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PATHWAYS TO COSMOPOLITANISM IN POLAND: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Poland is witness to a sudden rise in migration from both European and African nations, an event which increasingly puts people of different races and cultures in close contact. A demographic consequence is a mini-boom in biracial families in Poland. In a globalizing Europe where national borders are increasingly permeable and individuals increasingly inter-marry, the idea of cosmopolitanism has become the subject of much spirited public and academic debate (Hall 2002; Hannerz 1996; Held 2002; Tomlinson 1999; Urry 2000b; Vertovec and Cohen 2002). Cosmopolitanism continues to be a contested term that means different things to different disciplinary fields; blurry lines between cosmopolitanism and internationalization, globalization, transnationalism and universalism add to the definitional complexity (Beck & Sznaider 2006; Pichler 2008, Saito 2011; Skrbis et al. 2004). Many argue that cosmopolitanism is "associated with a conscious openness to

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the world and to cultural differences" (Skrbis et al. 2004, 116). Due to nationalism, xenophobia and racism, there are many challenges to acceptance of cosmopolitanism in a racially homogenous environment (Mikulska 2011; Ząbek 2009). If the cosmopolitan assumption is that all humans belong to a single community, and that even strangers with weak connection to one another can share a common worldview, a critical question arises: *How can Polish society adopt a cosmopolitan view, if the racially dominant group sees and treats racial minorities as socially, culturally, and biologically different?*

In this paper I explore sociological definitions of cosmopolitanism and major, inter-related determinants of societal acceptance of cosmopolitanism in Poland. I explore two main paths toward cosmopolitanism for Polish society: acceptance or rejection. Theoretically, I examine the role of national context and the emergence of racial diversity amidst racial homogeneity. Methodologically, I analyze race as presented in Polish traditions and the mass media to interpret how cosmopolitanism is culturally perceived. Individuals who society perceives to be racially different are not the whole story of race, cosmopolitanism and Polish society; biracial individuals and families both represent and embody the tension between the national context and emerging racial diversity. In the attempt to understand pathways to cosmopolitanism in Poland, I focus on historical perceptions of both African and biracial[1] individuals.

Poland is a crucial case for examining this phenomenon in that it is a useful example of a society that in the recent past has been racially and ethnically homogenous, but presently

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[1]   A note on terminology: some prefer the term "multiracial" or "mixed race" to biracial, but I focus specifically on two socially constructed racial categories – Black and Caucasian – that have strong meaning in contemporary Poland.

experiences a boom in migration from various parts of the world. New forms of racial inequality are becoming apparent which have not existed in the recent past and this poses many questions for cosmopolitanism in Poland (Mikulska 2011; Ząbek 2009). Although there has been some research on cosmopolitanism (and also "Europeanization") in terms of European identity (Pichler 2008, 1121), the concept and empirical study of cosmopolitanism in everyday life has only recently made its way into the social sciences and struggles with definition and clarity (Beck 2004). There has been very little sociological research done on the concept in Eastern Europe and Poland, specifically.

Cosmopolitanism in Sociological Debate

The concept of cosmopolitanism, traditionally rooted in philosophical studies, has received an upswing in interest among social scientists. Philosophers understood that cosmopolitanism projects the idea that all human beings, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, belong to a single community. This "love for humanity", philosophy of universal inclusion, blindness to particularity, and ability to share a common worldview based on moral responsibility to all human beings is key in the cosmopolitan ideology. As suggested by Skrbis (2004), cosmopolitanism is often perceived as an "ideal" rooted solely in universalism and philosophy, however today it has resurfaced as a conceptual way "of understanding the consequences of increased social interactions across cultural and political boundaries…[with] focusing questions related to globalization, nationalism, population movements, cultural values and identity" (Skrbis et al., 131). Many others have also commented on cosmopolitanism as a valuable analytical concept and call for a "cosmopolitanism sociology" (Pichler 2008; Beck 2004; Skrbis et al. 2004). There have also been many discussions regarding the nationalism and cosmopolitanism debate, and

the attempt to understand how states are being changed and reformulated in a more cosmopolitan way (Beck & Sznaider 2006, 20-21). In recent years many scholars have attempted to separate cosmopolitanism from the purely philosophical ideal and root it in "concrete social realities" (Beck & Sznaider 2006, 7). There are many different cosmopolitanisms as well as the empirical phenomenon of cosmopolitanization (Saito 2011; Beck & Sznaider 2006; Beck 2004). Still, many insist empirical research on "actually existing cosmopolitanism" should be a priority (Pichler 2008; Lamont & Aksartova 2002).

Attempts at Conceptual Clarity

Cosmopolitanism finds itself intertwined with a variety of concepts and theories and many have made attempts to differentiate and define them. A primary distinction is between cosmopolitanism and internationalism. While both cosmopolitanism and internationalism suggest openness to other cultures, internationalism indicates that the "nation" is a part of the equation and that nations have commonalities, whereas cosmopolitanism eliminates national boundaries and instead insists on a single moral community. Beck (2004) details the difference between the two concepts and outlines that although cosmopolitanism may presuppose internationalism, they do not pursue the same idea (143). This is the case as internationalism draws boundaries between "us" and "them", the national and the international, whereas cosmopolitanism redraws and opens boundaries

> transcending or reversing the polarity of the relations between us and others and…by rewriting in cosmopolitan terms the relationship between state, politics and nation and goes beyond the 'either inside or outside' distinction between national and international and is instead 'both inside and outside' (Beck 2004, 143).

Cosmopolitanism must also be differentiated from concepts such as universalism and globalization. Universalism projects a worldview of a universal identity, often in contrast to religious distinctions and particularism. Universalism and cosmopolitanism share the idea of moral responsibility for all human beings, however universalism neglects to acknowledge cultural differences in the world that remain an important part of cosmopolitanism. Beck and Sznaider (2006) suggests that cosmopolitanism differs from universalism because "it assumes that there is not just one language of cosmopolitanism, but many languages, tongues, grammars" (14). They emphasize that cosmopolitanism should be inclusive rather than exclusive of universalism, nationalism, and transnationalism in its practices as these concepts are both the make up of cosmopolitanism as well the approaches that make it distinguishable (Beck & Sznaider 2006, 19). Pichler (2008) expands on this idea by arguing that particularism and universalism act as poles in overemphasizing difference on one end and neglecting difference on the other, whereas "Cosmopolitanism considers both similarity and difference in understanding the need for enclosure and the possibility of multiple identities and affiliations to groups on the one hand and individualism on the other" (1110).

Cosmopolitanism scholars attempt a conceptual division between cosmopolitanization and globalization with varying success. Beck and Sznaider (2006) define cosmopolitanization as a "globalization from within" or "internalized cosmopolitanism" (9). In this way, the authors suggest that local-global phenomena can be explored through suspending the assumption of the nation-state and through framing questions "…so as to illuminate the transnationality that is arising inside nation-states" (Beck & Sznaider 2006, 9). Saito (2011) takes this a step further and insists that "globalization, consisting of the institutionalization of world society and the transnational circulation of foreign

people and objects, leads to cosmopolitanism as a subjective orientation of openness to foreign others and cultures" (124). Globalization is then the diffusion of ideas, culture, and languages across space and cosmopolitanism is the feeling of openness within society that occurs as a result of this diffusion. Conceptual clarity is still necessary in many cases, as these terms seem to share more than they do not, and in this way, cosmopolitanism seems to both encompass these concepts as well as differ from them in slight respects.

Nationalism can have a profound influence on individual and societal acceptance of cosmopolitan thinking through the connections it has with racism and xenophobia. The debate over nationalism and cosmopolitanism appears in this context specifically in the influence that nationalism may have on cosmopolitanism in a homogenous society. Cosmopolitan ideology may be either reinforced or refused depending on the context, and societies may make it more or less difficult for individuals to adopt a cosmopolitan view of the world, a situation which influences the diffusion of cosmopolitanism. Nationalism, ethnic and racial homogeneity, and lack of contact with other cultures, play a significant role in the difficulties behind maintaining a cosmopolitan ideology for society as a whole. However, with an increase of cross-national contacts, and the attendant increase in racial diversity, cosmopolitanism becomes a central, and contested, philosophy.

Cosmopolitanism in the Polish Context

Under travel-restricted Communist-era Poland, contact with individuals of different races and ethnicities were rare. Because Poland does not have an extensive modern history of relations with individuals from Africa, most of the notions of the "black other" are informed by a uniquely Polish African mythology (Kłokowska 1962; Chodubski 2005; Fereira 2002; Mol 2004).

For example Julian Tuwin's (1923) children story "Murzynek Bambo", found in many preschools and homes throughout Poland, tells the story of a "happy little negro" who climbs trees and is afraid to bathe, as it will "bleach" his "black" skin, and has resulted in much controversy due to the inconsistency of what are argued to be Polish intentions versus African interpretations (Kłokowska 1962; Chodubski 2005; Fereira 2002; Mol 2004). On one end it is argued that the this poem promotes anti-African stereotypes while from on the other it is said to be a means of accustoming readers on an elementary level with individuals from different cultures and different parts of the world. Still, the word "Bambo" has in recent years acquired negative connotations as an invective term used to insult individuals with darker skin in Poland (Mikulska 2011). The term "murzyn", or its diminutive form "murzynek", is also a topic of debate in Poland as its definitions range from "black person" to "negro" and depending on the context of its use, it can have many negative connotations (Ząbek 2009).

Studies of African-Polish relations have emphasized that problems between "whites" and "blacks" as Africans in Poland are perceived through the prism of race, rather than through their nationality or ethnicity, and that stereotypes are change resistant (Ząbek 2009). In the post-communist context, emerging racial heterogeneity and racial institutions impact development of cosmopolitanism in Poland on individual and societal levels. Nationalism and racism push toward rejection of cosmopolitanism, while the positive experiences of Polish-African families can lead to a strengthening of it.

Polish Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

Generally, the debate between nationalism and cosmopolitanism brings about a great deal of discussion (Saito 2011; Pichler 2008; Beck & Sznaider 2006; Cheah 2006;

Skrbis et al. 2004; Beitz 1983). Beitz highlights one of the clear distinctions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism in his statement that

> According to the national ideal, foreign policy should 'promote interests of a determinate group of human beings, bound together by the tie of a common nationality'; according to the cosmopolitan ideal, it should strive impartially to promote the interests of everyone (Beitz 1983, 591-592).

According to cosmopolitanism, nationalism excludes those who are not members of the nation. Cosmopolitans claim that "home" or a "nation" provides a substantive identity, such as claiming that one is Greek or French, while a cosmopolitan may say, "I am a citizen of the world" and employ many different cultures into his or her lifestyle. As Voltaire so aptly states, "So this is the human condition: to want your own country to be great is to wish your neighbors ill. The man who would want his homeland never to be larger, or smaller, or richer or poorer would be a citizen on the world" (Voltaire 1994, 29). Clearly nationalism challenges cosmopolitanism as it implies that the nation is to come first, and that everything else is to come second. Nussbaum (1996) further discusses this point, explaining the dangers of choosing the nation, what she considers a "morally irrelevant characteristic", before considering one's responsibility to the rest of the world. She states,

> Once someone has said, I am an Indian first, a citizen of the world second, once he or she has made that morally questionable move of self-definition by a morally irrelevant characteristic, then what, indeed, will stop that person from saying…I am a Hindu first, and an Indian second, or I am an upper-case landlord first, and a Hindu second? (5)

Moral responsibility to all human beings is a fundamental element of the cosmopolitan ideology and is contested when the nation demands that citizens be morally responsible first and foremost to the nation and its fellow citizens. In homogenous societies this seems to be an especially powerful agent to exclusion, even in the exclusion of citizens who simply look different.

Beck and Sznaider (2006) argue that societal relations are becoming "…distinct from the nation-state" and that "'Society' no longer appears under anyone's control" (20). They suggest that "the new agenda does not intend to "throw the state back out" but instead aims to explore "how states are being transformed in the cosmopolitan constellation, how new non-state actors arise and a new type of cosmopolitan states might develop" (Beck & Sznaider 2006, 20-21). Cheah (2006) warns however, that "we cannot automatically assume that experiences of a globalizing world where people, things, and events have become more and more connected necessarily lead to and form the substrate for a cosmopolitan form of politics that displaces that of the nation-state" (Cheah 2006, 491).

When it comes to Polish national identity, and who Poles consider a part of their national community, physical difference plays a significant role. Nowicka (2004) develops the hardships of biracial individuals in Poland who choose to identify only with their Polish parent and states:

> The self-definition of Polishness leaves no room for physical difference (Nowicka and Łodziński 2001). According to surveys conducted on various samples, only 13% of the Poles are willing to admit a coloured foreigner to the Polish national community. According to the vast majority of the Polish people, physical difference makes it impossible to cross this barrier (Nowicka, 76).

Another Polish Public Opinion poll (2004) shows that Poles see the "presence of people from the former USSR (with the exception of Lithuanians), the Vietnamese, Turks, Arabs and Africans…as rather disadvantageous…most (83%) believe that Poland does not need more immigrants" (Polish Public Opinion, 2004, 2).

Polish nationalism seems to make it all the more difficult to have a cosmopolitan worldview. It is not easy however to say whether public opinion polls reflect nationalism or xenophobia, or what exactly leads to these forms of exclusion from the nation. Jasińska-Kania (2009) argues that education and socioeconomic status influence perceptions of exclusion and tendency to exclude. She states, "younger people, the better educated, the better off, and those living in big cities…are more tolerant and open toward national minorities and immigrants" (Jasińska-Kania 2009, 36). Similar results have come from recent empirical studies of cosmopolitanism as cited by Saito (2011) suggesting that "…age and education have statistically significant effects on cosmopolitanism as openness to foreign others and cultures: younger and better-educated respondents are more likely to express cosmopolitan orientations" (Mau et al. 2008; Olofsson and Öhman 2007; Phillips and Smith 2008; Pichler 2008, 2009; Schueth and O'Loughlin 2008 in Saito, 127). It is clear however that the majority of Poles still finds it difficult to adopt a cosmopolitan view of the world, and instead is more likely to exclude rather than adopt a common worldview.

Media and Cosmopolitanism

"Monkey," "black monkey," "asphalt," "Bambo," "gorilla" are the types of invectives that nearly all interviewees of African origin reported hearing. Individuals who stand out for their darker skin and/or are of Asian origin reported hearing

insulting epithets such as "black", "nigger" or "yellow."
Foreigners frequently hear comments that they are not
welcome in Poland and should go back to their countries"
(Mikulska, *Helsinki Foundation*, 2011).

The Helsinki Foundation 2011 study entitled "Racism in
Poland" explores racism toward immigrants and children of
mixed marriages. The increase of cross-national contacts and
immigration to Poland has certainly had an influence on how
race is culturally perceived. Physical difference is a marker
that has not been a positive determinant of what it means to
be "Polish" according to the Polish people.

While biracial and African individuals in Poland are clearly
in the minority and often encounter a great deal of discrimination
due to their appearance, many of Poland's beloved celebrities
are biracial. This "exotic" physical difference in a way gives
some biracial individuals a "status" that cannot be achieved
by the ordinary Pole, and this is something that seems to have
changed in recent years. These celebrities are often referred
to by Poles as "our strangers", affirming that although they are
different, they are in fact, Poles.

A recent article in *Wprost*, a popular Polish weekly news
magazine, began with the subheading,

"When they walk down the street, they hear: Bambo, nigger,
or asphalt. People with different color skin do not have an easy
life here. But we are convinced that we are extraordinarily
tolerant" (Bojar & Renata 2010, 48).

Within this article examples are given of how Poland's most well
known "racially different" individuals experience Polish racism.
Richard Mbewe, A well-known actor and economist from
Zambia who came in Poland in 1983, recaps an experience
shopping with his young daughter in a shopping mall. His

daughter ran through the aisles and one man, apparently unhappy with her behavior, exclaimed, "Behave yourself little nigger, this isn't Africa!" (Bojar & Renata 2010, 48). Although he says that he has gotten used to being called "Murzynek Bambo" on the streets, he explains that it still upsets him to hear that he is taking someone else's job.

Another experience with racism in Poland comes from Ola Szwed, a well-know biracial Polish actress whose father is Nigerian. She begins by describing how an older woman "spit at her feet" only weeks before her interview with *Wprost*. The actress recalls what she views as a "funny" experience, rather than a sad one, when young children would look at her and ask their parents, "Why is that woman so tan?" (Bojar & Renata 2010, 49). She says that this experience is not sad for her because she knows that "these little ones have probably never seen a person with darker skin" (Bojar & Renata, 2010, 49). She explains however that when she was a teenager she did experience a moment that really frightened her. She speaks about how she was approached by a group of skinheads on the bus and how "vulgar" and "aggressive" they were, which scared her, however she explains that she will never forget the moment when one of the passengers hid her from the skinheads and helped her off of the bus. In the end she says "Thanks to the fact that I acted on the TV show, everyone knew me, for them I was 'swoją obcą' [our stranger], different but accepted" (Bojar & Renata 2010, 48).

According to the article, another well known Polish-Ghanaian weather woman reports that she was a victim of racism before she was even born, claiming that upon finding out that her mother would birth a biracial child the nurses said they would not deliver the baby (Bojar & Renata, 2010, 48). Another woman from Angola remembers when a Polish man in the bus told her "Don't sit here, blacks don't have the right to sit"

(p. 48). Jacek Purski, an activist for an antiracism campaign in Poland called "Never Again" claims that most of the racism that occurs in Poland occurs at soccer games at Polish stadiums. He gives an example explaining that "the referee comes up to the dark-skinned soccer player who has just been injured and asks him: Are you going to get up or should I give you a banana?" (Bojar & Renata 2010, 50).

In a more recent incident, in January 2012 *Gazeta Wyborcza,* a leading Polish newspaper, reported that Polish MP Marek Suski was recorded speaking about John Godson, Poland's first Nigerian MP, to a member of Godson's party saying, "Your little black man will vote with you" ("Wasz murzynek głosuje razem z wami"). Suski's use of the term "murzyn", a contested term in itself, in its diminutive form, as well as his use of the term in the context of ownership, through the use of the word "your", caused a considerable reaction from many people in Poland. When Suski was questioned about his comment soon after, he explained himself in saying that the story "Murzynek Bambo is in Polish literature a nice little poem". In response to this, Godson insisted that the incident "is an issue of one's level of intercultural intelligence". An altered image of Suski, posted by MP Cezary Tomczyk, surfaced on Facebook shortly after the incident. The edited photo showed a dark skinned Suski, with a play on words from the poem "Murzynek Bambo": "Little black boy Suski lives here in Poland, he has weak jokes, this friend of ours". Later in the evening, MP Godson posted the photo on his own Facebook page with the heading and emoticon, ":-)". It was not long before the image accumulated 584 "likes" and 70 comments. The image was commented on by Poles subscribed to Godson's Facebook page. Comments ranged from short statements of support such as, "SUPER!", "BRAVO!", to more lengthy discussions of race in Poland. One

comment in particular, which accumulated the most "likes" from other users, stated

> Mr. Godson, If only our 'white' politicians had even 1/10 the intelligence, diligence, perseverance, and if they did even 1/20 for us that you have for your district, then in our country the things that we see on television and read on the internet or the newspapers would not happen.

Through the social power of in-group solidarity, a homogenous environment makes it very easy to voice prejudice; it is only when these views are challenged that they may change. For cosmopolitanism to exist in such societies, citizens must have much more exposure to different cultures, and to put aside racist views and stereotypes. It seems that in recent years Polish media has come to notice the contradictions behind stating that Poland is becoming more and more tolerant but at the same time sensing and seeing that there is still a deep cultural tendency to exclude.

Discussion

This paper addresses a critical question: *How can Polish society adopt a cosmopolitan view, if the racially dominant group sees and treats racial minorities as socially, culturally, and biologically different?* I argue that considering the recent past and current culture of Poland with reference to racial others, there are two major pathways at a societal level for cosmopolitanism to go: rejection or acceptance. In the case of Poland it is clear that it has been, and is still, very difficult to maintain a cosmopolitan philosophy on a societal level. The rejection of cosmopolitanism through nationalism and racism appear to be the most obvious and the strongest counterexamples to cosmopolitanism. Because Poland is

a country that has historically witnessed countless periods of oppression and has experienced a constant struggle with maintaining a Polish national identity under its many occupations, nationalism now proves to be a very important force in Polish society (Kłoskowska 1994). The way in which Poles perceive foreigners and whether or not they accept them into their national community continues to change, yet this still seems to be a force that rejects cosmopolitanism.

There are some signs that Poland may be moving in the direction of accepting cosmopolitanism in the growing number of multiracial celebrities as well as in electing individuals of different backgrounds, such as Godson. However as noted earlier, when public figures, such as Suski, who are meant to represent Poland, use offensive language, this also poses questions about cosmopolitanism in Poland. The reaction from Godson's side brought light to this issue but also served as a means to challenge the current dialect between individuals of different races and ethnicities in Poland. As seen in the distinction of "our strangers" it is possible to be accepted as a Pole, even when physically different such as in the case of multiracial Poles, however this does not apply to all individuals, and still does not show a complete implementation of cosmopolitanism.

Is education the path toward acceptance of cosmopolitanism? Pogge (2007) discusses how the works of Nussbaum (1996) and Rorty (1998) develop cosmopolitanism in the form of education: "children should be taught that foreigners, too, are citizens of the world, equal to us in dignity and human rights. And they should also be taught concretely about foreigners, about the history, culture, problems and prospects of their societies" (Pogge 2007, 328). Tuwim's poem cannot continue to serve as the primary tool to educate youth in Poland about individuals of different cultures. A step has been made to change this by

authors such as Mamadou Diouf, a native of Senegal and Polish citizen, in his children's book "The Little Book About Racism" ("Mala Książka o Rasizmie"). In this way, it is still difficult to say which path Poland will take.

Because very little empirical research has been done in terms of studying actually existing cosmopolitanism in Eastern Europe, it would be beneficial to continue this study through an empirical look at African-Polish families actually living in Poland. It would also be useful to do similar studies in other countries, including more racially diverse societies where cosmopolitanism may be more or less accepted or rejected. More research in Poland on views of cosmopolitanism, both on the societal level and within Polish families would be instrumental in determining which direction Poland may take in terms of cosmopolitanism. Lamont & Aksartova (2002) also discuss "anti-racist rhetorics" in comparing black workers in the United States and North African and white workers in France, which could also be developed further and compared in racially homogenous contexts such as Poland. Generally much more empirical research is necessary when it comes to contextualizing cosmopolitanism in the social sciences.

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