoring children, really anything that they can get paid a few zloty to do. In this stage, the unemployed believe that things will get better soon.

The seeming futility of it all leads to the next step of the mood path, where this hopeful feeling weakens. At this juncture, life gets really hard, as the selling off of household goods, or the observation that one's children are starving, renews the feeling of hopelessness and fear and distress. An attempt at suicide may occur here. Finally "comes either sober acquiescence or dumb apathy," followed by an ever-churning mix of hope and despair, depending on the relative material deprivations they experience that day (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 235).

In addition to the basic types of attitudes – unbroken, resigned, distressed and apathetic – Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld noted other psychological states, such as the feeling that one is unnecessary and without purpose, an increased sensitivity to the problems of everyday life in which suicide was a common thought, and aggressiveness and a feeling of impotent anger. The authors report that in some of the unemployed there was a shift in class-consciousness towards a two-tiered class structure: the employed *versus* the unemployed. Despite reporting that the unemployed can develop a kind of class-consciousness, Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld argue that the unemployed become less socially active.

When asked about the cause of the economic crisis, very few (two of fifty-seven) blamed the capitalist system. Writing in the 1930s, some of the unemployed in Poland blamed "the high salaries of executives and the large number of them," unfair competition between big and small companies, and changes in industrial technology, among others (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 247). The unemployed offered solutions, too. Some described a kind of descriptive representation, in which the representative political body resembles the demographics, identity, and experiences of the citizenry. The solution was that the elected representative "from the poorest unemployed" works in government to end the crisis. Others called for

special legislation, to not employ foreigners or buy foreign goods, to create “large public works,” to lower prices, and to nationalize industry (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 248). The authors noted that, while political orientation was difficult to discern, eleven of the fifty-seven declared that they are Socialists, “in the broadest sense of the word” (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 248).

It should be noted that Polish social scientists varied their methodology. In 1932, a study by the Institute for Social Problems focused on families of industrial workers (Sulek 2007: 9–10). They collected interview, direct observation, and archival data on household budgets and household density, the diet of primary school children (including a questionnaire to the children themselves), analyzed children’s medical records that were lodged in health clinics, and consequences of unemployment (on suicides or resorting to prostitution). Other studies focused on specific populations, such as the peasantry and the young, or were conducted in specific towns (Sulek 2007: 10–16).

September 1939 was the outbreak of World War Two and Polish unemployment studies stopped. Sulek (2007: 21–22) traced the biographies of some of the most prominent Polish unemployment researchers of the 1930s as they were touched – and in many unfortunate cases, ended – by war. Like all authors of the Marienthal study who fled Austria, Zawadzki, of the Polish memoir study, managed to escape Poland and the Holocaust. Others, such as Professor Ludwik Krzywicki, whose Institute organized the memoir competition, died in Warsaw in 1941.

Unemployment During State Socialism: A 45-year Break

In the late 1950s, after an academic hiatus caused by war and transition to State Socialism, Polish social scientists reengaged with the theoretical and methodological advances in the West (Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018: Chap. 2). Yet, for the next three decades they did not officially study unemployment and joblessness, although these were well researched topics in the US and Europe following the groundbreaking *Marienthal* book. The reasons are straightforward. First, from 1945 to 1989 the Communist Party state enacted the mandatory employment policy and framed unemployment as solely a problem inherent to capitalism and its exploitative class relations. Indeed, it has been documented that the tendency towards full employment and labor shortages, combined with labor under-utilization, prevailed in Poland through the entire state socialism system (Simatupang 1988). Even during the deep crisis of the early 1980s the regime remained committed to full employment.

Second, all research was state-funded, with resources allocated to topics deemed important by the political elite. In the 1960s, the original *Memoirs of the Unemployed* was republished and historical studies of unemployment were supported (Ciechocińska 1965). In the 1980s, the issue of possible unemployment under central planning was discussed on theoretical grounds (Kalecki 1982), while empirical studies shifted toward the issue of redundant employment that had reached the level of 25% by the end of that decade (Góra and Rutkowski 1990).

Polish Studies After 1989

After the mandatory employment policies ended with the fall of Communism in 1989, unemployment as a phenomenon and as a research topic surged anew. Scholars in Poland reconnected both to the wealth of theories and methods that surrounded contemporary social science research on unemployment in the West, and to their tradition of memoir studies.

In this chapter we focus on research that employs qualitative data analysis. Still, we note that Polish scholars produced a number of extensive quantitative studies on unemployment, especially in the 1990s when the phenomenon was widespread. In the mid-1990s in Poland, the official number of the unemployed fluctuated around 2.5–2.6 million, that is, between 14 and 16% of the labor force. While in recent years the official rate of unemployment decreased, it remains one of the country's most important economic problems that quantitative studies about the structure of unemployment (e.g., Kwiatkowska 2014), its determinants (e.g., Ciżkowicz et al. 2016), overcoming it (e.g., Adamchik 1999), policies toward it (e.g., Churski 2002), and its consequences (e.g. Koziół et al. 2010) address.

Memoirs of the Unemployed, 2000s

More than a decade after the fall of Communism and the resurgence of unemployment, in 2000, scholars in Poland conducted a follow-up to Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld's study (see Zawadzka 2007). Again, memoirs were solicited by competition. Anna Zawadzka, a Polish social scientist, published an article (2007) in the *Polish Sociological Review* that examined the new memoirs. Zawadzka noted that there were few differences between the memoirs of the 1930s and those of the 2000s, including the increased willingness to blame government for the economic situation of unemployment. In sum, there is much continuity in being a socially stigmatized group living in extreme conditions: looking for jobs, doing odd jobs, relying on public assistance, selling off personal and household possessions, the obsession with food, the feelings of fear and shame, and the suicidal ideation are all as much part of the experiences of the unemployed in 2000 as they were in the 1930s.

Zawadzka had cast a special light on the gendered differences between men's and women's memoirs (Zawadzka 2007: 38–40). Compared to men, women wrote more about their emotions and were more likely to expand on how their current experience is part of their life history. They were more likely to make reference to their children, their family, and their marriage. Men were more likely to write about their unemployment as if it was a series of facts and with little personal reflection. Men wrote about their families, but more in terms of their guilt in not being able to provide materially for them.

Poland is a Catholic conservative country and one would suspect that the unemployed would mention religion as a key factor. Yet, both Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld

in the 1930s, and Zawadzka in the 2000s, noted that religion was not a major theme of the memoirs. In the 1930s study, while some of the unemployed questioned the purpose of religion and morality, others clung to them. In the 2000s, Zawadzka also noticed that, for the unemployed, faith slips in times of crisis. Though Church outreach was present in both eras, in neither the 1930s nor the 2000s did the unemployed see the Church as a main way for alleviating their suffering. Of religion and ethnicity, only in the 1930s was anti-Semitism visible, where some of the unemployed complained about pawning their possessions to “those little Jews” (Zawadzka 2007: 41). Zawadzka noted that while the unemployed Polish Jews were just as poor as the unemployed Polish Catholics, no memoirs from the 1930s came from those who identified as Jewish.

Methodologically, both memoir studies have the same problems: validity and representativeness. Due to how the memoirs were collected – as a contest – it is obvious that neither the submitted nor the selected ones were representative of the population at large. Validity was not easy to assess. In both the 1930s and 2000s, the researchers claimed that they took great care to select out those memoirs that were blatant attempts to arouse pity, i.e. memoirs designed to win a competition rather than to be truthful. In a bid to establish validity, in the 1930s, the Institute investigated the homes of most – but not all – of the published winners (Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld 1935: 226).⁴ They report that the memoirs seemed to match the writers’ home circumstances.

Unemployment Experiences of the Young

On unemployment experiences of the young, Piotr Binder’s (2016) qualitative unemployment study is exemplary (in Lahusen and Giugni 2016). Based on an EU-funded project on youth unemployment, Binder analyzed face to face in-depth interviews with 23 young unemployed aged 18–35 years, who live in Kielce. Binder wanted to understand how they managed their time and resources, and the impact of the joblessness experience on their well-being and social relations.

He found three types of situations (pp. 178–9). One was youth who are “overwhelmed by the experience of unemployment.” They were between adolescence and adulthood. They lived with their parents with some institutional assistance, but they had little will to get a job (akin to the Marienthal classic “resigned”). Their social life was limited, and revolved around their family and close relatives. The second group was youth who “actively struggled against unemployment.” Though they lived with their parents, they were engaged in the informal economy and performed unregistered work. They made money, but did not feel that their income was stable enough to leave home. They were outgoing and sought out new social relations. They were less isolated and had more expansive networks than ‘the overwhelmed.’ Third were the “stay-at-home moms.” Married with children, they

⁴The methods of this investigation were not revealed in the article.

focused on family life before the baby was born; after, they sought employment. Their material situation was stable, but their social relations were similar to the overwhelmed; as they stayed out of the labor market, the expanse of their social connections shrank.

All of them struggled, to an extent, with the insecurity of their financial situation. Binder explains the consequences well:

It also meant not being able to save for a rainy day, for a crisis, or for any unexpected, extraordinary expenses related for example to health issues, whether their own or family members'. Financial insecurity often also resulted in a reluctance to make plans, or in postponing them for the foreseeable future (183).

To get by, some worked in the informal market (e.g. unregistered or illicit employment, being “paid under the table”), or took loans from friends and relatives. Some turned to state-funded or charitable institutions. Many of these youth worked in unpaid internships that never turned into a full-time job.

Internships that never turned into a job and informal or illicit work have tangible consequences for their benefits and job resume. Unemployment benefits come to those who were formally employed for a legally defined period of time – when youth worked in short-term jobs, or in the informal economy, they were not entitled to unemployment benefits. For those who did receive benefits, it was for a limited time and for a limited amount. A turn to the informal market meant putting a blank spot in the timeline they listed on their job resume – they worked hard, but could not tell future employers about it (Binder 2016).

Personal Consequences of Being Jobless

From the 1930s to now, the most common finding is that unemployment is negatively associated with wellbeing. Put simply, unemployed people feel bad and are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors than the employed (Wanberg 2012). The most well-known theory as to why this is comes from Marie Jahoda, the lead author of the Marienthal study. The main point of Jahoda et al. (2002) is that paid work is a fundamental human experience, and that when this experience changes – by becoming unemployed – people fall apart. According to Jahoda, employment has both manifest personal benefits, such as money, and latent benefits, such as having a usefully structured time schedule, positive social engagement, and the feeling that a person is part of the community. Unemployment can take all these benefits away, leading to personal chaos (for a study that offers empirical support to Jahoda’s argument, see Selenko et al. 2011).⁵

Post-Marienthal studies have added nuance to this theory. Nordenmark and Strandh (1999) theorized that there is a difference between those who are negatively

⁵Next to Jahoda (1979), another theoretical model that seeks to explain the experience of unemployment from a deprivational perspective was developed by Warr (1987).

affected by unemployment for economic reasons, i.e. they need the money, and those whose identity is closely tied with being employed, whether they need the money or not. They examined the unemployed in Sweden and found that strongest affected are people who both need the money and whose identity is being an employed person. When unemployment strikes, this group loses the most. Along the same lines are findings of Patton and Donohue (1998). They conducted in-depth interviews with 38 men and women who were long-term unemployed, that is, were jobless for one year or longer. They found two types of people: those who cope successfully with their predicament, and those who do not. Those who cope well try to be busy, have an optimistic view of their future, are religious, and are not afraid to change their life expectations. Those who did not cope well struggled to find activities that keep them busy and even withdrew from social activity.

A main critique of research on consequences of unemployment applies to the casual link between unemployment and mental health outcomes. Selection bias emerges as a basic methodological difficulty in assessing the extent to which the argument “unemployment is bad for you” holds. It could be that psychological distress and other ills attributed to unemployment were present while the person still held their job, and it could very well be that the psychological problems contributed to its loss. A meta-analysis of panel studies did find that, while selection effects have empirical basis, there is also evidence of causality: moving from employment to unemployment causes an increase in distress (Wanberg 2012: 372).

The kind of jobs people hold and how they feel about them matters beyond material situation. Malenfant et al. (2007) examined the association between insecure work – where employment is far from stable, including temporary work – and personal wellbeing. The authors interviewed 22 men and 30 women who worked off and on for about half a year before participating in the study. They said that steady work with pay is important to them, not only monetarily, but also psychologically. Bad work environments, the constant searching for stable employment, and continuing readjustment to new workplaces hit them hard, decreasing their motivation to find work. Many felt alienated from the physically invisible, yet omnipresent “labor market.” Not all participants reacted the same way. Some reported that, day after day, they plug away with hopes undimmed or, at least, with motivation sufficiently high to try, try again. The common thread of these accounts is that the work experience permeates the whole life experience, including relationships with others.

The argument Jahoda et al. (2002) put forth about the importance of employment for psychological functioning is not without critics. The personal agency model of unemployment (Fryer and Payne 1984; Fryer 1990) emphasizes peoples’ potential to find outlets of self-expression that are not based on paid employment. Agency, and through it, initiative, are core to the human condition, a feature that deprivational models (Jahoda 1979) might miss (see also Ball and Orford 2002); the absence of the latent features of employment does not necessarily leave people psychologically vulnerable. Ball and Orford (2002) find empirical support for Fryer’s (1990) assertion that the relationship between unemployment and poor psychological wellbeing is not inevitable. To describe how the long-term unemployed develop and

maintain different patterns of daily activity, and the meanings they find in them, Ball and Orford interviewed 24 men and women aged up to 35 years, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (White, Asian, and African Caribbean) living in UK Birmingham's "inner city," who had been unemployed for at least 12 months. They found participants to be future oriented and actively pursuing employment-related goals. In understanding how initiative can mitigate the deleterious psychological consequences of unemployment, Ball and Orford stress that both *proactive* and *meaningful* day-to-day activities are important (p.393).

Cole (2006), writing in the academic journal *Sociology*, argued that Jahoda and colleagues provided an unnecessarily narrow view of humanity, in which paid work takes an unnatural precedence. "What is not given due consideration in the Marienthal study," Cole (2006: 1135) wrote, "is the idea that the sufferings consequent on the loss of paid work might be social constructs, that is, outcomes of an historically-contingent construction of (male) identities in relation to a particular form of paid work."

Cole's (2006) critique reminds us that employment and unemployment are important to the class and stratification literature. Indeed, most class studies focus on the employed population because class is primarily defined using occupational characteristics. Similarly, economic and educational stratification studies focus on income and occupational attainment.

On the personal experience of unemployment, while we recognize the importance of agency, we contend that Jahoda and colleagues were right, and subsequent studies bear this out: people do place high value on paid work, and when they lose their jobs they suffer in many ways. To economic anguish adds the burden of social expectations, among others about (a) gender roles (to this day men are frequently regarded as providers); (b) the length of unemployment (it "should be" short-term); (b) the extent of economic support the unemployed are entitled to (enough to survive temporarily, but not too much to cause "dependence"); (c) what they should do all day (tirelessly look for a job). These expectations weigh heavy on the unemployed, who often hold these expectations themselves. The contradiction between societal expectations and the daily realities are difficult to bear.

Gender studies of unemployment date back to the 1930s. A classic is Mirra Komarovsky's book, *The Unemployed Man and His Family*, published in 1940. Komarovsky studied in-depth fifty-nine families to examine how unemployment changes the gendered structure of households, which in 1930s America meant that men were the breadwinners and *de facto* head of household. The Great Depression became an experiment in how both men and their families manage gender relations in extreme negative economic conditions. Komarovsky found that many men attempted to assert their role as the main domestic authority even during long-term unemployment. Men with an authoritarian streak struggled hardest and, psychologically, suffered in their losing bid to remain atop the household structure. Their families suffered, too.

Komarovsky's early twentieth century study, which introduced us to the impact of unemployment on the gender dynamics of married couples, led to twenty-first century studies such as by Rao (2017: 638) on the emotional labor wives perform to

console their unemployed husbands. In the early 2010s, in the aftermath of the Great Recession, Rao (2017: 641) conducted dozens of in-depth interviews with former white-collar unemployed men and, for 13 of those men, their wives, as well. Unemployed men felt rejected and, because their identity is tied tightly to their work, they lost some self-esteem. Some were fearful for their future. “The unemployed men in my sample thus experienced a variety of emotions,” Rao (2017) writes. “Prominent among these were sadness, despair, shame, discouragement, and a lack of confidence” (644). The duty of being household organizer and confidence booster fell to the wives, many of whom had a steady job that could support the family, though at a lower income bracket than a dual-earner couple would make (Rao 2017: 646). The situation put stress on their marriage. The wives coped by emphasizing that they form a team, a partnership that will find a solution to their problems. The husbands struggled with their newly unstructured time; the wives tried to put their husbands on a schedule to look for a job and be productive. All the while, the wives hid their own stressful emotions as best they could.

The unemployed have few options to generate income, no matter how small. To make ends meet, some turn to odd jobs, or “fiddly” jobs. MacDonald (1994) examined the daily lives of 214 working-class men and women aged 16 to over 70 years who were doing “fiddly jobs,” that is, were working informally while collecting unemployment benefits. The study was carried out in the early 1990s in Cleveland, a poor county in the North-east of England. McDonald was interested in the motivations that underpin fiddly work and the normative values surrounding it. He found that participants had a “conservative morality” that did not coincide with popular notions of the “welfare dependent.” They engaged in fiddly work with help of social networks, both to make ends meet and to preserve self-respect. In their taking up this type of work, participants displayed behaviors similar to entrepreneurs. Altogether, the fiddly work that participants readily talked about had helped them mitigate some of the deleterious social and psychological consequences of unemployment.

Being unemployed when older, in the twilight of your career, could be fundamentally different experience than when young and just starting out, given the specter of having reached ‘the end of the line’ (see Lassus et al. 2015). Lobo (1996), as part of a larger study of older unemployed people in Western Australia, conducted group discussions and then followed a group of 10 persons with in-depth interviews over a period of 1 year. He found that meanings of time and activity changed as a result of job loss, but not uniformly. While all participants had to deal with enforced unobligated time, they reacted differently. Some had a harder time adjusting, and withdrew socially. Others tried to fill it with self-development activities. Among all participants, “leisure” acquired a different meaning – from pressure of not knowing what to do, to a deliberate struggle to keep busy, to regarding it as an opportunity to catch up with doing things that work prevented one from. A separate group considered leisure absent altogether, as they felt that job search consumed most of their free time (p. 404). For all participants, being out of work meant not having much money to spend. This shortfall of cash impacted the kind of activities they would have liked to do. Altogether, the unemployment experience was not unpleasant

for everybody. People coped better if unemployment did not affect them too badly psychologically, and depending on their ability to use pre-existing skills, usually developed in non-occupational roles, to deal with large amounts of unobligated time.

Mendenhall et al. (2008) is a study of 77 middle-age professionals, managers and executives (most of them were men and white), who, despite their qualifications, found themselves out of work for at least three months. By design, participants were married at the time of their job loss, had children aged 12–18 years living at home, and lived in the Greater Chicago area. Researchers collected a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to examine how the former white-collar workers perceived the role of the global economy for their unemployment spell and for career-recovery plans. They also investigated participants' expectations for their own and their children's future career pathways. The study shows that these educated workers interpreted their job termination as lack of employer loyalty (p. 195), realized that they were stigmatized due to age, and linked unemployment to globalization factors. To cope with the challenges of finding reemployment, they used various coping strategies, including adapting a "free-agent" mentality and downplaying markers of age, such as total years of experience. As participants were keenly aware that job security should not be taken for granted, even among the privileged, they made mastering the "new risk economy" a developmental goal for themselves and their children.

Gabriel et al. (2010) examined the lives of 28 men in their 50s who were unemployed former managers and professionals at the beginning of the global financial crisis in 2008. They struggled with being newly self-defined as an unemployed person. Gabriel et al. presents the variability in peoples' "narrative coping", which describes their struggle to construct a story that offers both meaning and consolation following unemployment (p. 1687). Interviewees whose stories are 'closed,' because job loss is perceived as 'the end of the line,' expressed the most profound despair. Participants who maintained an open-ended narrative, either by defining unemployment as a temporary career aberration or by separating life in general from career, were more optimistic and better able to contain their emotions.

Age as a dimension of personal identity can influence what kind of work – so-called "age appropriate" jobs – the jobless are looking for and how they try to make sense of their situation. In the early 2010s, Norris (2015: 403–404) interviewed 25 former white collar men and women about their life as newly jobless. All felt the relevance of age. Some of the older participants, in their 50s and 60s, did not look for jobs in their field, because they thought that due to their age, they would no longer fit in. As a result, they considered a broader palette of job options. They were more willing to entertain – but not be happy about – the idea of taking a low wage, low responsibility job. Among respondents in their 30s and 40s, some also truncated their job search because of age, although the reason was different. They thought that the low wage, low responsibility jobs that they could relatively easily get were below their standards – not necessarily because of overeducation, but because they felt they reached an age at which they should be getting a better job (Norris 2015: 407). To make sense of their joblessness, both old and young compared themselves

to their age cohorts. Older folk looked at their peers and derided them for being unfit for the job search, while the younger respondents consoled themselves in the knowledge that many of their peers were also experiencing joblessness.

Being a Housewife

Are homemakers different from others in terms of wellbeing? There is a substantial body of recent quantitative work on gender, work status, and wellbeing, including studies on homemakers and housewives (Riley and Keith 2003; Treas et al. 2011; Kitterod and Ronsen 2013; Beja 2014; Baslevent and Kirmanoglu 2017; Ciciolla et al. 2017; for marriage, work, and wellbeing, see Mikucka 2016).

The article by Treas et al. (2011) is well cited and emblematic of the cross-national literature. The authors used the International Social Survey Programme and compared self-reported life satisfaction of full-time and part-time workers, homemakers, and others not in the labor force across 28 nations (including Poland). Among individual characteristics, they accounted for household factors, such as family income, marital status, and presence of children, and national context, such as GDP, social spending, and whether the country has policies on affirmative action for gender and assistance for childcare. “All things considered,” Treas et al. (2011) report, “homemakers are slightly happier, full-time workers are slightly less happy, and part-timers are much like homemakers” (p. 125). With the European Social Survey, Baslevent and Kirmanoglu (2017) found much the same (but see Beja 2014, who used the World Values Survey). None of these studies found a substantial difference between housewives and employed women, either full- or part-time (see also Lennon 1994).

More nuanced insights about post-Communist Europe come from the work of Kohn and his colleagues (2002). In comparative research on the impact of radical social change on personality during the early post-communist transformation in Poland and Ukraine, they devote considerable attention to the jobless (whom they refer to as ‘the nonemployed’) and, among them, to the category of housewives. As a novelty, Kohn and colleagues are able to distinguish – for Poland – between housewives who were seeking employment and those who were not.⁶ The latter they refer to as “pure housewives” (p. 366). They find that the only housewives who are decidedly more distressed (i.e. net of age and educational attainment) are the Polish women who strongly preferred to be employed outside the home (p. 375). There are no statistically significant differences in distress between “pure” housewives and employed women in Poland, nor are there any cross-national differences between housewives of choice in Poland and in Ukraine.

⁶ Among housewives in Ukraine, the number of women expressing preference to work full-time was too low to allow for between-group comparisons.

Conclusion

Employment is a central feature of modern societies and is for many a source of life satisfaction and a key dimension of self-identity. At a certain point in the life-course, paid work becomes something that most people are expected to do. This widely shared expectation, together with the economic and social losses – including diminished household income, poor or no health insurance coverage, and the shrinking of personal networks that follow unemployment – render job loss a negative experience for most people who undergo it.

The major studies of the 1930s, the *Marienthal* project and the Polish Unemployment Memoirs, show that most of the unemployed suffer psychologically and financially. This finding has remained robust over 80 years-worth of research. Critiques of deprivational models notwithstanding, more often than not the unemployed feel resignation, distress, or even apathy. They struggle to construct a narrative that offers meaning and consolation to their life after job loss (Gabriel et al. 2010).

Despite experiencing varying degrees of psychological distress, the unemployed do not sit idly – they fervently try to find work. Both men and women seeking alternative sources of income turn to odd jobs in the informal labor market. Sometimes they engage in fiddly work, but they do so both to make ends meet and to preserve self-respect (MacDonald 1994). Indeed, some kinds of “self-employment” are indistinguishable from odd jobs or work performed in the shadow economy.

Unemployment does not leave everyone psychologically vulnerable to the point of apathy and resignation. Some people are pounding the pavement, phones to their ears, or hunched over their computers, looking for a new job. They make their way to the unemployment office for help, to social support groups, or to internet forums and other sources of job information. They use their time to improve their human capital, acquire new skills, retrain, or otherwise gain experiences that would help them land a job. Or, they move abroad in hope for a better economic outcome. “The unbroken,” as the 1930s researchers referred to, are able to make the most of their new situation. What sets this group apart we can infer from the agency model of unemployment and its emphasis on a key psychological feature – initiative. They have a stronger sense of agency, willingness to adapt (e.g. Wanberg 2012) and intellectual flexibility (e.g. Kohn et al. 2002), but also pre-existing skills to pursue hobbies they are committed to (Lobo 1996).

Recent research on gender and wellbeing suggests that housewives are not significantly better or worse psychologically than employed women, *ceteris paribus*. To what extent joblessness as a choice (rather than an involuntary outcome) mitigates the dire consequences of not holding paid employment calls for new analyses on data that allow meaningful distinctions among the voluntary and involuntary jobless.

In closing, we note that the stratification structure interacts with psychological factors to shape the joblessness experience. Research conducted in the last decades has cast new light on the role of structural forces, social class and stratification, especially.

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Chapter 4

The Respondents, the Interviewers, and the Interview Situation



In this chapter we describe three main facets of our study that interconnect to provide the information analyses in this book are based on: the respondents, the interviewers, and the interview situation.

The Respondents

We start with basic information about who our 152 respondents are.¹ They constitute the jobless – unemployed and homemakers – many of whom had held a paid job sometime in their life. By design, all participants in the 2012 study, which, for smoother narration, we define as “now,” took part in the 2008 wave of the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN. Most also participated in POLPAN 2013. Thus, we have extensive information on their social background, which we aggregate to build intersections between various demographic characteristics.²

Our book dwells on the relationships between class, social stratification and the experience of joblessness. We pay close attention to four types of demographic characteristics: gender, age, education and class. We distinguish between class and stratification, and between class and the experience of joblessness. We assume, *a priori*, that gender and class intersect to uniquely influence peoples’ stratification position and their experience of being jobless.

Let us describe our respondents beginning with their labor market situation. In 2012, participants told us about their current job status in extensive interviews. This information we juxtapose to their earlier employment status that is based on POLPAN 2008 survey data. Table 4.1 summarizes respondents’ labor market

¹For purpose and design of the Joblessness project, see Introduction.

²To build intersections, data aggregation is necessary: first, the size of the 2012 sample is small ($n = 152$), and second, we have even fewer cases when we distinguish between the unemployed, on one hand, and housewives, on the other.

Table 4.1 Labor market situations of the respondents in 2012

	Percent	N
We, the researchers, identified the respondent as...⁴		
... jobless in 2008	74.3	113
... a housewife in 2008	25.7	39
The respondent was jobless in 2008...		
... but is now employed	62.7	69
... is still jobless but is currently looking for a job	28.3	32
... is still jobless and is not currently looking for a job	8.0	9
... and now say that they were never unemployed	2.00	3
The respondent was a housewife in 2008...		
... but is now employed	20.5	8
... is still a housewife and is currently looking for a job	25.6	10
... is still a housewife and is not looking for a job	53.8	21

situations. Of the 152 participants, 113 men and women (74%) were jobless in 2008, and comparatively fewer, 39 (26%), were homemakers (all women). About half of all participants – 77 (51%) – got a job between 2008 and now.

To learn more about respondents' demographic characteristics, we bring in information from the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN (see Table 4.2). POLPAN records participants' gender, year of birth, completed levels of education, and provides rich information on their employment and joblessness history.

We use the detailed occupational data to measure the social classes that our respondents belong to.³ It bears repeating that, due to the Joblessness study's small sample size, we aggregate class categories, as follows: Upper Non-Manual, Lower Non-Manual, and Manual workers. Of the 152 respondents, nine (6% of our sample) did not report having an occupation in either of the POLPAN survey waves preceding the 2012 study, nor in 2012; for them, we cannot derive class position.

The Upper Non-Manual social class encompasses entrepreneurs, managers and professionals. For example, our respondents can be technical managers in manufacturing companies, teachers in secondary schools, economists in banking and finance, lawyers, computer scientists, and owners of firms, large and small.

Then there is the class of Lower Non-Manual workers, which comprises technicians, office workers and service employees. These are technicians in factories, kindergarten workers, nurses, administrative assistants, and workers in retail sales, for example.

The third class we examine are Manual workers in industry or agriculture, who are either skilled or unskilled. Some occupations in this class are miners, electricians, bricklayers, car mechanics, ironworkers, drivers, construction workers, and street sweepers.

³For our approach to occupational differentiation and social class, see the Introduction to the book.

Table 4.2 Demographics of the respondents

	Percent	N
Gender		
Men	31.8	48
Women	68.2	103
Age: Respondent is in their...		
20s	61.8	94
30s	13.8	21
40s	11.2	17
50s and over	13.2	20
Educational Attainment		
Less than High School	41.1	62
High school, or vocational-technical school, with or without a diploma	36.4	55
Post High school, with or without diploma	6.6	10
College (BA) and above	15.9	24
Social Class		
Upper Non-Manual	16.5	25
Lower Non-Manual	36.8	56
Manual	40.8	62
No class identified	5.9	9

Table 4.3 Demographic intersections: gender and class

	No identifiable class	Upper non-manual	Lower non-manual	Manual	N
Men	0	22.9%	16.7%	60.4%	
<i>n</i>	0	11	8	29	48
Women	5.9%	13.6%	46.6%	31.7%	
<i>n</i>	9	14	48	32	103

Most respondents are women (68%), they are in their 20s (62%), they have no college experience (77%) and are either in a Lower Non-Manual (37%) or Manual (41%) class.

In our data, there are no major differences between men and women in educational attainment. This is not the case, however, with class. As Table 4.3 shows, the class situations of men and women differ quite a bit. Men are more likely to come from a disadvantaged class than women (Manual workers), while more women than men belong to the intermediate classes (Lower Non-Manual). The pattern holds when we compare men with women in the full sample, as reported in Table 4.3, or among the jobless only – excluding housewives, or if we look at the class distribution of housewives and that of jobless men.

Men are slightly better represented within the advantaged classes – entrepreneurs, managers and professionals, – which we aggregated as Upper Non-Manual workers. In the full sample (*n* = 152), 23% of men (*n* = 11) and 14% (*n* = 14) of

women are Upper Non-Manual workers. This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.1$). If we compare social class for men and women who were jobless in 2008 but exclude housewives from among jobless women, the difference attenuates: 20% of women are in the Upper Non-Manual class, compared to 23% of men.

We also find gender differences with respect to the mean number of years of being without paid work. Among respondents currently working, men reported substantially shorter periods of non-work spells than women, amounting to just over 1 year on average. For women, the corresponding value is 3 years. However, among respondents still jobless in 2012, men were on average one year longer out of paid work than women. This group is separate from homemakers, which comprises only women. Their stay out of paid employment is by far the longest, averaging 13 years.

Subjective Joblessness

As we describe in the Introduction to this volume, our study does not define joblessness only formally. We also rely on participants' perceptions. By analyzing POLPAN and Joblessness data on employment histories together with the timing of important life events, such as completing education, giving birth to a child, we learn that individual respondents use differing definitions of joblessness when asked: "since when have you been without a job, but wanted to have one?" or "since when have household duties become your main activity?" Some simply report the date their previous job ended, even if it was followed by a period of housework (i.e., maternity leave), or by education, while others describe these experiences more extensively. There is also variation in whether people identify the end of a job with the termination of the formal employment contract, the end of performing duties associated with work, or the date they started looking for a job. Sometimes, respondents included in the employment spell events that research usually identifies as a career interruption, maternity leave in particular.⁴

From participants' accounts we learn that a number of them were not jobless – in the strict sense of the term – throughout the whole period that in the POLPAN survey they reported as unemployment or homemaking. Oftentimes, they undertook various odd jobs that can be treated as a coping strategy, a way to manage through difficult times or gain new experiences. On the other hand, several individuals defined themselves as unemployed although they were having a job (or a series of jobs), which lasted several months and took 40–50 hours per week! It seems that respondents tended to associate the start of their most recent unemployment period not with the end of their most recent job, but rather with the end of that job to which they attached more importance (as opposed to jobs viewed as "inferior" or meaningless). This "meaninglessness" may stem from the nature of the employment

⁴In the case of one housewife the date of childbirth was reported, even though this respondent apparently continued her previous employment for more than 2 years after her child was born.

relationship – fixed-term or informal jobs – or the mismatch between respondent's skills and aspirations on one hand, and the job's requirements, on the other.

In sum, in this book we place emphasis on the subjective perception of being “out of work” rather than lacking access to any kind of job. This approach offers a richer, more complex, picture of various situations and meanings of labor market exclusion among Polish workers. Any attempt to correct respondents' definitions using more detailed data on the timing of particular employment spells would require arbitrary distinctions between jobs that are important enough to end an unemployment spell, and odd jobs allowing one to survive during periods of unemployment.

The Interviewers

Characteristics of the Interviewers

The Joblessness project enlisted 31 interviewers to talk to the 152 participants. If interviewers would have worked relatively equally, each would have conducted five interviews. Data show that the average number is five interviews per interviewer. However, the distribution is skewed. The fewest number of interviews per interviewer was one, and the maximum was 16. Put differently, one man conducted over a tenth of all interviews. Seven people conducted nine or more interviews. This small group of “heavy-interviewers” collectively accounts for half of all interviews conducted in this study.

We identified the gender of 30 (95%) of the interviewers: Of these, 21 are men, and 9 are women. Of the seven “heavy-interviewers,” five are men. This composition is opposite to that of the respondents' sample. There was no explicit attempt to match interviewers and respondents by gender.

Training of Interviewers

The Center for Fieldwork (ORBS) at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences was responsible for data collection in the Joblessness project. They also conducted the trainings of interviewers, just as they had for previous POLPAN waves. ORBS has a long history and excellent reputation in Poland for conducting surveys, mostly of closed-ended items, but not only. According to standard practice, since the respondents are spread throughout Poland, interviewers were trained at regional locations.

The involvement of ORBS in training the interviewers is reflected by the general professionalism of the project. At the same time, the training process introduced differentiation in how interviewers approached the open ended items. Interviewers

received a manual as part of their training, which, among others, referred to methodological aspects of POLPAN and specified that the interviews are “in-depth.” It also stated that interviews are conducted according to the interview schedule and the questionnaire, and as such, the interview should be semi-structured.

The training and the manual were not overly specific as to tactics for asking open ended items. On open ended items, the manual reads:

It means that, with some exceptions, questions do not have to be read verbatim, but they should be adopted to the style and rhythm of the conversation – in order to obtain answers to issues which are formulated in questions.

In another part of the manual, it reads:

Part F is especially important. We very much value the information about respondents’ own opinions and perception of reasons (of unemployment, of homemaking as main activity). In this part the interview is completely free and we rely on the interviewer’s invention to obtain accurate answers.

From reading the interview transcripts, it seems that the kind of responses interviewers elicited reflects their own previous training and experience in interviewing. As would befit a semi-structured interview, some interviewers rarely asked any additional questions, even if the respondent had given incomplete or incomprehensible information that would suggest the use of a series of prompts. Other interviewers had experience in ethnographic interviewing, and were more comfortable with the unstructured interview format. These interviewers obtained more information than was expected from a semi-structured interview instrument. This differentiation makes for richer data, but it also makes us cautious as to how to interpret variation in respondents’ answers.

At the end of the interview, interviewers had the opportunity to record their own comments for us to analyze. Most comments were mundane, for example a short statement about “R,” generic shorthand for Respondent, refusing recording. Sometimes information was more detailed, e.g. “R was afraid of recording,” “R wondered how we will use recordings,” “R’s father asked me to not record,” “R agreed to record only selected questions.” Other comments referred aspects that influenced the recording, such as the place of recording (e. g. “recorded in a restaurant”), the quality of recording (e. g. poor, with interruptions), or whether other people present during the interview and their influence on the interview.

Interviewers at times remarked on the respondent’s life situation: “Every so often R arrives home for a short while. He works illegally in another country. He thinks about having legal job (dreams? plans to seek?)” or “R is seriously ill, has just left a hospital, and felt badly during the interview, and would prefer to not participate in the survey in the future.” Some interviewers made notes about the mental capacity and interest of the respondent and their attitude towards the interview (e. g. “intelligent”, “sometimes didn’t understand”, “interested in the interview”). Other comments are on the conduct of the interview and its content, such as an attempt to clarify a remark made by the respondent (e.g. “Question P1 – R indicates answer 2, but without the word ‘family’ – because ‘I will always find time for my family, but not for myself’”).

The Interview Situation

Cold Spell

The majority of the 152 interviews were conducted in January (n = 62, 41%) and February (n = 82, 54%), and the rest in March of 2012. From late January to early February, Poland, and much of Europe, experienced a sharp cold spell during which the high temperature averaged well below freezing. On January 28, 2012, 13 interviews across Poland were conducted, and the average temperature in Warsaw was -10°C .⁵ The cold spell was mentioned in the newspapers. As *The Guardian* reported on February 2, 2012:

In Poland, where temperatures have dropped to -22°C , officials have been trying to direct homeless people away from derelict unheated buildings and into crammed shelters. Eleven people around the country have died since Friday from carbon monoxide poisoning after using charcoal heaters in sealed rooms.⁶

Interestingly, we were in good company. The accounts that formed the basis of the 1930s landmark book, *Memoirs of the Unemployed*, were also collected during the winter (Zawadzka 2007: 27). The competition was announced December 1931 and “winners” were pronounced in February 1932. It is likely that the timing of the 1930s study influenced the content of the data. “Next to hunger, cold is one of the greatest evils which plague the unemployed,” Zawadzka and Lazarsfeld (1935: 231–2) noted. “The suffering from cold is mentioned 22 times.” They then quote a man’s memoir as starting with the sentence, “It is mercilessly cold” (231). The quote goes on to describe how poverty and cold form a particularly harsh misery in which the room they live in is cold, and that the children (and the man) do not have clothes that are suited to the weather. “The quoted account may be taken to describe all,” Zawadzka and Lazarsfeld (1935: 232) write, “since they all sound the same.”

In our 2012 study, we do not observe much mention of the cold. Extreme poverty and the gloom of winter may have had an effect on the responses, especially those items addressing their psychological mood, but it would be difficult to draw a causal line.

Interviews were conducted at any place agreed upon with the respondent, such as at home or a restaurant. The majority of the interviews were conducted when the interviewer and the respondent were alone (70%). In some situations, another person was present during the whole interview (16%), or at least part of it (11%). Many of the interviews have no audio recording, which limits the number of transcripts we have of the respondent-interviewer interaction. Less than half (43%) of the interviews have a complete audio recording. Some interviews were only partly recorded in this way (6%), and almost half (48%) have no audio recording

⁵ www.wunderground.com/history/airport/EPWA/2012/1/28/DailyHistory.html? Accessed October 28, 2014.

⁶ www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/02/europe-freezes-cold-winter-weather Accessed October 28, 2014

whatsoever. There are no obvious patterns of association between these situations: In 69% of interviews without audio records, the respondent and the interviewer were alone. Fifty two percent of interviews conducted in their entirety in somebody else's presence were not recorded. Of all instances when the interviewer and respondent were alone together, 48% were not recorded.

We feel it is best to acknowledge this interactive environment in our study. The interaction between the interviewer, a stranger asking personal and sensitive questions about joblessness – itself a situation that many stigmatize – and the person answering the questions is complex. Therefore, when identifying the social world of the jobless, and in our reporting of respondents' experiences, we treat the interview as a social performance. We seek to provide an honest account of the context within which respondents' answers take shape, and in doing so, enhance our analysis.

Part II

Routes into and Out of Joblessness

Chapter 5

How I Lost My Job



We begin the empirical chapters of this book with the first stage of the joblessness experience: becoming jobless. In this chapter, we present how and why the Polish women and men in our study found themselves without paid employment. We rely on information from 102 Of the 110 respondents whom we identified as jobless based on the 2008 POLPAN survey data and who confirmed our classification.¹ Gender matters at work, and it does in losing it, too. To put our respondents' accounts in perspective, we start by providing a brief overview of the social environment where their labor market experiences unfold.

Gender, Class, and Entering Joblessness

During the state socialist era, employment was guaranteed to all who were able to work. Nonetheless, women's labor force participation remained lower than men's (Fodor 2005). A combination of structural and individual-level factors accounted for this situation: (a) full state support of household chores was economically unsustainable, (b) in light of declining birth rates the state framed childbearing as a social responsibility rather than a personal choice, and (c) many people continued to strongly value the traditional family model, as did the Catholic Church (for a discussion of the role of the family among Polish values in late state socialism, see Siemieńska 1996). In addition, despite the prevailing discourse of gender equality, among the economically active, fewer women than men held management or other positions of workplace responsibility, women earned less than their male counterparts, and there was job segregation (Fodor 2005).

¹ As mentioned in the Introduction (p. 9), and further in this chapter, we did not pursue an interview with the three respondents who said they were never unemployed. Also, in this chapter we do not include information on housewives (n = 39).

The fall of the communist regime only exacerbated these inequalities. A common theme of the gender and occupations literature on Eastern Europe is that women bore a disproportionate cost of the capitalist transition (Fodor 1997: 471). During the post-communist era, women lost the minimal protection of the right to employment. Throughout the 1990s, they were more likely to be among the long-term unemployed. In 2000, at the time of the unemployment memoir study chronicled by Zawadzka (2007), across Eastern Europe the unemployment rate was 14% for men, and 18% for women (Stenning and Hardy 2005: 505). One small silver lining was that women's academic and service sector experience potentially facilitated economic transition from state-organized industrial society to the market-oriented service sector society (Fodor 1997: 472 on "revalued resources").

Analyzing policy change as it linked to widespread economic restructuring sheds more light on why women's labor market discrimination continued well after 1989. Illustrative in this regard is the study by Stenning and Hardy (2005), who examine how health and education policies, and their change over time, impact women's employment in Poland. At the dawn of the post-communist era, women were more likely than men to be employed in the health and education sectors. Both these sectors suffered from low pay, unpredictable reorganizations and some of the harshest government cuts, which substantially worsened employees' working conditions. While predicted mass layoffs never materialized throughout Poland as a whole, layoffs did happen in specific regions, as hospital and school systems reorganized (Stenning and Hardy 2005: 508). There was a clear urban/rural divide: following the general trend manifest in Europe, where people moved into and around big cities, rural area hospitals and schools were the first to close. Staff got reshuffled to the cities. At a human level, this came with strong personal hardships, as people had to "decide" whether to move with the job or stay home and possibly face prolonged unemployment.

The objective realities that capitalist restructuring ushered in are reflected in subjective perceptions of unemployment risk. In Poland, concern with the prospects of job loss are widespread and cut across social classes. Analyzing public opinion data of the late 2000s, Feliksiak (2010) finds that around three-quarters of professionals with higher education, such as managers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and teachers, see themselves at risk of losing their job. Among unskilled workers 60% do so. Farmers are the social class whose members overwhelmingly consider themselves exposed to job loss (93%). How people assess the prospects of finding a new job with a similar income to what they currently earn, if they would lose this job, depends on class position. Seventy two percent of farmers consider it very difficult, compared to 65% of unskilled workers, and to 45–55% of professionals (Feliksiak 2010).

Understanding how people become jobless was greatly enhanced by sociologist Randy Hodsons' Workplace Ethnography Project (WEP), conducted at The Ohio State University (Hodson 2001). WEP indexed over 155 workplace ethnographies from 1940 to 2007 across 18 countries (but not Poland).² The data capture 122

²See Sallaz 2017: 576 and also ICPSR's Workplace Ethnography (WE) Project, 1944–2002 (ICPSR 3979) <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/3979>.

episodes “in which the ethnographer witnessed an employee quitting, contemplating quitting, or being fired” (Sallaz 2017: 576). Our study can add to this wealth with descriptions of how Poles after the Great Recession describe how they lost their job.

Methodological Considerations

Interactions Between Interviewer and Respondent

The interaction between the interviewer and respondent within the interview environment helped to shape the length and depth of the interview transcript. In many instances, the interviewer recorded the give-and-take between themselves and the interviewee, and we have access to detailed transcripts. Sometimes the interview was not recorded, either because the interviewer failed to do so or the respondent refused to be recorded. In these situations, information comes from the summaries that the interviewers provided. In a handful of cases, data collection through the use of open ended questions failed entirely, and we have neither transcript nor summary.

The interviewers asked all participants the same question: “How did you become unemployed?” Though asked in a similar way, we found that, within the interviewer-respondent interaction, some interviewers saw an opportunity to take initiative. They went “off script” and asked questions that were relevant to the jobless experience but were not formally part of the survey instrument. This did not occur systematically and we could not tell, from the outset, how the interviewer and interviewee would react to one another.

When interviewers thought that the respondent’s answers were too short or unclear, some tried to collect more information. They did so by prompting for more details, or by asking for clarifications of already provided detail. For example:

The interviewer asked, “How did you become unemployed?”

“Crisis,” the respondent replied.

The interviewer wanted to clarify what “crisis” referred to. “What crisis?” the interviewer asked.

“Financial, global crisis,” the respondent replied. “My firm collapsed.”

In this situation, through the prompt, the interviewer moved the respondent from a generic issue – the global economic crisis – to the more concrete reason of their firm collapsing. In our analysis, both pieces of information are of value, as they allow us to understand that the respondent directly links global affairs to their personal life.

Going “off script” could also mean that the interviewer added to the initial question (“how did you become unemployed”) details that the respondent divulged in an earlier part of the interview. For example:

“How did you become unemployed? It was right after school?”

“Yes.”

The interviewer then prompted: “You couldn’t find a job?”

“No,” she replied. “Because I am a farmer. They always told me to go to school. And now I work illegally, in the black economy, of course.”

In this particular situation, the interviewer, on their own initiative and for reasons unknown to us, added a detail the respondent had divulged earlier in the interview. As this tactic failed to elicit more than a monosyllabic answer, the interviewer decided to add a prompt in order to get more information.

It is clear from transcripts of the interviewer-respondent interaction that respondents are aware of their answers being recorded, even if only orally. And, at times, not only does the interviewer seize initiative, the respondent too attempts to contribute more. In these cases, the awareness that the interaction produces a joint “meaning” of becoming unemployed is explicit. We illustrate this below, when the respondent actually directed the interviewer as to what to write:

“How did you become unemployed?”

“Uhhh, they hired somebody who had better qualifications. It happens everywhere, they hire, then they dismiss. Write down ‘reduction of positions.’”

The explicit directive from respondent to interviewer produces contradictory information. According to the first part of her statement, the respondent lost her job to a better qualified employee, which could have been the outcome of situations that are not structural in nature: for example, the contract ended and the employer thought she should not be re-hired, or the employer found a better-skilled person for that position. By following the initial statement with the request that the interviewer adds “reduction of positions,” the respondent strongly suggests a structural reason for unemployment – for instance, the position ended and the new position required different qualifications than the respondent had. But this may have had nothing at all to do with the respondent in particular, as such a thing “happens everywhere.” In short, the meaning of this answer is not clear and we could not code reason for job loss (i.e. as structural, or non-structural).

In select instances, we present extended interactions – these constitute rare situations and bring rich data. We feel that our readers are better served by knowing that such give-and-take existed and guided the conduct of the respondent and, potentially, their response.

Throughout our analysis, we prize above of all the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents’ identity and personal life. While we divulge their situations as they build the book’s main themes, we are careful to reveal only so much detail – to ourselves included – as to leave the respondent shrouded in anonymity. The names we use are not respondents’ real names, and specific details of their demographic profile are, at times, changed or hidden.

Paths to Joblessness

We identify several ways through which respondents became jobless that largely mirror the project’s research design³:

³ See Introduction.

1. Dismissal: Structural reasons for dismissal include situations of business closing down, or elimination of job positions due to company reorganization; the completion of seasonal work also falls into this category. Non-structural reasons for dismissal most often involve contract termination: for many respondents, the contract was simply not renewed. Other interpersonal reasons include the completion of an internship, and being fired for conflict with the employer.
2. Quitting: voluntary, or for reasons that cannot unambiguously be called voluntary, including quitting for family reasons.
3. Graduation: having completed a given level of schooling, people searched for, but failed to get, a job.
4. Other, including returning from abroad and not finding a job.
5. Unknown, meaning that the interview was not conclusive.

Dismissals

Most respondents (54) in our study lost their jobs through dismissal. We identify two main categories of dismissal stories, on which we report below. The first involves “structural” reasons (17 out of 102 participants, i.e. 16.7%), meaning that, according to respondents, the firm closed down, or it reorganized and the position was eliminated, or the work was seasonal and the season simply ended. The second category involves “non-structural” reasons (37 persons, i.e. 36.3%). Here, respondents did not indicate that the business closed or restructured, but rather they lost the job because their contract was not renewed or, more specifically for some, the internship contract ended, and the person was not retained for the job. Some respondents detailed a personal conflict with the employer.

Academic language of unemployment sometimes refers to dismissals as involuntary. We recognize that in many instances the “involuntary” character could have been present. Nonetheless, since for the most part interviews are equivocal on this matter, we do not use the term. Generally, we cannot gauge the extent to which former employees themselves (i) precipitated the act of dismissal or, on the contrary, (ii) fought against it to retain their position. In some cases, the employee may have wanted to leave and saw dismissal as a way out, which would imply a volitional aspect to employment exit. But there were clearly involuntary instances, when the employers’ dismissal action bordered on the illegal, as in the case of women who found their job gone when they returned from maternity leave.

Structural Dismissal

When respondents talk about how they lost their jobs, internal restructuring leading to position cuts and the business closing down are the two common structural reasons they invoke. It is not always clear from the interviews why the position was

eliminated. The answer of a middle-aged woman with incomplete secondary education illustrates this well: “That’s very simple,” she said. “The contract came to an end, the position was liquidated and I was left without a job.” She was unemployed for 4 years before she found a new one.

Franek

Franek was a factory worker when he lost his job. When Franek was in his early teens, his father was a manager in an agricultural business. Franek is over 50, and never graduated from high school. He lost his job in the mid-2000s.

The interviewer asked Franek, “How did you become unemployed?”

Franek described a mass layoff.

“Ninety people at once,” Franek said. “There were a couple of halls, and they couldn’t [fire] everybody at once, only in groups.”

“And you haven’t got back to work after that?” the interviewer asked.

“No,” Franek replied. “Because they established a lot of small companies.”

“Everything sucks,” Franek added.

Franek, clearly unhappy with his employment situation, shared with the interviewer his experience – a standard example of structural dismissal following reorganization. The company Franek worked for fired its labor force as it reorganized into several smaller organizations. For whatever reason, Franek was not rehired. He is still out of work, but looking for a job.

Antoni

Other respondents, like Antoni, took hold of the lead question about how they lost their job to discuss different, yet related personal episodes of structural dismissal. Antoni’s interview is a good example of how interviewers and respondents collaborate to produce a meaningful narrative, and why this process is not necessarily smooth. Here, the interviewer appears to want the respondent to directly get to the point, but Antoni resists. Antoni has a story to tell, and he will not let the interviewer rush him in the telling of it, or how he should tell it.

Antoni’s background is similar to Franek’s: middle age, low level of education, unemployed for a long time, and looking for a job. Antoni’s father was a manual worker in the transportation industry. Earlier in the survey, Antoni and the interviewer established that Antoni worked in a warehouse. This being common knowledge, the interviewer began the interaction with the standard question: “How did you become unemployed?”

“This will take time,” Antoni replied. “I worked in a vegetable canning company.”

This new information about working in a vegetable canning company did not, according to the interviewer, seem to be relevant. The interviewer repeated the initial question.

“But how did you become unemployed?”

“But this is the basis [of the story],” Antoni said. “Then, the warehouse was just an addition, but normally I worked in a vegetable canning company. They needed people for the maintenance in the level crossing.”

A level crossing is where train tracks meet the road. From the context of the transcript, it appears that Antoni went to work on the level crossing on behalf of his employer, the vegetable canning company.

The interviewer kept pressing for details, and did so by repeating what Antoni said.

“At a vegetable canning company?” asked the interviewer.

“Yes, it was at a vegetable canning company. [Then] they did not need the level crossing any more, the maintenance was no longer necessary. And because the level crossing was outside the company, I did not have...”

The interviewer, still looking for the point in the story where Antoni finally gets fired, anticipates the end: “So they...”

“Yes,” Antoni continues. “They fired me. It was over. If I had kept working [in canning], if I had not hired myself at the level crossing maintenance, because I had worked there for a number of years, then, I think, I would have been working there today. But I wanted [to have an] easy [job], so now I am worse off.”

A decade on, Antoni clearly rues his decision. He blames himself for what he thought, at the time, to be a good choice, but later turned out to be a bad one. Notice that the interviewer still did not get what they came for: we have not learned how Antoni became unemployed at the warehouse.

“And then you went to the warehouse,” said the interviewer. “What happened that you lost that job?”

“The warehouse just collapsed,” Antoni replied. “It was over and it closed down.”

After a somewhat circuitous route to the story the interviewer was looking for, the interviewer, perhaps relieved, repeated the information. “The warehouse collapsed,” the interviewer began. “And you worked in a vegetable canning company that had a mass layoff.”

“Yes,” said Antoni. “They had reduction, and I was outside this factory, on the level crossing. The train was no longer necessary, because everything was switched to trucks. The boiler house switched to gas heating, and the level crossing was liquidated.”

“And so was I,” ended Antoni.

Klara

According to some respondents, structural dismissals have to do with the ebbs and flows of the business. A company will hire workers when needed, and shed them when the business does not need them anymore. This is Klara’s story, as she told it. Klara is a high school graduate in her twenties and her father was a farmhand. Klara had taken a job in a sewing room.

“How did you become unemployed?”

“Uhhh... I used to work then, in a sewing room,” Klara said, “and this work terminated and there were reductions, right. Just reduction of positions.”

“The company closed?” asked the interviewer.

“No no, no no, no. They just dismissed new girls, because the old ones stayed there.”

“But they didn’t have enough orders?”

“They didn’t have work [for us],” Klara replied.

The interviewer decided to ask if Klara was fired for the same reason she was hired, meaning that the business hires people based on temporary need. “So you were hired because there was such action?”

“Well, when I was hired they had a lot of work,” Klara said. “They called me on their own, but after two or three months the job ended.”

“They do that,” Klara added.

Klara was unemployed for half a year before finding another job, as a cashier in a retail store. At the time of the interview, Klara was still employed there, and not seeking work elsewhere.

Non-structural Dismissal

Within this group of dismissal stories, most frequent are recollections of work contracts ending and not being renewed, leaving the employee without a job. A common refrain is: “My contract expired and was not renewed, and I became out of work.”

Many in our sample are young men and women in their twenties (92 people). Among them, 11 report that they became unemployed when their internship ended. In the words of one of our respondents, “After graduating from university I had internship at a primary school (public) – they did not have a full-time position. I was thinking about doing a second major, but it didn’t work out. Now I am working at a private school – I have a civil contract for a trial period.”

Some women took the interview opportunity to further elaborate on how motherhood hinders job search following the ending of an internship. “I completed paid internship, and a school where the canteen was stated that they don’t have money to keep my position. Because of that my contract was not prolonged. Currently I am taking care of my little child, and that does not make it easier to take up employment.”

Dismissal After Maternity Leave

We counted four cases where women indicated that the company they worked for prior to childbirth did not rehire them following maternity leave. In this section we present their stories – three are based on transcripts, the other is a summary. The women share some features: they are low educated and from disadvantaged backgrounds. They do differ in age – which ranges from being in their 20s to their 40s. One woman found a job, one is looking and two have abandoned the labor market.

We start with the case of a respondent in her 40s that we analyze from a summary.⁴ The woman did not graduate from high school. Her father worked in the

⁴See Sect. 5.2, Methodological considerations, in this chapter.

garment industry. The interviewer recorded her saying, “In 2003 I had a son and after maternity leave I went on extended maternity leave. After that leave, my employment contract was not prolonged.” After getting fired, this woman was out of work for 4 years until she found a job working in a shop; now she is looking for a new job.

Her story is echoed by those other three women’s, starting with Beti.

Beti

Beti is in her forties. She never graduated from high school. Her father was a quarryman.

“How did you become unemployed?”

“I had a child,” Beti said. “I was on extended maternity leave.”

“And then what?” the interviewer asked.

“Well it just happened as it did,” Beti replied. “I couldn’t go to work because of the child. It was little, three years old. There are no nurseries, no kindergartens. Now, supposedly, there is a kindergarten here, but it is only [open] three times a week, for five hours. And there are no chances of work for these mothers who, uhm, I will say it rudely, who don’t know what to do with their children.”

“No kindergarten?” asked the interviewer.

“There is a kindergarten, like I said, but...” Beti trailed off.

The interviewer wanted to clarify the presence of kindergartens when Beti lost her job. “There was no [kindergarten] at that time.”

“Yes,” Beti said. “And in my place somebody else was hired, because it is common.”

Beti never went to work afterward, but she is uncertain about her labor market situation. When asked at the beginning of the interview as to whether she is looking for a job, Beti said no. Later in the interview, Beti seemed to solidify this answer by saying that she does not expect her life situation to change. But, when asked right afterward if she would take up a job under certain conditions, she said that she would, so long as the labor market situation changed. Sometime after that, when asked if she is now looking for a job, she said yes.

Notice that Beti regards job loss after maternity leave as a common occurrence. Whether this is primarily subjective, or indeed it happens frequently to women, of disadvantaged social background especially, we cannot tell with these data. What we do learn from interviews is that respondents speak of their experience without indicating that it is out of the ordinary and hard to understand. This type of dismissal clearly constitutes a deviant labor market strategy on the part of the employer, yet respondents present it as a normal, understandable practice. Such is the case with Iza.

Iza

Iza is in her thirties. Her father was a bricklayer and Iza has less than a decade’s worth of formal education. Her previous job in the food industry ended about five years ago.

Hers is an example of how the interviewer and the respondent collaborate to achieve a shared understanding, but with great difficulty. We present the difficulty because it accurately shows how stories of losing a job are far from simple, even for the ones telling them.

"How did you become unemployed? You got pregnant, right?"

"I got pregnant," Iza replied. "Then I was fired and then I got the unemployment benefit."

At this point, it seems as if Iza was fired for being pregnant on the job.

The interviewer asked, "And you were fired?"

"No," Iza answered.

This turn in Iza's answer may have been prompted by the interviewer's follow-up question about having been fired: Iza seems to have interpreted it as if firing would have occurred after she received her unemployment benefit, which would not make sense.

"I had money, everything, but later, when I ran out of money they came for the interview."

Iza added.

At this point, what Iza means by "the interview" is mysterious. "Alright," said the interviewer, who is apparently confused as to whether Iza was fired, and when, and for what. The interviewer tried to obtain details by setting the scene of when Iza had a job. "But when you worked, you got pregnant and you were in this workplace..."

"They paid me," Iza said. "They paid until the end of the pregnancy, and then they dissolved my contract."

The interviewer wanted to clarify when, exactly, Iza's contract was dissolved. In doing so they may have 'offered' her an answer, which Iza may or may not have provided otherwise. "After the maternity leave, right?" the interviewer asked.

"Yes," said Iza.

The interviewer then pressed for more details, clearly going off the structured survey. The interviewer wanted to know the type of contract Iza had before she was dismissed. "Did you have a temporary contract or a contract for an indefinite period?"

"A temporary contract," Iza replied.

"For how long?" asked the interviewer.

"For three months," Iza said. "But [the employer] didn't know that I am pregnant, so they prolonged it."

"For how long did they prolong it?"

"For two."

"Two years?"

From what can be understood so far, it seems that the employer, not knowing Iza was pregnant, gave her a new contract. This took her from a three-month to a two-year contract. But, once they learned Iza was pregnant, they decided to terminate her contract altogether.

Prompted by the interviewer, Iza took the initiative to explain further. "But then," Iza said, "there was somebody, I don't know, [who] took over the company and they were here twice already for the interview."

It is still not clear what "the interview" means, but it likely occurred when Iza was pregnant. The interviewer in our study tried to clarify the whole job situation by making a declarative statement: "So you got pregnant when you worked at [the company] and then after the maternity leave your contract was dissolved."

Iza decided to participate further in the clarification, but did not directly agree with the interviewer's formulation. She said, "I mean, they did the papers [as per normal], but then it occurred that I am pregnant."

"And the contract was for two years?" The interviewer had, by this time, become accustomed to repeating facts as questions in order to move the conversation from fact to fact, and thus hopefully achieve an understandable story.

"Yes," Iza replied. "But then they learned that I am pregnant, because they wanted people immediately."

And so ended Iza's bid for a longer contract and for a job when she returned from maternity leave.

It is now possible to summarize the story that emerged from this difficult interaction. Iza was on a three-month contract and the employer wanted to extend it for two years. Then the employer discovered Iza was pregnant. Iza took maternity leave, and when she came back, the employer did not want to keep her. Iza was out of a job, and the main cause seems to be motherhood. At the time of the interview, Iza was looking for a job.

Marya's story below is less complicated, but it ends the same way.

Marya

Marya is in her twenties. Like the other women whose stories we presented in this section, she did not graduate high school, and her father was a manual laborer. Unfortunately, we do not have information about her previous job.

"How did you become unemployed?"

"It was because my contract was not prolonged," Marya said. "There was a contract, with the termination date, and my boss did not prolong it, because [I had] a child, because of my extended maternity leave. And unfortunately it happened that they did not prolong the contract."

"So you were pregnant at that time?"

"No," Marya replied. "I had been on an extended maternity leave for six months already."

"So you were on maternity leave," the interviewer said, "and after you came back to work, the boss did not prolong the contract?"

"[The employer] did not," Marya replied.

"At the time you wanted to come back?"

"Yes," Marya answered. "I said [to the employer] that I want to come back, that I want the prolongation of the contract, but unfortunately no. [My situation with that employer] was decided at that time."

This happened over five years ago. Marya gave no indication that she is now looking for a job, and said that she could not envision any situation in which she would look for a job.

Quitting

In our sample of the jobless, stories of quitting not so frequent (14 instances out of 102, i.e. 13.7%). For some respondents, it was a personal decision, without apparent outside pushing factors. A woman in her 20s with post-secondary education tells a story of how she was simply bored of the work.

"How did you become unemployed?"

"Well, it wasn't a loss, I just mutually decided with my boss. By mutual consent."

"What made you do that?" asked the interviewer.

"Well, many things. Mostly, I wanted to learn something else," she replied.

"No new skills," prompted the interviewer.

"New skills, no, it was not the case. I just wanted something else. And maybe this, mainly, made me resign."

"Anything else?" asked the interviewer, still looking for details.

"No, rather not," she replied.

"What did you do?"

"It was a job at the office ... I helped with various invoices and so on, I don't know. Days and nights with [office work] actually," she said.

"And you got bored?"

"It was monotonous," she said. "Same things all the time. But when I look back, I think I miss it, I got used to it. Because nothing really changes."

Not all people who quit their job do so for reasons of self-exploration, or through mutual decisions with their boss about a given job not being suitable for them. Sometimes, this act of job termination appears less voluntary than the term 'quitting' implies. For example, a man in his 50s, with a low level of education, "quit" because the employer relocated the business to a location which the employee felt was too remote for them to commute to. "The company closed its branch in [this region], it was transferred to [another region]. I was dismissed on my own request because I could not commute. Twenty people were discharged like that."

The ambiguity about the voluntary character of quitting comes to light when we listen to the stories of people who quit their job for family reasons. It becomes apparent that, while people do give up their job, they do so under the pressure – real or perceived – of family obligations: it is necessary to take care of sick parents ("I had to take care of my mother – seriously sick, then died – family situation requested me to stay at home"), or there are other reasons they did not want to divulge ("I decided to quit because of family reasons").

Even quitting following marriage leaves room for wondering whether the decision is fully voluntary, or it is conditioned by family expectations and norms. The following example illustrates the dilemma: a woman in her 50s had quit her job when she got married and pregnant. She became a housewife, but later returned to the labor market, and found a job. As the interviewer summarized, "after I graduated from a vocational school I worked six months as an intern, then full time as a shop assistant. I quit my work because afterward I married my husband... I didn't have to work and I was a housewife, I raised my children. Currently I don't have such absorbing duties at home and I took up work."

Graduation

Given the large proportion of young men and women that make up participants in our study (62%), it is not surprising that trouble finding a job after leaving school features prominently in the narratives about joblessness. Of the 24 out of 102

respondents who invoked this situation (23.5%), most put it succinctly, “I was just looking for a job after graduation from the university.”

Some respondents went into more detail: “After graduation [from university] I could not find a job. The District Employment Agency directed me to an internship from [for a few months], as a clerk in the human resources department. Before that, I was looking for a job.” Some raised the issue of lack of work experience, as was the case of a working-class woman in her 20s who lived in a small town and graduated from high school. This young woman felt that her low level of work experience hindered her employment chances. The interviewer summarized, “After graduation there was no possibility to find employment. The liquidation of our local [industry] made it even more difficult to find employment here or in the closest city. Nobody wanted to hire an unexperienced person.” She was unemployed for almost three years.

Other

For most of the part, we were able to classify respondents’ stories of how they became jobless within the three types discussed above. But some experiences (10 cases out of 102, i.e. 9.8%) defy easy categorization. A man in his 20s, with a high school education, describes managing his employment with his military service: “After graduation, I used to work in a food processing plant, but they collapsed and I became unemployed. In the period of unemployment I was called up to service in the armed forces. After I finished the service I was unemployed again. I asked in various places and that’s how I got a job in a mill, where I applied. I wanted to work since I graduated, but those were the circumstances. Now I work and I am glad.”

We also encountered situations that seemed straightforward at first, but stopped being so after we learned the respondents’ full account. This pertains primarily to women’s job loss around pregnancy and marriage.⁵

Some women told us that they became pregnant and then unemployed, but stopped short of providing any clear indication as to whether they were dismissed, or they quit. Here is an example of such an exchange. The woman is in her 20s, with high school education:

“How did you become unemployed?”

“I got pregnant.”

Since interviewers became aware that some women lost their job after maternity leave, the interviewer followed up: “And you didn’t go back to work after you had a child?”

⁵ In our sample, no man said they became unemployed because of marriage or due to the birth of a child.

“I got pregnant again,”
 “Again, oh. Twice?”
 “Yes,” she replied.
 “And now what?”
 “Now I am raising my children,” she said.

Summary

In this chapter, we took a social constructionist view in asking the jobless themselves to define how they lost their job. Letting the interviewer-respondent interaction guide our analyses, we classified several major ways of becoming unemployed: (a) Dismissal, for structural or non-structural reasons; (b) Quitting, which may or may not be entirely voluntary; (c) Graduation, where school ended in some way and respondents searched for, but could not find a job; and (d) Other, such as returning from abroad but not finding work at home. There were a few instances where respondents did not provide conclusive answers as to how they lost their job – we mention them as “Unknown.”

We presented the four women from disadvantaged backgrounds who frame their experience of job loss in relation to becoming pregnant and taking maternity leave. Under Polish law, it is illegal to fire a woman for these reasons. We have no means to corroborate our respondent’s accounts of dismissal with information from external sources. In light of this project’s social constructivist approach, however, it would be beside the point. Instead, we emphasize that the women reported to the interviewer nothing out of the ordinary with how their contracts were terminated. That is, neither considered their experience indicative of gender discrimination in the workplace, and all regarded it as common among women like them.

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Chapter 6

Becoming a Housewife



In this chapter we focus on the experiences of homemakers, otherwise known as “housewives.” They constitute an important segment of the jobless, particularly so in post-communist Poland, where market restructuring and changes in government policy toward universal employment pushed many women out of the labor market temporarily or for good (e.g. van der Lippe and Fodor 1998; Fodor 1997; Kohn et al. 2002). In the Joblessness project, the group ‘housewives’ comprises 39 women aged 25–73 years who in the 2008 POLPAN panel survey had reported taking care of the household for 1 year continuously to be their main activity (and were not employed).¹ This chapter is about how the women describe the process of becoming a homemaker. One of the most important aspects involves their life choices: to what extent, if at all, do women’s narratives portray homemaking as personal preference concerning the balance of work and family?

Defining Housewives

The extant literature provides different definitions of housewives. One important criterion that scholars use is identity; another takes into consideration the amount of time people spend on domestic work (e.g. Kitterod and Ronsen 2013). Kitterod and Ronsen (2013:1268) use a combination of self-perception and information on women’s paid working hours to construct two definitions of housewives. Both definitions apply to women aged 25–59 years and with a partner. According to the first definition, housewives are women who consider themselves to be homemakers and are not employed. The second definition is broader: a housewife is a person who primarily regards herself as home-working, irrespective of employment status, or is employed less than 20 hours per week and primarily considers herself to be gainfully employed (p. 1269).

¹For details of the Joblessness project research design, see the Introduction.

The Joblessness project goes in the direction of Kitterod's and Ronsen's approach. Specifically, in the group of homemakers we include women who currently (i.e. in 2012) report taking care of the household as their main activity and are not employed (but may have odd jobs), as well as women who are currently employed, but were not employed and did household work uninterruptedly for at least 1 year prior to the 2008 POLPAN panel survey.² Of the 39 housewives whose experiences we discuss in this chapter, 31 fit to the first category, and eight belong to the second category. Generally, women who were homemakers in 2008 and employed by 2012 are slightly younger (25–58 years) and better educated ($p < 0.05$) than the rest.

The Polish term “*gospodyni domowa*” does not have the connotation of marital status and family that the term “housewife” in English-speaking countries has. In Poland, a woman who carries out unpaid work at home may not necessarily be a spouse or a member of a traditional family consisting of a father, mother and children. In fact, the most recent Polish census (2011) demonstrates that many single women live in inter-generational households (together with their mother, or both retired parents) and perform mostly the duties connected with staying at home. When they do not have regular employment these women belong to the group “housewives.”

Nevertheless, the Polish term has strong gendered connotations. We see this situation reflected in the Joblessness project. First, no men among participants in the 2008 POLPAN panel survey declared homemaking as their main activity. Second, from the 2008 survey answers we know that among women who reported to be housewives most (29 out of 39, 74%) were married, 15% (6 women) had never been married and were not living with a partner, 5% (2 persons) were widowed and another 5% were divorced. We note that the prevalence of marriage among homemakers is significantly higher ($p < 0.01$) than among the other women in the Joblessness study (74% vs. 30%).³

How many housewives are in Poland? The 2006 Report of the Civil Affairs Institute reports that there are 19 million women in Poland, of whom 59% were of working age. About 5.5 million Polish women were not employed. Another 5.5 million who were employed performed homemaking in addition to their “regular” employment. Based on these data, it was estimated that about 6 million women in Poland were housewives and performed duties associated with this position (ISO Report 2006).

To examine how women's preferences concerning work and family life are reflected – if at all – in their life choices, preference theory as developed by Catherine Hakim (2000, 2006) is particularly useful. Hakim proposes a tripartite typology of female work-family preferences. According to Hakim's breakdown, the majority of women represent a style named “adaptive”: they want to be employed, but they do not declare total commitment to a professional career as the most important aspect.

² See Footnote 1.

³ Since POLPAN 2008 did not directly ask respondents whether they have children (rather, it asked if there are children in the household, and if yes, how many) we cannot use the panel survey data to count the incidence of motherhood among housewives.

Table 6.1 Summary of the preference typology

Type of focus throughout life	Home-centered women	Adaptive women	Work-centered women
Most significant values declared by women	So-called “family values”: caring, sharing, non-competitive, communal, focus on cohesion	Attempts at compromising the two contrasting sets of values	“market values”: competitive rivalry, achievement orientation, individualism, excellence

Source: Hakim (2006), p. 288

The remaining two types are less common and display a more radical commitment to either home or work. Home-centered women declare that family life and children are their main concern. By contrast, work-centered women define employment and professional career as their priority, they are usually childless and engage in public activities such as politics or art (Table 6.1).

Clare Lyonette and Rosemary Crompton (2015) distinguish three types of arguments used to legitimize the gendered division of labor where women are mostly responsible for domestic obligations.⁴ Economic explanations see the uneven division of domestic labor as a consequence of gendered income inequality, where men earn more and thus are less engaged with household duties. Time availability explanations argue that those partners who work longer hours tend to be less occupied with domestic labor; since they are generally males, home duties are usually transferred to females. Normative arguments explain the feminization of domestic labor as a result of cultural constructions and gender stereotypes, which play a role regardless of working hours or wages. The researchers find support in their study for all three types of arguments, although they also observed an opposition to traditional gender roles expressed by women who earn more than their partners (Lyonette and Crompton 2015: 36–37).

Research conducted in various regions of the world on strategies and models of performing housewife duties shows that, to a large extent, cultural norms and socio-economic or political circumstances in specific countries shape these behaviors. For example, in Norway, housewives are overrepresented in the less educated segments of society, they have health limitations, many children and young children, are immigrants from non-Western countries, or have a high-earning partner (Kitterod and Ronsen 2013). Overall, the phenomenon is limited as around 9% of women fit the authors’ definitions of housewife.⁵ Among them, contentment with household finances and division of housework is high, though to what extent this stems from homemaking representing a deliberate choice (i.e. a voluntary adjustment) or

⁴See also discussion in Chap. 9.

⁵The authors employ two definitions of housewives, both of which apply to women aged 25–59 years and with a partner. According to the first definition, housewives are women who consider themselves to be homemakers and are not employed. The second definition is broader: a housewife is a person who primarily regards herself as home-working, irrespective of employment status, or is employed <20 hours/week and primarily considers herself to be gainfully employed (p. 1269).

dealing with various constraints (e.g. health limitations, lack of jobs adequate opportunities) is not clear.

In Poland, Titkow et al. (2004) reported that 40% of Polish housewives believed that being a mother and being employed at the same time was detrimental for the relations in the family (as quoted in: ISO Report 2006: 9–10). Mikucka (2011) explored the effects of homemaking on women's well-being in Europe with the European Values Survey. Results showed that the effect of full-time homemaking on personal comfort and satisfaction was overall positive, but its level depended on the country. In more conservative societies housewives demonstrated higher level of well-being, but only in Western Europe. Women who performed unpaid work at home displayed higher level of well-being when they personally supported traditional gender-role attitudes. Our research complements these works with a qualitative aspect, analyzing women's individual, subjective evaluations.

An important context for the analysis of Polish housewives is the sociocultural heritage of Communism. In the communist period after World War II, the authorities aimed at promoting women's employment, which resulted in their increased labor market participation and improved opportunities of equal treatment. At the same time they emphasized the "psychophysical" distinctiveness of females as suited for particular types of jobs and performing childcare (Fidelis 2013). These patterns of gendered activities prevailed after the systemic transformation and transition to capitalism. While the number of women who are active in the labor market is growing, they are also burdened with household obligations. Quantitative analyses emphasize the discrepancies between preferred and practiced models of labor division: while the declared preferences support the dual earner model (both partners in paid employment and share household duties), the majority of Polish families implement the "female double burden" model, where partners are unequally encumbered with domestic obligations (Matysiak 2005). Qualitative research also speaks to this issue. Elżbieta Tarkowska, who conducted research on the Polish poor (including the jobless) for many years, emphasized the feminization of poverty in Poland. The rate of poverty is higher among women, households ran by women are more prone to poverty, and in the crisis situations women tend to take responsibility for multiple aspects of family life: household obligations, paid work, and general coping strategies (Tarkowska 2002, also citing: Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Grotowska-Leder 1996). As we show in this chapter, faced with the inability to effectively combine paid employment and household duties, some Polish women limited their activities in the labor market – though not necessarily by choice.

Paths into Homemaking

In this section we rely on the qualitative data from interviews conducted with all 39 women who in 2012 were, or had recently been, homemakers for at least 1 year uninterruptedly (and had no formal employment). While eight women got a job by the time of the Joblessness study, their experiences into how they became

housewives remain relevant. Our intention is to present, through all these women's perspectives, the experiences that led them to leave the labor market, some temporarily, others long-term.

Economic Decisions

Economic considerations take a variety of forms. Some women declared that a significant reason was the dismissal from a previous job, liquidation of their work place, and generally experiencing problems in finding a job:

The respondent below was a young woman in her late twenties with a middle school or basic vocational education:

The interviewer asked: "How did you become a housewife?"

"I was dismissed from work," replied the young woman.

"Was it just your dismissal, or a mass layoff?" the interviewer asked.

"Yes, there was rotation..."

"And some workers were dismissed?" prompted the interviewer.

"Yes, exactly," the young woman said.

"What was the reason? The company was not doing well?" continued the interviewer.

"I don't say that," the young woman answered. "We didn't hear that, just the bosses decided to dismiss some people."

Later in this same interview, after a couple of clarifying questions about the process of dismissal, the interviewer asked the young woman, "What were the reasons of your dismissal, what do you think? Your age, or what?"

"No," she replied. "I think it is because I am not educated. I was the first to be dismissed, no matter if I did my job well or not. I suppose, that was the main reason."

Similarly:

"How did you become a housewife?" The interviewer asked.

The respondent thought for a moment, and then said:

"My factory was closed and I did not get another job. There were no offers and no jobs. I had to take care of the children, grandchildren. I raised my grandchildren."

We can understand this kind of decisions by recalling that Poland is, with respect to gender roles, a traditional society. Women are perceived primarily as mothers and caregivers, so when their role as breadwinners coincides with caregiving obligations, the decision to put the latter first is straightforward.⁶ Correspondingly, in this cultural context, men are defined primarily as breadwinners. The way some housewives refer to the wage which their spouses/partners bring to the household reflects

⁶In 2016, a new family benefit was introduced in Poland: the 500+ benefit which offers 500 PLN monthly to every family for each second and next child. While this solution was introduced with the aim of reducing poverty and increasing childbirth rates, its side effect is that some women in low-paid jobs leave their work and concentrate on household duties.

the pattern of treating the male's salary as the crucial contribution to the family budget even if the wife herself could, given her skills, earn salary, or actually does earn money through odd, irregular jobs.

In our study, all women who took up employment after the period of being a housewife declared that having and taking care of a child or children was a reason for their temporary roles as housewives. According to preference theory, their strategies could be "adaptive," which means that external circumstances and structural limitations shaped these strategies, rather than individual agency and personal inclinations.

In the cases depicted below, the housewives portrayed the choice to stay at home and become a housewife as a rational economic decision made by the whole family. This means the wife and her husband or, in some cases, the wife, husband, and his or her parents, who all live in the same household. These conversations also depict gendered economic decisions: some women explain that they left the labor market because other sources (such as a pension, or the husband's salary) covered the household's finances and there was no need for them to contribute salary. This strategy seems to be more popular among older respondents and those living in the countryside:

The interviewer asked, "How did you become a housewife?"

"We just had this farm," the respondent replied. "I had to help my parents."

As a prompt, the interviewer repeated what the respondent said. "Your parents had a farm."

"Yes, they had," the respondent said. "And I had to work, because my husband worked, we had enough money."

"So you lived there after getting married," the interviewer said.

"Yes," said the respondent. "My husband worked, I helped, and so it was. My parents also helped, there were profits. When you write that, then..."

One respondent said that becoming a housewife was a cost-effective decision made in the context of the income that other members of the family contributed. Listening to her story, we understand that a variety of factors – such as the financial burdens connected with hiring a nanny, or even costs of commuting to work – converge to make choices in line with societal expectations. Their roles as mothers, and their obligation to care for other, elderly family members, defined these women's care-giving obligations.

The respondent, in her seventies, said:

"My husband told me: it is not so easy, you should take care of the house; there is no sense to work. It was when I lived in [a particular part of town]. It was a long way from [that part of town to another]. And it was like that."

"So, commuting was too far," said the interviewer.

"Commuting, yes," the respondent said. "A child, then the second, third. And it was like that.... Yeah. And then one sickness, second sickness, I had to take care of my mum, my stepfather. And so it was. Later I had grandchildren."

Housewives who recalled their decision to stay home and take care of the household after several – sometimes over a dozen – years, indicated that they had weighed the choice between starting a family early in life and attaining a satisfying level of

education. In the conversation below, the homemaker admits that she was “crazy” to get married at the age of eighteen and also declares that this restrained her from school graduation.

The interviewer asked, “How did you become a housewife?”

The respondent replied,

“I mean, I got married when I was eighteen, I was crazy. Instead of graduating from school I got married.”

We learn that respondents are particularly prone to make the decision to stay at home when they have young children and they cannot count on help from older family members. In Poland, like in Eastern Europe generally, the expectation that grandparents, grandmothers especially, participate in raising the grandchildren remains strong. As one interviewee indicated, “*Grannies are essential*”.

An interviewer asked another woman, “How did you become a housewife? What was the main reason?”

“The main reason” the respondent started, and then thought for a bit, and then said: “I mean my first child, taking care of my first child.”

“You had a child,” the interviewer said.

“Having a child, yes,” said the respondent. “Taking care of the child. Because the child was often sick, grandma could not take care of it, because she took care of the daughter’s children. So we had nobody to leave the child with. And my husband, so to say, could afford to earn our living, so there was no need for me to work. Then there was our second child and so it was.”

“Nobody in your family could help you?” the interviewer asked.

“As I said, my parents have a farm, we live with my parents-in-law, and there are the younger children as well. So, [my parents-in-law were] taking care of the farm and the children. So we couldn’t actually bother them. But now they are taking care of the [husband’s] brother’s ones and my sister-in-law can go to work.”

“Grannies are essential,” the respondent added.

Accumulated Caregiving

A main trigger of housework is having a child. Staying home to care for them is sometimes an imposed decision. The respondent below is a young woman who graduated vocational or general high school:

“How did you become a housewife? What was the main reasons, what were other reasons?” the interviewer asked.

“Having a baby, just that,” the homemaker replied. “I worked until I had a baby. I worked for the whole 9 months [when I was pregnant]. Earlier, 2 years as an accountant and when I had a child, I just stayed at home, and at that time I was dismissed from work, because I had a contract for a definite period, until the day I had a baby. So that was the reason. As I said. But for 2 years I haven’t been looking for a job, because I couldn’t do it [*couldn’t work*].”

According to some participants, other factors that cumulated gradually over the years facilitated their remaining a housewife. Responsibility for caregiving simply

accumulated more caregiving: The responsibility for additional obligations associated with taking care of the older members of the family was shifted to the women who already stayed at home, and who were at home mainly following childbirth. Respondents justified these decisions of taking on more people to care for as maximizing the utility of each family member. In practice, it constitutes an accumulation of household obligations. The initial decision to nurture a newborn child often has far-reaching consequences for the unequal distribution of obligations in other spheres: looking after the older parents, or keeping the household. One respondent put it succinctly: “*Laundry, cooking, laundry*”.

Another respondent elaborated further. The interviewer asked, “How did you become a housewife? I understand it happened when your son was born?”

“Yes, yes,” the respondent replied. “I got married, I had a son and I became a housewife.”

“Do you have more children?” the interviewer asked.

“I also have a second son,” the respondent replied.

“And since that time?”

“Yes, there was the second boy and I had to be at home constantly. The second was born [in the late 1960s].

“Was there anything else?”

“No,” replied the respondent. “There was like an allotment, field. We had hens, ducks, other... pigs. Just to make life easier.”

“Hens, too?”

“Yes. There is a garden, still, I also take care of it, [somebody] helps me.”

Taking care of children and the household is perceived as an obligation that leaves no time for other (professional) activities: “I had a child and I had my family, my own household, so you know, it is a commitment.”

Health Reasons

A third major theme that surfaces from women’s narratives of becoming a housewife is their health status. Nine of our respondents (23%) said that poor health had been the main reason for their opting out of the labor market and taking on household care. We learn that often it is not the illness itself that keeps these women from taking on a paid job. Rather, existing employment conditions, the crisis on the labor market, economic slowdown, and the emphasis on flexible employment cause employers to shun employees with disabilities. “*They rather don’t like such workers,*” said one housewife. Given our data, we do not attempt any generalizations. We note that these individual stories “fit” the empirical result that “precarious” work arrangements have grown into the normative template in many work settings. Precarity helps to exclude the disabled, especially women, from the labor market (Vick and Lightman 2010).

In case of serious illnesses, some women equate becoming a housewife with simply being away or absent from “genuine” work. Staying at home as a housewife

is juxtaposed to the more valuable labor of a formally employed person, a status the respondent did not get “approved” for, as she states:

I quit because I was sick. I had difficulties walking, because of my rheumatoid joint inflammation. I had anaemia of the right hemisphere, uhm, I had problems with speaking, seeing. Heart, high blood-pressure, problems speaking, walking a longer way, stuff like this. The doctor drew up his opinion, ‘raus⁷ from work’. [Laughs]. With so many sicknesses and being such a long time on a sick leave, after a month, or two. So, such employers... they rather don’t like such workers [laughs]. So, the medical doctor did not approve me to work. I had to quit in spite of my age, which wasn’t the retirement age at that time. So, I have been staying at home for ten years now, and I feel bad about that, because I would prefer going somewhere, doing something. But unfortunately... I can’t make it [laughs].

In telling her medical story, this woman makes it clear that she considers household duties as a less important and less appreciated type of work compared to a ‘proper’ job. This view may reflect a broader cultural perception whereby homemaking commands less respect (i.e. is less prestigious) than formal employment. We point here to the research of Brescoll and Uhlmann (2005), who find that both men and women stigmatize male homemakers strongly while expressing the same, high, social regard for employed mothers as for employed fathers (or stay-at home mothers). The authors conclude that “by assuming the traditionally male breadwinner role, employed women accrue some of the social respect and regard associated with that role. Thus, employed women may be simultaneously disliked and socially respected” (p. 443).

We learn from some of the housewives in our study that the decision to “quit” work because of illness is not sudden. Instead, they try to keep their job in the first years of serious sickness or disability. In such cases, they mention various social benefits as a main source of income. In several narratives, they describe the sickness as coming in phases.

Another housewife returned to work every time her health condition was better for a while. Every subsequent period of being sick is interwoven with a period of being back to work:

After the first surgery I received a rehabilitation benefit⁸ and, shortly after that, I had the second surgery. I was operated in [back to back years in the 1990s], two surgeries. I stayed in bed for a long time. After I went [off from work] for this operation, I came back [to work several months later]. Later, I received a disability benefit. Later, I was receiving this benefit for three years and I was qualified for a pre-retirement benefit, I had 25 years of harmful work.⁹ When they took away my disability benefit, I was immediately qualified for a pre-retirement benefit. They told me to take advantage of that.

While her narrative leaves room for entertaining the idea that the decision to stop working was of her own choice, another woman’s does not. Lena, as we call her, had an endangered pregnancy. “I had to quit my job” Lena said, but there is nothing

⁷ German „out”.

⁸ A kind of sick leave.

⁹ Legal notion of a „harmful work” – in Poland, it entitles to earlier retirement.

voluntary in the termination of her employment. The decision was forced by the employer.

According to Polish law, women on a full-time position are protected against job dismissal (see Chap. 2). However, many women in reproductive age (especially in their twenties) face difficulties finding such jobs and remain employed on the basis of temporary contracts or civil contracts that are much more insecure and can be terminated at any time. Lena's narrative speaks to the unfavorable situation in Poland, which pregnant women, mothers of young children, and the disabled (temporary or permanently) face: "I got pregnant," Lena said. "It was a high-risk pregnancy and I had to stay at home. I had to quit [my job], because I just couldn't make it".

Sadly, such experiences are not limited to Poland. Despite workplace gains for women over the last decades, many working mothers in the US face workplace inflexibility, lack of support and a general negative bias from their employers (e.g. Stone 2007; Cabrera 2007)

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the discussion about the social expectations and social constraints that women encounter as they renounce employment (for shorter periods or long-term) to take up homemaking. While it is tempting to categorize becoming a housewife as a voluntary path into joblessness, we learn from our respondents that voluntarism may not apply as often as we would think. In line with Hakim's (2006) perception theory, we find that women perform "adaptive" strategies: they adjust to the circumstances on the labor market (economic crisis, precarious work conditions, lack of employment and inflexible work environments for young mothers) by staying at home. Adaptation is not the same as voluntarism.

Based on qualitative data from the 39 interviews conducted in 2012, we identify three main reasons for becoming a housewife. First are economic considerations. Many respondents reported that they became housewives because they had difficulties in obtaining a job, especially when married with young children. Part of the difficulties are structural (e.g. slow economy, inflexible workplace environment), while others stem from dynamics within the household (e.g. the spouses decided it was economically more profitable for the husband to be the breadwinner and the woman to take on household care).

Second are considerations about caregiving. While taking care of a newborn represents for many of our respondents the stepping stone into becoming a housewife, the *accumulation of caregiving* turns homemaking into an enduring state. Such situations illustrate well the ambiguity surrounding women's free choice: once the mother finds herself at home, after her initial decision to leave the labor market and care for the baby (and possibly other children), she faces the needs of other family

members who require care. Since the woman is home already, so the logic goes, she can as well take on these responsibilities, too. This accumulation of caregiving solidifies the housewife's place outside the labor market, turning them long-term jobless.

Third are health reasons. Some respondents told rather detailed medical stories of becoming ill that led to spells of joblessness, during which they turned temporarily to homemaking. When returning to the labor market became difficult to manage, due to weak health but also an unsupportive work environment, these women fully withdrew from the labor market and became housewives.

These stories must be seen through a gender lens, which casts further doubt on the assumption that becoming a housewife is primarily a personal, voluntary, choice. When women's role as breadwinners coincides with caregiving obligations, the decision – made alone or with family members – is to prioritize the caregiving obligations. Like the US (e.g. Brescoll and Uhlmann 2005; Dillaway and Pare 2008), Poland is a conservative society that places greater value on men's role in the labor market than on women's; women are perceived first and foremost as mothers and caregivers, a view strongly promoted by the Catholic Church (see Siemienicka 1996). Such normative perceptions place strong pressure on women trying to decide how to balance work and family. This is especially true of young women after childbirth. We learn that, in defiance of Polish law, some of our respondents were dismissed, or had to quit their jobs because of a difficult pregnancy, or were not renewed the contract after having their child, and, as a consequence, became housewives. It is important to note here that these women's subjective recollections of their experiences (i.e. we cannot check the content against external sources), do not occur in isolation. Among the narratives on becoming unemployed, presented in Chap. 5, are those of four women from disadvantaged social background who frame their experience of job loss in relation to, and because of, becoming pregnant and taking maternity leave.

In sum, some housewives perceive themselves as having been downgraded, performing tasks which are not as valuable as those of the employed. Their narratives reproduce the conservative imagery of gendered labor division, normalize the feminization of household work, while at the same time highlighting its secondary, subordinate role to paid employment. Often, becoming a housewife is an outcome imposed by external circumstances. It emerges, thus, that respondents describe becoming a housewife as falling in-between free choice and an externally imposed duty. This makes a lot of sense in light of the complex realities, including objective conditions and cultural norms that these women consider when making their decision. We end with the following observation: By 2012, of the 36 women who in 2008 declared to be housewives (we exclude the three who are past retirement age) eight persons (24%) have reentered the labor market, and an additional 10 (32%) declared looking for a job. Of these latter, three were successful by 2013.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Chap. 8 in this book.

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Chapter 7

Looking for and Finding a Job



In this chapter we return to the women and men who in POLPAN 2008 reported a spell of unemployment lasting at least three months, and whose paths into joblessness we examined in Chap. 5. This subsample of our project comprises 64 women and 48 men aged 25–55 years. Our purpose is to see how they look for, and if successful, how they find a job.¹

Peoples' characteristics and experiences, and, by extension, the features of social groups they belong to, interact with larger societal forces to influence thoughts, actions and outcomes. In brief, social forces include government policies that aid, and at times hinder, job search and the decisions that drive it. They also include the stratification system, meaning the systematic differentiation among persons and groups with respect to generally desired goods. It is within this system that micro- and meso-level factors combine to potentially impact how people search for jobs, and whether they do so successfully. At the individual level, gender, education, social class and age are important characteristics. At the meso-level, a person's social network, through the resources it embeds – for example, information about new hires, tips about the hiring process, but also support groups for job search – influences the process and outcome of looking for employment (Granovetter 1973) and the strategies of coping with unemployment (Garrett-Peters 2009).

This chapter explores the interplay of meso- and micro-level factors, keeping in mind that it occurs within a broader, structural context. For example, a woman who loses a job because she is pregnant, or has a hard time returning to a good job because she spent time out of the labor market to care for her child, and whose family and close friends (i.e. strong ties) provide emotional support but do not “link” her to employment opportunities (a) potentially misses out on good employment options for lack of knowledge about them, and (b) encounters discrimination within a stratified labor market that privileges some human capital,

¹For details on the Joblessness sample, see the Introduction and Chap. 4 in this book.

social capital, and demographic attributes over others. We pay close attention to respondents' own accounts of looking for and finding a job, to explore how respondents themselves make sense of the process and the factors that drove it.

Theoretical Background

The phenomenon of seeking employment, whether by newcomers to the labor market or by people who, for various reasons, experienced career breaks, is well-researched in the social sciences. It is beyond the purpose of this chapter to do an extensive literature review of the rich body of empirical studies devoted to it. Instead, we highlight qualitative research on macro-, meso- and micro-level determinants of employment that provides the theoretical background to anchor our analyses.

The effect of institutions on job-seeking, and the experience of joblessness, are best studied in a comparative framework. An exemplary study is Ofer Sharone's (2013) *Flawed System/Flawed Self: Job Searching and Unemployment Experiences*. Sharone conducted in-depth interviews and observations of job seekers in the U.S. and Israel – two countries with very different labor market institutions that govern job search – to show how these institutions influence both the experience of being jobless and the ability to find jobs. Americans, who live in a system that espouses a mix of personal skills and job qualifications as necessary for getting a job, blame themselves for their failure to find employment. Israelis live in a system in which employers place a rigid and impersonal screen of specific qualifications; consequently, the long term unemployed in Israel blame the system. Sharone convincingly shows how labor market institutions shape the joblessness experience. We draw on this work when we consider the role of the Polish labor market in shaping our respondents' experiences.

Social networks represent a key path linking processes at the micro level to structural outcomes (Granovetter 1973). In his famous 1973 study, Mark Granovetter highlights the importance of weak ties – that is, people we are acquainted with but whom we do not know well – for community building in general, and for finding a job in particular. On the individual level, weak ties enhance occupational mobility. On the macro-level, they enhance social cohesion, in the sense of linking separate social networks.

In Eastern Europe, there is empirical support for the role of personal contacts in looking for and finding a job both during State Socialism (e.g. Slomczynski and Lee 1993) and after the 1989 systemic change (e.g. Slomczynski and Tomescu-Dubrow 2005). In the Soviet Bloc, political segmentation of the labor market, which stemmed from, and was perpetuated by the logic of central planning and strict administration by political entities, meant that members of the *Nomenklatura* system reaped a larger share of the rewards, as certain jobs, generally managerial

ones, were reserved for direct control by the Communist Party (Slomczynski and Lee 1993).²

In post-communist Europe, personal ties matter, but their effect is not uniform across countries. Analyzing Croatia and Ukraine, Kogan et al. (2013) compared youth who used personal contacts as their primary method of job searching with those who did not rely on personal contacts. Young Croatians who just left their educational institutions and who relied on personal contacts to find a job found their first job faster, but not necessarily a job with a higher economic reward, or representing a good fit with their educational level. In Ukraine, there was no difference between personal networkers and those who relied on other means. In Poland, having a large number of friends who do not know each other, i.e. belonging to a network with structural holes (Burt 2001), is conducive to upward income mobility, net of traditional status attainment determinants (Slomczynski and Tomescu-Dubrow 2005).

Social networks, and the social capital they entail, are also important for helping the unemployed to cope with the negative consequences of job loss. Garrett-Peters (2009) used participant observation in four job search groups for displaced workers (one secular, three church-affiliated groups) and in-depth interviewing, to examine the strategies that a total of 22 unemployed men and women used to collectively “repair” the damage that job loss inflicted on their identities and self-conceptions. While in principle all job search groups were open to the public, in practice attendees were middle-class and upper-middle-class managers and professionals. Garrett-Peters finds that, as meso-structures, the support groups enabled participants to create ties through which they shared information, coping strategies, and opportunities for practicing accountability, in short, resources for self-concept repair that they would not have had access to otherwise (p. 574). The author cautions that this type of resources is likely distributed unequally across social classes, leaving working class members at greater risk of psychological distress.

How individuals experience unemployment, what they do all day, how they look for a job, the duration of their unemployment, are elements influenced both by structural determinants and individual ones. Among the individual determinants, psychological factors are important. A key study by Melvin Kohn and colleagues (Kohn, Zaborowski, Janicka and Khmelko 2002) on Poland and Ukraine shows that the stratification structure interacts with psychological factors to shape the joblessness experience. Kohn et al. (2002) examined personality differences between the employed and the “nonemployed,” i.e. people who do not participate in the labor market, including students, pensioners, housewives and the unemployed (classically understood), as they lived in the early years of the post-communist era. They focused on self-direction, orientations to self and society, and intellectual flexibility. By self-

²The *Nomenklatura* was a structural arrangement through which the Communist Party ensured that “appropriate” people (i.e. those loyal to, and oftentimes members of, the party) were placed in important positions, and that they carried out party directives efficiently and effectively.

direction the authors understand “not holding conservative-authoritarian beliefs and in being receptive to change, and secondarily in having personally responsible standards of morality, being trustful of others and not being fatalistic” (Kohn et al. 2002: 369). Orientations toward self and society refer to personal well-being on one hand, and distress on the other. Kohn et al. (2002) define distress as a condition in which the individual is both self-disparaging and anxious, has low self-esteem and is distrustful of others. Intellectual flexibility pertains to “people’s effectiveness in coping with the intellectual demands of complex tasks” (Kohn et al. 2002: 370). In general, the study finds substantive and statistically significant relationships between the employed and the jobless in both Poland and Ukraine. Nonetheless, this variation is not greater than the differences among the several categories of the nonemployed. While the magnitudes of the relations are roughly similar for Poles and for Ukrainians of each gender, and for men and women of each country, the patterns of relationship differ considerably by country and by gender.

Long after the Marienthal and Polish studies of the 1930s, psychologists and social psychologists have returned their attention to the problems of looking for and finding a job (Wanberg 2012). Recent research has expanded the four-part psychological schema developed in the 1930s – unbroken, resignation, distressed and apathetic – to include the concept of personal adaptability (see Chap. 3 of this book). As Wanberg (2012) defines it, “personal adaptability entails a willingness and ability to adjust to changing situations and requires optimism, openness to learn, flexibility, agency, and self-efficacy” (377). Individual ability to change and adapt – to form a new, post-employment identity – coincides with human capital, social capital and demographic aspects rooted in social structure.

Human and social capital do not wash out within-group differences in how people internalize the experience of unemployment. The study by Gabriel, Gray, and Goregaokar (2010) on 28 unemployed male managers and professionals in their fifties presents the variability in peoples’ “narrative coping,” that is, their struggle to construct a story that offers both meaning and consolation following unemployment (p. 1687). Interviewees whose stories are ‘closed’ – because job loss is perceived as ‘the end of the line,’ expressed the most profound despair. Participants who maintained an open-ended narrative, either by defining unemployment as a temporary career aberration, or by drawing a line between career and life in general, were more optimistic and better able to contain their emotions.

People out of work use their time to improve upon, or adapt, their human capital to better their chances of returning to the labor market. This was found in the 1930s studies and still holds true today. In late 2000s Poland, Feliksiak (2010) showed that, compared to the employed, the unemployed were more likely to agree with the ideas that they would use their time out of work for retraining, for study to improve qualifications, or move abroad. Of the unemployed, almost 80% reported having attended a training session organized for people seeking a job, and 65% said that they were willing to commute to another locality to get a job.

The body of research presented above influenced our approach to the data stemming from the Joblessness study. We take into consideration macro-level

factors of the Polish labor market, while at the same time delving deep into class and stratification structures, especially the intersection of gender, age and education.

Our Study

The Interview as a Social Performance

Many of the unemployed report a strong urge to look for a job for economic and psychological reasons. To receive unemployment benefits, people who lost a job must report to the employment agency and be willing to accept its job offers. Societal pressure adds to economic incentives. The powerful societal expectation that all working-age people who are capable of work should have a job means that joblessness can be stigmatizing, especially in cultures that strongly tie the discourse on success and failure to individual willfulness and performance.³

In examining the experiences that participants in our study recall, we acknowledge the possibility of social desirability bias. The interview is a social performance even in academic research settings, and the unemployed may feel compelled to report looking for a job although they were not doing so. We have no means to independently verify our respondents' statements. But neither would it make sense in light of this project's social constructivist approach. Instead, we focus on what the jobless themselves say during the interview, and interpret the data on whether and how the respondents look for a job as a social performance: the interviewees want to provide insights into their day to day lives, while putting on their best and most desirable public face.

Let us reiterate that in the design phase of our project, the researchers identified respondents as jobless based on information they provided to survey items on employment and housework in the 2008 round of the Polish Panel Survey POLPAN (for details on the composition of the Joblessness sample, see Introduction, and Chap. 4 in this book). This warrants the following questions: at what point in their relationship with the labor market is a person considered jobless, and from whose point of view – the researcher's or the subject's? What is the extent of overlap between our, the researchers', definition of joblessness and unemployment, and how respondents themselves see joblessness and unemployment?

In light of these considerations, we note that the 2012 interviews asked participants three times and in different contexts if they were looking for work. The first time we did so at the very outset of the interview. With the first question, the interviewer tried to establish the respondent's current life situation. The interviewer set the stage by announcing:

³This kind of pressure targets primarily the unemployed; it is less an issue for students, housewives and pensioners, whom Western societies allocate different social and economic roles.

We are interested in people who, for some time, at least for a period of three months – without interruption – remained without work but wanted to have work. We do, of course, mean that the work is not related to running their own household. Over the last five years have you been in such a situation?

If our, the researchers', definition of joblessness and that of our subjects' would have fully overlapped, then everyone should have said "yes." However, three people said "no." Why this situation arose, we do not know. The three people may represent a glitch in our study design, a misreading of the question by the interviewer, a misunderstanding of the question on the part of the respondent, or a change of mind on the part of the respondent from what they told us in 2008 to what they were telling us four years later (in 2012). All we can say is that these mysterious three are young (30 years or below), and one had an MA degree or its equivalent. In surveys, there are unforeseen situations, and this is one of those.

Next, the interviewer, through unscripted conversation, had to establish respondents' labor market situation and classify them into one of the following three, mutually-exclusive, categories:⁴

Group A. In the last five years, the person had been without a job for at least three months – without a break – and was looking, at that time, for a job.

Currently, the person is employed or an entrepreneur.

Group B. In the last five years, the person had been without a job for at least three months – without a break – and was looking, at that time, for a job.

Currently, the person is not working and does not look for a job.

Group C. Currently, the person is unemployed and is looking for a job.

This was the second time respondents had an opportunity to say whether they were jobless, and whether they wanted to find a job. The conversation with the interviewer, as indicated earlier, was unstructured. Based on their exchange, the following distribution ensued: of the 110 people who, at the onset of the interview confirmed joblessness sometimes during the last five years, 69 persons (62.7%) provided information that led the interviewer to assign them to the group of "currently working, or entrepreneur." Hereafter, we refer to them as the reemployed. For nine respondents (8%), interviewers recorded their life situation as "unemployed and not looking for a job now." By contrast, almost one third – 32 respondents (29%) – were categorized as unemployed and currently looking for a job.

This classification has research implications. The questionnaire prompted interviewers to different sections of the instrument, and hence to a different set of survey items, according to categories of respondents. To illustrate, interviewers were instructed to administer the 'Job Search' section to all those classified as 'currently unemployed and wanting to work' (Group C); among members of Group A, the reemployed, only to respondents who said that they consider changing their work;

⁴As discussed in the book's Introduction, according to the Joblessness project research design, we had defined a priori to which group a given respondent (whose characteristics we knew from the POLPAN study) belongs to. The interviewer had to establish, through conversation, the extent to which our a priori classification was mirrored in respondents' current accounts.

and among members of Group B (unemployed, not looking for work) only if respondents indicated that they would take up a job if their personal conditions changed, the labor market conditions changed, or both.

In the set-up of the questionnaire, the third time interviewers asked about job search occurred after they had classified respondents into Groups A, B, and C, respectively. As specified in the research design, all 31 respondents in Group C – the unemployed currently looking for a job – were asked the ‘Job Search’ items. Among them, 29 (94%) reported looking for a job. Still, two respondents, one man and one woman, said they were not. Once more, we are reminded of the fluidity of the interview situation.

Among the reemployed (Group A), one third – 20 persons out of 69 – met the condition to be asked about job search (i.e. they answered yes to whether they are considering changing their work). Among the unemployed not seeking work (Group B, 10 cases), eight ‘qualified’ for the job search questions.⁵ In sum, many of the jobless were given three times to report whether they are currently looking for a job.

Who is Searching for Jobs, and How?

We start with the reemployed (part of Group A) who reported that they considered changing their work (20 persons). We refer to them as the “job-dissatisfied,” based on the assumption that people would change jobs when certain aspects of currently-hold employment are not satisfactory. Among the job-dissatisfied, sixteen persons – ten men and six women aged between 25 and 53 years – report searching for a job; most (nine people) have high school education or below, and four have at least college education.⁶

By design, Group C, currently unemployed and searching for work (hereafter, currently unemployed), make up the largest number of respondents (31 cases) whom the job search items apply to. Of the 29 who answered that they were searching for a job, 58.6% (n = 17) are women and 41% (n = 12) are men. They are between 25 and 55 years old, with a median age of 27 years (mean = 32.3, st.d. = 10). Education-wise, their resources are low: most have up to basic vocational or middle school (17 of the 29 people, or 58.6%); 11 (37.9%) have high school education or less; only one person has a college degree or above.⁷

It is safe to assume that most people think that, to find a job, they have to look for one. To learn how our respondents searched for employment, the interviewers asked them about the following possible strategies, through a set of fixed-choice items followed by an open-ended question. The fixed choices pertained to: (a) using personal networks (including the number of people they asked for help), (b) using

⁵They said that they would take up a job if personal, labor market conditions, or both, changed.

⁶Four of the job-dissatisfied, one man and three women - say they do not search for new jobs.

⁷In this section, we do not detail the characteristics of the three respondents from Group B, unemployed not looking for a job, whom interviewers asked about job search and who answered yes.

state employment services, (c) personally contacting potential employers, and (d) through job adverts or some other method. Then, respondents were asked whether they are searching for jobs in some other way, and if yes, how. Generally, these methods can be grouped into two main job search strategies: personal networks, and official channels.

We find that most people do not rely on just one way to look for a job. The job-dissatisfied ($n = 16$) use on average 2.2 strategies (st. d = 1.2), and the currently unemployed ($n = 29$), 2.8 strategies (st. d. = 0.9). There are no substantive differences across gender, age or educational categories.

Personal Networks

Personal networks refer to family and friends that respondents relied on to look for a job. Most of the job-dissatisfied (10 persons, 62.5%) and of the currently unemployed (24 persons, 82.8%) told us that they used this strategy. The frequent use of such resources that we see here is consistent with the literature.

Interviewers then asked how many friends and family were involved in respondents' job search. Among the 10 job-dissatisfied, eight provided network size (five men and three women), while among the 29 currently unemployed, 22 (10 men, 12 women) did so. We provide descriptive statistics of network size, by gender and age for the combined sample of the jobs-dissatisfied and currently unemployed, below.

Network sizes for the pooled sample ($n = 30$) range from one to 100, with a median of five. One young female respondent reported that she relied on 30 people; one middle-aged man reported 100. To calculate some statistics, we top-coded these extreme answers as a network size of 20 and more. After this transformation, on average respondents reported using roughly eighth family members and friends. Consistent with previous results (e.g. Moore 1990), men ($n = 15$) report using a slightly larger network (mean network size is 9, median is 6, and standard deviation is 7 persons) than women ($n = 15$, mean network size = 7, median = 5 and standard deviation = 5). We find no relationship between respondents' age and the number of family and friends they rely on to search for jobs once we removed the outlier (middle aged man who reported 100 persons). There is not much variation between educational categories in terms of reported network size.

Official Channels and Other

Both the job-dissatisfied and the currently unemployed make extensive use of official channels when seeking work. These include checking with the employment office, direct contact with a company in which they would like to get a job, and checking job advertisements. For obvious reasons, the percentage of currently unemployed using the unemployment office (76%, 22 of 29 respondents) is far

greater than the corresponding percentage among the job-dissatisfied (25%, four of 16 persons). Other than this, there is basically no substantive difference in how respondents use the other two channels: roughly 44% in each group contact companies directly, and roughly 75% check job adverts.

The picture becomes more nuanced when accounting for respondents' demographics, gender especially. Among the job-dissatisfied, the proportion of women checking with the unemployment office is significantly larger than that of men; this is not the case among the currently unemployed, where men are equally likely as women to do so. On the flip side, we find a statistically significant difference between the currently unemployed men and women in terms of their contacting companies directly – the proportion of men engaging in this strategy is substantially larger than that of women – but no gender differences among the job-dissatisfied. Finally, regarding job searching via adverts, we find the proportion of women to be significantly higher than of men among the job-dissatisfied, but no gender differences appear among the currently unemployed.

Except for accessing the unemployment office by the currently unemployed, we see some education-related differences in how the job-dissatisfied and the currently unemployed use official channels to search for jobs. Given the small number of cases, it is difficult to assess whether these are substantive. For example, respondents with college education are more likely to contact the company directly, especially among the job-dissatisfied. In one instance only do we find a statistically significant relationship between age and job search strategies: among the currently unemployed, older respondents are less likely to look for work via job adverts.⁸

About 30% among both the job-dissatisfied and the currently unemployed reported using other channels than those we specifically asked about. Not surprisingly for a survey conducted in 2012, most who answered the open ended question on what these other ways entailed, replied simply, "Internet."

Finding a Job

In the Joblessness project, from 2008, when the information we used to design the sample originated, to 2012, when we reached our respondents, 69 (63%) of the jobless had found work. To learn how, interviewers asked the same questions about strategies as for job search, that is, about personal networks, official channels, and other.

On average, one strategy turned out to be successful. This was reported by both women and men, and the variability was low (st.d. = 0.7 for the pooled sample, and within each gender category). There are no substantive differences across educational groups, nor in relation to age. We examine strategies in more detail later in the chapter.

⁸ Currently unemployed searching for jobs are between 25 and 54 years old.

We also asked the reemployed if they found a job in a different way. Nineteen percent (12 out of 62 persons) answered positively. Half of them used “different ways” in conjunction with the social networks or official channels strategies.

An important dimension of the joblessness experience is the length of one’s unemployment spell. Based on the information the reemployed provided, we grouped them into four unemployment durations: less than a year, one year, two to three years, and four or more years. We find no substantive differences across these durations with respect to number of job finding strategies the reemployed used.

Personal Networks

Among the reemployed, 44% (27 out of 62 respondents) say that they found a job through family and friends. Recall that 63% of the job-dissatisfied and 83% of the currently unemployed looking for work were relying on personal networks to search for jobs.

We asked the reemployed, too, about the number of family members and friends they relied on to find a job. Twenty-four respondents answered this question. Network sizes ranged from one to 20 persons.⁹ Once again, to eliminate the strong positive skewedness of the distribution, we top-coded number of family and friends, this time to 10. After this transformation, the average size of personal networks was four persons (st.d = 3.5; median = 2). We do not find any empirical evidence that personal networks used in finding a job are stratified in any substantive way.

Official Channels

Of the official channels, very few of the reemployed (10%, $n = 6$) referred to the unemployment office as a resource. A greater percentage (39%, $n = 24$) indicated that they found work after contacting the company directly, or through job advertisements (26%, $n = 16$). Gender seems to matter for reported job finding strategy: women are more likely to have used the unemployment office and job adverts than men. Similarly to strategies of seeking employment, we find only one instance where age correlates significantly with our outcome of interest – among the reemployed, older respondents are less likely to have found a job via job adverts.¹⁰ Education does not play a stratifying role in our respondents’ job finding strategies.

⁹Two female respondents said that they relied on 20 family members and friends for finding their job.

¹⁰The reemployed are between 25 and 55 years old.

Conclusion

We would like to remind the reader of the difficult economic situation around the time of the interviews and the government's response to it. On television and the internet, the government delighted in the "Green Island" success (see Chap. 2). Meanwhile, since 2008 the national unemployment rate kept rising, and while not as bad as in the 1990s, in 2012 unemployment exceeded 10%. In separate analyses of the employment situation, Mikucka (2016) and Kiersztyn (2016) found that Poles' employment condition was unevenly distributed across the social structure – people with lower education working in low-level occupations were at greatest risk of losing their job. In this pre-Brexit time, some Poles migrated to the UK and elsewhere in the EU for employment. At home, Poland saw an increase in trash contracts and junk jobs, while the government aggressively deregulated the labor market (Chap. 2). Young job-seekers faced the twin burden of over-education and under-employment.

Starting as early as 1989, the government, aware of unemployment and the problems it creates, tried repeatedly to combat it and improve the opportunities to look for, and find a job: it created special programmes for job training, public employment services and agencies, in partnership with local governments (cf. Chap. 2). Employment agencies provided information on jobs, as well as vocational guidance and career counselling.

In this chapter, we explored how the job-dissatisfied and the currently unemployed seeking work look for a job, and how the reemployed found one. Searching for a job is a major preoccupation of the jobless, and many use different strategies simultaneously. Among them, official channels, the unemployment office especially, play an important role. Indeed, three-quarters of the unemployed in this study reported the use of government employment agencies. At the same time, people relied on their own means. We found that personal networks are important for job-searching, but do not frequently result in job-finding. This result aligns with insights from other studies. Russell (1999), using survey data on Britain, shows that the social networks of unemployed men and women consist, to a large degree, of other jobless people, which likely isolates the unemployed from important job information networks.

Structural factors – gender, age, and education – had, at points, influenced how people look for and find a job. The job-search experience is more stratified than the experience of job-finding, and differs between the job-dissatisfied and the currently unemployed who seek employment. Overall, in looking for a job, women report using slightly smaller sized personal networks than men, and are more likely to use the unemployment office. Men report a somewhat larger personal network, and are more likely than women to contact a company directly. Age does not matter outside of the job adverts strategy. Educational attainment matters little, but readers should keep in mind the composition of the sample we examined in this chapter. For one, only a fifth of the 102 respondents had college education. This should not be surprising knowing that education can act as a buffer against joblessness (for Poland,

see Mikucka 2016). Moreover, among the 21 college educated, 19 were already working by 2012, when we conducted this project. And among the 19 reemployed, only four considered changing jobs.

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Chapter 8

Labor Market Destinations of the Jobless



In this chapter, we study the labor market outcomes of the jobless respondents in more detail. Our aim is not only to distinguish those who are employed during the time of the Joblessness study from those who are not, but also, in defining “labor market success”, to take into account various dimensions of the quality of their jobs, such as: stability, employment contract, occupational status, and wage levels. To do this, we use data on the jobs reported in the 2012 Joblessness survey together with information on the jobs the respondents had 1 year later, as captured by POLPAN 2013. By combining data from the two studies we get a longer term view of the labor market trajectories of the Polish jobless.

Having a job may mean one of two things. If the job offers a decent salary, reasonable amount of legal protection and employee benefits, as well as promotion opportunities, then we can speak of successful labor market integration. There is, however, a less desirable alternative: that job is part of a sequence of successive short-term, low paid jobs, separated by periods of unemployment and job search. In other words, simply having a job does not always mean labor market success. This chapter attempts to determine which scenario comes closer to our respondents’ experiences.

The prevalence of temporary jobs and other forms of underemployment in Poland (discussed in Chap. 2) increases the probability of the less optimistic scenario. According to the literature, fixed-term employment tends to trap workers in vicious circles of inferior, unstable employment relations (Barbieri 2009; European Commission 2010). This hypothesis draws on the dual labor market theory, which emphasizes the limited flow of workers between the internal and external labor market (Doeringer and Piore 1971). One of the mechanisms whereby fixed-term jobs may become traps (or “dead-ends”) assumes that employers tend to view temporary workers as less attached and less valuable to the firm, which makes them unwilling to invest in employee training. The limited access to on-the-job training opportunities further weakens the bargaining position and labor market

chances of fixed-term workers. With regard to low paid employment, the literature points to the existence of the so-called “low pay – no pay” cycles, with low-wage workers being relatively more likely to lose their jobs and re-enter employment through other low paid jobs (Dickens 2000; Pavlopoulos et al. 2010; Uhlenborff 2006).

A large body of literature points to the scarring effects of unemployment and identifies two mechanisms through which experiences of unemployment reduce the chances of finding a good position. The first mechanism emphasizes the risk of cognitive decline due to unemployment: when individuals are deprived of opportunities to develop their skills on the job, they may be less able to sustain their cognitive abilities. At the same time, the skills acquired during their education may become obsolete, leading to a deterioration of their human capital, making workers less valuable to potential employers (de Grip et al. 2008). The second mechanism is predicted by signalling theory: the jobless have lower chances to land a better job, as potential employers assess candidates for permanent, insider positions on the basis of their employment record (Spence 1973). The above views may become a self-fulfilling prophecy for yet another reason – the jobless lose their motivation to search for more adequate work.

Although these issues have not been often analyzed in Poland, the few studies that have done so found empirical support for the hypotheses. In particular, experiencing an unemployment spell increases the risk of subsequent overeducation and fixed-term employment (Kiersztyn 2016a, b), while being in fixed-term employment is associated with an increased risk of joblessness in the future (Kiersztyn 2017a).

The Present Analysis

The underemployment literature draws attention to the fact that labor market activity, understood in binary terms of either working or actively seeking employment, may not be a suitable point of reference for the measurement of joblessness in a given labor market. Standard indicators of economic activity leave aside those who remain outside the labor market – have no job and are not looking for one. This approach may be misleading insofar as inactive individuals may actually be discouraged workers – who have given up searching for employment not because they do not want a job, but because they consider it a worthless effort. This may be caused by poor labor market conditions, when (or where) jobs are particularly difficult to find. Another factor which may discourage the jobless from undertaking job search may be actual or perceived discrimination – as, in the Polish context, is often the case among young mothers. Such cases are included in the “sub-unemployed” category in attempts to measure underemployment (Jensen and Slack 2003). If members of this category were given the opportunity to work, some of them may in fact accept it. One of the contributions of the Joblessness study lies in the fact that

it offers a better understanding of the situation and motives of those who are not looking for jobs, and are thus not covered by official unemployment statistics used to diagnose labor market problems.

According to the Joblessness study, a majority of respondents (77 individuals) in our sample had a job in 2012. This group includes eight respondents who were selected into the sample as economically inactive “housewives”, which suggests that some of those who define themselves as homemakers may actually be discouraged workers. In the case of our study, 24.2% of the housewife subsample (if we exclude women who were past retirement age) have re-entered the labor market by 2012. In addition to the 77 employed respondents, a number of jobless individuals from both subsamples declared seeking employment at the time of our study – 32 from the non-employed subsample (Groups 1–4, cf. Introduction) and 10 from the housewife subsample. This means that, if we exclude the three respondents who reported never having been jobless and the six women above retirement age, the overall rate of labor market activity at the time of the 2012 survey was 91.8% among the jobless and 54.5% among housewives. These are very high percentages, especially given the fact that we conducted the 2012 study at a time of global economic crisis. Although the crisis did not hit Poland as hard as it did other countries, the general labor market conditions were worse than they had been in the spring of 2008 (when the POLPAN survey was administered).

The analysis presented in this chapter focuses mainly on the labor market outcomes of those who declared either working or seeking work. The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part uses the subsample of 77 respondents who declared having a job at the time of the study to analyze the occupational status and certain aspects of employment quality (occupational status, perceived job insecurity, level of legal protection) of those who had experienced a period (or multiple periods) of joblessness. Given the prevalence of job insecurity and underemployment on the Polish labor market, analyzing who manages to find (any) employment does not offer a sufficient understanding of the labor market situation. It is necessary to look at the types of jobs the former unemployed were able to find. To see whether respondents have succeeded in finding *adequate* employment since the POLPAN 2008 study, which was the basis of their selection into our jobless sample, we take a closer look at their jobs in 2012. These are important issues for the analysis of the scarring effects of unemployment.

The second part of the analysis draws on the link between the 2012 study and the larger Polish Panel Survey POLPAN. This means that we have detailed information on the earlier employment histories of respondents since their early 20s.¹ It also means that participants in the Joblessness study were subsequently approached in 2013, when the next POLPAN wave was carried out. Despite a sizable dropout rate (25.5%), most of the 2012 respondents were re-interviewed in 2013, which allows us to monitor their ensuing labor market trajectories. Focusing on men and women

¹ Actually, some of our older respondents participated in all the five waves of POLPAN covering the period 1988–2008.

who were economically active in 2012, we rely on combined Joblessness and POLPAN data to address the following questions: Did those working keep their jobs or even find better ones? Did those who were still searching for a job in 2012 manage to find employment by 2013? And if they did, did this employment match their expectations declared in the Joblessness survey?

Respondents' Jobs in 2012: Success or Failure?

Among the 77 respondents who were working at the time of the 2012 interview, only 7 were working in firms owned by themselves or other members of their families (and only two of these firms hired any employees from outside the respondents' family). The remaining 70 individuals were hired employees. With regard to the legal form of their employment, a majority of them had employment contracts covered by the Labor Code (including open-ended and fixed-term contracts), eight people were working on civil law contracts, and one respondent reported working without any written agreement (Table 8.1). Overall, less than 50% of respondents enjoy the full employment protection provided by open-ended employment contracts.

The percentage of temporary employees among the formerly jobless (50.7%) is higher than in the general Polish population. One explanation could be the overrepresentation of young respondents in our sample: 74% were still in their twenties during the 2012 survey, 15.6% were in their thirties, and only 10.4% were older. In Poland, youth are the ones who are the most affected by fixed-term employment (see Kiersztyn 2017a). However, in our sample the young do not appear to be more affected by temporary employment, compared to the older workers (Table 8.1).

Actually, the older workers appear more at risk of working on the least protected civil-law agreements. It also appears that men are worse-off than women in terms of the level of legal protection associated with their employment contract.

Despite their employment on fixed-term contracts, respondents feel relatively protected against dismissal, as data on perceived job insecurity suggest (Table 8.2). Only one out of five considered losing their jobs within 1 year "rather likely", and none chose the response option "certain or very likely". More pessimistic in this regard are the older respondents. Women appear to be slightly more optimistic than men.

Table 8.1 Current job: form of employment by age category and gender

	Total	Age 25–29	Age 30+	Males	Females
Open-ended employment contract	49.3%	48.0%	52.9%	44.0%	52.4%
Fixed-term employment contract	37.3%	42.0%	23.5%	36.0%	38.1%
Civil-law contract/unregistered employment	13.4%	10.0%	23.5%	20.0%	9.5%
N	67	50	17	25	42

Notes: Sample of 70 respondents who are hired employees. Total number of missing data cases: 3

Table 8.2 Perceived likelihood of job loss within 1 year by age category and gender

Job loss:	Total	Age 25–29	Age 30+	Males	Females
Completely or very unlikely	25.0%	26.8%	20.0%	18.8%	29.5%
Rather unlikely	52.6%	55.4%	45.0%	59.4%	47.7%
Rather likely	22.4%	17.9%	35.0%	21.9%	22.7%
N	76	56	20	32	44

Notes: Sample of 77 respondents who are working at the time of the survey. Total number of missing data cases: 1

The type of employment contract and subjective job insecurity are associated, consistent with other studies (see Kiersztyn 2017b), but this relationship is not as evident as might have been expected. The percentages of those who consider their jobs completely or very unlikely to end within 1 year are almost identical among workers with open-ended regular employment contracts, and those in temporary arrangements (25.0% and 26.5%, respectively). However, respondents working on the basis of a temporary contract more often declare job loss to be “rather likely” (29.4%) compared to those in the most protected jobs (12.5%).

The Joblessness study does not include questions on wages, which are an important dimension of job quality (data on wages come from POLPAN 2013, and are presented in the next section). However, looking at the number of working hours may offer some insights regarding the minimum level of remuneration that our respondents are likely to receive. According to the Polish law, all full-time employees are legally entitled to a minimum wage. The statutory minimum wage in Poland has steadily increased in the years preceding 2012 and is now one of the highest among post-communist countries; since 2009, the net minimum wage is slightly above the social minimum poverty line – the level of income that allows participation in society (Kiersztyn 2015).²

Theoretically, only part-time workers can legally receive wages below the social minimum. Of course, this applies only to those protected by the Labor Code. However, even in the case of civil-law or unregistered jobs, earnings to a large extent depend on the number of hours worked per week. For example, a 2008 study of unregistered employment in Poland found that the hourly pay of unregistered workers is not lower than that of regular employees, and the only reason that the former, on average, had lower total earnings was the fact that they worked fewer hours and not on a regular basis (Millward-Brown SMG/KRC and CASE 2008). In the case of respondents in the Joblessness study, the data on the number of hours worked per week suggest that a majority of them are working full-time. In fact, none of the respondents reported working for less than 15 h per week. 18.2% worked between 15 and 32 h per week, which is usually defined in the literature as part-time employment. 57.1% reported working between 35 and 40 h per week (40 h per week is the legal standard of full-time employment in Poland), and the remaining 22.1% reported working even longer hours.

²More information on the Polish social minimum is provided in the next section.

It should be noted that in the Polish context the self-reported weekly number of working hours should be approached with caution when analyzed in relation to wages. In Poland, wages are usually determined not on the basis of hours actually spent on work-related activities, but on the basis of formal contractual full-time or part-time status. A problem arises when work is done partially at home, as is the case in many professional occupations: individuals may differ with respect to the inclusion of time spent on work outside the workplace. Teachers are a typical example – although the Polish law specifies the standard weekly number of classroom hours for a full-time teacher (18 h), teachers are also expected to engage in work-related activities outside the classroom (i.e. preparing for classes, professional development, student evaluation, and various kinds of paperwork). Thus, many full-time teachers report their number of working hours to be 18, but many also report working 40 or more hours (Kiersztyn 2016a). Thus, even working below 35 h per week does not necessarily mean that a given worker is not a full-time employee.

Indeed, it is possible that employment inadequacies experienced by some of our respondents do not result from low hours, but from working overtime. Some respondents reported working as long as 60–70 h per week. In Poland, according to the reports of the Public Labor Inspectorate (PIP), in many cases additional hours spent on work (either at home or at the workplace) are not formally registered as overtime. This is one of the most frequent violation of employee rights. In such cases, working for more than 40 h per week is typically not associated with additional pay. We will return to the issue of wages in the next section.

A crucial indicator of social status is the individual's occupational position. In addition to being a strong determinant of wages, occupation also affects the level of perceived and actual job and employment security (Kiersztyn 2016a, 2017b). In our analysis, occupational position is based on the Polish Social Classification of Occupations (SKZ, Domański et al. 2009), aggregated at the one-digit level. As shown in Table 8.3, employed respondents in the Joblessness study are a very diverse group in terms of occupational status of their 2012 jobs. Twenty one of them

Table 8.3 Level of education and occupational category, crosstabulation

	Education:				Total
	Below secondary	Secondary general	Secondary vocational	Tertiary	
Occupational category					
Managers, professionals, proprietors	1	2	5	13	21
Technicians and lower-level office workers	0	1	9	6	16
Services	9	4	7	1	21
Skilled manual labor	3	4	5	0	12
Unskilled manual labor	4	0	2	0	6
Total	17	11	28	20	76

Notes: Sample of 77 respondents who are working at the time of the survey. Total number of missing data cases: 1

were working as managers or professionals, in most cases teachers. Another 16 were in technical and office occupations – mostly as secretaries or lower-level accountants. A large category was service work – 21 respondents, many of whom were salespersons. The remaining 18 individuals were blue-collar workers in various types of industrial branches, 12 among them had jobs as skilled manual employees, and 6 as unskilled workers.

The data offer no reason to assume an inferior occupational status of the formerly jobless compared to other Polish workers. In particular, the respondents' occupation in general appears to match their level of education, as shown in Table 8.3. The size of the sample is too small to allow a systematic analysis of the relationship between educational and occupational variables for the formerly jobless, and a comparison with the general population. Results in Table 8.3 should be regarded only as a description of our study-specific sample. Nonetheless, these data point to only two cases of evident over-education (secondary vocational graduates working in unskilled manual labor).

Another way to look at these relationships is by comparing different groups of workers with respect to the mean value of an occupational status index. To do so, we use the Index of Material Remuneration (henceforth, MR), developed for SKZ categories. This variable is obtained based on estimations of mean income in occupational categories, taking into account all additional remuneration granted to workers, such as payments for overtime work, as well as awards and bonuses, from October 1999 through January 2000 (Slomczynski 2009). The values of the MR index range from 14.5 to 88.2; the lowest values are assigned to unskilled manual occupations, and the highest to top managers of large enterprises.

In Table 8.4 we present the descriptive statistics for the MR index, for all the employed respondents and separately for the main socio-demographic categories, for different employment contracts and level of subjective job insecurity. As could be expected, there is a relationship between level of education and material remuneration – which means that among the formerly jobless, too, earlier investments in education pay off to some extent. It should be clear, however, that these analyses use a measure of education reported in POLPAN 2008 (the last school completed), and do not take into account any further training that the respondents may have completed from 2008 to 2012 (possibly, even as a reaction to joblessness, in attempt to improve their chances on the labor market). Still, the relationship between education and MR is statistically significant, though not very strong (Eta squared = 0.121, $p < 0.05$). Interestingly, there appears to be no wage premium associated with vocational education: although respondents with secondary education and vocational skills are clearly better off than those with just general secondary education in terms of their chances of finding any job (the percentages of respondents who were employed in 2012 were 73.7% among those with vocational secondary education, and only 50% among those with general vocational education), the wages they are likely to receive once they find a job are, on average, comparable.

There is a gender gap among our respondents: the value of the MR index is 28% higher for men than for women (Eta squared = 0.059, $p < 0.05$). Although the descriptive results presented here do not allow us to assess what part of this

Table 8.4 Descriptive statistics for the index of material remuneration, by type of contract, job insecurity, gender and the level of education

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Total	30.5	15.7	14.8	79.4	77
Level of education					
Below secondary	23.9	11.4	14.8	66.2	17
Secondary general	31.3	13.2	19.4	66.2	11
Secondary vocational	28.6	13.0	18.8	73.2	28
Tertiary	38.9	20.6	19.4	79.4	20
Gender					
Male	35.2	18.2	18.8	79.4	31
Female	27.5	13.2	14.8	73.2	45
Age category					
Age 25–29	31.2	14.9	16.8	73.2	57
Age 30+	28.5	18.2	14.8	79.4	20
Type of contract					
Regular open-ended	30.4	14.8	14.8	73.2	33
Fixed-term employment	26.3	11.0	16.8	66.2	25
Civil law contracts and other	23.9	5.2	18.2	32.2	9
Losing job within a year likely?					
Completely or very unlikely	27.3	11.4	16.8	59.6	19
Rather unlikely	32.0	16.7	14.8	79.4	40
Rather likely	31.0	18.1	18.2	79.4	17

difference is directly attributable to gender, independent of other characteristics that are important determinants of occupational status, the gender differences in our sample of formerly jobless individuals largely mirror those observed on the Polish labor market in general.

A more striking result concerns the age differences in our sample – contrary to what may be observed in the general working population, we find no significant differences in the MR index between those below 30 years of age and older respondents. This finding, coupled with the observations from Tables 8.1 and 8.2, suggest that the older jobless are at a relative disadvantage: even if they manage to find jobs, these tend to be of lower quality than those of other people their age. Their relatively lower education may account for this outcome: more than 60% of the respondents aged 30 and above have not completed high school, and only one out of ten has a university diploma.

Regarding the job insecurity variables, although there are some differences in the average value of the MR index depending on type of contract (with the lowest values for workers on civil-law contracts), these differences are not statistically significant, possibly due to the small sample size. We find no meaningful differences between respondents who differ in their evaluations of the likelihood of job loss.

The final part of our analysis compares the status of respondents' job prior to unemployment with the position held in 2012 to assess whether unemployment

experience hurts one's occupational status and remuneration, consistent with the literature on the scarring effects of unemployment. The previous occupational status concerns the last job reported up to the 2008 wave of POLPAN. Strictly speaking, this may not always be the last job before the most recent period of unemployment, since some respondents may have found and lost employment between the 2008 and the 2012 study. The data on the most recent job is not available, since the Joblessness project did not collect information on any earlier jobs between 2008 and 2012 for those who were employed in 2012. However, since respondents were selected into our study based on their labor market problems observed in 2008, we assume that the last job up to 2008 offers a reasonable approximation of their occupational status before the spell of joblessness based on which they were selected into our sample.

Comparing the 2008 and 2012 data is also interesting due to changes in the general economic context which took place during this period. 2008 was the last year before the onset of the global economic crisis (most of the POLPAN fieldwork was conducted in the spring of 2008). At that time, the unemployment rate in Poland was relatively low, but there was a high incidence of precarious employment and other employment inadequacies. Although the Polish economy did relatively well throughout the crisis, the situation on the labor market did deteriorate to some extent, which may have affected the occupational status of our respondents in 2012.

A majority of respondents in the Joblessness study (both those who had found employment by 2012 and those who did not) had a job either in 2008, or in the period between 2003 and 2008: 56 and 49, respectively. The remaining respondents were in prolonged spells of joblessness: 24 of them had jobs which they reported during their participation in earlier POLPAN waves (1988–2003) and 22 never had a job. This latter group mostly comprises young respondents, who until 2008 had not yet entered the labor market.

Among the 77 respondents who reported being in paid employment in the 2012 Joblessness survey, 71 had had a job before, or in 2008 (prior to the POLPAN 2008 survey). The analysis below focuses on the subsample of 70 respondents, for whom data on occupational position in the previous job (in or before 2008) and current (2012) job were available.

Table 8.5 is a typical mobility table, showing respondents' movement between occupational categories. Respondents who experience no significant occupational mobility in period under study are on the diagonal (highlighted in gray). These are, in total, 35 people, 50% of the sample. Above the diagonal are those who moved to lower status occupational categories, in total 12 people. The remaining 23 respondents actually improved their occupational status despite the economic crisis. The small sample size does not allow for a more detailed occupational categorization, which makes certain types of mobility difficult to interpret in terms of status changes (especially movement between skilled manual labor and services, which largely involve employment as salespersons, or between services and self-employment, which is included in the highest-status jobs regardless of the type of activity, size of business, and actual income). Nevertheless, this result is surprising and warrants further examination.

Table 8.5 Occupational mobility of the jobless respondents: a comparison of the last job up till 2008 with the 2012 job

Previous occupational category	2012 occupational category					Total
	Managers, professionals, proprietors	Technicians, lower-level office workers	Services	Skilled manual labor	Unskilled manual labor	
Managers, professionals, proprietors	7	3	0	0	0	10
Technicians, lower-level office workers	9	9	4	1	0	23
Services	2	2	7	1	1	13
Skilled manual labor	0	0	1	9	2	12
Unskilled manual labor	1	0	8	0	3	12
Total	19	14	20	11	6	70

Notes: Occupational category for previous job based on POLPAN 1988–2008 data. Number of missing data cases: 1. People whose previous job was as an independent farmer are excluded (3 cases)

To determine the characteristics of respondents whose occupational status has improved or deteriorated following joblessness, we compare changes of the MR index across various socio-demographic categories. The MR index offers a more accurate picture of occupational change experienced by individual workers, since it takes into account a more detailed occupational classification at the 4-digit level of SKZ. Looking at these changes, we confirm the main finding from Table 8.5: in our sample, increase in status occurs more frequently than deterioration. For example, assuming that meaningful change occurs if the absolute difference in the MR index values between jobs is 5 units or more, we observe improvement in 12 out of 70 cases, and deterioration in only 5 cases. Among those whose situation improved, 11 cases involve changes of more than 10 units (compared to 3 cases among those whose position deteriorated by more than 10 units).

Table 8.6 presents the descriptive statistics for the change in the MR index by education, gender, age category, employment contract, and subjective job insecurity. We can see that, on average, the MR index improved by 3.67 units. Improvement was stronger among men than women, and among those with tertiary or general secondary education, compared to respondents with secondary vocational education or without high school credentials.

The positive results for general high school graduates (who did not receive any vocational training while at school) are surprising, given the results of other labor market studies in Poland. A potential explanation is that many of those who declared having general vocational education in 2008 continued their education in the later years to gain additional credentials, which allowed them to land better jobs in 2012. This hypothesis cannot be tested directly, as Joblessness project did not ask about

Table 8.6 Descriptive statistics for change in the index of material remuneration, by type of contract, job insecurity, gender and the level of education

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Total	3.67	15.84	-54.10	54.20	70
Level of education in 2008					
Below secondary	2.52	11.16	-3.70	45.10	17
Secondary general	5.34	14.87	-5.40	45.20	10
Secondary vocational	2.13	17.51	-54.10	47.40	24
Tertiary	5.78	18.39	-26.00	54.20	19
Gender					
Male	6.56	17.14	-26.00	54.20	31
Female	1.38	14.54	-54.10	48.20	39
Age category					
Age 25-29	5.66	14.25	-5.80	48.20	50
Age 30+	-1.30	18.74	-54.10	54.20	20
Type of contract					
Regular open-ended	5.46	14.41	-4.30	48.20	30
Fixed-term employment	0.53	16.53	-54.10	45.20	22
Civil law contracts and other	-3.88	8.73	-26.00	3.40	9
Losing job within a year likely?					
Completely or very unlikely	4.72	11.14	-5.60	39.10	17
Rather unlikely	6.45	17.76	-26.00	54.20	37
Rather likely	-4.11	14.01	-54.10	4.20	15

Notes: Change between last job up till 2008 and job reported in 2012

education. However, the interpretation seems likely in light of the POLPAN 2013 data. Among the six respondents who in 2008 reported having completed only general high school, had a job in 2012, and participated in POLPAN 2013, five had continued their education: by 2013 they had gained a post-secondary school diploma or university degree. This result suggests that some of our young jobless respondents may still be in the process of school-to-work transition, which may affect both their subjective experience of joblessness and its objective consequences.

The latter reasoning is confirmed by the substantial difference between the older and younger respondents (Eta squared = 0.04, $p < 0.1$). It is the older jobless who seem most affected by the scarring effects of unemployment, in terms of their occupational status. The type of employment contract also matters, as those whose status deteriorated are heavily concentrated among employees working on the basis of the least protected, civil-law, contracts. Finally, there is a correlation between experiencing a fall in the MR indicator and subjective job insecurity. This may be interpreted in two ways: as an accumulation of various aspects of labor market disadvantage among some of the jobless or as a sense of temporariness among those whose occupational status does not meet their aspirations.

Expectations and Realities: The Jobless Respondents in 2013

In this second part of the analysis we combine 2012 Joblessness data with data from POLPAN 2013 to obtain a longer-term view of employment dynamics. Among the 143 participants of the Joblessness study who completed the questionnaire and did not reach retirement age by 2012, 105 also participated in the 2013 wave of POLPAN. This means a 26.5% attrition rate from 2012 to 2013. The demographic categories with the highest dropout rates were: men, youth below 30 years of age, and respondents with tertiary education (Table 8.7).

We focus primarily on economically active respondents, that is, those who in 2012 were either working or looking for a job. Among the 77 respondents who were working in 2012, 54 participated in the subsequent round of POLPAN. This allows us to assess whether they managed to keep their jobs or find better ones after 1 year. In addition, for 32 out of 42 jobless respondents who in 2012 declared looking for a job, we can assess whether they succeeded in their search.

Table 8.8 indicates that the employment rate among survey participants working 1 year earlier was high: 81.5% were in employment in 2013 (however, it should be noted that the percentage of respondents who remained employed until the time of the survey was slightly lower, 78%). Those who in 2012 were jobless and seeking employment were less lucky, as only 43.8% had found work by 2013 (and only 34.4% have stayed in these newly-found jobs until the time of the 2013 survey). Housewives appear to be the most disadvantaged group, a result which points to the persistence of structural constraints to the employment of women attempting to re-enter the labor market. Additional comparisons reveal that, in fact, those who managed to find jobs after 2012 were mostly younger respondents, aged 29 or below. Among the 18 young respondents unemployed in 2012, 13 reported being

Table 8.7 Participants in the 2012 and 2013 survey; sample composition and attrition rates by gender, age category, and education

	N	N	Composition	Composition	Attrition
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012–2013
Total	143	105	100.0%	100.0%	26.5%
Gender					
Male	47	33	32.9%	31.4%	29.8%
Female	96	72	67.1%	68.6%	25.0%
Age category					
Age 25–29	92	66	64.3%	62.9%	28.3%
Age 30+	51	39	35.7%	37.1%	23.5%
Level of education					
Below secondary	59	42	41.5%	40.0%	28.8%
Secondary general	22	16	15.5%	15.2%	27.3%
Secondary vocational	38	31	26.8%	29.5%	18.4%
Tertiary	23	16	16.2%	15.2%	30.4%

Notes: For one respondent who participated in the 2012 survey, data on educational attainment is unavailable

Table 8.8 Participants in the 2012 and 2013 survey; attrition and 2013 employment rates by 2012 labor market status

Labor market activity in 2012	N (2012)	N (2013)	Attrition rate	Worked in 2013 ^a	Employment rate
(1) WORKING RESPONDENTS	77	54	29.9%	44	81.5%
(1a) working, not wanting to change job	55	37	32.7%	29	78.4%
(1b) working, wanting to change job, no job search	4	3	25.0%	2	66.7%
(1c) working, wanting to change job, job search	18	14	22.2%	13	92.9%
(2) JOBLESS BUT ACTIVE	42	32	23.8%	14	43.8%
(2a) unemployed: not working, job search	32	22	31.2%	11	50.0%
(2b) housewives: not working, job search	10	10	0.0%	3	30.0%
(3) JOBLESS AND INACTIVE	24	19	20.8%	5	26.3%
(3a) jobless, no job search in 2012	9	7	22.2%	3	42.9%
(3b) housewives, no job search in 2012	15	12	20.0%	2	16.7%

Notes: ^a this column reports the number respondents who had a job in 2013. Not all of these jobs were ongoing at the time of the survey – five of them had ended by the time of the POLPAN interview

employed in the following year (and 10 were in an ongoing employment relationship). Conversely, only 1 out of 14 unemployed job seekers aged 30 and above had succeeded in their search for employment. This suggests that, as time passes, the differences in the scarring effects of unemployment between the youngest cohort and other jobless may become more pronounced.

It is interesting to note that even among respondents who were economically inactive in 2012, some report working in 2013. This pertains especially to the jobless who do not consider themselves housewives. This observation suggests that the common categorization of the jobless into economically “active” and “inactive” based on job search declarations in a given moment may not reflect their actual labor market status. Job search is not always a continuous process: if someone declared seeking employment in 2012, this does not mean that they were searching for work throughout the whole period of joblessness. Conversely, many of those who did not report seeking employment in 2012 may have started looking for work at some point before or after the date of the survey. An example is offered by two respondents in the Joblessness project who were not seeking employment at the time of the interview but declared their intention to start their search in the next few months. Indeed, when checking their status with the POLPAN 2013 data, we see that both had found jobs. Only two among the nine nonemployed who were not searching for jobs in 2012, when asked directly whether they would consider re-entering the labor market if certain conditions were met, replied that they did not

want a job under any conditions.³ That is why we decided to include the “inactive” respondents who have found jobs by 2013 in some of the analyses reported below. In total, 63 respondents were in employment according to POLPAN 2013 data.

Job and occupational mobility among the respondents who were working in both 2012 and 2013 is rather limited. Although a significant share of participants declared in 2012 that they would like to change their jobs and were even looking for alternative employment, 1 year later a majority of them were still in the same job. Specifically, only 7 among 44 respondents started the jobs they held in 2013 after the 2012 survey. Moreover, we do not have precise information on the circumstances which led to the change of employment: whether it was a voluntary change – the result of finding a more desired job – or whether job mobility was forced upon them by the loss of their previous job. In this context, it is interesting to note that three out of seven respondents who had changed jobs by 2013, had declared in 2012 that they wanted to remain in their current job. For them, job mobility may have been involuntary. On the other hand, we note that people who changed jobs did not experience any significant deterioration or improvement in their occupational status, as measured by the scale of monetary remuneration.

This lack of upward mobility needs not be a sign of failure. It is possible that the conditions of the respondents’ jobs improved, even while they stayed in their previous employment or moved to new jobs in similar occupations. Given that workers with longer tenure, who have accumulated more on-the-job experience, tend to benefit from better protection, this interpretation seems quite likely. To check this possibility, we compare the respondents’ 2012 and 2013 jobs in terms of type of contract to see whether their situation changed (for better or worse) during the year following the Joblessness survey.

Table 8.9 presents the data on the contractual status of 56 respondents who were hired employees in 2013.⁴ Several respondents have indeed moved into more secure contracts (21.1% of those who were employed, and 47.1% of those who in 2012

Table 8.9 Employment contract reported in POLPAN 2013 by employment status and type of contract in 2012

	Open-ended contract in 2013	Fixed-term contract in 2013	Civil law contracts in 2013	Total
Jobless in 2012	8	5	5	18
Open-ended contract in 2012	17	4	0	21
Fixed-term contract in 2012	6	7	0	13
Civil law contracts in 2012	2	0	2	4
Total	33	17	7	56

Notes: Civil law contracts also include unregistered employment

³We do not have analogous information for the housewife subsample.

⁴The self-employed in either 2012 or 2013 and those for whom data on employment contracts were unavailable are excluded from this analysis (in general, the self-employed mostly remained self-employed in POLPAN 2013).

were working on temporary job arrangements). Although comparisons should be treated with caution due to the small sample size, there appears to be an effect of job tenure on the level of employee protection: those who were employed in 2012, 1 year later are more often hired based on regular open-ended contracts, compared to those whose spell of joblessness ended after the 2012 survey. Still, a significant group of respondents remain on less protected contracts despite having accumulated an additional year of tenure, which is striking given the fact that, from a legal point of view, probationary contracts in Poland should last for only 3 months.⁵ In addition, we find that, while a majority of those employed in 2012 managed to keep their jobs until the subsequent POLPAN wave, the incidence of job loss is significantly higher among respondents who in 2012 were working on the basis of fixed-term contracts or civil law agreements. Specifically, almost one out of three workers in such non-standard arrangements moved into joblessness in 2013, compared to only one out of 22 respondents with a regular open-ended employment contract.

In the final part of the analysis, we provide a comparison of expectations and realities: did respondents' 2013 jobs match the description of the "desired job" reported in 2012? We focus on wage levels, which are one of the main indicators of job quality. To assess respondents' wages, we use an absolute criterion, which defines low pay as net monthly earnings from the respondent's main job (regardless of the number of hours worked) below the social minimum poverty line for an individual living alone. The social minimum is the current price of a minimal amount of goods and services that enables household members to participate in social life. The list of such goods and services was created in the 1980s by experts from the Polish Institute of Labor and Social Affairs, with the participation of doctors, social workers, and consumption researchers, and underwent only minor changes over the last decades. Therefore, the value of the social minimum criterion is independent of the changes in the economic situation and political influences. It is also worth noting that, in absolute terms, this threshold is relatively low compared to the two-thirds median criterion in other developed countries. For example, in 2008 and 2013 the value of the social minimum for a one-person household was equivalent to around 250 Euro per month (1061.3 Polish zloty, in June 2013; Kiersztyn 2015). Let us point out that in the same year, the statutory minimum wage in Poland was 1600 zł before taxes, 1181 zł net.

In the Joblessness project, all respondents who declared that they were looking for a job (i.e. regardless of current employment status) were asked the following question: "What would be the minimum wage level which you could accept? Please provide the approximate net monthly wage". Sixty participants provided an answer. The values they gave ranged from 600 to 6000 zł. The median expected wage in our sample was 1600 zł. This is not much higher than the social minimum poverty line

⁵The persistence of fixed-term employment cannot be explained by worker preferences – since among the 61 respondents who were asked in 2012 which type of contractual arrangements they would like to have in their future jobs, 48 (almost 80%) pointed to an open-ended employment contract. Among the remaining respondents, only 4 stated explicitly that they would prefer fixed-term or civil-law contracts (3 pointed to self-employment, and 5 replied that they did not know).

or the statutory minimum wage at that time. In sum, more than 75% of our respondents indicated wages above the social minimum but below 2237 zł, which, according to the Central Statistical Office, was the value of the median of net monthly earnings on the Polish labor market in late 2012. A majority of respondents whose acceptable earnings level was above the median wage (11 out of 14) already had employment at the time of the Joblessness survey.

A comparison of the rates of employment by self-assessed acceptable wage levels does not confirm the popular notion of joblessness arising as a result of overly high wage expectations on the part of the jobless. Actually, we find those with the lowest expectations in 2012 (of wages below the median in the sample) least likely to be in employment in 2013 (11 out of 27 respondents, 40.7%). The respective percentage for all the respondents who answered the question regarding acceptable wages was 18 points higher. This suggests that acceptable wage thresholds to some extent reflect the respondents' assessments of their own weak bargaining position on the labor market (maybe even more so than their actual financial needs).

Let us now turn to the assessment of actual wages respondents receive. We use POLPAN 2013 information pertaining to respondents' current main job, where the main job is the one they spend most time in. Net monthly wages range from as little as 30 zł to 4000 zł. The median in the sample is 1500 zł, with almost 75% receiving wages below the median for Poland. A significant percentage of respondents, 16.4%, receives wages below the social minimum threshold.

Only 27 respondents who in 2012 provided an assessment of their acceptable wage were employed 1 year later. For this small group, it is possible to compare their expected and their actual wage (Table 8.10). This comparison suggests that, despite having rather low expectations, the formerly jobless receive, on average, wages that fall well below the value they provided as an acceptable minimum. The difference is 281 zloty, and it is larger for those whose 2012 wage expectations were the highest. In short, while these results should be treated with caution due to the very small sample size, we find little evidence of the former jobless' success on the labor market, if success is defined in terms of adequate wage. Not only are our respondents disadvantaged in terms of wages compared to the general population, they tend to receive even less than they define as acceptable, despite the fact that their expectations do not appear overly high.

Table 8.10 Difference between acceptable and actual wages

Expected wage in 2012	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Below 2012 sample median	7	654	-1050	900	11
Between sample median and population median	-350	728,7	-900	1000	6
Above population median	-557	943	-2319	700	10
Total	-281	800	-2319	1000	27

Conclusions

Results of this analysis offer some reason for optimism regarding to the labor market chances of jobless individuals. Despite both the Joblessness study and POLPAN 2013 having been conducted during times of economic crisis, many of our respondents managed to find jobs, and – more importantly – to keep them for a period of at least 1 year. These outcomes could be treated as evidence of labor market success. In terms of occupational position, the findings presented in this chapter may also be regarded as quite positive. The jobs respondents report generally match their level of education. When comparing the values of the material remuneration index for respondents' occupations before and after joblessness we see no signs of a general deterioration in occupational status, which could be attributed to unemployment scarring effects. On the contrary, for many respondents, especially those with more education, we observe a slight increase in the level of expected monetary rewards between their last occupation up to 2008 and the one reported in the Joblessness survey.

We also note that a majority of the jobs that respondents found were on employment contracts protected by the Labor Code (either open-ended or fixed-term), as opposed to civil-law agreements, which were relatively rare. In addition, data on perceived job insecurity suggest that the respondents have some sense of job stability. Indeed, their positive view of their chances of keeping their jobs turned out to be quite realistic: a majority of those working in 2012 held the same jobs 1 year later, at the time of the 2013 POLPAN survey. These results do not support the concerns that the Polish unemployed face an increased risk of intermittent employment or later career patterns consisting of short-term jobs separated by recurrent periods of joblessness. However, it appears that there is a group of workers who remain in temporary arrangements (specifically, fixed-term employment contracts) for prolonged periods of time, which is likely to have an effect on job security and labor market outcomes. We also need to keep in mind that the period of observation in this analysis is too short to allow us to assess long-term scarring effects of the joblessness experience. According to many studies, such effects may persist over numerous years and have a detrimental effect on life-long careers of young people (McQuaid 2015; Nilsen and Reiso 2014). The data from this study do not allow for a full assessment of these effects.

We have two additional reservations. First, the generally positive results of this analysis may be attributable to the overrepresentation of young people (age 25–29) in the Joblessness sample. Though unemployment, especially one that lasts for extended periods of time, may lead to scarring effects regardless of age, there is evidence that the young are more likely to exit unemployment and move into employment, compared to older people (e.g., Landmesser 2014). In addition, our respondents were selected for the Joblessness project based on 2008 data, when the youngest cohort was in their early twenties. This means that some of the jobless spells that were the basis of this selection could have occurred before the youngest respondents completed university education (the 2013 data confirm this scenario for

several respondents; however, we miss information on individuals who dropped out of the panel sample between 2012 and 2013). Gaining additional credentials is likely to have had a strong and positive effect on labor market status observed in 2012 and 2013.

Indeed, when we compare the employment outcomes of respondents from the youngest cohort with those age 30 and above, a less optimistic picture emerges. First, among those still jobless in 2012, practically only people in their twenties managed to find employment in the following year. Second, older respondents who found employment were more often employed on the basis of the least protected civil-law agreements and more often regarded losing their jobs within the following year as “rather likely”. Third, comparisons of their 2012 and earlier jobs suggest that these respondents have experienced a significant deterioration in their occupational status (conceptualized in terms of material remuneration) after their jobless spell. Even if the youngest cohort appears relatively unharmed by their experience of joblessness, this is probably not the case for the remaining jobless. Though the subsample of respondents aged 30 and above is too small to allow any generalization, these observations are certainly disquieting and merit further study.

The second reservation concerns respondents’ earnings. Despite the fact that the expectations of the jobless regarding their future wages appear to be quite modest in a majority of cases (not exceeding the median monthly wage in Poland), respondents mostly end up with earnings way below the values which in 2012 they reported as their acceptable minimum. This observation should be treated with caution due to the very small sample size. Still, it suggests that, regardless of the rather positive findings regarding the chances of finding and keeping employment, significant scarring effects of joblessness may occur with respect to later wages. In other words, what future research and policy may need to focus on is not necessarily transitions from unemployment to (any) job, but rather movement from joblessness to in-work-poverty, and the possible consequences of such movement for workers and their households, and society as a whole.

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Part III

Daily Life of the Jobless

Chapter 9

Irregular Jobs and Housework



In this chapter we examine work performed outside of regular employment: irregular jobs and unpaid home production. We describe who among the project participants engages in these types of economic activities and what amount of time they devote to them. Following the literature, we pay close attention to labor market status and gender differences.

A major distinction in terms of occupational placement is that between permanent positions and informal jobs. While both generate income, permanent positions come with higher employment security, and often also with higher earnings and status. It may be tempting to assume that informal jobs, or odd jobs, are relegated to people who do not have stable employment. This would be an oversimplification. First, among individuals with permanent jobs, are those who take on additional jobs to supplement their income. Second, odd jobs are also attractive for some of the people mainly engaged in household activities.

Increasingly, social scientists analyze unpaid home production as an economic activity in its own right. Helena Lopata in her well researched book *Circles and Settings: Role Changes of American Women* (1994: 137) defines housework as “the production of the goods and services by the members of a household, for their own consumption, using their own capital and their own unpaid labor”, which includes goods and services such as preparing meals, cleaning, or child care. In all these cases the household provides the added value to purchased intermediate commodities and makes them ready for final consumption using the household’s own capital and labor. The consumption of these final goods and services is not associated with monetary exchange, which distinguishes housework from paid employment. Breaking up with earlier studies that juxtaposed paid work to leisure, researchers now recognize the importance of housework and the strategies which household members employ to allocate time to solving various tasks.

In looking at both informal jobs and household work, we analyze differences in time allocation across three groups of respondents, based on information they provided in the 2012 study¹: (a) participants who in the 2008 POLPAN survey reported unemployment and who, at the time of the 2012 survey, are employed; we refer to this group as currently employed; (b) those who were unemployed in 2008 and continue to report unemployment in 2012; we refer to them as the currently unemployed; and (c) those who in the 2008 POLPAN waves identified as homemakers; since this group comprises only women, we refer to it as housewives. For home production, in addition to describing between-group differences in time allocation, we look at the monetary value, which respondents subjectively assign to performing various household tasks.

Problem Statement and Research Expectations

Employment and the amount of unpaid home production are related. Personal preferences notwithstanding, the extent of financial resources that households have at their disposal impacts the degree to which household chores – for example cooking, cleaning, child- and elderly care – can be outsourced. From this perspective, job loss can influence the total amount of housework performed, because some goods or services that previously were being purchased on the market now need to be produced within the household (De Ruijter et al. 2005; Heisig 2011). Thus, the loss of paid employment may change both the allocation of housework within the household, and the amount of time spent on housework.

The housework literature refers to *time availability*, *relative resources* and *doing gender* as the “big three” theoretical explanations for spouses’ time devoted to household labor (Gough and Killewald 2010). *Time availability theory* suggests that allocation of time to different tasks within the household depends on the labor market status of the household members, in that members working shorter hours or who are unemployed take on more of the household-related activities than those who work longer hours for pay (Presser 1994). Adjustments are made as the labor market status of members of the household changes (Bianchi et al. 2000; England and Farkas 1986; Gough and Killewald 2011). According to the *theory of relative resources*, spouses decide on housework allocation on the basis of their contribution to the household budget, with lower earners expected to devote more time to household labor (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Evertsson and Neramo 2004). We agree with Gough and Killewald (2010) that it is difficult to distinguish, empirically, time availability effects from the effects that relative resource theory predicts. Spouses who work fewer hours in paid labor tend to have lower earnings. If we observe that they do spend more time in doing household chores, it could be either

¹The 2012 Joblessness study focuses on a purposive sub-sample of 149 respondents of the 2008 wave of the Polish Panel Survey. Selection into the Joblessness study took into consideration respondents’ labor market situations in 2008. For details, see the introductory chapter of this book.

because they have more non-market time for housework, or because they have less power to get out of such work (p. 17). Finally, the “*doing gender*” theory stipulates that housework is a space for the symbolic formation of gender relations and that cultural norms play an important role in deciding which spouse should devote time to the labor force and which should dedicate time to domestic labor (West and Zimmerman 1987).

For the purposes of our analyses, we treat these theoretical insights as largely complementary. We expect that people without employment – the unemployed and the homemakers – spend more time doing irregular, odd jobs than the employed. Further, homemakers likely devote less time to odd jobs than the unemployed. This may be for two reasons. First, homemakers are defined as individuals whose main activity is running their own household, who are not employed and do not seek work. Thus, they would be less likely to take up any kind of jobs than people who used to work for pay but found themselves out of work. Second, the unemployed who are seeking employment might take up odd jobs not only to generate income, but also as a strategy for increasing their chances of securing a permanent position, either with the same employer or thanks to the network of connections they could establish while doing informal jobs.

With regard to housework, micro rationality would suggest that individuals who have a permanent job would spend less time doing household chores than those who do not have a job. This simple pattern is likely complicated by gender differences, as suggested by a number of studies (e.g., Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010; Bianchi et al. 2012), which show that women tend to spend far more time on housework than men regardless of their labor market status. We expect homemakers (housewives) to devote the most time to housework due to their self-defined role, given also that they do not search for paid jobs.

Irregular jobs and housework are time investments and, as such, are or could be evaluated with some price tags. The amounts of time spent on either activity, together with actual or implied returns, are crucial factors of the non-market economy. For this reason, we analyze both time devoted to odd jobs and to housework, and their actual or perceived monetary value. Specifically, we analyze how much respondents earn on irregular (odd) jobs, and how they assess the monetary value of various household tasks they perform: preparing meals, shopping, doing laundry, cleaning the house, or caring for others.² We used the subjective assessments respondents provided for their involvement in different chores (amount per hour for a given activity) to compute the total value of housework. We examine differences in the total value of housework among men and women belonging to three categories: employees, unemployed and housewives. According to the theories of time availability, relative resources, and “*doing gender*” – and noting that Poland is a socially conservative country with traditional gender roles – we can predict that men, especially those employed, earn more on irregular (odd) jobs and assess the mone-

²As part of the Joblessness study, we asked respondents to attach an hourly price tag to various household chores they perform: preparing meals, shopping, doing laundry, cleaning the house, or caring for others.

tary value of their household duties, per time units, higher than women. We also expect that housewives, in comparison to the other two groups, underestimate the value of their work in the household when this value is expressed in monetary terms.

Results

Informal (Odd) Jobs

The literature on labor market distinguishes between permanent (stable) full-time employment and jobs that are performed on an *ad hoc* basis or with very limited time involvement (Marzano 2004; Dallago 1990). Yet few studies use both criteria, sporadic occurrence and time restriction, in a uniform way. Some researchers consider any seasonal or occasional work as an indicator of the presence of odd jobs, others refer only to timing and classify odd jobs as those that people perform less than 3 h a day or 10 h per week.

Figure 9.1 provides information on the prevalence of part-time employment, defined as ten or fewer hours a week among European countries, on the basis of the European Social Survey, Round 5 (2010).³ The bars show proportions for men and women aged 21–50 years without permanent employment who had a job in which they worked ten or fewer hours per week. For Poland, the situation is not that bleak: only about 11% of both men and of women report being without permanent jobs

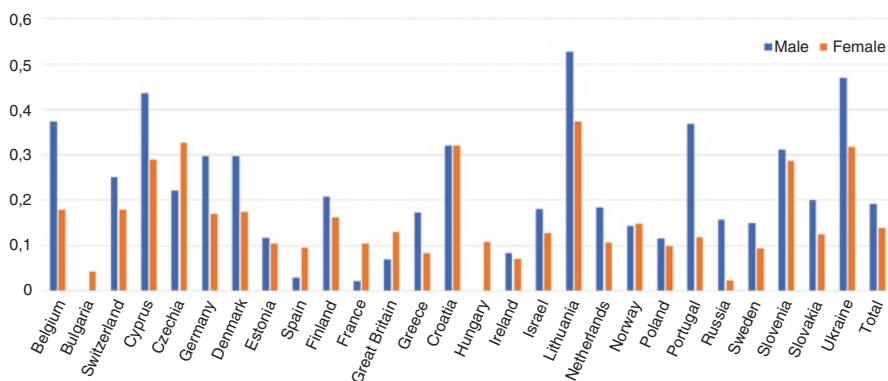


Fig. 9.1 Prevalence of part-time employment in Europe (ESS 5, 2010)

³The European Social Survey (europeansocialsurvey.org) is an academically driven, comparative cross-national general population survey carried out in most countries in Europe (and in Israel) every 2 years since 2002. The 5th Round of the ESS covered the following countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine.

Table 9.1 Percent of people undertaking par-time jobs (for 10 or less hours a week) in Europe, by gender and labor market status (ESS Round 5)

Categories of respondents	% with part-time jobs		Total
	Men	Women	
Europe, 27 countries			
Paid work ^a N _{total} = 3171, men = 26.4%, women = 73.6%	14.1	9.0	10.3
Unemployed, looking for a job N _{total} = 323, men = 35.0%, women = 65.0%	13.3	17.1	15.8
Unemployed, not looking for a job N _{total} = 104, men = 42.3%, women = 57.7%	13.6	21.7	18.3
Homemaker, looking after children N _{total} = 547, men = 4.0%, women = 96.0%	4.5	15.6	15.2
Total ^b N _{total} = 3523, men = 37.4%, women = 62.6%	16.4	13.1	14.0
Poland			
Paid work ^a N _{total} = 70, men = 30.0%, women = 70.0%	3.1	11.6	9.1
Total ^c N _{total} = 99, men = 32.3%, women = 67.7%	11.5	9.9	10.4

^aThose without full-time employment but working for more than 10 h a week

^bIncludes disabled, retired, in military, and in education

^cFor all persons without full-time employment

and working part-time. This is the seventh lowest level among the 27 studied countries, and four times lower than the record high of 45% in Hungary. Poland is also relatively equal as far as the gender breakdown of holding part-time jobs goes. The difference between men and women is around 1 percentage point, compared to a 25 percentage point difference in Portugal (in favor of men) and a 10 percentage point difference in Hungary and the Czech Republic (in favor of women).

Next, we use the ESS Round 5 data to examine the prevalence of part-time employment between different groups of respondents based on their labor market position and gender (see Table 9.1). This division mirrors rather closely the three groups we compare and contrast in the Joblessness study, to get a general sense of how the prevalence of part-time employment varies by labor market status in the pooled sample of 27 European countries. We find that the unemployed and homemakers are more frequently engaged in part-time employment than those individuals who work for more than 10 h per week but do not have full-time employment. As expected, there are important gender differences in undertaking part-time employment: women, both unemployed women and homemakers, more frequently are engaged in this kind of activity than men.

With ESS Round 5 it is not possible to analyze patterns in Poland in the detail we provided for the pooled data, because of small sample sizes: for Poland, the unemployed and homemakers make up less than ten cases. Still, we would like to point out that Polish women without full-time employment but working for more than 10 h a week undertake part-time employment more frequently than men.

Table 9.2 Percent of Poles undertaking irregular (odd) jobs, the amount of time devoted to this kind of activity and income earned, for the employed, the unemployed, and housewives (Joblessness study)

	Performing irregular(odd) jobs		Total N = 100%	For those performing irregular (odd) jobs ^a		
	Yes	No		Median number of hours per week ^b	Income per hour (PLN)	Average income in PLN per month ^c
Categories of respondents	Percent					
Employed – total	16.0	84.0	75	3.0	16.5	213
Male	15.6	84.4	32	1.5	34.9	225
Female	16.3	83.7	43	3.5	13.0	196
Unemployed – total	32.4	67.6	34	4.5	15.5	300
Male	33.3	66.7	15	7.0	19.5	587
Female	31.6	68.4	19	4.5	12.9	250
Housewife	20.1	79.9	38	3.5	20.9	315
Total	21.1	78.9	147	3.5	16.6	250
Male	21.3	78.7	47	2.5	34.9	375
Female	21.0	79.0	100	3.5	16.3	245

^aEstimates for performing informal (odds) jobs should be treated with caution since they refer to small observation numbers ($4 \leq N \leq 37$)

^bRounded to half an hour

^cAt the time of the Joblessness study, 1 PLN was approximately 0.25 Euro, and 0.30 USD

For Poland, we turn to the Joblessness study, which offers richer data. Here, respondents provided information about odd jobs defined as “various sporadic jobs that give some, typically small and irregular income.” The interview questions asked about the number of hours spent doing odd jobs per month, and the income received from these jobs per month. By contrast, in the ESS odd jobs are defined only in terms of the number of hours worked per week. In Table 9.2 we provide information on the frequency of occurrence of odd jobs, their duration in terms of number of hours per week, monthly income from odd jobs, and hourly income.⁴

Before commenting on numbers in Table 9.2 we note that, in contrast to the ESS Round 5 – Poland sample, our project does not rely on a nationally representative sample, which hinders any direct comparison of results. Additionally, although our classification resembles that in the ESS study, there are some notable differences. First, we define the employed as people working full-time, 15 or more hours a week (paid job in ESS means any type of employment with 10 or more hours/week). Second, in this chapter we do not distinguish between the unemployed who seek a job and those who do not, mainly because differences in these subcategories are negligible.

⁴We use income per month to facilitate comparison with statistics on earning from the main jobs later in this chapter.

A cursory look at the full sample of respondents for whom we have valid information reveals that about one fifth (21%) of the 147 people reported working odd jobs, with no significant differences between women and men. These figures, however, conceal the differences by labor market status. The proportion of currently unemployed respondents performing odd jobs is twice that of respondents who were unemployed in 2008 but had employment in 2012. Within either of these two groups gender differences are very small: 33.3% men vs. 31.6% women among the unemployed, and 15.6% men vs. 16.3% women among the employed. Looking at housewives, we find that, indeed, fewer report having informal jobs than the unemployed. Nonetheless, they make up a larger proportion of odd jobs holders than the employed.

Among people with jobs and among the unemployed, men have higher hourly earnings than women. These differences are largest among the currently employed, where men earn over twice as much per hour than women. Among the currently unemployed, men's hourly earnings are about 50% higher than women's. A comparison of hourly earnings within gender categories and by labor market group reveals an interesting discrepancy. Hourly earnings from odd jobs of employed men are twice as high as hourly earnings of unemployed men, but there is no such difference between employed and unemployed women. Housewives earn significantly more per hour of odd jobs than other categories of women.

Since the proportion of persons involved in informal jobs is not constant across labor market categories, in Table 9.3, we provide average earnings for these categories, assuming that those who do not work on odd jobs earn nothing. After recalculation, the amounts are much smaller than for odd jobs earners but they give a better sense about the contribution of this kind of activity to the overall distribution of income.

As indicated in the last column of Table 9.3, the contribution of income from irregular (odd) jobs to the overall household income in the entire sample is 1.58%. We note that different groups bring in different amounts. The greatest contribution

Table 9.3 Income contribution from irregular (odd) jobs to the overall household income of the employed, the unemployed, and housewives (Joblessness study)

Categories of respondents	Average income from irregular (odd) jobs in PLN per month for the entire category	Average household income	Income contribution from irregular (odd) jobs, in percentage
Employed – total	34	3979.0	0.85
Male	35	4335.7	0.81
Female	32	3685.3	0.87
Unemployed – total	97	2739.0	3.54
Male	195	2592.3	7.52
Female	79	2851.2	2.77
Housewife	63	2832.1	2.22
Total	53	3361.7	1.58
Male	80	3782.9	2.14
Female	51	3165.4	1.61

is made by unemployed men – over 7 percent of the overall household income comes for their involvement in odd jobs; we remind the reader that among our respondents, unemployed men also report the largest number of weekly hours spent on irregular jobs (cf. Table 9.2). For unemployed women and housewives, the financial contribution from odd jobs is between 2% and 3%. Comparing the last two columns of Table 9.3, one could conclude that earnings from irregular (odd) jobs have some equalizing effect. We urge caution with this respect, given data limitations. In particular, these data show only one person’s earnings, the respondent’s, whereas household income may come from more contributors. We do not know to what extent the other household members work odd jobs, and if they do, whether their contribution goes in the same direction.

Overall, results support our expectations that individuals without employment, the unemployed and homemakers are more likely to engage in irregular or odd jobs than the employed. We also expected that among the jobless, homemakers take up odd jobs less often than individuals who are unemployed and seek employment, which is supported by our data. In addition, compared to women, men’s income from informal jobs contributes more to the total household income, even when men report working fewer hours than women (the employed).

Housework

To put information on housework in the Joblessness study in context, let us first refer to data for Europe (see Fig. 9.2). Using information from ESS Round 5 (2010), we find that in the pooled sample for 27 European countries, women spend on average more than twice as much time doing housework than men, with a mean of 21.8 h per week for women and 9.9 for men.⁵ Since the conceptualization of house-

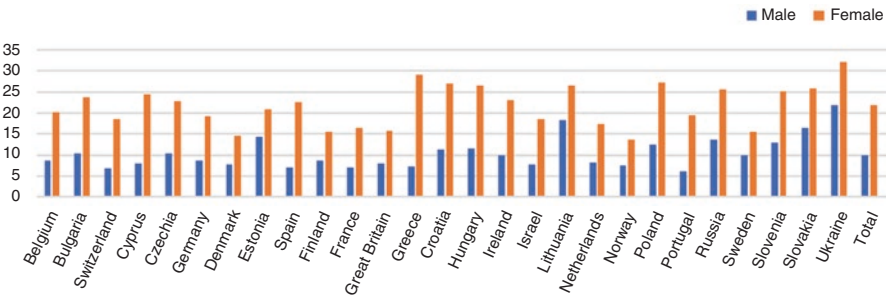


Fig. 9.2 Number of hours per week allocated to housework, by gender (ESS 5, 2010)

⁵ESS 5 question: G76 I would now like to ask you about housework. By housework, I mean things done around the home such as cooking, washing, cleaning, care of clothes, shopping, maintenance of property, but not including childcare or leisure activities. About how many hours a week, in total, do you personally spend on housework?

Table 9.4 Average hours per week spent on housework in Europe and Poland, by labor market status and gender (ESS 5)

Categories of respondents	Mean number of hours/week doing housework		
	Men	Women	Total
Europe, 27 countries			
Paid work N _{total} = 15,111, men = 52.6%, women = 47.4%	8.4	17.2	12.6
Unemployed, looking for a job N _{total} = 1224, men = 49.9%, women = 50.1%	12.7	25.4	19.1
Unemployed, not looking for a job N _{total} = 455, men = 36.5%, women = 64.5%	15.0	27.7	22.7
Homemaker^a N _{total} = 2999, men = 5.5%, women = 94.5%	19.6	30.0	29.4
Total^b N _{total} = 27,936, men = 47.9%, women = 52.1%	9.9	21.8	16.1
Poland			
Paid work N _{total} = 555, men = 58.4%, women = 41.6%	10.5	22.0	15.3
Unemployed, looking for a job N _{total} = 32, men = 50.0%, women = 50.0%	17.7	24.4	21.1
Unemployed, not looking for a job N _{total} = 17, men = 47.1%, women = 52.9%	33.2	22.9	27.8
Homemaker^a N _{total} = 87, men = 1.2%, women = 98.8%	(10.0) ^c	40.3	40.0
Total^b N _{total} = 931, men = 51.4%, women = 48.6%	12.6	27.3	19.7

^aIncludes other categories such as disabled, retired, in military, and in education
^bIncludes those who stay home looking for children
^cFor Poland, the ESS sample contains one male respondent who identifies as a homemaker (n = 1)

work in ESS Round 5 does not include childcare (cf. Footnote 4), one can assume that gender differences would be even larger when children are involved. Compared to the European average, the breakdown of housework by gender in Poland just as unequal as the European average, with women spending 27.3 h per week on housework *versus* 12.6 h for men.⁶

Time allocation to housework can be further broken down by labor market status to verify our research expectations stated at the beginning of the chapter. Results in Table 9.4 show that time allocation to housework varies by labor market situation and gender. The labor market categories: individuals in paid work, the unemployed who are looking for a job, the unemployed who are not looking for a job, and home-

⁶According to an OECD study (Miranda 2011), in Poland the gender gap in unpaid work is almost the same as in the ESS study: for housework women spend around 14 h per week more than men. The OECD study is based on time-use surveys, and includes care for children and other persons in the household. Due to these differences in methodology the mean values in the OECD study are higher than in ESS study (around 31.5 h per week for women and 17.5 for men).

makers, were constructed to resemble, as much as the ESS data allow, the three-group division in the Joblessness study.

Both in the pooled sample for Europe and in the sample for Poland, housework consumes the largest amount of time in the case of housewives, followed by the unemployed, with persons in paid employment spending the least time on household chores, which supports our expectations about the variation in housework across labor market groups.

For the 27 countries of Europe together, the general pattern of gender differences is unequivocal: irrespective of labor market status, women devote more time to housework than men. Looking at Poland only, one exception is noticeable: among unemployed people not seeking a job, men spend, on average, more hours per week on housework than women.

Home production involves a variety of activities, whose completion may part along labor market status and gender lines. Yet, the ESS Round 5 asked only one question about time spent on housework in general. To get a better understanding of the different tasks that home production entails and their perceived monetary value, we turn to data from the Joblessness study.

All respondents in the Joblessness project were asked how much time they spent – in hours per day, week, or month, depending on the activity – on the following: preparing meals, grocery shopping, other shopping, laundry, cleaning and tidying, other household chores, caring for a person in the household, and caring for a person outside of the household. This information is summarized in Table 9.5, which records the number of hours per week that men and women of different labor market status spend on given household activities.

In our study, women report spending 51.7 h a week on all household activities together, while the corresponding number reported by men is 15.1 h. This overall large gender gap reflects both substantive and methodological factors. There are differences in the design of the sample (see discussion of Table 9.2). Moreover, in the Joblessness study questions about housework include childcare, which is omitted in the ESS.

Let us compare differences in time allocation by labor market categories and gender. For all types of household activities, the differences in time spent on them by unemployed and employed men are small, with the exception of “caring for a person outside of one’s household” – but cell sizes in both cases are 1, so the error might be very large. Greater variation in time spent on housework appears between employed and unemployed women. Regarding gender differences, we find the greatest discrepancy within the category of the unemployed; here, women spend over 60 h more per week on all household activities taken together than men. In this category, the particularly large gender discrepancy pertains to caring for others, meals, and cleaning.

Returning to differences among women: compared to employed women, unemployed women and housewives spend more time on home-bound activities (preparing meals, washing, cleaning), and less on out-of-home tasks (grocery shopping and other shopping). This could reflect a combination of (a) daily routines – working women go shopping on their way to and from work, whereas for housewives and the

Table 9.5 Time spent on different types of housework (in hours per week) by current labor market status

Labor market status	Number of hours per week									
	Meals	Groceries	Shopping	Washing	Cleaning	Care	Care outside	Other	Total	
Employed	Male	8.7	2.0	0.7	1.7	4.7	25.6	2.0	2.8	14.9
	Female	17.9	4.3	1.1	3.1	6.9	27.2	20.0	3.1	35.7
	Total	15.1	3.3	0.9	2.8	6.3	26.8	11.0	2.9	27.0
Unemployed	Male	8.7	2.4	0.6	1.1	2.8	22.5	21.0	3.6	15.5
	Female	23.2	3.4	0.8	3.4	10.5	47.7	20.5	7.3	75.8
	Total	20.2	3.1	0.7	3.1	8.6	41.0	20.6	5.4	49.2
Housewife	Female	21.9	2.8	0.8	3.4	8.1	38.9	3.5	5.8	58.6
	Male	8.7	2.1	0.6	1.6	4.2	24.2	11.5	3.1	15.1
	Female	20.6	3.6	0.9	3.3	8.1	37.7	15.6	5.5	51.7
Total	18.4	3.1	0.9	3.1	7.3	35.5	14.7	4.5	40.2	

Table 9.6 Time spent on housework (in hours per week) by current labor market status of the respondent and the respondent’s partner

Respondent		Respondent’s partner		
Labor market status	Gender	Employed	Unemployed	Housewife/other
Employed	Male	22.5	6.3 ^a	24.8 ^a
	Female	44.8	58.3 ^a	–
Unemployed	Male	29.5 ^a	20.9 ^a	6.2 ^a
	Female	94.2	69.8 ^a	–
Housewife	Female	73.3	85.0 ^a	–

^aN < 5

unemployed women, their partners perform part of these chores, (b) financial arrangements – as the employed have more economic resources, including for shopping, and less time left for cooking and cleaning, and (c) different personal preferences.

We emphasize here that the greatest difference between employed and not employed women pertains to the time spent on caring for other people. Employed women spend on average 27.2 h per week taking care of others, compared to 47.7 h for unemployed women and 38.9 h for housewives. In the case of caring for individuals outside of their own household, employed and unemployed women spend around 20 h per week, and housewives around 3.5 h. This result speaks to the issue of a qualitative difference in the social capital that women who spent at least some time out of the labor market can accrue (see Russell 1999).

Earlier in the chapter we stated that, based on insights from the housework literature, we expect that allocation of time to different tasks within the household depends on the labor market status of the household members. Table 9.6 presents the number of hours spent weekly on housework by the labor market status of the respondent (in rows) and of the partner (columns). The cell sizes in some cases are too small to draw conclusions, nevertheless the observed differences are instructive. Women whose partner is employed spend on average 44.8 h on housework if they are employed, and 94.2 h if they are unemployed. Unemployed men whose partners are employed spend 29.5 h per week on housework slightly less (20.9 h) if they are both unemployed, and much less if their partner is a housewife or in another situation (6.2 h).

There is also a substantial difference for housewives: they spend more time on housework if their partner is unemployed (85.0 h) than if he is employed (73.3 h). Housewives spend additional time on preparing meals when their husbands are more often home, which happens when they are unemployed. This could account for the substantial difference among housewives in spending time on housework depending on the employment status of their partners.

Table 9.7 Perceived monetary values of household activities in Polish zlotys

Activity	In Polish zlotys (PLN) per hour			N	Occupation closest to the activity	Range of earnings per hour in zlotys
	Mean	Median	90th Percentile			
Meals	14.6	11	20	103	Cooks	12–20
Groceries	13.3	10	20	128	Delivery persons	9.5–12
Shopping	13.7	10	20	124	Shop helpers	9.5–15
Washing	14.9	10	25	106	Laundromat leaners	9–20
Cleaning	15.0	15	25	113	Household cleaners	8.25–20
Care	14.3	12	20	58	Baby sitters	8.25–15

Life at Home: Perceived Monetary Value of Housework

The literature discusses three general methods for valuing housework, which Deanna L. Sharpe and Mohamed Abdel-Ghany (1997) summarized well:

One such method is value-added. This method involves measuring household outputs in physical units and evaluating them at market prices, then subtracting the cost of purchased inputs, resulting in the value-added by households [...] To determine a wage rate for the homemaker, the value added for the different commodities produced during a specific period of time is divided by the number of hours spent in production.

The second method of valuing household production time is replacement cost which measures the value of household production time in terms of what it would cost to replace it in the market. There are two main variants of replacement cost. The first is the equivalent homemaker method [...] in which the wage rate of a housekeeper who provides the same package of household tasks is used to calculate the value of time spent by the homemaker in producing household production. The second variant is the specific services replacement cost method. It is determined by using the equivalent market wage rate of a specialist for each task times the number of hours spent by the homemaker performing the task [...].

The third method of valuing household production time is the opportunity cost approach. According to this method, the value of household production time is calculated by multiplying the total housework time by a single wage rate which reflects the next best alternative as determined by the homemaker productivity related characteristics. (p. 150).

Our approach is different, in that we focus on *perceived* monetary value of household chores.⁷ We asked respondents to estimate the monetary value of their house-keeping activities. For each respondent, we employed two ways to calculate the mean perceived value of housework. The first is a simple average of estimates for the hourly value of all listed activities (Table 9.7). In the second approach, hourly values of the different activities are weighted by the time spent on these activities (Table 9.8).

⁷We define the subjective value of housework performed by person *i* in a given month as $SVH = \sum (T_{ij} * M_{ij})$, where T_{ij} represents time spent performing household activity *j* by person *i* per month and M_{ij} is the monetary value person *i* assigns to performing task *j*. This formula refers to individuals and summation goes over *j*. However, individuals differ with respect to their assessments of monetary values of tasks. Thus, computing the average for all respondents requires also summation over *i* and dividing the result by the number of respondents.

Table 9.8 Subjective value of housework

Labor market status	Gender	Zlotys per hour	Zlotys per hour weighted	Worth of housework per month in zlotys	Average household income	Worth of housework as percent of household income
Employed	Male	17.5	16.9	1068	4335.7	25
	Female	15.0	15.8	2062	3685.3	56
	Total	16.0	16.3	1653	3979.0	42
Unemployed	Male	15.7	12.9	1172	2592.3	45
	Female	15.9	15.5	4334	2851.2	152
	Total	15.8	14.4	2992	2739.0	109
Housewife	Female	13.1	13.2	2843	2832.1	100
	Total	13.1	13.2	2843	2832.1	100
Total	Male	16.9	15.7	1101	3782.9	29
	Female	14.5	14.8	2790	3165.4	88
Total for the entire sample		15.2	15.1	2270	3361.7	67

On the average, our respondents assign very similar monetary values to different activities, with the largest amount given to cleaning (15.0 zlotys per hour) and the smallest to grocery shopping (13.3). Given much higher values of the mean compared to those of the median, we can say that the distributions of perceived monetary values for all activities except cleaning are positively skewed. However, the 90th percentile is not larger than twice the median, with the values of 25 zlotys for washing and cleaning, and 20 zlotys for all other activities. Since the lowest values, at 10th percentile, are usually not lower than 5 zlotys, it means that 80% of respondents use the range of 20 zlotys or less for assessing the value of their housework, independently of the kind of activity.

How do these subjective values compare to the values that corresponding activities incur on the labor market? In the last column of Table 9.7 we provide the earnings as advertised in the sections “workers wanted” of Polish national newspapers or the Internet. Some household cleaners and babysitters earn at the minimal wage level of 8.25 zlotys per hour (about 2.5 USD), but the usual upper payments were close to 15 zlotys/hour for cleaners, and 20 zlotys/hour for babysitters. In the advertisements, we noted ‘peaks’ not reflected in Table 9.7, such as household cleaners earning 30 zlotys/hour. While advertisements for cooks ranged from 12 to 20 zlotys/hour, first-class cooks were offered 40 zlotys. Thus, the amounts we provide as the upper bounds in the last column of Table 9.7 represent a conservative pay for activities performed by cooks, delivery persons, shop helpers, launderers, household cleaners, and babysitters.

Let us turn our attention to the subjective values of housework activities. Generally, their means are either in the range of the market values or very close to the upper bound of this range. The 90th percentile usually exceeds the upper bound of the range but not dramatically. The median value is closer to the lower bound of

the range. Taking into account these distributional properties, we claim that the subjective values of household activities are quite realistic, mirroring actual market values.

A summary of results is presented in Table 9.8. This table shows that – when looking at the simple mean – employed and unemployed men and women on average value their housework equally, around 16 zlotys per hour. Housework value estimates are considerably lower among housewives, who on average indicated 13.1 zlotys as worth of an hour of their housekeeping activities. Comparing simple and weighted means shows that respondents estimate higher values for the types of activities they perform the most, but the differences are generally small.

The total value of housework multiplied by the number of hours devoted to housework results in considerable amounts of money, both in absolute terms, and relative to respondents' actual income. On average, the total value of goods and services produced in the household equals 1653 zlotys or half of the actual income of the currently employed, while among the unemployed the mean value is 2992 zlotys or 1.7 of actual household income; among housewives it is 2843 zlotys or 130% of monthly household income. Housework performed by employed women is worth over twice as much as that of employed men, and among the unemployed the difference is almost four-fold. According to the subjective evaluation of unemployed women, the value of their housekeeping activities was on average equal to 4334 zlotys, compared to the 2500 zlotys average post-tax monthly salary at that time (or 3500 zlotys pre-tax).

In some instances, adding the value of housework to the household income lessens the income differences between groups. Once again, such an interpretation needs to be made cautiously. For example, in the case of unemployed women, their added value of housework would widen the income gap with other groups, most notably, employed men. For these two categories the absolute difference in the worth of housework is 3266 zlotys per month, while the analogous difference for the household income is 1485 zlotys per month. One could hardly talk about an equalizing effect of housework value here.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we draw on the housework literature to examine how men and women differently placed on the labor market fare with respect to their involvement in irregular (odd) jobs, household chores, and valuing, financially, their housework. In doing so we used data from the European Social Survey Round 5 (2010) and from the Joblessness project (2012).

Irregular (odd) jobs and housework are two important components of economic activities usually not accounted for in gross national income or production statistics. This is so due to their relation to national labor markets. Irregular (odd) jobs, which make up a large proportion of part-time employment, belong to the shadow economy,

and as such escape official statistics (Schneider and Enste 2013). In the case of housework we deal with implicit income (Becker 1965), since people who do it are not directly remunerated. Considering the monetary value of household chores is particularly important for sociological analyses of the standard of living and social inequality.

We would like to make two remarks, pointing out that new research is necessary to better understand the implications of the analyses we presented here. First, it has been argued that during a country's economic development, a large part of informal jobs and household production shift from the non-market to the market sector (Schneider and Enste 2013). As Miranda (2011) points out, this process "translates into a rise in income as measured by income and production aggregates and gives a false impression of an improvement in living standards" (p. 6). In the Joblessness study we estimated the monetary value of housework for the unemployed and housewives. Some proportion of these people will move to the market sector, and buy services that they now themselves deliver. In turn, this will affect the recorded increase in gross national product and the standard of living.

Second, accounting for the value of irregular jobs and housework offers a fresh perspective to understand social inequality. Frazis and Stewart (2011) demonstrated that the extended income measure, which incorporates the value of household production, will show more equally distributed total income, since unpaid work varies much less than paid work across households. Indeed, including irregular (odd) jobs has some equalizing effect for household income: on average, income from these jobs is higher among respondents whose household income is lower. Also, the discrepancy of the average household income among the employed and homemakers would be smaller if the value of housework would be included. However, in the case of unemployed women we have the opposite effect: their subjective value of housework multiplied by the number of hours spent on these activities is so large (around 150 percent of household income) that their total income would exceed that of employed men, contributing to raising inequality.

Our final note deals with gender differences in housework activities. Women are responsible for and actually perform a vastly wider range of household tasks than men. Schooler et al. (1984) developed a general hypothesis stating that responses to household labor, like those to paid employment, are conditional on the "imperativeness of work conditions."⁸ The fact that women have greater housework responsibilities than men makes work in the home particularly salient for women's lives.

⁸One main conclusion of the classical study by Schooler et al. (1984) is that "the pattern of relationships between the conditions of women's housework and their psychological functioning is remarkably similar to that found for conditions of work in paid employment. Women whose housework is substantively complex are more likely to be intellectually flexible and to have a self-directed orientation, whereas women who experience 'job pressures' and 'job uncertainties' - that is, time pressure and the likelihood of being held responsible for things outside one's control - feel distressed." (p. 114).

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Chapter 10

Social and Political Activities of Housewives



This chapter presents how Polish housewives define and engage in social and political activities, and their perceptions of how their homemaker status enables or limits such activities.

This topic fits into the broader discussion that social scientists have about the link between social capital and political participation. To the extent to which “patterns of formal and informal sociability build up relations of trust and reciprocity” that result in social capital (Lowndes 2004, p. 45), people who are more active socially will accumulate greater resources of this type. Social capital, in turn, enhances peoples’ ability to act collectively to solve various common issues, that is, it fosters political participation. Yet, there is a puzzle: while women and men have increasingly close levels of social capital, women are politically less active (but see Coffe and Bolzendahl 2010). Lowndes (2004) uses survey data and insights from qualitative research to show that the amount of social capital for women and men in Britain is the same, but the type of social capital differs slightly. As women’s “‘social capital profile’ is more strongly embedded in neighbourhood-specific networks of informal sociability,” women are more likely than men to use this resource “for balancing the competing demands of home and work and for protecting their own and their families’ health and well-being.” (p. 61). The author concludes that “care and community based responsibilities are clearly a factor in explaining why women drop out of formal politics, or do not progress at the same rate as men” (p. 61).

Other factors contribute to lower the likelihood of women’s political participation, including their level of interest in politics and political ambition (e.g. Fox and Lawless 2014). In Poland, particularly relevant are (a) the nationalist rhetoric, strongly supported by the Catholic Church, which encourages women to assume the traditional role of caregiver, (b) a legacy of collective group interests favoring the interests of men, and (c) political structures that continue to be patriarchal (cf. Graham and Regulska 1997). Works describing political participation of women, especially in the context of gender inequality and under-representation of women in political institutions such as political parties, governments or parliaments finds that the burden of bringing up children placed on women seriously restricts political

activity of mothers (McGlen 1980; Chibber 2002; Lawless and Fox 2010; Coffe and Bolzendahl 2010).

To examine how Polish women who have experienced homemaking as their main activity perform and reinforce gender roles through social and political engagement, we asked the 39 women in the ‘housewife’ subsample to define, in their own words, “social activity” (*aktywność społeczna*) and “political activity” (*aktywność polityczna*).¹ The interviewer followed this question by asking whether the respondent is active socially and politically, respectively. These were fixed-choice questions. Respondents could answer “Yes,” “No,” “Do not know”, or they could choose to not reply at all. Homemakers who answered ‘yes’ with respect to either of the two activities were further asked to describe what they were doing as part of these activities. If they said that they were not active, the interviewer asked them about their reasons.

Social Activities

Helping People in Need

Most respondents indicate that social activity is connected with “helping people in need.” Some experience it as a form of solidarity with the disadvantaged. By disadvantage, often housewives in our study mean the sick or the disabled. Similarly to Lowndes’ (2004) findings, such views tie to women’s own health problems. This is clearly visible in the cases of women who became housewives following illness, or after being diagnosed with a disability that led to early retirement. At the same time, they also say that illness prevents them from being socially active or, at least, limits their participation.

For respondents who feel such limitation strongest, lack of social activity is connected with feeling useless. Below is a telling example, from a woman who entered homemaking after qualifying for disability benefits:

The interviewer asked, “How would you define social activity?”

“It means to help,” the respondent replied. “This is my opinion. I used to help people, who needed help. I kind of took care of them... God, those were beautiful times. Because I used to be active in this association of people suffering from multiple sclerosis, right. I arranged some trips, meetings, and so on. Stuff like that.”

The interviewer prompted the respondent for more information. “So, working for other people in need?”

“Yes, exactly.”

“Anything else?”

“I helped them with various things,” the respondent replied. “In the past, for example, it was hard to make a phone call. Nowadays everyone has a phone. Who would think that,

¹ Among the 39 women we selected based on their homemaker status in POLPAN 2008, eight had found employment by 2012, and 31 remained housewives; for a detailed description of the housewife subsample in Joblessness project, see the Introduction and Chap. 6 in this book.

God... Or, there was a petition that should be written, in order to arrange a telephone for somebody. So many doors had to be open."

The interviewer then asked about the respondent's current situation. "Do you think you are a socially active person?"

"No," said the respondent.

"Why not? Because of your worsening health?"

"Yes."

Polish housewives may regard themselves in need of help, health wise, and also participate in neighborhood-based networks:

"Because I am not always in a good condition. However, when my friend asks me, like today, I went to see the baby. There was nobody she could leave him with, when she walked the dog, so in such matters. We do help each other. Yes, yes. So I can do babysitting, or my second friend lives opposite me. But [I can help] only here in the nearby, because I can't walk too much, I am not always in a good condition." (Housewife, in her mid-fifties)

Care-related social networks, as Lowndes (2004) finds for British women, matter greatly for our respondents, too:

"Well, socially active [means that] when we participate in something, like we go to a hospice. But I don't know if I could [do that]" one respondents said in response to the question of defining 'social activity'.

"But we talk generally, theoretically," the interviewer said, in their attempt to get the respondent to talk more.

"No, when people participate, when somebody needs help, I am the first one to help. When my sister needs [help] with the baby, or my granddaughter."

"So, help other people, right?" the interviewer leaded on.

"Yes."

"Do you think you are a socially active person?"

"Yes."

"How is it manifested? What do you do, specifically?"

"If anybody needs anything, I help everyone," the respondent replied.

This interview illustrates well that unpaid assistance within the family, such as help with taking care of the children and grandchildren, is a common form of social solidarity among housewives in Poland. We know less about it as a type of social capital given that it does not presuppose activity in any organisations or associations. Membership in organizations is commonly covered in nationally representative samples, and a thus a frequently-used indicator of social capital (for a discussion of gender bias in the choice of social capital measures, see Lowndes 2004, p. 47).

The sense of solidarity with others in poor health goes beyond immediate family. We can see this through this respondent's lens:

The interviewer asked, "How would you define social activity?"

The respondent thought, and then said: "That they work in a society, right. To have contact with people."

The interviewer wanted the respondent to expound a bit more. "But what does it mean?" the interviewer asked. "In general, not for you?"

"Like helping, for example," the respondent replied. "Like helping the disabled children, what I do too, for example. I collect bottle caps."

"Do you think you are a socially active person?"

“Yes.”

“How is it manifested? What do you do, specifically?”

“Currently,” the respondent began, “I collect bottle caps for the disabled children, who have cystic fibrosis. We go to concerts of disabled children. The income is later allocated for rehabilitation of the children.”

“What else?” asked the interviewer.

“Like plays, I have been recently with my husband. The income was also for the disabled children. I also have a sick relative, we go to visit her with our daughter. She lives some floors beneath us, we hang out together a lot.”

The experiences our respondents in Poland talk about mirror those of other homemakers in other countries: housewives are not socially isolated, and mothers with young children engage in meaningful social exchange (cf. Bell and Ribbens 1994). The example below is telling in this regard:

The interviewer asked, “Do you think you are a socially active person?”

“No,” the respondent replied.

“Why not?”

“Well, socially, I did something,” said the respondent. “The bus. I went out to people and I gathered signatures. The bus was at ten to eight, you know. The children were late to school and the parents didn’t actually know what to do with it. So we wrote this petition to PKS and the bus was rescheduled and now it is [at the bus stop] at half past seven. So one can [do something]. I was a bit socially active. So it was.”

“So you are socially active, actually?”

“I mean if there was... No, it was just once. If there was something to do, if somebody came to me and told me what to do. Because I cannot make it on my own; because I stay at home. So, I could do something, but I have no possibilities. There is will, but there is no space [for social activity].”

Here too, we see overlap with Lowndes’ (2004, p. 54) insight: women may often not identify themselves as active in the community because they regard what they do as part of their routine tasks of caregiving, childcare especially.

Joining Others’ Initiatives

When analyzing the housewives’ narratives, we noticed a recurring theme. While women expressed interest in various forms of social activities, when they referred to their own participation, some said that they join existing initiatives. They gave examples such as collecting bottle caps in the quote we provided earlier, or contributing to social charity, as in the example below:

“How would you define social activity?”

“I don’t know. To help other people.”

“Do you think you are a socially active person?”

“Yes, I am.”

“How is it manifested? What do you do, specifically?”

“I give my clothes to Caritas. I don’t know what else.”

We could interpret this result in different ways. In one interpretation, housewives are reluctant to initiate new action and will ‘join’, that is, to fit into, some existing

structures. There is a different interpretation, more aligned to Lowndes' (2004) piece: because women tend to engage primarily in care- and neighbourhood social networks that they often regard as a routine task, when asked explicitly about social activities they themselves pursue, these women mention a 'legitimate' outlet, that is, a widely-known initiative that others recognize. We would need data other than what is available to us to examine which of these scenarios holds.

Social Disengagement

We find that experiences among the group of Polish housewives in our study closely echo Lowndes' insights into the social capital of British women. Care and neighborhood networks are most prevalent. Although housewives engage in such exchanges often, they tend to say that they are not socially active, citing "lack of time" as the most common reason.

There is also the perception of their own ineffectiveness that drives some women away from action. In instances when they define past activities as futile, frustration, dissatisfaction, and regret colored the answer:

"For example, here in my homeland, there was a situation. I had been living in [a part of Poland] for some time. We fought, we asked that they built us a road. No matter what kind of road, just a simple road, but they haven't done it until today. And then there was an accident, and even fire brigades could not come. So if I am asked to [be socially active], I just don't want any more. In my opinion, it is not worthwhile. For myself I can do something, for others not, because it is as it is."

Political Activities

Voting

In providing their interpretation of what 'political activity' stands for, housewives frequently refer to voting. This fits known patterns of political behavior, where electoral participation is the prevalent form of engagement for both women and men.

One group of housewives stands out as more active. For them, involvement goes beyond voting. In line with extant findings (e.g. Graham and Regulska 1997; Lowndes 2004), these women are active in political issues of the local community and at the municipal level. It is these dimensions where the women under study tend to have more trust in the transformative and emancipatory potential of their activities. As shown in the interview below, they mean activity in and support for political ambitions for other members of respondent's family:

"How would you define political activity?" the interviewer asked.

"To be involved in politics," the respondent replied. "We had municipal elections once. I took part, because my sister was a candidate. So I went to a school for the elections, I stayed there, but currently I don't do that."

"You were in the election committee?"

"I was also in the election committee."

"And your sister was a candidate to the municipal council?"

"Yes," the respondent said. "But she didn't make it."

Another housewife, who at first declared that she does not participate in politics, eventually revealed that she votes in elections and, furthermore, actively supports some political initiatives. This shows that the respondents sometimes initially underestimate their level of engagement in politics.

"I mean, when signatures are collected [to support] something that makes sense, I also join it," the respondent said.

"You just signed," the interviewer said, "Or you gathered the signatures?"

"It happened sometimes that I even gathered signatures, yes."

Some women who defined political activity through participation in the elections at the same time explicitly voiced their distrust in politics and the political elites – a theme we will return to soon due to its prominence among our respondents. This excerpt illustrates the point well:

"I mean, like, participate in elections. Because I do not participate in other campaigns, just voting."

"Voting," the interviewer repeated. "Anything else?"

"No," the respondent said. "Recently I have not voted at all."

"I had nobody to vote for," she added.

Interest in Politics

Frequently, political activity is described as "being interested in politics", or "reading newspapers and watching TV." In the example below, the respondent is seemingly torn between the conviction that she is not politically active (because she is not a politician) and the belief that she "has something to say". She mentions a controversial medium (ultraconservative religious radio station "Trwam"²) as a main source of news about the country. In the end she admits that she actually engages in various political activities:

"Political activity," the respondent began. "Surely it means to know what is going on in the state. To have, to read newspapers between the lines. What else... Read various newspapers, listen to various radio stations. However, I listen to only one programme, *Trwam*, because they don't lie; I came to this conclusion. And my radio is Warsaw. Very good radio. And that's it."

"Do you think you are a politically active person?" asked the interviewer.

"Yes."

"How is it manifested?"

² *Ad literam*, "Abide".

The respondent seemed to reverse her answer at first, but it was in the process of clarifying it:

"No, I am not politically active, because... I mean, I vote in elections, I have been always doing that. I think that my vote counts somehow. This is the only activity... when somebody asks me about something, I explain as I can. And I try to be sincere when I explain something."

Due to the reversal, the interviewer asked the question again.³ "So are you or are not you politically active?"

The respondent replied, "I think I am active, because... When somebody is interested in what is happening generally here and in the state, you know, this is a kind of activity. Because, even when I talk to people, I have something to say."

As we can see in the response above, too, when providing their interpretation of what 'political activity' stands for, housewives generally tend to settle on a narrow definition involving formal politics – we hear about membership in political parties or working as a politician. More often than not, answers are brief and not too diversified.

The interviewer asked, "How would you define political activity?"

The respondent thought for a moment, and then said, "Participate in politics. Something, somewhere. Like a party, this or that."

"Do you think you are a politically active person?"

"No," the respondent replied.

"Why aren't you politically active?"

"I am not interested in that," she said.

Even if the interviewer pressed the respondent, encouraging them to elaborate on the answer, the housewives usually do not develop their definitions. In some cases, they do not differentiate between "social activity" and "political activity".

"How would you define political activity?"

"I am not politically active at all," the respondent said. "To be interested. To be interested in politics, like, to listen what they say in TV. I don't listen to that, no, I have never known anything about politics, I don't understand, I don't watch it, because it makes me upset. I don't watch it."

"Do you think you are a politically active person?"

"No."

"Why aren't you politically active?"

"I don't know anything about politics," the respondent said. "I am not keen on it. They will do what they want anyway. So... why be upset? Why worry?"

It becomes apparent that respondents' language often portrays a dualistic representation of political subjects and political decision makers. This suggests a huge perceived distance between the world of politics and the social worlds of respondents. From the respondents' perspective, politics has no direct relation to their everyday lives, or worse, it is a relation of deep distrust that prompts women's withdrawal from political activity. We elaborate on this topic next.

³ Speaking to the social environment that interviewer and interviewee 'construct', we see here that the interviewer seems to search for a binary yes/no answer, where none was available.

Withdrawal and Disassociation

Some housewives in the Joblessness study express strong distrust toward politics and the political elites, in what Graham and Regulska (1997, p. 69) refer to as the “‘us versus them’ mentality.” This results in housewives withdrawing from any form of political activity.

“I think it doesn’t facilitate political activity. This is all the government’s fault. Many years ago everyone was obliged to work and I liked that. There were stamps in the ID and everyone had to collect that, not just mooch about the streets, accosting people. I say, communists were communists, but when there was the communist system, life was better. And now, you know, there is no communism. The communist regime might have stolen furtively, and now the government does this aloud. People blame people and they make a laughing stock of themselves, nothing else.”

Because they link politics with “lies” and dishonesty, it would be demeaning to engage politically. Politicians are perceived as fraudulent and deceitful. Some admit that it makes them nervous and upset and the statements concerning this topic are sometimes very passionate:

“It pisses me off, all that stuff,” the respondent said. “I can’t listen to that, I really can’t, what they are doing in this government, it is the end of the world. Now this, then ACTA.⁴ Kids are crying and they say ‘granny’, my granddaughter says ‘granny, they will get rid of the Internet’.”

“So you are upset and that’s why you don’t participate.”

“Yes, for what they are doing.”

We see a similar argument below:

“I am interested, so to say, but if I do not like any candidate, then I do not vote, in order not to hold a grudge against myself later, that I chose somebody. It’s bad either way.”

The interviewer mistakenly believed that such responses must be binary yes/no. “So what is the answer? Because I can only write yes or no.”

“No,” the respondent said. “Because of what I have just said. I don’t trust a candidate, that he would change anything. I have negative experience. Because when you turn on the TV set, you’ll see it: only quarrels, nothing else. Nothing good comes out of it for people.”

Closely linked to these perceptions of distrust of all formal politics is the belief that politics is “not really the business of ordinary or honest people” (Millar and Wolchik 1994, p. 2):

“Why aren’t you politically active?”

“I don’t know how to say it,” the respondent said. “They just think what they want and do what they want, and a simple man thinks differently and would do it in a different way, or something like that.”

⁴The ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement) case refers to the process of implementation of an international agreement, which was designed to introduce new rules of protection of intellectual property restricting individuals’ access to cultural goods. The agreement caused massive protests in Poland and other EU countries and finally was not implemented.

The interviewer said: "So you should fight for that...".

"Yes, but you know, what can a simple peasant do?"

Similarly, in the example below, the respondent thinks that politics is an activity for other social groups, and she is not prepared – in terms of the intersection of her age and gender – to participate:

"Why aren't you politically active?"

"I don't participate at all," the respondent said. "I am not interested. I may listen to the TV, but... I am an old woman, how can I be interested in politics?" The respondent laughs.

We learn from housewives in our sample that lack of political efficacy is another major deterrent to their participation, which health and economic woes exacerbate:

"Why aren't you politically active?" the interviewer asked.

"Because I have no opinion," the respondent said. "Even if I expressed my opinions, I wouldn't be listened to."

"Does unemployment facilitate or doesn't it facilitate social activity?"

"No, it doesn't, obviously. Because a jobless person simply doesn't exist in the society. If there was such possibility, they would just cross her out of the society, such person would not exist. I suppose. A jobless person does nothing for the state. No taxes, no money, no use. That's what I think."

Some housewives, who lost their jobs and decided to focus on homemaking after a period of unsuccessful search for a job, make a strong connection between the situation of being unemployed and being a housewife. Lack of political agency further strengthens the centrality of their social role as jobless, passive victims of structural boundaries who have a difficult time focusing on any other issue than the job-search:

"I think a jobless person only thinks how to find a job, nothing else. Other things do not matter to such a person. When one has no job, no livelihood, one does not want to make politics."

The same thought was expressed by another homemaker:

"... I don't know anything about politics. I am not interested in that."

"Why aren't you politically active?"

"No. How? When one is jobless, one is depressed. I had this for ten years, I was so depressed that..."

The respondent did not finish her thought.

We end this section with the observation that "lack of interest in politics" and "lack of political knowledge" can go together, and has cut across housewives' stories of why they stay away from the political arena. In respondents' own words:

"Why aren't you politically active?" asked the interviewer.

"I am not interested."

The interviewer decided to prompt. "Please think it over," the interviewer said. "Can you say why you are not politically active?"

"It is difficult to say," the respondent replied. "I am not interested, I am not interested in political matters."

And, in a different interview:

“Why aren’t you politically active?”

“I am not interested in it at all.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know, lack of time, I don’t know, maybe also, at that time [time of elections], I didn’t even manage to find time to watch TV, the news, and because of that I don’t know what is going on. And when there are elections, I don’t know whom I should vote for.”

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined how housewives in the Joblessness project define social and political activity, how they pursue these activities or, if they do not, why so. Our inquiry draws on others’ research (cf. Lowndes 2004) showing that (a) social capital is a resource that people can use to increase their political participation, (b) women and men do not differ in the amount of social capital but they do with respect to its types, and (c) the kind of social capital women, housewives especially, tend to develop is less conducive to formal political participation than that of men. Insights from country-specific studies devoted to women’s political participation in Poland (e.g. Graham and Regulska 1997) allow us to place respondents’ narratives within the socio-economic and political dimensions of the country’s post-communist environment.

The narratives in the Joblessness study largely reflected these extant findings from Poland and abroad. At the same time they revealed ambiguities and inconsistencies in homemakers’ perception of activities that unfold in the public sphere. In terms of social activity, the recurrent theme was the link between social activity and familial and community solidarity, and the desire to assist the less fortunate. On one hand, housewives reported social exchanges, and on the other hand, some said that they were not socially active, and cited “lack of time” as the most common reason. In the context of previous studies showing that women, particularly mothers of young children, underreport participation in social activities that are closely tied to their daily caregiving tasks (cf. Lowndes 2004 p. 54), we consider the narratives of Polish homemakers to be a reminder that gender bias in survey coverage of social capital indicators remains a problem.

We observed two substantial approaches concerning the political participation of housewives. In the first, housewives were politically active, as manifested primarily through voting and following political news. In line with the literature (e.g. Graham and Regulska 1997; Lowndes 2004) our respondents tended to shun formal politics, but if they did engage, it was primarily at the community and municipal levels.

The second approach is that of withdrawal and disassociation from politics. We learned that respondents’ language often portrayed a dualistic representation of political subjects and political decision makers. This suggests a substantial perceived distance between the world of politics and the social worlds of the housewives. From their perspective, politics had no direct relation to their everyday lives, or

worse, it was a relation of deep distrust (cf. Millar and Wolchik 1994; Graham and Regulska 1997). Several housewives linked politics with “lies” and dishonesty; since politicians were perceived as fraudulent and deceitful, some women considered it demeaning to engage politically. The perceived lack of personal efficacy that health and economic woes exacerbate was another strong deterrent from political participation.

The narratives revealed the gendered character of social activities that reflect the connection between broadly accepted, conventional female social roles as care providers, and the type of their engagement in the public sphere. The sense of solidarity with the disadvantaged, the sick, and the marginalised, can be placed in contrast to the same respondents’ negative attitude towards political activity. The reason for this association may be that political participation is defined as the situation of being privileged, such as the well-paid positions of state officials. The difference between definitions and evaluations of social activity *versus* political activity may re-enact the classic conflict of solidarity with the poor *versus* contempt for the privileged.

We gained these insights primarily from homemakers’ answers to open-ended questions. In addition, we looked at response patterns to a couple of fixed-choice interview items – ‘Do you count yourself among those people you would call socially/...politically active?’ These questions followed the open-ended ones about the meaning that social activity and political activity holds for the respondent. Of the 39 women who we identified as housewives in our study’s research design (i.e. according to POLPAN 2008 survey records, they had been housewives without formal employment for at least one year prior to 2008), 15 (roughly 39%) regarded themselves as socially active. Only two persons considered themselves politically active. We need to interpret these results in relation to the interview transcripts. Specifically, we learn that participants tended to speak at greater length about their involvement rather than providing a ‘yes/no’ response. Some women did give in to the interviewer’s insistence to choose one answer option or the other, but then they opted for ‘no’ despite having referred, just moments earlier and within the same thread of thought, to activities that they themselves engaged in.

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Chapter 11

Social and Political Activities of the Unemployed



This chapter continues our inquiry into how the jobless define and participate in social and political activities. We turn our attention to the women ($n = 63$) and men ($n = 46$) selected into the Joblessness project based on their unemployment status, as reported in POLPAN 2008.¹ We want to examine how their views align or not with the general idea that social capital can act both as a ‘buffer’ against the negative consequences that unemployment has on the individual, and as a resource for political participation. We build on the literature we refer to in Chap. 6 with a brief overview of research that sets the frame for interpreting our respondents’ narratives.

Social Activity

Social contact, even with others who are in the same life situation, has many benefits, and social engagement is often treated as a sign of positive mental health (Lahusen and Giugni 2016a, b). Lower sociability of the unemployed is often considered apiece with their distress, anxiety, and other characteristics of poor mental health (McKee-Ryan et al. 2005; Paul and Moser 2009). Knowing people and interacting with them allows the unemployed to lean on others for financial and psychological support in their time of distress (Russell 1999: 206). Social engagement also enables the unemployed to access an information network – what jobs are out there, who is hiring, and insider tips – that can facilitate looking for and finding a job.

Lahusen and Giugni (2016a, b) write that joblessness can negatively impact access to social networks and the quality of social relations. Employment gives

¹ They represent a subsample of participants in the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN, who reported an unemployment spell of 3 months or more in POLPAN 2008. By 2012, roughly 63% of the 110 (69 persons) were reemployed. For details on the Joblessness’ project research design and sample composition, see the Introduction in this book; also, Chaps. 5 and 7.

structure to the day; unemployment leaves time unstructured, forcing people to create new ways to fill their days. As Lahusen and Giugni (2016a, b) put it:

Prolonged joblessness increases the exposure to experiences of marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination, and this condition provokes feelings of dissatisfaction, boredom, uselessness, shame, resignation and distress – with detrimental effects on the person’s self-conception and identity (p. 3).

Demographics, such as age, gender, and marital status, and social position (e.g. class) influence the impact of joblessness. Young people are especially vulnerable to social isolation. As they transition from school to work, they must foster new relations and find new networks to join. This is a stressful time that likely gets rougher if the youth cannot find work. Prolonged unemployment, especially when coupled with insufficient economic resources to engage in social activities, likely exacerbates social isolation of the young.²

Long-term unemployment means having less money to spend and fewer (or lesser quality) material goods, and it means bearing, oftentimes, the social stigma of “not working,” and for many, it means deterioration of mental health. The combination erodes informal networks that, in turn, make the unemployed feel worse about themselves. Unemployment affects social relations so severely that researchers have come to consider “social exclusion” as a phenomenon that underpins the jobless experience (see also Durcan and Bell 2015). This holds in cross-national perspective. Closely related is the problem of social isolation, of which unemployment is a major trigger³:

There are a range of negative consequences for working-age adults who are unemployed, one of which is being isolated from networks of influence. The long-term unemployed are at greater risk of becoming socially isolated than those in employment; this in turn negatively impacts upon labour market opportunities. One mechanism by which unemployed people become socially isolated is through the loss of daily contact with colleagues. Another cause is withdrawal from friends and family because of embarrassment and/or the need to cut back on the expenses associated with socialising, the latter being associated with a lower income. Thus the effects of social isolation and long-term unemployment reinforce one another. (Durcan and Bell 2015: 21)

Sociability and a strengthening of informal networks during unemployment can mitigate the negative effects that often incur (Lahusen and Giugni Eds. 2016a, b). Since formal, expensive forms of social activity decline following unemployment and are replaced with informal, home-based social contact, people embedded in strong family and neighborhood networks – e.g. married people, mothers with young children – will be better off (see Russell 1999).

Research shows that the likelihood of enjoying access to supportive social networks during unemployment is tied to peoples’ labor market position prior to job loss, and it differs by gender. Russell (1999), in her study of gender and sociability

²For unemployed youth in Poland, see Binder’s chapter (p. 171–196) in Lahusen and Giugni. Eds. 2016.

³According to Durcan and Bell (2015: 8): “Social isolation describes the state of being deprived of social relationships that provide positive feedback and are meaningful to the individual” (see also British Columbia Ministry of Health 2004: 3 and Lindsay 2009).

among the unemployed in Britain, finds that women's continuous involvement in the domestic sphere, while restricting the range of social activities they perform compared to men's, enhances the likelihood of building up supportive social networks in the community (p. 219). These type of networks tends to be more emotionally supportive than men's and is more resilient to unemployment. Thus, women may experience less psychological distress than men during unemployment (p. 221). However this holds only for women with certain kinds of labor market experience prior to job loss. In Russell's words:

Only unemployed women who have previously worked part-time or spent time outside the labour market were found to have networks that are resistant to unemployment. Women with full-time continuous work careers experienced more social shrinkage following unemployment than unemployed men (p. 219).

Political Activity

Some argue that the jobless constitute a potentially potent political force that could organize themselves around a common theme of jobs and economic welfare. Consider the following events involving the political engagement of the unemployed.

On November 23, 2013, tens of thousands attended public demonstrations in 55 Spanish cities and towns.⁴ They protested against Spain's government and its economic policies which, they claimed, were responsible for the poor functioning of the economy, exemplified by an unemployment rate of 26%. It was Spain's largest mass protest to date. A week later, the government introduced a bill designed to limit where people could protest and what they could do during a protest: "Demonstrating near parliament without permission could result in a fine of up to €600,000, while insulting a police officer during a demonstration could cost up to €30,000."⁵ Clearly, the government noticed the mass protests against unemployment, and saw such protest as a threat.

Demonstrations against the so-called "austerity measures" and unemployment also occurred in Greece. In July 2013, municipal employees from police to garbage collectors took to the streets against the government's plan to slash government jobs.⁶ Protesting over unemployment and the economy has become the norm for Greece since the global economic crisis. A Greek middle aged office clerk voiced why: "There is the constant fear that if you lose your job you'll never find work again and then how will you pay your bills, how will you buy food?"⁷

⁴<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/anti-austerity-protests-55-spanish-cities> Accessed March 6, 2014.

⁵<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/21/spain-government-strict-anti-protest-laws> Accessed March 6, 2014.

⁶www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/11/us-greece-unemployment-idUSBRE96A0H020130711 Accessed March 6, 2014.

⁷www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/11/us-greece-unemployment-idUSBRE96A0H020130711 Accessed March 6, 2014.

Poland is no stranger to mass protests over unemployment and the economy. In April 2003, Solidarity organized a mass protest that drew an estimated 20,000 people in Warsaw over economic problems and a high unemployment rate that had reached 18%.⁸ Participants waved banners that read, “We want work, not unemployment,” and burned effigies of the Prime Minister.⁹ In September 2013, a demonstration organized by Solidarity brought thousands marching through Warsaw demanding job security and protesting the 13% unemployment rate.¹⁰

When unemployment is high, sometimes people take to the streets to protest it. Yet, outside a few sustained protests during the 2008 economic crisis, and the long-standing culture of the Solidarity movement in promoting worker’s rights, there has been no major political movement of the jobless in post-communist Poland. This points to the more general question about the relation between unemployment, mobilization and political action. Few studies in Poland have examined why the unemployed do not form a coherent political movement.

In 1979, Kay Schlozman and Sidney Verba published the book, *Injury to Insult: Unemployment, Class and Political Response*, that asked a similar question about America. In America, they noted, the poor and the unemployed are less likely to act in their political interests. This book was based on a study conducted in the 1970s, the period of one of America’s worst economic downturns since the Great Depression of the 1930s. They had conducted a special survey of the unemployed and asked them about their political activity. The authors expected that unemployment is a problem that binds people together and should act as a catalyst for protest. “Unemployment matters,” they wrote, “not simply because it can be used as a key to enlarged understanding of the American political process, but because it affects the lives of so many Americans: those who are or have been themselves out of work, who depend on others who are jobless, who are threatened with job loss...” (Schlozman et al. 1979: 2).

The problem *Insult to Injury* addressed also vexed Karl Marx: Does shared economic interests translate into shared political interests, and thus a common political

⁸ www.nytimes.com/2003/04/26/world/world-briefing-europe-poland-protest-over-economy.html Accessed March 6, 2014.

⁹ “Polish union protesters clash with police in Warsaw,” 25 April 2003, Agence France-Presse: “Protesters in front of cabinet headquarters burned two effigies of Prime Minister Leszek Miller and threw them at police, who responded with tear gas and water cannons. Public sector employees, Warsaw factory workers and workers from cities in southern Poland all participated in the demonstration, waving banners like “The mafia governs Poland” and “We want work, not unemployment.” There were no injuries or arrests reported.”

¹⁰ “Poland: Workers Stage Protest as Economy Slows.” Associated Press, 12 September 2013: “Thousands of Polish labor union members marched through Warsaw on Wednesday, sounding sirens and throwing smoke grenades to protest against government labor policy and overhauls to the pension system, and to demand higher pay. The march was the first of 4 days of protests planned by Solidarity, the OPZZ union and smaller organizations. The unions demand that Prime Minister Donald Tusk’s government support Poland’s industry, where workers are being laid off amid a slowdown. They want job security and contracts that guarantee health care and retirement benefits at a time when unemployment is at 13% and many companies offer short-term contracts. They also want the government to reverse a recent rise in the retirement age.”

program? In theorizing the causes and consequences of political engagement, the situation of the unemployed offers a paradox. Collectively, the unemployed share an economically debilitating problem that has the potential to translate into a shared political program, yet previous research on the relationship between employment status and political participation has shown that either (a) the unemployed are slightly less likely to be politically active than the employed or (b) there is little substantive difference between different types of employment status in political action (Schlozman et al. 1979; Gallego 2007; Lim and Sander 2013). Personal factors, such as occupational position, income, and education have been shown to substantially impact political engagement generally and the lesser resourced are those who tend not to engage (e.g. Verba et al. 1979). The implication is that, in the absence of an external mobilizing force that organizes and pushes the unemployed to politically engage, left to their own, the unemployed are not much different from the employed.

Our Study

As we discussed previously, in the process of collecting the data via the semi-structured face-to-face interviewing that created an interactive environment between the interviewer and interviewee, the emergent information may bear the input of both social actors. Below, we illustrate how, at times, the interviewer and the respondent collaborated to shape the meaning of social and political activity.

Negotiation with the Interviewer

Here is the interview of a man in his late twenties. He did not graduate high school and he had a 4 year unemployment spell prior to the interview, but was reemployed in 2012. The interviewer was male.

The interviewer asked, "How would you define social activity?"

"Social activity?" the respondent replied. "To have some kind of non-profit activity." The interviewer did not understand the term, 'non-profit,' because the respondent said the term in English. The interviewer attempted to clarify.

"What kind of activity?"

"Non-profit," replied the respondent, again using the English language term.

"I don't know English," the interviewer said. "What is that?"

"Activity without any income."

"What else?"

"Just that," the respondent replied. "I would define it like that."

"Do you think you are a socially active person?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't have time," the respondent said. "I am not capable."

"How would you define 'political activity'?" the Interviewer asked.

"It means being in a political party."

The interviewer decided to probe. "Just being in a party? Are there any other forms of political activity?"

"Be in a party and try to become a prime minister," laughed the respondent.

"Do you want me to write that?" The interviewer asked.

"This is my opinion," the respondent said. "Please write that."

The interviewer addressed the 'prime minister' joke by saying, "I will write in quotation marks, 'the prime minister' – as a career. Any other forms of political activity?"

"No," the respondent said. "I don't see anything else."

"Do you think you are a politically active person?"

"No."

"Why are you not politically active?"

"Because generally," the respondent said, "I don't like politicians."

"What else?" the interviewer asked. It is not clear as to what 'else' the interviewer is referring to. It could be about the meaning of political activity or about why the respondent is not politically active. The respondent interpreted this as a prompt to continue on with details of why he does not like politicians.

"I think they manage the state wrongly," the respondent said.

The interviewer probed again. "What else?" the interviewer asked.

"I don't think I could change that." The respondent seems to have meant that he did not think he, personally, could influence the current political situation.

The interviewer decided that they exhausted this line of questioning, and moved on to the next set of questions about the relationship between unemployment and social and political activity.

"Does unemployment facilitate or doesn't it facilitate social activity?"

"No," the respondent replied. "Because unemployed people are usually... gosh, it slipped my mind."

"Apathetic?" suggested the interviewer.

The respondent agreed that the interviewer's suggestion was akin to what slipped his mind. "Yes," the respondent replied. "Something like that."

"They are not capable of doing anything?" asked the interviewer.

"Not very much," the respondent replied. "If one is unemployed, then one can't take even care of himself. Then it would be difficult [for such person] to help other people. One breaks down. That's it."

"Does unemployment facilitate or doesn't it facilitate political activity?"

The respondent thought for a moment and then said, "I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"I have no idea," the respondent said.

"You have no opinion?"

"No."

During this interview, the interviewer and the respondent were both combative and collaborative. The combativeness, as genteel as it was, was over the respondent's joke regarding the meaning of political activity. The result was that the interviewer felt that they must make a "correct" record of the interview. The respondent who, by his own words, does not "like politicians," reacted to the interviewer's probe by making a sarcastic joke about brazen political ambition. One can speculate that since the respondent does not like politicians, he would take this probe as an opportunity to further vocalize his dislike. The interviewer may or may not have thought the joke funny; in any case, the interviewer felt the need to vocalize how he will record the joke.

- “Do you want me to write that?” The interviewer asked.
- “This is my opinion,” the respondent said. “Please write that.”
- “I will write in quotation marks, ‘the prime minister’ – as a career.”

Afterward, they collaborated to create a coherent answer about the relationship between unemployment and social activity. The respondent’s previous remark about an individual’s influence over politics [“I don’t think I could change that”] seems to have influenced the interviewer, who extrapolated political efficacy to a kind of “social efficacy.”

Definitions of Social and Political Activity

Interviewers invited respondents to define social activity and political activity. Some answers were brief – one or two words – and some were as long as a few sentences. We present a taxonomy built on these long and short answers. The taxonomy presents each idea separately, though some respondents mentioned more than one of these.

Social Activity

A circular definition, or by defining it by its obverse:

- (a). “It’s social,” without deeper meaning, e.g. “participate in social life”;
- (b). “Going out,” or “socializing;”
- (c). In opposition to political and economic activity, e.g. it is “not politics,” or it is “not profit.”

As a form of assistance:

- (d). “Help,” in general; or “help other people,” such as friends and family;
- (e). “Charity;”

As involvement in public affairs:

- (f). Community involvement, in general, or specifically in terms of schools, housing, or governmental, non-governmental, or other kinds of organizations;
- (g). “Using public facilities;”

It is not clear why, but for ‘social activity’, the range of definitions is very narrow. Perhaps the term is not commonly discussed, especially in comparison to referencing “political activity.”

Political Activity

A circular definition:

- (a). “Do politics” without further elucidation.

Listing common forms of political participation

- (b). “Elections and voting”
- (c). “Belong to party”
- (d). “Active in an organization”
- (e). “Voice political opinions”

By expressing disinterest or lack of understanding of politics

- (f). “Not interested” or “don’t understand politics”;

As a practice

- (g). “Build support”;
- (h). “Help others”;

In terms of its locus

- (i). “Participate in community”

In general, the range of definitions for political activity was substantial and covered many of the dimensions we can find in wave after wave of the World Values Survey or the European Social Survey: vote, belong to a political party, and participate in organizations. In this realm are the expressions of political interests or opinions that respondents find meaningful although they may be of relatively low impact.

In some cases, the respondents combined several definitions of political activity and provided real world examples to illustrate.

For example, when the interviewer asked, “How would you define ‘political activity’?”

The respondent replied, “Do something for a community, like... I don’t know, let’s start from a housing cooperative, somebody has this idea and gathers signatures for water or sports field, now that’s politics, because one has to convince a certain group [of people who] want to do something else and you have to work out consensus. Grassroots politics.”

Here, the respondent defined political activity in terms of its locus (“do something for a community”) and as a practice (“gather signatures... convince a certain group”).

Social Isolation

Joblessness can degrade social networks. Two interviewees expressed how and why this happens: both are women in their early forties and without a job in 2012, and one was married and the other was divorced.

“Does unemployment facilitate or doesn’t it facilitate social activity and political activity?”

“Surely, it doesn’t,” the respondent, who is married, replied.

“Why not?”

“Well, mostly because one stays at home, doesn’t know anything, doesn’t see anything, one doesn’t talk to other people,” the respondent said. “One doesn’t have contact with... uhm, you know... you see, I can’t even speak properly...”

The interviewer tried to help the respondent out. “You get used to it?” the interviewer asked.

“Yes,” the respondent replied, and then added, “Unfortunately that’s how it is.”

Another respondent added a great deal of sarcasm. In response to the question, “Does unemployment facilitate or doesn’t it facilitate social activity and political activity?” The respondent said:

“It doesn’t. Because one stays at home, has no contact with other people, can’t discuss on subject which interest him. How can I be active? Even me, I have to stay at home, without Internet, without anything, because one would have to pay bills. One who doesn’t pay the bills is cut off from world. One goes to the town, to the constituency office and the doors are always closed. So why get involved, why get upset. Would this help? No. One should stay at home and look at ads [job offers], one may find something. Or pack your stuff and go abroad, work like a slave 12, 14 hours a day. Save a bit, change the Euro into Polish zloty in an exchange point. And then our prime minister will say: wow, Poles live so well! Green Island!”

Social and Political Activity as a Cost-Benefit Analysis

Some of the jobless view social and political activity as a rational action in which one calculates costs and benefits, or as a transaction that requires investment and return.

Participation as a Money Investment

Here, the respondent is a woman in her early thirties, never married, and reemployed by 2012. The interviewer asked, “Does unemployment facilitate or doesn’t it facilitate social activity?”

“No, it doesn’t because it is not rational,” the respondent replied. “Because unpaid activities do not improve the economic status of the unemployed.”

“Do you feel the same about political activity?”

“Yes,” affirmed the respondent. “Even if you speak out, or act, but I doubt it. It would be your source of income in such case.”

Joblessness is a low or restricted income situation; with less money, one struggles to be social. The respondent is a man in his late thirties who never married and was reemployed by 2012.

The interviewer asked, "Does unemployment facilitate or doesn't it facilitate social activity?"

"It doesn't," the respondent replied.

"Because some ideas... some forms of social activity demand financial resources. And an unemployed won't go to the cinema, won't go out and have beer with friends."

Interestingly, some view this transaction costs in terms of political activity, as well.

The interviewer asked this same respondent,

"And does it facilitate political activity?"

"No," the respondent replied. "One has to pay membership fees, one needs financial expenditures, and one doesn't know what will come out of it eventually."

Participation as a Time Investment

Interviewer: "Why aren't you socially active?"

"Lack of time," the respondent, a man in his early thirties, married, and reemployed by 2012, replied. "I want to spend time with my family; that would only take additional hours. I travel a lot and I do not always know what is going on here. I know what is going on here in the block, but outside the block, hard to say."

Here, the respondent calculated travel and effort and decided that the costs of social activity outweighed its benefits. The respondent did not voice what benefits would accrue from such an investment.

Politicians are Annoying and Politics Wouldn't Help, Anyway

As with the housewives, distrust and dislike of the political elite features prominently among the reasons that respondents say keep the unemployed from engaging politically.

In this interview, the respondent was a man in his late twenties who was married and reemployed by 2012. The interviewer asked, "Do you think you are a politically active person?"

"No."

"Why aren't you politically active?"

"Can you tell me for whom I should engage politically?" asked the respondent.

"I can't," the interviewer replied.

"We have five or ten parties," the respondent explained. "Once this one is good, but then it occurs they take bribes, then the other one is good."

"So, you are neutral?"

"Yes," the respondent said. "I am not interested, at all, because when I see all these witch-hunting... let's call it ugly. I don't have time for this shit."

A woman in her forties who also felt isolated from unemployment had expressed annoyance at politics.

Interviewer: "Do you think you are a politically active person?"

"No," the respondent replied.

"Why aren't you politically active?"

"Politics annoys me, in general," the respondent said. "I don't like the way politicians argue with each other, it discourages me. Even if I support a party, I don't publicly speak about it. Politics is not in the center of my matters, of my interests. It is something for what I would have to devote my free time, my attention to it. Although I don't believe that, as individuals, we have power to change anything."

Here the interviewee also expresses low political efficacy. This may have to do with politics in Poland as a de-motivator for some than our respondent's unemployment status (see Graham and Regulska 1997).

Combinations of Views

The views we discovered above are not mutually exclusive. Iza is in her late twenties, married, unemployed and seeking employment. We first met her in Chap. 5, when we learned how she lost her job.

The interviewer asked Iza, "What does it mean to be socially active?"

"That I help somebody?" Iza said. "That I help other people. I go to my grandfather, or to my mother..."

"Do you think you are a socially active person?" the interviewer asked.

Iza said, "If we talk about my family, then yes, I am. Because I can't help other people if I already help my family. I help my grandfather."

Here, Iza expresses that which we found through interviewing housewives, that social activity means helping others. And in Iza's case, she attributes this form of altruism with political activity, as well.

"What does it mean to be politically active?"

"It means active," Iza said, but then added, "someone who helps people."

"But what does it mean to be politically active?" asked the interviewer.

"It's difficult," Iza said. "I help my brother."

"Do you think you are a politically active person?"

"Yes," Iza affirmed. "I am first to help."

"Does unemployment facilitate or doesn't it facilitate social activity?"

"No," Iza said. "Because of poverty. I take care of my cow, stuff in my cottage. But I also attend courses, I am very happy that I attend these courses."

"And does it facilitate political activity?"

"No," Iza said. "There is a lot of stealing. If they wanted to give us jobs..."

Iza expressed a variety of views, including social activity as a form of assistance, as, particularly in helping family. Her views on politics are both of disinterest and distrust.

Low Political Efficacy Connected to Low "Social" Efficacy

Like Iza, other respondents seem to combine political elements into social activity. Some express a sense of low political efficacy combined with a belief that they cannot change their lot in life.

Here, the respondent is a young woman in her upper twenties, with a high school education, and reemployed by 2012. The interviewer was male. The interviewer asked, "How would you define social activity?"

"I haven't got the slightest idea," the respondent replied. "Social..." and she laughs.

"What does it mean?" asked the interviewer.

"Social, I don't know, to participate in something, in councils, in all these institutions."

"What else?"

"I have no idea."

"Do you think you are a socially active person?"

"No," the respondent replied.

"Why not?"

"Because I think that one voice can't change anything. So people ignore persons like me. That's all."

"Why do you think they ignore you?"

"Because," and she thought about it for a moment before saying, "I am just an ordinary person, I am not perceived as a candidate for taking charge of something."

"How would you define political activity?"

The respondent thought again, and then said, "To participate in politics of course, but I don't do that and I am not going to. I am not interested in politics at all."

"But what do you mean," the interviewer asked, "how can one participate in politics?"

"I mean, one can... I personally don't vote in elections, because I know it won't change anything. I don't believe."

"Do you think you are a politically active person?"

"No."

"Why aren't you politically active?"

"As I said," the respondent replied. "I am not interested in politics. I don't vote in elections because I don't think it would change anything."

"Does unemployment facilitate or doesn't it facilitate social activity?"

"No, it doesn't. Maybe it does, because people try to do something they are interested in changing something, because they are jobless."

"Does unemployment facilitate or doesn't it facilitate political activity?"

"It only facilitates activity against politics," the respondent said, laughing. "No it doesn't facilitate political activity. Because what they do in politics, is ignoring the unemployed."

"That's my opinion," the respondent added.

Conclusion

Social and political engagement are crucial parts of the human experience because they link people to each other, to groups, and to the larger society. Among the unemployed participating in the Joblessness project, some were unsure how to define 'social activity', and provided circular definitions or referred to it as a form of assistance and involvement.

Social isolation was a recurrent theme in respondents' narratives. Lack of money or time played a part in this outcome. The complaint about lack of money partly speaks to the modern world's monetization of social activity – going to the movies, dining in restaurants, and reciprocal gift giving are often foundations of creating

and maintaining social relationships. The complaint about lack of time may appear odd, considering that the unemployed seem to have a lot more time at their disposal than they would have if they had worked full time. But we should remember that some of our respondents were reemployed by 2012, when the interview took place, while others work in the informal economy, doing odd jobs for low pay and little possibilities for advancement. Moreover, for most people it is difficult to structure unstructured time.

While no one derided social activity, we found that political activity was widely ridiculed. Similarly to homemakers in the previous chapter, the unemployed – both women and men – more often than not expressed displeasure with politics and its professional practitioners, lack of trust toward politics, and a disinterest in politics. Altogether, in our study the jobless seem to express the same range of sentiments about politics one can find in other countries, as reflected in extant research on the political behavior of the jobless.

For the purposes of this chapter, we did not distinguish between persons who reported unemployment in 2008 and were still unemployed in 2012 ($n = 41$), and those who had reentered the labor market by the time of the Joblessness study ($n = 69$). Based on the literature (see Chap. 3) we assumed that unemployment is a powerful state that impacts peoples' perceptions to such an extent that effects will linger even if the condition ended prior to the interview. We checked whether the data support this assumption by looking at the information gathered via fixed-choice interview items. Following respondents' answers to the open-ended questions about what social activity and political activity mean to them, the interviewer asked: "Do you count yourself among those people you would call socially active?" and, correspondingly, "Do you count yourself among those people you would call politically active?" Respondents could answer "Yes," "No," "Do not know", or they could choose to not reply at all. Of the 110 respondents unemployed for 3 months or more in 2008, 44 persons (40%) said that they were socially active, and 20 people (18%) declared being politically active.¹¹ We found no significant differences in response patterns related to participants' employment status in 2012, nor to gender. Both women and men consistently report higher levels of social activity. This holds across the full Joblessness sample, and when looking within given labor market status.

If we had stopped at the fixed-choice questions, as most surveys do, we would have missed how the unemployed define their social and political world. We end this chapter with a few more insights from the qualitative data. First, we noticed that among the unemployed, more women invoked participation in caregiving or neighborhood-linked social activities than men, which speaks to Lowndes' (2004) findings on gender differences in type of social capital. Second, when women defined 'social activity' in terms of caregiving, help and support, some would subsequently label themselves as socially active. If they defined it in terms of membership and involvement in organizations, some would not regard themselves

¹¹ For details about the breakdown of the Joblessness sample by employment status in 2012, see Chaps. 1 and 4 in this book.

as socially active. Finally, we noticed that some men and women equated participation in elections with social activity. In light of the strong negative perception of politics some of our respondents, and Poles in general, express (e.g. Graham and Regulska 1997) and the key role of elections within a democratic system, defining elections as a social rather than a political activity strikes us as a resourceful solution by which respondents eliminate cognitive dissonance (for cognitive dissonance theory, see Festinger 1957, Harmon-Jones and Mills 1999).

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Conclusion

The experience of joblessness in Poland belongs to broader economic and legal processes. Poland's economic and legal systems over the last three decades have been dynamic. The move from authoritarian Communism with a centrally-planned economy and legally-guaranteed employment to democracy and a competition-based capitalist market wrought the massive unemployment wave of the 1990s. As Poland completed the post-communist transformation, unemployment rates dropped but joblessness has continued to affect many. The post-1989 unemployment studies seek to investigate this phenomenon.

Our book contributes to this line of research. We focused on a total of 149 Polish men and women who in 2011–2013 were either unemployed, homemakers, or recently reemployed following a spell of joblessness, and described their experiences with joblessness. For our data, we used the Joblessness project, which is a special extension of the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN. We viewed the experience of being jobless through the lens of inequality, and interpreted the data with a social constructionist approach.

The book has three parts. Part I (Chaps. 2, 3, and 4) provided the background of the Joblessness study, in terms of social circumstances in Poland that prompted our research, a summary of the literature that we considered especially influential for the project and this book, and a description of the data we used. Part II (Chaps. 5, 6, 7, and 8) presented information about the routes that took our respondents into and out of joblessness. Part III (Chaps. 9, 10, and 11) was about the daily lives of the jobless. We examined respondents' informal jobs and life at home, and their engagement in social and political activities.

We began Part I with an overview of the economic context, labor market situation, and official unemployment policies in Poland. An adequate understanding of the problems the jobless experience required an account of underemployment and precarious work, as the high prevalence of low quality jobs may have influenced our respondents' subjective perceptions and definitions of joblessness. In Chap. 2, we discussed main themes of the Polish public debate on unemployment, and the appeal of labor market deregulation as a main strategy to alleviate it. Although international

comparisons showed that the level of legal employment protection in Poland was actually moderate, some regarded the Labor Code as an impediment to entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and job creation. At the same time, the negative consequences of deregulation were often overlooked. Deregulation has been associated with the proliferation of insecure, low paid employment that has become a new line of segmentation of the Polish labor market.

Chapter 2 also provided an overview of the legal framework within which employers, employees, and the jobless operate. We presented the main regulations Poland adopted through the decades since State Socialism ended, and discussed them in the context of the Constitution of 1997 and Poland's accession to the European Union.

Poland created a series of laws to deal with the new employment environment. We pointed out that Polish unemployment laws consisted of both active (financing professional training, facilitating self-employment) and passive (benefits) instruments. Since the 1990s, when the state system of protection against unemployment began, programmes and provisions counteracting unemployment have gradually transformed. They shifted to a more diversified and flexible approach that addressed different groups separately. For example, they addressed young graduates, long-term unemployed, and participants of resocialisation programmes, such as former prisoners and drug addicts. While Polish law also contained provisions against unlawful dismissal and safeguards of stability of work, such guarantees were only available for individuals who were subject to employment contracts. The growing number of civil contracts that were disadvantageous to the worker on the labour market decreased the importance and effectiveness of statutory regulations on this issue.

Typically, unemployment research is of two kinds: macro studies of how jobs are created and destroyed, and micro studies that examine how people view the experience of unemployment. In Chap. 3, we focused on the qualitative literature on unemployment in Poland and abroad. We provided a history of joblessness studies in Poland from the 1930s to the present. As our data did not contain specifics about well-being, we reviewed studies on how the jobless in other studies have felt about their situation and how they coped with it. We also provided a literature review on homemakers. We noted the quantitative cross-national studies of marital status, employment, and well-being that reveal that housewives' well-being does not differ much from that of employed women.

The joblessness literature suggests that employment is a central feature of modern societies, and is for many a source of life satisfaction and a key dimension of self-identity. At a certain point in the life-course, paid work becomes something that most people are expected to do. In line with deprivational models of unemployment (Jahoda 1979; Warr 1987), this widely shared expectation, together with the economic and social losses – including diminished household income, poor or no health insurance coverage, the shrinking of personal networks that follow unemployment – render job loss a negative experience for most people who undergo it. Yet, as the agency model of unemployment postulates (Fryer and Payne 1984) unemployment

does not leave all psychologically vulnerable. “The unbroken,” as the 1930s researchers refer to, are able to make the most of their new situation.

In Chap. 4 we described the three main facets of our study that, through their interconnectedness, provided the information our analyses are based on: the respondents, the interviewers and the interview situation. We noted that of the 113 men and women whom we identified as unemployed based on information they had provided in the 2008 POLPAN survey (Groups 1–4 – see Chap. 1) and who agreed to participate in the Joblessness study, 110 confirmed our classification. Three respondents said they had never been unemployed; we did not complete an interview with them. Participants in Groups 1–4 were between 25 to 55 years old, with a mean age of 31.¹ Of them 69 persons (62%) were reemployed at the time we interviewed them, in 2012. There was more variation in age among the housewives in our study. In the Joblessness project, the group ‘housewives’ comprised 39 women aged 25–73 years, who, within the 2008 POLPAN panel survey, reported as their main work activity taking care of the household for one year continuously (and were not employed).² The median age for this group was 34 years. Most respondents had no college experience and were either in a Lower Non-Manual or Lower Manual social classes. Eight women (21%) had moved from homemaking into formal employment at the time we interviewed them.

Part II focused on respondents’ experiences on exit from and reentry into the labor market. Peoples’ characteristics and experiences and, by extension, the features of social groups they belong to, interact with larger societal forces to influence thoughts, actions, and outcomes. In brief, larger societal forces include government labor market policies and the stratification system (Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018). It is within this system that micro- and contextual-level factors combined to potentially impact how people became jobless, how they searched for jobs, and whether they did so successfully.

In Chap. 5, we asked respondents about how they lost their job, or how the job lost them. In this chapter we did not include housewives. In a social constructionist approach, we let the interviewer-respondent interaction guide our analyses. We classified several major ways of becoming unemployed: (a) Dismissal, for structural or non-structural reasons; (b) Quitting, which may or may not be entirely voluntary; (c) Graduation, where school ended in some way and respondents searched for, but could not find a job; and (d) Other, which reflected the myriad ways one can lose a job, e.g. some returned from abroad and could not find a job.

Chapter 6 was about the how people became homemakers. We relied on information from the 39 women we identified as housewives using the POLPAN 2008 data and who agreed to be part of the Joblessness project. This chapter contributed to the discussion about the social expectations and social constraints that women encounter as they exit employment (whether short- or long-term) and enter homemaking. We learned from our respondents that voluntarism may not

¹The unemployed vary from the average age of 31 by plus/minus 8 years. Half are younger and half are older than 28 years (i.e. median = 28).

²Housewives are on average 42 years old. They vary from the mean by +/- 15 years.

apply in women taking up homemaking. In line with Hakim's (2006) perception theory, we found that women performed "adaptive" strategies: they adjusted to the circumstances on the labor market (economic crisis, precarious work conditions, lack of employment and inflexible work environments for young mothers) by staying at home. Adaptation is not the same as voluntarism. Normative perceptions of the socially conservative Polish society placed strong pressure on women trying to decide how to balance work and family. This was especially true of young women after childbirth. We learned that, in defiance of Polish law, some of our respondents were dismissed, or had to quit their jobs because of a difficult pregnancy, or were not renewed the contract after having their child, and, as a consequence, became housewives.

In Chap. 7 we examined how men and women who were jobless (but not housewives) in 2008 looked for, and found, a job. We explored the interplay of meso- and personal-level factors, keeping in mind that it occurred within a broader, structural context. At the individual level, we focused on gender, education, social class, and age. At the meso-level, a person's social network, through the resources embedded in it, influenced the process and outcome of looking for employment (Granovetter 1973) and the strategies of coping with unemployment (Garrett-Peters 2009; Russell 1999). We found that the job search is a major preoccupation of the jobless, and many use different strategies simultaneously. The official channels, and the unemployment office especially, played an important role. Personal networks were also important for job-searching, but they seemed a less common a solution for job-finding. This result aligns with insights from other studies. Russell (1999), using survey data in Britain, showed that the social networks of unemployed men and women consist, to a large degree, of other jobless people. This network likely isolates the unemployed from important job information networks. Altogether, we found that stratification played a larger role in job-search than in job-finding.

Chapter 8 extended analyses in Chap. 7 to examine respondents' labor market outcomes in more detail. Our aim was to both distinguish those who were employed during the time of the Joblessness study from those who were not, and also, in defining "labor market success," to account for various dimensions of the quality of their jobs. These included stability, employment contract, occupational status, and wage levels. To do so, we used information about the jobs reported in the 2012 Joblessness survey, together with that about jobs one year later that we obtained from respondents' answers to the 2013 round of POLPAN. We combined data from both studies to allow for a longer-term view of the labor market trajectories of the jobless.

The results offered some reasons for optimism. First, many of our respondents managed to find jobs, and – more importantly – keep them for a period of at least one year – despite the economic crisis that characterized the times of both the Joblessness and the 2013 POLPAN studies. Second, the jobs respondents reported generally matched their level of education; we found little sign in deterioration of occupational status attributable to scarring effects of unemployment. Third, a majority of the jobs respondents found were on employment contracts protected by

the Labor Code, as opposed to civil-law agreements. In addition, data on perceived job insecurity suggested that the respondents have some sense of job stability.

However, these results need to be interpreted with caution. First, we cannot assess potential long-term scarring effects of the joblessness experience among our respondents because the data we employ cover only a short period of time. According to many studies, such effects may persist over many years and have a detrimental effect on life-long careers of young people (McQuaid 2015; Nilsen and Reiso 2014). Second, the generally positive results may be attributable to the overrepresentation of young people (age 25–29) in the Joblessness study. Empirical research suggests that the young are more likely to successfully transition from unemployment to employment, compared to older people (e.g., Landmesser 2014).

A further reservation concerns respondents' earnings. The jobless had quite modest expectations regarding their future wages (not exceeding the median monthly wage in Poland). Yet, they mostly ended up with earnings way below the amount they had reported in 2012 as their acceptable minimum. While we should treat this observation with caution, due to the very small sample, it suggests that, positive findings regarding the chances of finding and keeping employment aside, significant scarring effects of joblessness may occur with respect to later wages. In other words, what future research and policy may need to focus on is not necessarily transitions from unemployment to (any) job, but rather movement from joblessness to in-work-poverty, and the possible consequences of such movement for workers and their households, and society as a whole.

In Chap. 9 we used data from both the European Social Survey Round 5 (2010) and the Joblessness project to examine how men and women differently placed on the labor market fared with respect to their involvement in irregular (odd) jobs, household chores, and valuing, financially, their housework. Irregular jobs and housework are two important components of economic activities that gross national income or production statistics usually do not account for. They are time investments and, as such, are, or could be, evaluated with some price tags. The amounts of time spend on either activity, together with actual or implied returns, are crucial factors of the non-market economy. We analyzed how much respondents earned on irregular (odd) jobs, and what monetary value they assigned to the various household tasks they performed: preparing meals, shopping, doing laundry, cleaning the house, or caring for others.

Regarding irregular jobs, we found that the unemployed and homemakers were more likely to engage in such work than the reemployed. Among the jobless, housewives took up odd jobs less frequently than the unemployed seeking employment. Compared to women, men's income from informal jobs contributed more to the total household income, even when men reported fewer working hours than employed women. Next, we found support for the expectation that the extent of housework varies across labor market groups. Household tasks consumed the largest amount of time in the case of housewives, followed by the unemployed, with persons in paid employment spending least time on household chores. Housewives spent additional time on preparing meals when their husbands were unemployed, possibly because men were more often home. We emphasize in this context that the

greatest difference between employed and not employed women pertained to the time spent on caring for other people. This links, conceptually, to the insights about the role of caregiving both for taking up homemaking full time, which we discussed in Chap. 6, and its impact on nonworking women's social networks, which we discussed in Chap. 10.

We also looked at how much money respondents thought their household production was worth. On the average, our respondents assigned very similar monetary values to the different activities, with the largest amount given to cleaning and the smallest to grocery shopping. Generally, the subjective valuations of household activities were quite realistic, mirroring actual market values. Finally, we used the subjective estimates respondents provided for their involvement in different chores (amount per hour for given activity) to compute the total value of housework. We examined differences in the total value of housework among men and women belonging to three categories: employees, unemployed and housewives. We found that men assessed their contribution to household duties, per time units, higher than women. Housewives, in comparison to all other types of respondents, underestimated the financial value of their work in the household.

From a stratification perspective, we found that including irregular (odd) jobs in assessing respondents' household income had some equalizing effect: on the average, income from these jobs was higher among respondents whose household income was lower. However, this result needs a cautious interpretation, given data limitations. Specifically, our data showed one person's (the respondent's) earnings, whereas the household income generally comes from more contributors. We do not know to what extent the other household members worked odd jobs, and if they did, whether their contribution went in the same direction. We also found that in some instances, adding the value of housework to the household income lessened income differences between groups. Once again, such an interpretation needs to be made cautiously. For example, in the case of unemployed women, their added value of housework would widen the income gap with other groups, most notably, employed men.

In the last two chapters, we asked respondents about their social and political activity. Chapter 10 was about the social and political activity of homemakers. Social activity was perceived positively, being associated with solidarity and assisting the poor. On one hand, housewives reported social exchanges, and on the other hand, some said that they were not socially active, due to "lack of time." In the context of previous studies, which showed that women, particularly mothers of young children, underreport participation in social activities that are closely tied to their daily caregiving tasks (cf, Lowndes 2004 p. 54), we considered the housewives' narratives as a reminder that gender bias in survey coverage of social capital indicators remains a problem.

We observed two substantial approaches concerning the political participation of homemakers. Some narratives were of withdrawal and disassociation from politics. Respondents' language portrayed a dualistic representation of political subjects and political decision makers. Among housewives, there were those who expressed low opinions of politics: it lacks decency and fairness. Some homemakers looked down

on politicians. Still, others declared involvement in politics, primarily through voting and keeping up with political news. In line with the literature (e.g. Graham and Regulska 1997; Lowndes 2004) our respondents tended to shun formal politics, but if they did engage, it was primarily at the community and municipal levels.

Chapter 11 continued our inquiry into how the jobless define and participate in social and political activities. We returned to the group of 110 unemployed and recently reemployed men and women to examine the extent to which their views align with the general idea that social capital can act both as a ‘buffer’ against the negative consequences that unemployment has on the individual, and as a resource for political participation. We assumed that unemployment was a powerful state that impacted peoples’ perceptions strongly enough for these effects to continue even if the condition ended by the time of our study. Indeed, we found no significant differences in response patterns related to participants’ employment status in 2012, nor to gender. We found that women and men consistently reported higher social activity, whether we looked at the entire group of 110 participants, or within given labor market status.

Some respondents provided circular definitions of social activity, or referred to it as a form of assistance and involvement. Among respondents’ stories, some told of social isolation, a risk closely associated with unemployment. Others touched on the difficulty to structure their suddenly unstructured time (see Chap. 3). While no one derided social activity, we found that political activity was widely ridiculed. Similarly to housewives in Chap. 10, both women and men expressed their displeasure with politics and its professional practitioners, lack of trust toward politics, and a disinterest in politics.

Gender Matters

Polish qualitative studies of unemployment and joblessness date back over 80 years – the interruption during the communist era notwithstanding – and stem from early collaboration between social scientists from Poland and abroad. There are strong continuities from then to now. Employment in a paid job continues to be a central feature of modern societies. At a certain point in a person’s life, we are supposed to hold a job. The cultural expectation of employment makes joblessness a potentially negative experience. The precariousness of employment is felt strongest by the disadvantaged.

An important development in the history of Polish unemployment and joblessness studies is the focus on gender. Indeed, the most disturbing stories of dismissal and becoming a homemaker are the cases of women who framed their experience of job loss in relation to becoming pregnant and taking maternity leave. As indicated in Chap. 2, such dismissals are illegal. Whether the women’s contracts were indeed illegally terminated, we cannot check. We find it striking, though, that among the group of the unemployed, each of the four women who reported job loss following

pregnancy and maternity leave considered their experience to reflect a common outcome among women like them.

Gender as an institution also matters for how women became housewives. Economic decisions loomed large, especially for married women with children. For others, it was the accumulation of caregiving – leaving the labor market to have a child put the women in a position to take care of children and, in time, of other family members who needed care. This caregiving accumulation solidified their place outside of the labor market and made them long-term homemakers. Some women reported health reasons, detailing their medical conditions that prolonged their stay outside of the labor market. Returning to employment became difficult in an environment that did not embrace people with disabilities, and some women stayed home.

All stories are best viewed through a gender lens. Poland is a strongly patriarchal society in which women are primarily seen as mothers and wives whose domain and sphere of competence are domestic and childcare duties. Some young women who gave birth and lost their jobs became “housewives.” Even the seemingly joint decision to become a homemaker sometimes appears gendered: when women’s role as breadwinners coincides with caregiving obligations, the decision – made with family members – is to prioritize the caregiving obligations.

Social Construction

Our study also explored how interviewers and interviewees, within the context of a study created by social scientists, collaborate to create responses to the semi-structured survey instrument. While interviewer training and fieldwork controls were in place, all did not go according to plan. The interviewers asked participants the same basic questions, but some interviewers went “off script” to ask questions that were relevant to the jobless experience but were not formally part of the survey instrument. Other interviewers suggested responses. Some interviewers hewed close to the interview instrument to demand answers that “fit” the survey. At times, some interviewees attempted to dictate what the interviewer should record.

All of this resulted in richer data than we anticipated and the rare opportunity to present a look inside the interviewee-interviewer process. We contend that, the complex interaction within surveys notwithstanding, survey data reasonably reflect the experiences of the respondents. In the case of the Joblessness project that explicitly presents the social actors’ dynamic creation of information, the reader can make up their own mind as to the extent of each actor’s contribution. We encourage more projects to present these kinds of data.

Researchers can see the jobless statistically and view them as numbers in a table. But behind the statistics are real people. They are not simply jobless; they *experience* joblessness. Our book attempted to describe this experience and join the long literature on the subject from Poland and abroad.

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