

# The Category of Masculinity in the Polish Media Discourse on Robert Lewandowski

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**Abstract:** The fundamental objective of the studies was to reconstruct and analyze the category of masculinity in the media discourse that refers to Robert Lewandowski as well as to describe and interpret the most important discursive strategies used in creating the image of the footballer. The research material includes almost 120 Polish-language media messages: mainly Internet articles, commercial spots, and interviews, all of which appeared in the years 2013-2019. This article presents the results of the critical analysis of the discourse, including proposals of the discourse-historical approach. The prime theoretical framework of the studies is made up of the theory of hegemonic masculinity on the one hand and the theory of inclusive masculinity on the other, as well as the concept of caring masculinities. The discourse on Lewandowski is not homogeneous; it includes elements derived from different versions of masculinity. The discourse is divided into two parts: one connected with the professional sphere and the other referring to the private. The strategies describing the footballer's professional life are quite conservative. The elements of the highest importance within this part of the discourse include hard work, success, rivalry, and the mesomorph body type. The part of the discourse referring to the footballer's family life is dominated by the strategies connected with the concept of caring masculinities and the notion of egalitarian relationship even though it is not completely free from the traditional gender roles.

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Researchers locating their interests in the area of gender studies maintain that the categories of masculinity and femininity are socially and culturally constructed, and a very important element of the construction is media coverage (Connell 1987; 2013; Kimmel 1992; 2015; Renzetti and Curran 2005). Television, the Internet, and the press shape images of gender roles and the relations between men and women. According to Michael Kimmel, the media reflect the existent gender differences and inequalities, construct the differences, and bring about the situation where they seem natural and not socially produced (Kimmel 2015:384-385).

This article concentrates on the media image of Robert Lewandowski. He is one of the most popular and outstanding Polish footballers, which made him a role model for many young Poles. Lewandowski is the best goal scorer in the history of Poland's representative team in football. He played at the UEFA European Championship in 2012 and 2016, as well as in the World Cup in 2018. Since December 2014, he has been the captain of the national team. Playing for Borussia Dortmund and then Bayern Munich, he was a top scorer of the Bundesliga, one of the strongest football leagues in Europe. He has gained 15 club trophies, which makes him the most titled Polish football player in history (*Robert Lewandowski Biography* 2019).

The fundamental aim of the studies was to reconstruct and to analyze the category of masculinity in the Polish media discourse concerning Robert Lewandowski, as well as to describe and interpret the most important discourse strategies used in the creation of the sportsman's image. The category of masculinity appears in the media coverages describing the footballer in relation to other categories, such as 'femininity,' 'family,' 'body,' and 'gender.' Therefore,

wherever it is necessary, the article includes these categories.

### Masculinities, Sport, and Media

Following the assumptions of feminist criticism initiated in the 1970s, Michael Messner, who is one of the most prominent researchers analyzing the area of sport from the gender perspective, points out that sport makes up a field of the confirmation of the traditional male power, force, and violence (Messner 1987:54). Organized sport establishes an order that reflects the concepts of masculinity and femininity dominating in society, and it performs it through "masculinizing" bodies and psyche of men (Messner 1995:112). There is a connection between construing a masculine identity and boys' participation in organized sport (Messner 1995:102). As Messner writes, "Sports world is an important cultural arena that serves partly to socialize boys and young men to hierarchical, competitive, and aggressive values" (Messner 1987:66). Sport has been accepted as a masculine domain, underscoring the importance of competition and hierarchy between men. As a result of the fear of feminization, sport disciplines – particularly contact and/or brutal sports – have been spread and appreciated (Messner 1987:65-66). According to Messner, sport became one of the "last bastion" of masculine power, the way of transforming boys into men (Messner 1987:54).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of sport in public life and media has increased considerably. In the introduction to the book *Media – eros – przemoc* [*Media – Eros – Violence*], Andrzej Gwóźdź writes that "there is no sport today without the media, but also there are no media without sport" (Gwóźdź 2003:7). Currently, a huge role in creating images of masculinity and constructing male identity is played by sport

and media coverages showing well-known athletes (Messner 1995:102-114; 2007:6). The media change the status of sportspeople, who are becoming icons of pop-culture, idols of mass imagination, and celebrities (compare: Jakubowska 2008:115).

In spite of the fact that sport competitions with women's participation now enjoy a more considerable interest on the part of the media than they used to, the attention paid to them is disproportionately lower in comparison with men's sport disciplines (Messner 2007:3; Kluczyńska 2011a:387, 390). Moreover, television commentaries on sportswomen are quite often infantilized and trivialized. It is often the case that sports commentators concentrate on sportswomen's appearance, referring to them as "pretty," "shapely," or "sexy," whereby they belittle the athletic struggle of women. Remarks of this type are not made in relation to male athletes; on the contrary, they are frequently referred to as "modern gladiators" (Sabo and Jansen 1999:176-177).

In the last decades, the number of women doing team sports has increased (Messner 2007:2). However, studies into media messages – carried out in various countries – indicate a considerable disproportion in the way and frequency of presenting team sports played by women and men (Messner 2007:3-4; Kluczyńska 2011a:391). Team sports, particularly contact sports, are defined as men's sports, i.e. suitable for men, because during rivalry the players may immediately feel and confirm their strength, power, and domination (Kluczyńska 2011a:387).

The media still make a distinction between "men's sports" and "women's sports." They treat the former one seriously, while the latter one is merely an addition to the 'true' masculine rivalry. Present-day media spectacles show who has the power, who is de-

prived of the power, who may apply force, and who may not. Sport, particularly football – being the most popular sport in the world – is an important field of socializing and acquiring by boys and young men qualities characteristic of the hegemonic-masculinity model. Media images of athletes and representations of men's sports rivalry usually serve to construct and maintain men's domination in society (compare: Messner 2007:3-7; Kluczyńska 2011b:69-82). However, a certain change has recently occurred in the images of athletes, for some athletes exhibit elements associated with inclusive and caring masculinities.

### Selection of Research Material

I concentrated on essential focal points of the media discourse, which is the periods when Robert Lewandowski attracted the media's attention, namely the 2016 UEFA European Championship, the World Cup in 2018, the footballer's wedding with Anna Stachurska in 2013, and the birth of their child in 2017. It is important to add, however, that the articles and audiovisual coverages which describe Lewandowski's sport activities as well as his private and public life appear on the Internet and other media nearly every day. Due to the size of the material, the analysis includes only these media coverages that are the most relevant from the point of view of the problems and aims of the studies. I collected most of the research material using the Google search engine in June and July 2018, and then I completed it in January and February 2019 by means of online desk research. In 2018, I recorded commercials (using a decoder) as well as television and radio programs with Lewandowski or referring to him. After a tentative review and selection of the collected research material, I chose and analyzed 118 Polish-language media coverages published or broadcasted in the years 2013-2019 (see: Table 1).

**Table 1. Basic information on the analyzed media coverages referring to Robert Lewandowski**

Type of media coverage	Place of publication or broadcast of the coverage	Years of publication or broadcast of the coverage	Number of coverages (N=118)
Articles about Lewandowski and photos connected with him	Internet portals and services: Onet.pl, Gazeta.pl, NaTemat.pl, Sport.onet.pl, Sportowefakty.wp.pl, Sport.pl, PrzegladSportowy.pl, PolsatSport.pl, Weszlo.com, Gala.pl, Motoonet.pl.	2013–2019	82
Commercial spots with Lewandowski	TV channels: TVP 1, TVP 2, Polsat, TVN. Internet services: YouTube, Sport.pl.	2014–2019	17
Interviews with Robert Lewandowski and/or Anna Lewandowska	Internet portals and services: Onet.pl, Gazeta.pl, YouTube, Sport.pl, Gala.pl. TV channels: TVP1, TVN, TVN 24.	2013–2018	13
TV and radio programs about Lewandowski	TV channels: TVP1, TVN. Radio channels: Polskie Radio Program III, TOK FM.	2014–2018	6

The fundamental criterion of the selection of Internet sources was the rates of the number of real users and the number of views in 2018. The analysis includes the materials published by popular Polish-language portals (onet.pl, gazeta.pl) and the major sports services (sport.pl, sport.onet.pl, sportowefakty.wp.pl, polsatSport.pl) as well as advertisements and interviews placed on the YouTube service. I analyzed coverages broadcasted by four television channels that have the highest audience rate in the current decade: TVP 1, TVP 2, TVN, and Polsat. I also analyzed programs broadcasted by TVN 24 and two radio channels (Polskie Radio Program III and TOK FM), which are all news and opinion-forming media with an established status on the media market. Additionally, the analysis included articles relevant to the studies published in the following Internet services: PrzegladSportowy.pl, Weszlo.com, Gala.pl, NaTemat.pl, Moto.onet.pl.

### The Theoretical and Methodological Assumptions Behind the Studies

In my studies, I used primarily theoretical concepts developed within the framework of critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM).<sup>1</sup> One of the best known and influential theories referring to gender, namely the so-called concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ – often used for analyzing media coverages – was developed by Raewyn Connell in the 1980s. The sociologist defines the hegemonic masculinity as the “configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is

<sup>1</sup> Critical studies on men and masculinities arose from a number of critiques – primarily from women’s and gender studies, but also from queer scholarship, as well as from men’s responses, particularly men’s pro-feminist responses to feminism (see: Hearn 2004:50; Wojnicka and Kluczyńska 2015:7).

taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and subordination of women" (Connell 1995:77). According to the Australian author, one cannot speak of one unchangeable category of masculinity, but, rather, of a plurality of masculinities that are dependent on historical, socio-cultural, and geographical determinants. Connell claims that in a particular culture there may exist many different masculinities, but only one version is dominant.

Hegemonic masculinity is one of three basic variants functioning in modern Euro-American societies. The main components making hegemonic masculinity include heterosexuality, authority, domination, high status in social hierarchy, and also physical strength. The researcher suggests that this variant in point constitutes an ideal model to which men aspire. However, most men are not able to achieve all the attributes connected with hegemonic masculinity. Many of them create other variants. One is 'complicit masculinity.' These men use the privileges and profits connected with hegemonic masculinity as well as the existent gender hierarchy, but their relations with women and men of the other categories of masculinity may be negotiable in societies. The third variant named by Connell is 'subordinated masculinity,' which embraces men who cannot, do not want or are not able to meet the requirements set by the other two types of masculinity. Therefore, the category of subordinated masculinity refers to non-heterosexuality and ethnic groups composed of non-white men. Heterosexual men who do not meet the criteria of the hegemonic masculinity, but evince qualities traditionally perceived as feminine (connected with behavior or appearance) are also counted among the subordinated group in relation to the hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995:78-90). The Australian researcher underscores the remarkable significance of body in

the context of reinforcing the existent gender hierarchy and maintaining the social *status quo* (Connell 2013:94-100).

Particular categories of masculinity are arranged hierarchically; the hegemonic masculinity is at the top, while the subordinated masculinity is placed at the bottom. All variants of femininities in the gender hierarchy are situated below the hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987:183-188)<sup>2</sup>.

It is important to note that the concept developed by Connell makes for a certain theoretical framework of my analysis, but is not able to describe all aspects of masculinity in late modern societies. I believe that certain theoretical perspectives – such as 'caring masculinities' (Elliott 2016), 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson 2015), and the criticism of consumer society made by Jean Baudrillard (2006) and Zygmunt Bauman (2008) – may be helpful as well.

When analyzing media coverages, I used the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the critical discourse analysis (hereinafter CDA). In the literature of the subject, the term 'discourse' is understood in multiple ways, but is usually described as a communicative event, i.e. language in use. It is often the case that at the level of the operationalization of the term 'discourse' the meaning of the context is also emphasized (Dijk 2001:9-29; Wodak 2011:15-29). I referred to the methodological postulates formulated by the representatives of the discourse-historical approach (hereinafter DHA). The discussed methodological approach remains

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<sup>2</sup> Due to social transformations and the criticism that the concept drew, the theory of hegemonic masculinity was reformulated at the beginning of the 21st century (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:829-854). However, most of the fundamental assumptions were not modified significantly and they were used in this article.

faithful to the general critical assumptions behind discourse analysis within the framework of the broadly defined critical theory (Wodak 2008:185-213; Reisigl and Wodak 2009:87-121; Wodak and Meyer 2009:1-33).

Studies carried out with the use of the DHA methodology consist in demonstrating what discursive strategies were used by the authors of media coverages or other texts of culture. In reference to the views of one of the most prominent representatives of DHA, Ruth Wodak, one can say that the discursive strategy means systematically repeating ways of the use of picture or language, which is a more or less defined, deliberately adopted program of actions aiming at achieving concrete social, political, psychological, or commercial objectives (compare Wodak 2008:195).

There are three fundamental types of strategies. Nomination strategies are about defining people and the way of talking about them in the language dimension. Predication strategies involve categorizing groups and social actors as well as attributing them with a particular identity and role in the discourse. These strategies may be connected with prejudices and social stereotypes. Argumentation strategies serve to justify positive or negative attributions (compare Reisigl 2010:41-54). An auxiliary category is *topoi*, which plays a role of concluding rules. *Topoi* may be understood as headlines; “they allow for summing up the discursively constructed arguments, for the expression of which different elements in the content of the text are used” (Krzyżanowska 2012:212).

Due to the restricted framework of this article, I present only these strategies that are the most important and/or appear in the discourse most frequently.

## Discursive Strategies Used in Making The Category of Masculinity

Researchers dealing with the category of gender maintain that masculinity is constructed in a relative way through showing the difference between ‘real’ men and those who do not deserve the name, as well as the difference between men and women (Connell 1987:186-187; Kimmel 1987:12-13; Bourdieu 2004:33-36).

The fundamental strategy of attribution used in creating masculinity in the discourse about Robert Lewandowski is **giving the importance**: it refers to putting certain categories, actors or social groups in the foreground and appreciating them. In media coverages connected with the professional sphere, traditional masculinity is exposed. This variant of masculinity has many qualities associated with the **hegemonic masculinity** as described by Connell. Above all, they include heterosexuality, domination, strength (both physical and of character), and rivalry. The part of the discourse concerning the footballer’s professional life suggests that the hegemonic masculinity is of a greater value than the other variants of masculinity that are connected with sensitivity and showing feelings and emotions openly (the traits stereotypically ascribed to women). A good illustration of the problem may be one particular interview with Lewandowski, during which the sportsman – answering the reporter’s question about whether the footballers who were rejected before the World Cup by the coach Adam Nawałka showed emotions in the form of crying – stated: “Tears? No! Men never show it to other men” (Lewandowski 2018a). Media coverages describing the Polish footballer are linguistically saturated with expressions which refer to the traditional perception of the category of masculinity. This category is associated with winning, success, responsi-

bility (for the national team and the family), and hard work. A good illustration of this may be television programs broadcasted in June 2018 by the public television: a documentary and an announcement about the Polish representation's match at the World Cup. The former one underscored the significance of the hard work ethos, which is indispensable for achieving success (*Robert Lewandowski – droga na szczyt 2018* [Robert Lewandowski: *The Road to the Top*]), whereas the latter one showed the Polish national team and exposed the body of the captain of the representation. The picture was accompanied by a verbal comment: "Mundial does not forgive mistakes, it does not tolerate weaknesses" (*Zapowiedź meczu Polska – Japonia 2018* [Poland vs Japan – Match Announcement]).

In the media discourse about Lewandowski there appears a **predication strategy in the form of the nuclear family**. The analyzed articles, interviews, commercial spots, and television programs emphasize that the traditional family is a value. This strategy of attribution correlates strongly with **the *topoi* of support and motivation**. The *topoi* often sum up the discursive strategies and as such are connected with the

arguments which suggest that a man in difficult moments – e.g. after failures in sports rivalry – can count on the support and motivation from the closest people. In his conversations with reporters, the captain of the Polish representation highlighted the importance of the family in his life – both private and professional – many times. In the interview after the World Cup – which ended with the loss of the Polish team as well as Lewandowski himself (let us remember that the captain of the representation did not score any goal and was criticized for his attitude in the pitch by the media) – the footballer said that "[t]here's nothing to hide, that, anyway, the family is the closest and one always at these hardest moments wants to spend time with the family" (Lewandowski 2018b). Another time he stated that the family is, beside success in sport, the most important value providing him with happiness (Lewandowski 2017). In many conversations with journalists, the footballer said that he was currently receiving the greatest support from his wife. Football fans can remember well Anna Lewandowska's behavior after the lost game with Senegal; she approached her husband and, embracing his face with her hands, she tenderly kissed him on the lips.

**Photo 1. Anna Lewandowska consoles her husband after the match Poland-Senegal at the World Cup in Russia.**



Source: PAP/EPA, after: *Polsatsport.pl* (19 June 2018).

The behavior of the footballer's partner may be interpreted as a manifestation of the feelings between the spouses and a sign of support from the wife for the husband. However, it is important to remember that such gestures may also have a commercial dimension. The Lewandowskis are the most desirable couple on the Polish advertising market, which is why spectacular behaviors – such as the one during the World Cup – may be a certain form of marketing and promotion. It is worth adding that they both work to earn money; he is a professional football player and she is a fitness coach as well as publishes books and sells various dietary products; they both take part in numerous advertising campaigns. It can be said that the Lewandowskis make a dual-career family (see Ostrouch-Kamińska 2011:89-95), although it is important to note that, most probably, the husband brings in higher incomes to the household budget.

In the media discourse there also appears **the strategy of egalitarian relationship**. Both the footballer and his wife express that they try to support and help each other in difficult moments. In the academic literature, we can find different definitions of the egalitarian relationship, but, usually, the authors agree that egalitarian relationships are those in which partners share the benefits, burdens, and responsibilities in an equal manner. Moreover, gender equality is the foundation of such a relationship; it is characterized by the balanced power division and the right to self-actualization (see: Ostrouch-Kamińska 2011: passim; Deutsh 2015:482-483). My analysis demonstrates that the case of the Lewandowskis shows an example of **an incomplete and disturbed egalitarian relationship**. In the collected research material there appear pieces of news, often illustrated with photos, stating that the man likes playing with the child and taking her

out for a walk. The footballer claims that whenever he has an opportunity he spends time with his daughter as well as he suffers whenever she is sick: "The child's pain, Klara's tears – that's something most difficult that can be. When it hurts Klara, it hurts me, and I suffer too" (Lewandowski 2017). However, there is no concrete information about the proportions of time devoted to the physical care of the daughter by the mother and the father. We can talk about **the strategy of indetermination**. It is worth referring to Anna Lewandowska's words when she mentioned that her husband stays at home more seldom than she does, and that a qualified babysitter helps her (Lewandowska 2018 a). The division of household duties does not seem egalitarian, too. One of the reportages showed the footballer's wife shopping at a vegetable market in Munich. The visual layer is captioned with the woman's statement: "The funniest thing is that people in Poland think that I have a cook, but it's me" (Lewandowska 2018b).

The media coverages expose **the strategy of gender differences**, which is connected with the traditional perception of the categories of masculinity and femininity. Even though the gender dichotomy connected with stereotyping is sometimes broken in the discourse, to a large extent it still determines the perception of the spouses and their social status. In contrast to Robert Lewandowski, who is perceived as an excellent striker above all and only later as a husband and a father, Anna Lewandowska is mainly perceived as the wife of a famous footballer.

In the analyzed discourse an important place is occupied by the footballer's **family of origin**. Articles and commercial spots include the information that the parents, who were athletes themselves, played a very important role in shaping the character and

the personality of the Polish striker, and that they always supported him in difficult moments of his life. A good illustration of this matter is a commercial spot of the smartphone Huawei, made in 2015 and broadcasted many times by the major Polish-language television channels as well as on the Internet. The very long (taking into account the standards of TV spots in Poland) commercial lasts nearly 90 seconds and tells the story of Lewandowski's career. In the coverage, one can see frames presenting the footballer's parents driving him to the training and watching him play during the match.

Even though articles, commercials, and TV programs cover the role of both parents in forming the son's personality, more attention is devoted to the father. There appears information that the father motivated his son to work hard and overcome difficulties: "I always remembered by father's words: «If you win today, you'll win tomorrow»" (Lewandowski 2015). A recurring thread in Internet articles and interviews with the footballer is the premature death of his father (he died at 49) and the sportsman's regret that his father could not see him as a senior player (Pawlik 2017).

An important element of the discourse used in constructing the category of masculinity is **the strategy of masculine symbolism**. The role of a symbol is played by things, mainly **cars**, but also **the body**, which in media coverages is a basic instrument of making a gender distinction with many meanings (Goffman 1979: passim; Connell 2013:94-97). In the Western culture, a model that is valid for the vast majority of men is a **mesomorph body type**,<sup>3</sup> while

<sup>3</sup> A mesomorph body type is one of three basic types of body structure described by Harvard psychologist William Sheldon. It refers to a proportional silhouette, yet a well-muscled body devoid of visible fat tissue.

in the case of women it is a slender body (Mishkind et al. 1987:38-45; Grogan 1999, passim; Kimmel 2015:447-453; Majer 2016:194-196).

## Foto 2. Robert Lewandowski during the World Cup in Russia.



Source: PAP/EPA (author: Facundo Arrizabalaga), after: *Sportofakty.wp.pl* (06 July 2018)

A great number of articles posted on the Internet are accompanied by photos representing Lewandowski's well-muscled body. The commercial spots also expose the mesomorph silhouette of the footballer. This strategy, although only to a certain extent, is part of a phenomenon called 'spornosexuality,' which was proposed in the previous decade by Mark Simpson. A spornosexual man takes care of his physical shape and proudly exposes his muscular body. Simpson also described the phenomenon of 'sporno' as one consisting in including male sports stars into advertising in a way that is saturated with eroticism on the brink of pornography (compare Olekser 2015). Well-known athletes, such as Cristiano Ronaldo or Rafael Nadal, were commissioned to advertise men's underwear, sports products, and cosmetics<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> One of the first manifestations of spornography was the publication of a 'nude' calendar for the year 2001, titled *The Gods of the Stadium (Dieux du Stade)* and featuring the French rugby team.

Lewandowski takes part in marketing campaigns of well-known brands, but his body is not exposed as boldly as it happens in the case of other renowned football players. For example, the commercial of the Head&Shoulders shampoo, made in 2017, showed the footballer's naked torso. In modern commercials, the male body, like the female body, has become an object to look at (Bordo 1999, *passim*). However, in advertising coverages athletes who represent the type of mesomorph body often appear in the company of slender or very slim women. Thus, we can state that the images of spornosexual men serve more to consolidate the gender differences than to efface them. A considerable part of society still associates a muscular silhouette with strong mentality and courage. The ideal of a slender or very slim woman's body represents the other side of the phenomenon; a slim woman's body connotes traits such as weakness, tenderness, and submission, which are contrasted with male power and strength. According to some analysts of the modern culture, the image of a mesomorph body was made a model to follow due to the fact that there occurred a growth in women's participation in the public sphere as well as the differences between male and female roles began to blur, which is why the exposition of male musculature is supposed to show that the differences between women and men still exist (Mishkind et al. 1987:39)<sup>5</sup>.

In Internet articles about the footballer and in interviews with Lewandowski there appears **the strategy of fit body and physical shape**. The discourse underscores that for a professional athlete – especially at the very high level that the Polish

<sup>5</sup> Mesomorph body as a canon of beauty appeared in the art of the Ancient Greece as early as 5th century BCE (Clark 1998:30-39). However, currently the number of images of the mesomorph body of a person living in the Western culture is incomparably higher than before.

striker now represents (he plays in one of the best European clubs) – taking care of the shape, proper nutrition, and sleep should be of utmost importance. The footballer is assisted by his wife, who designs nutritious diets. As the article on the website of *Przegląd Sportowy* reads, "Soft cocktails, healthy snacks, food without gluten and a rational approach to day-to-day nutrition. These are the basics of the diet promoted by Anna Lewandowska, privately Robert's wife, and professionally primarily a champion of karate and a fitness coach" (Rudnik 2015).

One should not forget that the widespread standards of male body and female body are connected with consumerism. Jean Baudrillard claims that when capitalism socialized the masses as a productive force, it had to push even further, namely to start controlling the body as a consumer force. Critics of consumer society, such as Baudrillard or Zygmunt Bauman, believe that the way people are 'formed' by modern society comes down to the role of a consumer primarily, which is what citizens are to be in the first place. In this project, the body is primarily an organ of consumption, and the measure of its proper state is the ability to absorb and assimilate everything that the consumer society has to offer (Baudrillard 2006:75-88; Bauman 2008:98-100).

In the media discourse referring to the Polish footballer, **the role of a symbol is played by a car**. Articles published in popular sports services (e.g. Sport.pl, Sport.onet.pl, Sportowefakty.wp.pl) contain information about Lewandowski's fondness for very strong, fast, and expensive cars. Journalists often give the brand and the model, and not seldom also the technical data and the price of the car owned by Lewandowski. The collection of the

footballer includes, for instance, Audi RS 6 Avant, Ferrari F12 Berlinetta, Maserati Granturismo, Mercedes S 560 Maybach, and Porsche Cayenne GTS. The headlines underscore that the footballer's new vehicle is very expensive and has a powerful engine and excellent performance: "He chose a real beast. Robert Lewandowski's new car" (Sport.pl 2017); "Robert Lewandowski has a new car. Cosmic performance and paralyzing price" (Sport.pl 2017); "What does Robert Lewandowski drive? The cars are worth several million zlotys" (Moto.onet.pl 2018). Literature from within the anthropology of things as well as gender studies indicates that a car may symbolize the social and economic status as well as play a role of a phallic symbol, which is associated with power and domination (Komisar 1972:312; Dant 2006:69)<sup>6</sup>. It is important to note that in the traditional masculinity discourse only certain vehicles are a symbol of a 'real' man. The present-day culture categorizes cars as 'men's' and 'women's' as well as that for 'real men' and those that are 'effeminate.' The category of 'masculine' cars embraces primarily the vehicles which have a powerful engine, great power and/or are big, whereas 'feminine' and 'unmanly' cars are small and characterized by weak performance (Arcimowicz 2019:34-35).

Here, it is important to mention **the strategy of heteronormative metrosexuality**, which suggests that caring about the appearance is an important element of the identity of a modern heterosexual man. The concept of metrosexuality was defined in the mid-1990s by Simpson, the inventor of the later 'spornosexuality' term. According to the au-

<sup>6</sup> It is important to take into consideration that certain articles may be sponsored by car manufacturers and that Lewandowski plays a role of an ambassador of particular brands. However, this does not change the symbolic dimension and meaning of the cars he possesses.

thor of the book *Sex Terror*, the term 'metrosexual' is to "describe a new kind of male: the single young men living in metropolis (because that's where all the best shops are) who may be gay or may be straight, but it's immaterial since he openly take himself as his own love object" (Simpson 2002:143). The definition formulated by the British author was subject to various interpretations. Today, the borders of metrosexuality are not clearly determined; generally, this term covers men who attach a lot of importance to their appearance – both body and clothes – but it also refers to sensitive and empathic men, which does not necessarily corresponds with Simpson's original interpretation of metrosexuality. An icon of metrosexuality at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was David Beckham, a man with a wife and children. The English footballer and celebrity acted in commercials of cosmetics and underwear, changed his hairstyles many times, experimented with the nail polish, and wore unisex clothes (often in pastel colors). Moreover, Beckham expressed positive opinions about sexual minorities, which is not frequent in the athletes' environment. According to Eric Anderson, Beckham is a representative of a gender identity, where there is room for more than one version of masculinity (Anderson 2015:441). In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was Cristiano Ronaldo who became a global icon of metrosexuality. In the case of Lewandowski, one can see **a certain version of metrosexuality**, namely one that refers to the media image of Beckham or Ronaldo, but is more conservative (we do not know if Lewandowski polished his nails; the Polish striker avoids talking about non-heterosexuality, etc.). Most frequently, the captain of the representation of Poland appears in commercials of cosmetics and clothes. In this type of commercial coverages, professional models usually appear, but – more and more often – this role is also played by

known actors and athletes. Marketing campaigns experts consider them as especially desirable for promoting new products. The Polish striker advertised, among other things, hair shampoo, razors, and suits.

In the last few years, special attention of mass media was devoted to the neatly arranged hairstyle of Lewandowski. This haircut was an object of interest not only in advertisement and marketing campaigns, but also during matches. His interview for *Playboy* in July 2018 echoed loudly. As he stated, “I feel much better when I’m well-groomed during my performance on the field. During the match it is difficult to improve anything, so the time in the hotel plays an important role. I like having a hairstyle with which I train every day and even one misplaced hair bothers me” (Robert Lewandowski’s interview for *Playboy* [Polish edition] after: Stanowski 2018).

It is difficult to state to what extent the footballer’s declaration was an expression of his personal views of masculinity, and to what degree it had a commercial dimension (in 2018 the athlete took part in advertising campaigns of Head&Shoulders and Gillette, and at the World Cup he presented a fine hairstyle called GoScalpBrave). It is worth noting that Lewandowski’s statement in *Playboy* raised controversies and came under criticism in Poland, especially in many Internet services. For example, Krzysztof Stanowski, the editor-in-chief of a popular sports service, did not like the fact that the captain of the Polish national football team so strongly underscored the importance of appearance, especially the hairstyle, because – according to the journalist – such statements make an impression of hypocrisy and commerce, and are unbecoming of a mature man (Stanowski 2018).

## Conclusion

The Polish media discourse referring to Robert Lewandowski is not homogenous; it includes elements from the hegemonic version of masculinity, but it also involves traits of inclusive and caring masculinities. The discourse is divided into two parts: one connected with the professional sphere and the other linked to the private one.

The discursive strategies describing the footballer’s professional life are quite conservative. It can be said that in this part of the discourse the hegemonic masculinity is valued much more than other variants of masculinity. The discourse referring to the athlete exposes values such as strength, domination, rivalry, and success. An important role is also taken by the strategy of masculine symbols, where the crucial symbolic function is ascribed to the mesomorph masculine body. Exposing the discursive strategies referring to the hegemonic type of masculinity is partly understandable, since in this way Lewandowski’s “masculinity capital” is protected, which serves to establish and/or to confirm the gender distinction as well as the difference between the hegemonic (‘real’) masculinity and other variants of masculinity<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, cracks in the discourse appear, because the footballer also tries to show his modern metrosexual side, which Eric Anderson connects with the inclusive masculinity. In the case of Lewandowski – as well as other known football players who experiment with this image – it is difficult to state to what extent the strategy of metrosexuality is really a gender change, and to what extent it is a marketing device. Nevertheless, as Anderson

<sup>7</sup> Eric Anderson describes the difference in “masculine capital” in various sports disciplines. Football, in contrast to other disciplines – e.g. figure skating – gives a man a high level of the capital (Anderson 2015:432).

aptly notes, metrosexuality has a certain potential that may weaken the hegemonic masculinity (Anderson 2015:442).

The part of the discourse referring to the footballer's family life is dominated by the strategies connected with the concept of caring masculinities and the notion of egalitarian relationship. Even though the traditional structure is visible – namely a nuclear family, the basis of which is heterosexual marriage – the discourse also underscores the value of egalitarian relationship, i.e. one that features a balanced division of household duties and is connected with childcare. As Karla Elliott writes, "Caring masculinities are, furthermore, a critical form of men's engagement in gender equality because doing care work requires men to resist hegemonic masculinity and to adopt values and characteristics of care that are antithetical to hegemonic masculinity" (Elliott 2016:254).

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There are a number of statements from the footballer himself as well as his wife, which refer to caring masculinity, but cracks in this discourse appear. The strategy of indeterminacy is visible; in truth, we do not know to what extent the Lewandowskis implement the assumptions of egalitarian relationship into their life. Nevertheless, it is important that, at least at the level of declaration, they both highlight the father's involvement in childcare as well as distance themselves from the patriarchal model of family.

In the dialectical concept of discourse it is assumed that discourse is not only subject to the socio-cultural forming, but also plays a role in the forming (consolidating or transforming) of the context (Wodak and Meyer 2009:5-6; Starego 2011:28-29). New variants of masculinity promoted in mass media – which currently play an important role in masculine identity formation – may thus contribute to positive social transformations.

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## Kategoria męskości w polskim dyskursie medialnym dotyczącym Roberta Lewandowskiego

**Abstrakt:** Podstawowym celem badań było zrekonstruowanie i przeanalizowanie kategorii męskości w dyskursie medialnym dotyczącym Roberta Lewandowskiego oraz opisanie i zinterpretowanie najważniejszych strategii dyskursywnych wykorzystywanych w kreowaniu obrazu piłkarza. Materiał badawczy obejmuje blisko 120 polskojęzycznych przekazów medialnych – głównie artykułów internetowych, spotów reklamowych i wywiadów, które ukazały się w latach 2013–2019. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki krytycznej analizy dyskursu przeprowadzonej z uwzględnieniem postulatów podejścia dyskursywno-historycznego. Główne ramy teoretyczne podjętych badań stanowią teoria męskości hegemonicznej, teoria męskości inkluzyjnej, a także koncepcja męskości opiekuńczej. Dyskurs dotyczący Lewandowskiego nie jest jednorodny, występują w nim elementy pochodzące z różnych wersji męskości. Ten dyskurs dzieli się na dwie części: pierwszą – związaną ze sferą zawodową oraz drugą – prywatną. Strategie opisujące życie zawodowe piłkarza są dosyć konserwatywne. Elementy o największym znaczeniu w tej części dyskursu nawiązują do ciężkiej pracy, sukcesu, rywalizacji oraz mezomorficznego wzorca ciała. Część dyskursu odnosząca się do życia rodzinnego piłkarza jest zdominowana przez strategie łączące się z koncepcją męskości opiekuńczej i pojęciem relacji partnerskiej, ale nie są one całkowicie wolne od wpływu tradycyjnych wzorców ról płciowych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** męskości, Robert Lewandowski, polski dyskurs medialny, rodzina, ciało