Editorial
Gender Perspective in Social Research: Chosen Problems, Aspects, and Contexts

Emilia Garncarek 🆔

University of Lodz

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Abstract: This volume *Society and Gender: Contemporary Issues and Research Perspectives*, is a reflection of dynamically developing gender studies in the Polish social sciences. The first part of the introduction shows that gender/gender perspective has become one of the basic and essential cognitive category to understand the social world at its various levels, has also universal and widespread structural and stratification meaning. The second part of the introduction presents six articles that show all the richness and complexity of gender perspective in social research. The contributions are devoted to the issues connected with the media images of masculinity; the critical reflection on contemporary Polish television series, in particular the ways they tackle narratives that include instances of violence against women; the under-representation of media coverages of women's sports; experiences of infertility and the social expectations towards women until they receive a diagnosis of infertility; medical views on transgender and their influence on self-perception among trans people; and the process of gendering memory as a counterpoint to the politicization of memory. The diversity of contents presented within individual texts illustrates how multi-faceted the considerations of gender issues are.

Emilia Garncarek is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology of Structures and Social Changes, Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz. She is a sociologist and her research interests include: gender studies, alternative forms of modern family, voluntary childlessness, transformations of motherhood in the contemporary world, issues connected with regretting motherhood.

Contact details:

Departament of the Sociology of the Structures and Social Changes

Institute of Sociology

Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Lodz

Rewolucji 1905 41/43, 90-214 Lodz, Poland

e-mail address: emilia.garncarek@uni.lodz.pl

Categories of sex and gender are not only variables capable of explaining social phenomena, components of the identity puzzle or social factors; they are also categories in which we think and classify the social world.

(Guionnet and Neveu 2004:9)

It is currently practically impossible to describe the social reality without taking into account the gender perspective. This category has entered permanently into the canon of tools within analytical social sciences. Gender has become one of the basic cognitive categories with which to understand the social world at its various levels, and as such has a universal and widespread structural and stratification-related meaning (Malinowska et al. 2016). However, as Janet S. Chafetz (Chafetz 2006:3-20) points out, sociology in the 1960s and the 1970s has neglected gender issues. Gender analyses were usually developed on the margins of academic sociological institutions and in isolation from the canon of concepts, theories, and the assumptions that constitute the sociological mainstream. The attempts to organize the conceptual system were not undertaken until the 1980s and the 1990s. At that time, the first textbooks on the gender phenomenon appeared and they were primarily works that synthesized and summarized various perspectives on the definition of gender (Leszczyńska 2013:99).

Gender contributed to 'removing a spell' of the structural and functional social order, which had been based mainly on biological gender difference (Slany, Struzik, and Wojnicka 2011). The rejection of biological essentialism has translated into a gradual departure from its biological or naturalistic understanding – which is rooted in classical sociological reflection – towards defining sexuality in social and cultural terms (gender roles, power relations, interaction practices) (Leszczyńska and Dziuban 2012:13). Contemporary researchers emphasize the importance of socio-cultural factors in constructing gender. In the process of shaping gender, biological and cultural factors enter into complex interactions, and gender is treated as a multidimensional phenomenon – biological, sociological, cultural, anthropological, as well as historical. Katarzyna Leszczyńska (2013:100) claims that the contemporary reservoir of the definitions of gender in sociology is extensive. Today, gender is defined both substantially, i.e. through its essence and fundamental elements (e.g. Hyży 2003), and functionally, i.e. through its social role and place in the constitution of social life (Wharton 2006; Holmes and Marra 2011). A review of sociological work on gender reveals that it is conceptualized as a social role and a set of expectations (Norris and Inglehart 2008), an identity (e.g., Bem 2000; Titkow 2007), a performance (Butler 2008), an action (West and Zimmerman 1987; 2009; Martin 2006), or an external and oppressive social structure (Delphy 2007a; 2007b). On the one hand, gender is described as a feature of the social relationship concerning individual differences between people. On the other hand, it is a stratification category, which is used to analyze power relations and the different positions of men and women on various levels of the organization of social life (Acker 1990; Ferree 2003; Martin 2004 as cited in Leszczyńska 2013:100). There is no full agreement on this and gender is sometimes still seen as being more or less arbitrarily related to biology (Titkow 2007) as well, even though it is conceptualized as independent from biology (see Butler 2008) (Titkow 2007). However, it should be noted that the gender/gender perspective is an important analytical tool in humanities and social sciences, also in Poland since the late 1990s. The Polish gender studies have also opened up to the lat-

est current – the intersectional approach, which no longer looks at inequality only through the prism of gender, but includes also the economic position, religion, race, or sexual orientation, as these categories are mutually reinforcing (Slany, Kowalska, and Ślusarczyk 2011:9).

This volume is a reflection of dynamically developing studies on gender issues, also in the Polish social sciences. It shows the complexity, multidimensionality, and intersectionality of gender knowledge. The articles are set in the context of problems specific to Poland, while referring to findings from foreign research. The presented research results are a fragment of widely undertaken problems when looked at from the gender perspective. They show the current state of the development of gender studies in Poland, their achievements, the topics they address, and their specificity.

The thematic part of this volume consists of six texts. In the first article, Krzysztof Arcimowicz focuses on gender-based media analysis. The author reconstructed and analyzed the category of masculinity in the media discourse referring to Robert Lewandowski, a famous Polish football player. The researcher described and interpreted the most important discursive strategies used in creating the image of the footballer. The text is based on the author's own research, which included various media messages (Internet articles, commercial spots, and interviews). Arcimowicz presents the results of his critical analysis of the discourse, including a proposal of the discourse-historical approach. The principal theoretical framework of his studies includes and employs the theory of hegemonic masculinity and the theory of inclusive masculinity, as well as the concept of caring masculinities. The author claims that the discourse on Lewandowski is not ho-

mogeneous and includes elements derived from different versions of masculinity. His research shows quite conservative strategies describing the footballer's professional life. Despite a minor change in the discourse about the player's private life (a presence of strategies related to the concept of caring masculinities and the notion of egalitarian relationship), one can say that the images of football players still refer to the traditional paradigm of masculinity and are not completely free from the traditional gender roles.

The second article also relates to a gender-based media analysis. Specifically, it focuses on the critical reflection of contemporary Polish television series, in particular the ways they tackle narratives that include instances of violence against women. The case study here is the show titled *Druga szansa* (*A Second Chance*). Aleksandra Różalska looks at violence against women in the context of the #MeToo movement on the one hand and the gender-related debates in Poland on the other. The conclusion of her research is that the chosen television series considers violence against women (VAW) as a serious social problem and has the potential to sensitize audiences. However, it fails to address its wider socio-cultural aspect that results from patriarchal structures and gender inequality.

The next article focuses on women's sports as perceived by Polish female sports journalists. Natalia Organista emphasizes the issue of the under-representation of media coverages of women's sports, as well as a small quantity of female sports journalists. This author refers to feminist media scholars, who have shown that beliefs about masculinity, femininity, and sports have shaped journalism as a gendered institution. Her analysis has shown that female journalists perceive women's sports as

inferior to men's sports, and are not in favor of increasing the amount of information about women's sports. The researcher indicates that socialization into sport and the professional socialization of the interviewed female journalists are possible reasons for the manner in which women's sport is perceived by the respondents.

The next article concerns the issue of experiencing infertility and the social expectations towards women until they receive a diagnosis of infertility. Katarzyna Walentynowicz-Moryl points out that the problem of infertility in Poland may concern between 15-20% of couples at the childbearing age. The author presents the stories of women who have been diagnosed with infertility. Her research refers to symbolic interactionism and to the negotiation-based model of malady. Walentynowicz-Moryl concentrates primarily on the interpretative activity of women during their procreative experience – from the stage prior to trying to conceive, through the stages of 'normal procreation' and 'difficult procreation,' to the stage of infertility. The procreative experience was considered by the author as a process connected with stages above. The researcher underlines the difficult situation of women who cannot be mothers – they are constantly asked about their reproductive plans. Such questions are posed because of the presence of the traditional thinking and beliefs about motherhood in the Polish society. Frequently, the questions directly express the assumption that motherhood is an obvious experience and stage in every woman's life. Such questions and remarks are also made in reference to people who do not want to have children by their own choice; similar considerations are presented in studies on women who are childless by choice or studies on regretting motherhood (Garncarek 2014; 2020). As the author's research and other reflections on modern

motherhood show, Poland still is a society of the 'culture of assumed parenthood' (see, e.g., Tomaszewska 2017).

The authors of the next text focus on medical views on transgender people and their influence on self-perception among trans people. Anna Kłonkowska and Wiktor Dynarski indicate that over the years, in Poland, most of the existing information on transgender has been heavily influenced by the pathologizing, medicalizing discourses of the 1980s and the early 1990s, and as such deeply rooted in the essentialist understanding of gender. The authors explore the current approaches to transgender issues, including the discourse now prevalent in the Polish medical community and how it is perceived in the field of social sciences. They present an analysis of the broader social perceptions of trans individuals in Poland. According to Kłonkowska and Dynarski, the existing Polish gatekeeping system not only makes transgender people dependent on diagnostic outcomes, but also promotes a specific brand of experience-policing among trans communities, in which people are often labeled as being disordered.

The last article, one by Inga Kuźma and Edyta Pietrzak, is devoted to the process of gendering memory as a counterpoint to the politicization of memory observed in the Polish context. The main problem addressed by the authors of this contribution is a description of a local case of gender 'memory practising' within the public urban sphere. It is created by the Łódź Women's Heritage Trail Foundation, which is a gender grass-roots female initiative concerned with the city's past. The researchers focus on three important aspects–the functioning of memory in the urban public sphere as a form of dialogue, the process of gendering memory appearing alongside

the narrative phrase and feminist proposals for the interpretation of memory as a form of its pluralization, and – last but not least – the presentation of the activities of the above-mentioned foundation, which prepared Women Routes in Łódź as a kind of case study for the city as a landscape of memory. The article deals with the tension observed between the politics of memory and the political practice on the one hand, and the alternative memories that arise from the idea of multiplicity and polyphony, including the voice of women, on the other. The authors highlight the genderization of memory as an important issue.

Finally, it is worth noting that the diversity of contents presented in these individual texts illustrates how multi-faceted the considerations of gender issues are. Research based on the gender perspective critically interrogates the social construction of gender, how gender interacts with other social forces in society, and how it relates to the overall social structure. It is particularly studies from the area of social sciences that are characterized by a wide range of topics with a variety of research methods, including notions like identity, social interaction, power and oppression, and the interaction of gender with other axes of identification, such as class, culture, religion, politics, and sexuality. The articles in this volume show all the richness and complexity of this research approach, as well as the current topics undertaken by Polish researchers.

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Citation

Od redaktora: Perspektywa genderowa w badaniach społecznych – wybrane problemy, aspekty i konteksty

Abstrakt: Niniejszy tom *Społeczeństwo i płeć – współczesne problemy i perspektywy badawcze* jest odzwierciedleniem dynamicznie rozwijających się studiów genderowych w polskich naukach społecznych. Pierwsza część wprowadzenia pokazuje, że gender / perspektywa genderowa stała się jedną z podstawowych i niezbędnych kategorii poznawczych pozwalających zrozumieć świat społeczny na jego różnych poziomach, ma również uniwersalne i powszechne znaczenie strukturalne i stratyfikacyjne. Druga część wprowadzenia przedstawia sześć artykułów, które ukazują całe bogactwo i złożoność perspektywy genderowej w badaniach społecznych. Artykuły poświęcone są zagadnieniom związanym z: medialnymi obrazami męskości; krytyczną refleksją nad współczesnymi polskimi serialami telewizyjnymi, w szczególności nad narracjami, które obejmują przypadki przemocy wobec kobiet; niedostateczną medialną reprezentacją kobiet w sporcie; doświadczaniem niepłodności oraz społecznymi oczekiwaniami wobec kobiet niepłodnych; medycznymi poglądami na temat transseksualizmu i ich wpływami na postrzeganie siebie przez osoby transseksualne; historią kobiet i procesami upolitycznienia pamięci. Różnorodność prezentowanych treści ilustruje, jak wieloaspektowe są rozważania nad problematyką gender.

Słowa kluczowe: męskość, kobiecość, płeć, gender, transgender, polskie media, sport, macierzyństwo, polityka historyczna, historia oczami kobiet, badania jakościowe, dyskurs