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**IS A GENDER REVOLUTION POSSIBLE IN POLAND?
ANALYSIS OF THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGES IN THE
PERSPECTIVE OF THE THEORY OF GOLDSCHIEDER,
BERNHARDT AND LAPPEGÅRD**

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Keywords: gender revolution, Second Demographic Transition, division of household duties, marriage and family life.

The purpose of the article is to analyse the changes in private life and gender relationships in Poland after 1989 in the context of the Polish society's potential for the second stage of the gender revolution. The authors look at the changes from the perspective of the gender revolution theory as defined by F. K. Goldscheider, E. Bernhard and T. Lappegård. The changes were analysed in the context of the concept of the second demographic transition

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by Van de Ka. They were treated as conditions for further transformations in the relationships between men and women. The results show that in Poland the gender revolution stopped at the first stage.

CZY W POLSCE MOŻLIWA JEST REWOLUCJA PŁCI? ANALIZA POTENCJAŁU ZMIAN W PERSPEKTYWIE TEORII F. K. GOLDSCHIEDER, E. BERNHARD I T. LAPPEGÅRD.

Słowa kluczowe: rewolucja płci, drugie przejście demograficzne, podział obowiązków domowych, życie małżeńsko-rodzinne.

Celem artykułu jest analiza przemian w obszarze życia prywatnego i relacji płci w Polsce po 1989 roku w kontekście potencjału społeczeństwa polskiego dla drugiego etapu rewolucji płci. W artykule przyjęto perspektywę teorii rewolucji płci w ujęciu F. K. Goldscheider, E. Bernhard and T. Lappegård. Analizy przemian dokonano w kontekście koncepcji drugiego przejścia demograficznego autorstwa Van de Ka. Przemiany te traktowano jako uwarunkowania dalszych zmian w relacjach między kobietami i mężczyznami. Rezultaty wskazują, że w Polsce rewolucja płci zatrzymała się na pierwszym etapie.

Introduction

Although significant changes and progress towards gender equality have been observed, research conducted in recent years has shown that in many countries the progress has slowed down or halted (Farah 2018; Scarborough, Sin and Risman 2018). The changes noted by researchers indicate that the progress in gender equality refers mainly to the public sphere and work; however, it is slightly more advanced in the private sphere. i.e. family life, child care and household chores (Bianchi et al. 2006; Parker and Wang 2013; Scarborough, Sin and Risman 2018, Goldscheider, Bernhard and Lappegård 2015).

Frances K. Goldscheider, Emerita Bernhard and Trude Lappegård (2015) argue that gender revolution is composed of two stages. The first one is connected with the increased participation of women in the labour market, which, in turn, adversely affects relationships between gender roles and family formation, growth, and union dissolution. At the same time, the second stage of the gender revolution has a positive influence, which is due, in particular, to the increased involvement of men in home activities. The

proposed view makes it possible to look at the gender revolution not only from the perspective of negative aspects brought about by the first stage, but also from the perspective of positive support in the family life, where men play a significant role as they become involved in daily chores and participating in childcare.

Goldscheider, Bernhard and Lappegård (2015) posit that the negative aspects of family change which are linked with the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) can be reduced by increasing the involvement of men in the home. The authors focus on three outcome measures: union formation, fertility, and union dissolution, as well as their changing linkages with male and female education and participation in the labour market. They also examine the processes that mediate these relationships, including the determinants and consequences of both gender role attitudes and sharing housework and childcare.

The purpose of the article is to analyse the changes in private life and gender relationships in Poland after 1989 in the context of the Polish society's potential for the second stage of the gender revolution, assuming the perspective of the gender revolution theory as defined by Goldscheider, Bernhard and Lappegård.

Changes in family and marriage life in Poland

The changes that have been taking place in Poland have their foundation in the SDT (Van de Kaa 1987) and the accompanying processes of industrialisation, modernisation, urbanisation, secularisation, globalisation, individualisation, gender revolution and in the diffusion of liberal values from Western European countries. However, demographic and social changes observed in Poland and the course of the accompanying processes were different in terms of their pace and scope than in other countries. After the political transformation in 1989, Poland's population status started to be determined by social, cultural and economic processes with various origins and characteristics. The population processes were conditioned by three directions of change. The first one was to return to the modernisation trends, which were distorted or even stopped during the communist period. The second direction of change referred to the reality of the political transformation, which meant institutional discontinuance, social changes and economic difficulties. Finally, the third one pertained to the entry into the path of late modernity and the associated axionormative transformations, including individualisation of people's lives (Okólski 2004). As a consequence, Poland's situation is specific and comparable only to other Central and Eastern European countries (Duszczuk and others 2014).

The existence of the Iron Curtain and the communist system also restricted the flow of new ideas to Poland from the countries in Western Europe. It was not until the political transformation in 1989 that a strong impact of sexual revolution in Poland was observed, although in the case of Poland one can rather speak about the evolutionary nature of the changes in morals (Szlendak 2011).

An important context which is quite relevant to the course and strength of these changes in Poland is the strong influence of catholic values and the significant position of the Catholic Church. Poland is one of ten countries with the largest Roman Catholic populations; it ranks 3rd in Europe and 8th worldwide. At the same time, it is ranked first according to the percentage of Catholic citizens (Pew Research Center 2011). Poland is classified as a “very religious” country (Pikel & Sammet 2012, p. 8) and with “low secularisation” (Arnold 2012). As a special feature of the contemporary Polish society, a high religious homogeneity is identified (Sekerdej, Pasieka 2013; Boguszewski 2016). The Catholic Church (Roman Catholic Church) membership is declared by 87.7% of the total population in Poland (CBOS 2019). However, the Poles’ engagement in religious practices after 2005 began to weaken significantly and, according to the statistics of the Catholic Church, the rate of those who are active church-goers in Poland is now 36.7% (Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia, 2018).

As mentioned above, characteristic changes in the SDT (van de Kaa 1987, 1994) are observed in Poland. For several decades, a number of demographic and social changes have been observed in particular as regards marital and family life, intimacy and sexuality, fertility models, values and social norms, practices in religious services and labour market participation.

Changes in the aspects of family in Poland indicate a decline in the number of marriages – from 307,373 marriages in 1980 to 183,371 in 2019 (CBOS 2020, p. 181) – it is a decrease by nearly 50% over the last 50 years. In this context, with falling rates of participation in religious practices, what is significant is that most couples in Poland get married in church (concordat weddings). Out of 190,000 marriages in 2015 approximately 117,000 were entered into in the Catholic Church (about 72,000 were civil weddings) (Demographic Yearbook 2016). The interest in getting married in church is still high. In 2017, according to church statistics, the number of marriage sacraments dispensed was approximately 137,000 (Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia 2018). Most of the marriages were Catholic marriages, but the divorce rates observed for several years: from 40,000 in 1980 to 65,000 (Polish Central Statistical Office 2020, p. 230) make Poland similar to countries in Western Europe in this regard. The number of applications for

the annulment of church marriages is also increasing (*Annuario Staticum Ecclesiae in Polonia* 2018, pp. 32-33, 38). The higher frequency of family breakdown through divorce is parallel to the increased number of second marriages (CBOS 2020, p. 222). In general, divorce as a social phenomenon is socially acceptable. The surveys indicate that there are twice as many strong supporters of divorce in Poland than determined opponents, and the percentage of the former tends to increase (CBOS 2013b, 2019).

Another change in the aspects of family format in Poland is the delayed start of a family unit (CBOS 2020, p. 185; Kotowska 2002). In the past 50 years, the mean age of newlyweds has increased, while the number of marriages has been decreasing. In the 1980s, the average age of a woman getting married was 23. In 2010, it rose to 26, and in 2019 it was 28 years of age. At the same time, the average age of a man getting married in 1980 was 24. In 2010, it was 28 and in 2019, the average age was 30 (CBOS 2020, p. 185). The upward trend continues.

The increase in the average age of people getting married implies directly an increase in the average age of mothers at childbirth, as in Poland most children are born to married couples. In 2019, the average age of a mother having her first child was around 30 (CBOS 2020, p. 259). Also, a decrease in the number of childbirths is observed (CBOS 2020, p. 250; Kotowska 2002). Since the 1980s, the number of childbirths has decreased by half and amounted to 378,000 births in 2019. The share of children born outside marriage has increased since the 1980s, from 5% in 1980 to 25% in 2019 (CBOS 2020, p. 250). Thus, a quarter of children are born to unmarried parents, which indicates the separation of childbearing and raising children from marriage (CBOS 2020, p. 489; Kotowska 2002). The decreasing birth rate is not only due to conscious family planning but also to economic pressure, self-fulfilment and individualism. Nowadays, the reproduction rate in Poland is record low. Since 1989, there has been no replacement of generations in Poland (Szukalski 2009, p. 60). Since 1990, the TFR ratio has been below 2, and in some years even 1.3 (2001-2007) and 1.2 (2002-2005). This phenomenon is referred to as lowest-low fertility, which is the lowest fertility rate ever recorded in the history of humankind (Duszczuk et al. 2014). Between 2005 and 2010, Poland was among 10 countries with the lowest fertility rate in the world (UN 2011).

The changes in Poland have led to the proliferation of the nuclear family model (parents and children) living in one household (Polish Central Statistical Office 2017, p. 210). These are usually marriages with one or two children (OECD 2011, pp. 24-25). Single parent families are also an increasing social phenomenon (CBOS 2017, p. 211).

Despite these changes, in terms of marital status the majority of the population are married couples, which indicates that Poland is a country with a strong family tradition and marriage is a universal form of life. Most Poles live in relationships (71.8%), more often in marriages (62.4%) than in non-marital cohabitation (9.3%) (Paprzycka, Mianowska 2020). There is no legal regulation in Poland for non-marital cohabitation. Invariably, for Poles, the family happiness ranks first among the hierarchy of the most important recognised values (Jasińska-Kania 2012, CBOS 2013a).

In Poland, there has also been a fundamental change in the social axionormative order in the approach to sexuality. The percentage of Poles who decide to begin sexual activity before getting married has increased, as evidenced by the low age of sexual initiation of around 18. However, changes have been observed in the lowest age group among young people aged 15-18, where their sexual initiation takes place when they are around 15 (Izdebski 2012). Changes in the approach to sexuality (Izdebski 2020), the popularity of alternative forms of marriage and family life (Kwak 2014; Juszczyk-Frelkiewicz 2014) as well as the changing attitude towards divorce (CBOS 7/2019) show that the views in Poland are more liberal and the importance of religiousness weakens, although analyses indicate that these changes are accepted by very religious people the least frequently (Paprzycka, Mianowska, Połec 2020).

It is considered that, at present in Poland, the manifestations of cultural changes described in demographic theories are noticed in parallel, as accompanying both the first and second demographic transition. The former includes the still-lasting family model in the Polish society, defined by van de Kaa (1987) as 'king-child with parents', as demonstrated by parents' desire to invest in the human capital of children, often at the expense of their own self-fulfilment. However, the second transition includes, among others, increased women's independence in choosing their life careers and increased importance of self-fulfilment, but also negative effects in terms of the difficulty of reconciling different life careers (Duszczyk et al. 2014), which results in double burdening the women with professional career and household chores, where the engagement of men is low. According to the researchers, women did not benefit from the transition. They stress that the consequences of the transformations affected women to the greatest extent (Charkiewicz, Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz 2009, Dryjańska Piotrowska 2012). Structural adjustment processes of the Polish economy to integrate it into the global economy (Kowalik 2009, Woś 2014) were accompanied by the state's withdrawal from providing social services and reducing the budget for public purposes, such as kindergartens and

nurseries. As a consequence, these services had to be provided by families on their own account, which, in practice, meant that they were performed by women. The reforms introduced in the 1990s meant that women had worse working conditions, part-time jobs and unpaid work at home (Szelewa, Polakowski 2008).

Potential for gender revolution in Poland

The changes described by the SDT had an impact on gender equality, and in the reference to the concept by Goldscheider, Bernhard and Lappegård (2015), they can be analysed as the first stage of the gender revolution. A key area for achieving equality in the second phase of the gender revolution is a family. The results of the research in Poland show that gender inequalities are better established and more visible in the family life. The importance of both structural and cultural considerations for practising gender equality in the family is taken into account and in particular, the importance of cultural values and standards for the models of family life and the authority distribution between partners or spouses is emphasised (Slany, Krzaklewska, Warat 2016, Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2014). The studies on gender equality conducted in Poland show that equality is an important value in the life of the respondents – the vast majority of the subjects, both female (93%) and male (92%) believe that gender equality is such an important value that it should be promoted in families. The majority of women (90%) and men (80%) also claim that women and men should share household chores equally and that men and women should take the same responsibility for the financial stability of the family (84% and 80%, respectively). However, when it comes to childcare and recognising the importance of work, the opinions are equally strong – as many as 64% of men and 57% of women think that women hold the ultimate responsibility for their family home. Next, 37% of women and 46% of men accept the fact that a woman gives up her own career and supports her husband in his career. What is more, 75% of women and 78% of men believe that mothers of young children up to 3 years of age should not be professionally employed. As regards the respondents with children up to 15 years of age, only 40% of them indicate that care is shared equally; few of them think that care activities are largely attributed to fathers, but very often only or to a large extent to mothers (Slany, Ratecka 2018). The research findings show, on the one hand, the progressing change in attitudes towards differences in social and professional roles of women, and on the other, the increasing burden on women, who, according to the Polish model of management matriarchate, share their professional work and their household chores to a larger degree

than a men (CBOS 2013a, 2018).

The survey shows that over the past seven years, the proportion of Poles who prefer a partnership model of marriage has increased from about 41-48% in 2004-2013 by 12 percentage points. At the same time, the choice of models which mainly burden women has decreased. The preference for the traditional model decreased from 23% to 14%, and the proportion of people who regard the disproportionate female model as the most desirable model decreased from 22% to 20% in the period under consideration (CBOS 2013a, 2020). However, although the Polish families declare to pursue the partnership family model, it appears to be based mainly on the professional work of both spouses, without having a greater impact on sharing the chores at home. The survey shows a persistent imbalance in doing chores. In most households, women are the only ones who do the laundry (82%) and ironing (81%). The division of chores in this respect has not been substantially altered over time as is the case of the preparation of meals, which in almost two thirds of households is only performed by women (65%). A small percentage of men do chores on their own, such as the laundry (2%), cleaning (4%), washing up dishes (13%) and preparing meals (5%) (CBOS 2018). 'Typically female' tasks are still the same despite the lapse of time, while 'typically male' tasks are increasingly performed jointly or interchangeably (CBOS 2018).

In Poland, the departure of women from the private sphere into the public sphere has not been offset by male entering into the family and home sphere. In addition, the labour market situation still needs to be changed. Despite the fact that most often both spouses work (64%) in the Polish family, the employment rate is much lower for women (48.6%) compared to men (65%) (MPiPS 2016). In addition, the analysis of the problem in Poland indicates that young women of the procreative age are the most vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market. Working conditions of many women can be described as precarious – as many as 75% of women have income below PLN 2,000, but only 10% of women have income above PLN 3,000. Despite the fact that women are better educated, the university diploma (at least a bachelor or engineer's degree) was held by every third Polish woman and every fifth Polish man (Warat, Kowalska 2018). Salary inequalities are reflected in the strengthening of unequal relations in families. Due to the different pool of resources brought to the household by men and women, a specific authority distribution between the partners emerges (Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2014).

The pandemic time has revealed even more that the partnership model is only apparent. According to the research conducted during this period,

the costs of the pandemic are largely borne by women who were committed to organising the daily life of the household. The research analyses show that it is women who feel responsible for managing the family and home sphere during a crisis, organise leisure time for the family, take care of the right home atmosphere, and care for the dependant family members. Women more often report lack of time, emergence of new chores and lack of freedom. In the future, the switch to remote work by women who previously did their jobs outside home may contribute to reducing its value and treating it as less important. As a result, the pandemic can lead to increased discrimination of women in the labour market, as it dismounts the illusion of equality. The return to traditional patterns launched during the pandemic is described by the researchers as the reset of equality (Drozdowski et al. 2020, pp. 31-32).

In the case of Poland, we observe that the gender revolution has not only stopped; there is a growing tendency for the return to a traditionally defined gender, especially in the area of private life. Nevertheless, the second phase of the gender revolution, which aims at increasing men's involvement in the private sphere and introducing changes in the public policy to promote symmetrical involvement of both parents in childcare and balance between the family life and professional life in Poland, seems to be slowing down significantly.

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