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Fatherhood and the nexus of gendered attitudes towards domestic violence amongst future teachers in Poland***

Summary

In this paper we claim that gender attitudes towards fatherhood and parental practice, change quicker than attitudes of Polish society towards domestic violence (DV) and gender stereotypes. In the literary review we used an interpretative approach, embedded in Michael Rush's (2015) theoretical framework, based on the Nordic turn in social policy and the convergence and divergence of fathering across cultures (Seward & Rush, 2016). Focusing on an empirical case study a questionnaire directed to future teachers was used as a method of data collection, to interlink attitudes towards fatherhood, masculinity/femininity archetypes and violence in intimate relationships. Gender stereotypes as well as attitudes towards DV and paternal involvement are strongly interconnected, and yet social change in these areas occurs at varied speeds in each field, due to the differences in which society accepts new norms. Whilst many studies suggest that involved fathers have a positive impact, leading to a decrease in violent behaviour, we take this further, demonstrating that change in fatherhood

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patterns has a positive impact on decreasing the social tolerance of DV. However, as our study shows this must be accompanied by changes in gender stereotypes, including attitudes towards fatherhood.

Keywords: gender, fatherhood, masculinity, domestic violence, future teachers, social attitudes

Introduction

Building on Seward and Rush's (2016) findings that the expectations placed upon fathers across cultures are convergent, but the actual practices are divergent, we wanted to test gender attitudes of Polish future teachers, focusing on 2 areas: attitudes of these students towards fatherhood and towards domestic violence. As Seward and Rush (2016) confirmed, although the welfare state arrangements and the involvement expectations placed on fathers have evolved in most societies, including the former Soviet bloc, the actual implementation of the latter is lagging and the same may apply to condemnation of domestic violence and its actual occurrence. In our paper we consider which attitudes change faster. We choose the Polish context due to the accessibility of respondents and the specific historic conditions, related to a strong Roman Catholic heritage, the influence of communism during the cold war and a post-communism orientation towards western values, coherent with the "Nordic Turn" in public policy in/towards parenthood (Rush, 2015).

Poland traditionally had a Roman Catholic church model of family, traditional gender division of family work and was affected by the "strong man" masculinity model due to the Soviet Block's influence for almost 50 years. Since the fall of Iron Curtain, it has experienced ongoing changes in gender orientated attitudes towards domestic violence and towards the role of fathers in their children's upbringing. The paper reports the study conducted among 269 future teachers studying at a pedagogical university in Poland. We feel that it is important to understand the gender attitudes in these indicated important areas amongst the new generation teachers, who are in power to form opinions of their pupils.

The paper was inspired by the overview of gender stereotypes by Tiffany Barnes and Emily Beaulieu (2014) and a volume of papers on gender stereotyping published in the journal called: *Gender & Politics* over the years. These articles were focussed mainly on political campaigns and intersectionality, whilst our paper focusses on gender attitudes towards DV

and changing expectations towards parental involvement of fathers in children's upbringing. These issues are heavily politically loaded and important for development of adequate social policy.

The overall aim of this article is to explore the prevalent gender attitudes and their mutual relationships concerning gender models, gender-based violence against women and the models of fatherhood amongst young Polish students attending a pedagogical university. We hypothesise that attitudes concerning the involvement of fathers in childcare are changing faster than those regarding gender-based violence and this may be linked to the slow changes in gender stereotypes. Indeed, while it may be acknowledged and accepted that the presence of the father has a positive impact on children's development and well-being (Harper & Fine, 2006; Ito & Izumi-Taylor, 2013; Mensah & Kuranchie, 2013), it is not necessarily recognised that involved fatherhood requires a change in the normative models of masculinity (i.e., the sole breadwinner macho virile model), which also involves a move towards equal, non-violent gender relations inside a heterosexual family.

Domestic violence in Poland – a bird's eye overview

In 1998 a special police program of recording, monitoring and preventing domestic violence (DV) incidents, called the "Blue Card," was created in Poland to protect victims and influence offenders. When the police are called to a domestic incident they create a Blue Card, recording information on who is in the household, who is directly and indirectly affected by the incident, who is a potential threat and the severity of danger. This official record of each case may be used as evidence in court. Every year, over 50,000 new cases are recorded, 73,153 in 2018, including 59,829 newly issued blue cards (Police Statistics, 2019). The number of victims recorded in each card is often higher than one per incident, as DV relates to more than one family member (with approximately 76% of victims being women, 13% being children and 11% being men). Altogether, 400,000 new cases of DV occurred between 2012–2018 (Police Statistics, 2019).

A nationwide survey by National Survey of Public Opinion (OBOP, 2010) revealed that all public services have seen an increase in the reporting of domestic violence and have therefore perceived an increase in DV in Poland. It is striking that during this survey, it was found that 24% of police personnel

(if the violence is caused by women) and 18% (if the violence is caused by men) think that incidental hitting of a partner from time to time does not constitute DV as such, but can be part of a normal marital misunderstanding. The same opinion was expressed by 15% of medical staff and 7% of court curators. Moreover, whilst the police and court personnel were clear about the existence of marital rape, 11% of medical personnel declared that rape in marriage does not exist as a form of DV.

According to a Polish national survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBOS, 2012), 1 out of 10 respondents disclosed that they have experienced violence from their partner and women were more likely to disclose it. Moreover, 25% of Polish men and women declared that they knew in person at least one woman who was hit by her husband. Women declare that they have been a victim of DV twice as often as men, while men were more likely to experience violence outside of their household. These studies indicate that there has been a significant decrease in DV if we compare it to the 2002 findings showing that 1 out of 6 women in Poland was experiencing intimate partner violence (Aberg et al., 2002)¹.

The Police and Official Statistical Bureau data indicate that so far in Poland DV perpetrators are predominantly male and the victims are predominantly female (Police data 2012–2017, 2018). Moreover, according to Survey FRA (2014), women in general are more likely to become victims of any forms of violence. Looking at the characteristics of Polish domestic violence victims and offenders, a survey conducted by Budyn-Kulik (2009) shows that domestic violence victims are mostly women and predominantly between 20 to 40 years of age. This group is statically more exposed to violence at home, although violence may affect people of any age. A recent study of domestic violence in Poland, conducted on people over 60, revealed that the majority of victims of domestic violence were women and that the majority of the perpetrators were their husbands (Giezek et al., 2017). With respect to the relation

¹ Although this particular paper focuses on Poland, to demonstrate that domestic violence and its gendered aspects are not only a Polish case, in the USA, the Department of Justice (2005), estimated that in the years 1998–2002, there were approximately 1.7 million violent crimes committed between spouses, and 2 million violent crimes perpetrated between boyfriends and girlfriends. Of those acts occurring between spouses, 84.3% of the victims were women, and of those committed between boyfriends and girlfriends, 85.9% of the victims were women. Even more tragically, in 2002, there were 787 spousal murders and 668 boyfriend/girlfriend related murders; 81% of the spousal victims were women and 71% of the boyfriend/girlfriend victims were women.

between violence victims and offenders, the victims were mostly wives or common-law wives (49.4%), followed by children (29.8%), and parents or parents-in-law (15%). The highest percentage of victims (38.4%) lived with offenders for 20 or more years, whereas 22.3% of them lived with offenders from 16 to 20 years (Budyn-Kulik, 2009). Another survey conducted 7 years later, by Wójcik, Czarnecka-Działuk and Drapała (2016) showed that 81% of domestic violence victims were wives or common-law wives, similarly followed by children and parents. The victims were people aged 31 to 50 years and children under 18 years of age. Moreover, 48% of victims were unemployed and therefore economically dependent on their perpetrators, whereas 30% worked full time or were self-employed.

In cases where women have economic dependence on someone else, this situates them in a lower position at home, more likely to be subjected to domestic violence. For working women instead, a level of earnings, usually lower than their husbands', may be a contributing factor to their compromised position in DV situations. Indeed, the gender pay gap between men and women in Poland, puts women in a lower position at home, making them more dependent on men (c.f. Landmesser, 2017; Śliwicki & Ryczkowski, 2014). Moreover, a recent study showed that violence mostly concerned shy women, with low self-esteem and emotionally dependent on others (Wójcik et al., 2016), which as the study suggests, may be both a result or an enabling factor for becoming a victim of DV. Cultural acceptance of DV by women in Poland lies deep in the gender attitudes concerning the traditional female gender archetype in male dominant societies enforced by social practices. For example, the Polish Labour Force Surveys point to statistically proven determinants of wage differences in Poland: gender, age or job seniority, level of education, size of firm and occupation. On average, a 10% wage difference was discovered, together with the acceptance by female employees of lower wages. This is due to lower self-esteem than men, despite often having higher education attainment and the cultural practices in society accepting such situation as normal. Moreover, women were more likely to work in low paid job sectors and in lower paid professions (Kompa & Witkowska, 2018). This is linked to parental roles and it will be argued that fathers gain economic privilege from becoming parents, whilst women lose economically, situating them in a lower economic position at home. Parenthood widens gender economic inequalities, with fatherhood predicting a wage premium that contrasts with the wage penalty for motherhood (Lundberg & Rose, 2000). An extensive survey of the differences between wages and the work opportunities of fathers and mothers,

carried out by Cooke & Fuller (2018) revealed the significance of gender and of parenthood in economic inequalities between the two parents. This imbalance will be further discussed later, whilst a comprehensive review of changes in the Polish domestic landscape highlighted below may help to identify changing attitudes towards masculine and feminine roles at home.

The division of domestic chores and the ongoing change towards greater gender balance at home

Every 10 years, the Main Statistical Office of Poland “GUS”, studies citizens’ time budget (GUS, 2016). A sample of 40 thousand people living in 28 thousand households is considered. Studies from the years 2004 and 2013 showed that time spent by men on domestic duties increased, however it was still one hour and 45 minutes shorter than the time spent on domestic duties by women. Time dedicated to childcare for both men and women increased in this period, to 3 hours for women and 2 hours for men. An average monetary value of unpaid domestic labour provided by women was estimated at 2,100 PLN a month, whilst that of the men at 1,200 PLN a month. In 2013, half of the declared domestic time spend on daily chores was dedicated to childcare, respectively 14% for women and 6.4% for men. An alternative national survey of public opinion, CBOS (2013), which relies on a random sample of 1,227 citizens found that in the same time frame, less respondents declared that in their household domestic chores rely solely on women and respectively more respondents declared that both genders participate in domestic work. However, in 2013 women were still providing 82% of ironing, 81% of washing, 67% of routine meal preparation, 58% of washing up, 58% of mundane cleaning and 54% spring cleaning.

In the more recent studies by CBOS (2018) and GUS (2019), new sets of data confirmed that in 2018, 82% of washing was done by women, followed by ironing, 65% of everyday cooking and 61% of cleaning. An egalitarian approach to dealing with bureaucracy, shopping, taking the trash out was observed with increased involvement of fathers in doing homework with their children. In the last 5 years the percentage of households where women were the only ones engaged in homework and childcare dropped to 15%. These surveys show slow but progressive societal change in Polish households in relation to division of labour at home.

Domestic violence and attitudes towards corporal punishment of children

DV affects all inhabitants of a household including children. During the International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect that took place in Japan in 2015, a group of researchers presented their findings on violence against children in Poland. They claimed that:

The analysis shows that 15% of Poles use violence against their children in different forms. Physical (9%): in the form of spanking (56%), pushing (20%), hitting with a belt (15%), or with other object as a result of which traces were left – (bruises, cuts) (5%), mental (8%), economic and sexual. Most victims experiencing domestic violence (besides women) are children under the age of 13. The next victims are teenagers aged from 13 years to adulthood (18 years), these are mainly girls. Clearly four out of a hundred perpetrators of violence – parents, commit violence against their own children while under the influence of alcohol. Unfortunately, 82% of families in which there is violence did not use any form of assistance. Only 18% asked for such assistance in the relevant institutions. (Król et al., 2015)

Perhaps DV, which was traditionally perceived as a disciplining measure is still tolerated as a social norm. In fact, survey participants (CBOS, 2012), particularly men, were more likely to admit that they used physical punishment as a disciplining method in children's upbringing. Every eight respondents who had children below the age of 20, admitted that sometimes they used to hit or spank their child regularly, or that they still do. 84% of Polish respondents condemned violence against women, however over 11% felt that there are situations in which the use of violence against them is justifiable. When reversing this most common gender scenario, only 56% of research participants condemned the use of physical violence by women against men and over 33% thought that there may be situations in which violence may be understandable. Moreover, 4% of respondents would always try to find excuses for violence committed as a crime of passion, regardless of their gender. In the CBOS study there was no statistical correlation with the gender of the respondents and it was shown that both male and female respondents expressed similar opinions about DV. Younger respondents were more condemning of violence against women than violence against men and the lower the educational attainment, the more accepting attitude towards family violence was declared.

Some studies indicate that forceful parenting by fathers who act aggressively has a direct correlation with the level of antisocial behaviour of their children (c.f. Sharma et al., 2011). Conversely, children of non-violent

fathers were found more sensible, respectful and ideal in their behaviour (Akhter, 2018). Wolff (2000) noted higher global scholastic and physical self-esteem in children of fathers practising an authoritative parenting style when compared against authoritarian fathers. In previous studies, it was concluded that authoritative parenting based on reasoning, thoughtfulness, harmony and trust, resulted in pro-social behaviour, while authoritarian fathers with their strict rules, abuse of power, threats and punishment, resulted in anti-social behaviour. Mensah and Kuranchie (2013) are also in favour of fathers practicing an authoritative parenting style, to nurture pro-social behaviour in children.

Faced with this evidence it is a worrying sign that in the report prepared for the Polish Children's Rights Ombudsman (Jarosz, 2018), dedicated to attitudes towards the corporal punishment of children, 43% of Poles accepted spanking as a norm and a positive disciplining measure for children's upbringing. Moreover, 25% declared that physical punishment does not harm children. If a child is considered 'weaker' and therefore perceptible to punishment by those who are stronger (adults), then it leaves the child with a clear attitudinal message that the stronger may discipline the weaker by means of violence (c.f. Odrowąż-Coates, 2019). This message is transposed into wider society enforcing the idea that a stronger side in the relationship may discipline the weaker side by the means of violence. Therefore, the physical disciplining of children may affect gender attitudes in the area of domestic violence.

Changing fatherhood models and a decrease of violence in society

Societal changes in fatherhood models were captured comprehensibly by Szulich-Kałuża and Wadowski (2014) and Janowicz (2017), showing that Poles are slowly adopting the involved parenting models from the West and from the North (Scandinavian model), and spending more time with their children.

Indeed, scientists support greater involvement of fathers in the upbringing of their children and there is a visible social change in most developed countries, with governments offering split parental leave and other statutory rights to working fathers who wish to spend more time with their children. Legal and societal gendered attitudes towards unmarried fathers and therefore towards the social imaginary of involved fatherhood at large, was discussed in-depth by Dara Purvis (2019), who showed the clear change in

attitudes towards the role of fathers in Europe since 1970s until today. These changes in fatherhood may have the potential to positively influence children's wellbeing and they may also reduce gender-based and domestic violence against women.

Concerning children's wellbeing, the positive influence of a father's participation in childcare on children's social development was found in multiple studies (Harper & Fine, 2006; Ito & Izumi-Taylor, 2013). Indeed, fathers' participation as positively linked to children's overall social competence, imitativeness, maturity, and relative abilities is well documented. More clarity was offered by East, Jackson and O'Brien (2006) who found that children of participating fathers are more likely to have positive friendships, be welcoming, be welcomed and find love. Alizadeh, Abu Talib, Abdullah and Mansor (2011) reported that children of involved fathers were more likely to resolve conflict themselves without seeking assistance. Panter-Brick et al. (2014) maintained that a father's warmth and involved parenting contributed to the moral maturity of their children. However, even if it is true that a more egalitarian parenthood is progressively becoming the norm, this is not leading men to become more egalitarian husbands or partners (Miller, 2011). For example, looking at the share of domestic chores and commitments to paid work, strong differences between men and women remain, found both in terms of the amount of time spent in the two spheres and in terms of the split in domestic work. This is to do with the way in which masculinity and, as a consequence, femininity, are socially constructed. Under the male breadwinner norm (Ridgeway, 2011), becoming a father may motivate men to work longer, harder, or switch occupations to increase their earnings (Lundberg & Rose, 2000; Percheski & Wildeman, 2008), with wives burdened with the responsibility for the bulk of family unpaid work.

Hodges and Budig (2010) argued that inequalities become entrenched when stereotypes about the productivity of different groups are linked with organizational distinctions (see also Ridgeway, 2011). From this, Hodges and Budig (2010) hypothesised that the net wage privilege of fatherhood would be greatest for men displaying hegemonic masculinities prized within bureaucratic organizations, such as rational authoritative leadership and technical competence (Acker, 2006; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Lawrence (2016) claims that nowadays it is also men who work on the Hochschild's "two shifts" and that it is much harder for them than it was for women, because work environments are not yet supportive enough of the involved

and equitable father. In his view, companies still associate the role of the men predominantly with breadwinning and therefore as committed to the professional sphere, whilst the role of women is still associated with child rearing and therefore women are not expected to give as much commitment as men. Controversially, he also supports the 'decline of men' theory (pp. 158–159), discussing the idea that it has been caused by the empowerment of women. However, he also sees that involved fatherhood is a way to compensate and reward men for their renegotiated space in society. Setting aside these controversial points of his book, he managed to capture the post-war changes in perception of what fatherhood is and should be in North America and provided an overview of studies that highlight the benefits for all: children, parents and society at large, where all parental roles and tasks are evenly shared between both parents. Lawrence's take on changes in social perception of fatherhood, and the assigned tasks and role models of fathers, may be a little bit too optimistic, as other studies suggest that the time fathers devote to the care of their children remains substantially below the level exhibited by mothers (Bianchi et al., 2006; LaRossa, 2012; Pleck, 2010; Tropp & Kelly, 2015).

Sarah Cornfield (2015) writes about the masculinization of fatherhood in prime-time, crime drama in accordance with stereotypical archetypes that in her view are slowly affected by the new wave of multitasking men who are more directly child-oriented dads. The demands to be the best in both worlds, macho when protective against external dangers whilst tender and caring when looking after the family, matches the myth of super woman, who is the sexiest lover, the most committed mother and a successful career-driven highflyer at the same time. The expectations that TV promotes, puts pressure on the average person, yet contributes to positive changes in attitudes towards a more involved, child-centric fatherhood.

When looking at the reduction of violence, it is important to take into account the social construction of masculinity and the fact that traditionally, one of the main pillars of men's identity construction is violence (Connell, 1995; Heilman et al., 2017; Heilman & Barker, 2018; Kimmell, 2005). Unfortunately, even in the most egalitarian countries, figures for violence against women and domestic violence in particular, remain very high. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2014), which conducted research with 42,000 women in the 28 state members of the UE, 33% of women (1 out of 3) experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence from the

age of 15 and 22% of women experienced this violence whilst in a relationship with a man².

Studies indicate that the greater parental involvement of fathers in child rearing may have an overall societal benefit and that due to its proven record of reducing violence within families, this may save millions of dollars spent on fighting violence and create safer societies. When discussing fathers involved in childcare, there is an expectation that through the act of caring, men would evolve their empathy, and this is believed to have beneficial consequences for society as a whole: such as less violence, rape, and abuse (c.f. Korsvik & Warat, 2016). Involved fatherhood has the potential to redefine traditional models of masculinity towards nurturing masculinities which, in turn, may neutralise some mechanism at the basis of violence in general and violence against women and children. Other researchers have explored and found a nexus between fathers' involvement and violence reduction. For example, a study conducted in Asian countries (Chan et al., 2017) found that paternal presence in prenatal medical examination, fathers' use of parental leave and fathers' involvement in childcare reduce the odds that a man enacts violence against his partner.

Moreover, numerous studies (Holter et al., 2009; Scambor et al., 2014; Warat et al., 2017) show that gender equality can not only reduce family conflict and violence in the present, but also in the future, because a father's involvement in child rearing conveys a more egalitarian gender attitude and pacific resolutions of conflicts. Even if it is very difficult to establish a causal link between witnessed violence as a child and the enacting of violence as an adult, the former will always be a risk factor because of the intergenerational transmission of gender models and practices (Cooper et al., 2013; Etherington & Baker, 2016). In the study by Straus and colleagues (2010) using Personal and Relationship Profile (PRP) – a multiscale instrument used for clinical screening and research on risk factors for family violence, it was established with certainty that a father's involvement in parenting is a predictor of lower levels of aggression and violence in their sons.

² It is important to note that these data are means. Looking at the sole violence enacted by the partner, in Poland, France, Germany, Netherlands and UK the rate is between 20% and 29%; in Italy and Spain between 10% and 19%; in Finland and Denmark between 30% and 39% (FRA, 2014, pp. 19–20). However, it is also important to remember that the data are influenced by the prevailing gender models in each Country that may affect the awareness of women of being victims of violence and their willingness to admit being a victim.

Methods

Poland is a very interesting case study because these matters remain largely unexplored in a country where significant social change has occurred in the last 30 years. The relatively recent fall of the Iron curtain and the subsequent fall of the Soviet Union provoked profound changes especially in the economic field, but also in cultural and gender models. The choice of students of a pedagogical university is motivated by their role as socialisers of children in the future.

As method of data collection, we used a self-generated survey of opinion, equipped with self-assessment scales and vignettes with statements that participants could have agreed or disagreed with on a scale. The survey's accuracy was first tested using random sample of 100 respondents (69% female) and the alpha de Cronbach was at 0.78 level.

The procedure for the empirical part of our study was to send the self-reporting questionnaire to around 500 MA and BA students of a pedagogical university based in one of the largest cities in Poland, attending a social pedagogy course. The overall response rate was 53.8%, with 269 valid questionnaires returned from October 2018 to May 2019. The vast majority of respondents were women (89.6%), and only 8.9% were men (which reflects the gender ratio across teaching in Poland). 1.5% of respondents preferred not to disclose their gender or did not identify in a binary definition. This distribution of the sample is close to the gender composition of the university course participants, with 93% of females in this population. Therefore, the sample can be considered representative of the wider population in the researched setting. Notwithstanding the limitations due to the sample composition, this study may be a starting point to reflect upon the social changes that are occurring in the field of gender stereotypes, parenthood and gender-based violence against women.

Using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 is "strongly agree" and 5 "strongly disagree", the questionnaire investigates attitudes toward gender stereotypes, attitudes towards motherhood and fatherhood, and attitudes toward intimate partner violence and domestic violence. Attitudes toward gender were assessed using an adapted version of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA) (Galambos et al., 1985); this section consists of 25 questions addressing stereotypes concerning masculinity, femininity and gender relations. Attitudes concerning parenthood and the role of mothers

and fathers in the family were investigated through 23 statements, in order to explore how the respondents identify the most suitable arrangements for couples concerning care and house work. Attitudes toward violence were assessed using a series of 25 statements, compiled by the researchers following previous qualitative studies (i.e., Daphne III Programme, 2011) and literature regarding common myths or misconceptions about violence.

These statements focused on the reasons why men may be violent towards women, which behaviours are acceptable in relationships and some common myths about violence. A final set of questions collected the socio-demographic information from participants, shown in Table 1 below. It is important to note that we asked about church attendance as it may be linked with a more conservative attitude and is also quite relevant in Polish society stereotypically viewed as predominantly Roman Catholic. Table 1 presents sample composition.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variables		%	N
Gender	Female	89.6	241
	Male	8.9	24
	Other/prefer not to say	1.5	4
Age	19–21	3.3	9
	22–24	81.8	220
	25–27	7.8	21
	>28	4.8	13
	missing	2.2	6
Marital status	Married	5.2	14
	In relationship	44.2	119
	Living with a partner	17.8	48
	Single	29.0	78
	Separated	1.5	4
	Divorced	0.7	2
	Other/Prefer not to say	1.5	4

Importance of religion	Not important at all	21.2	57
	Not very important	20.4	55
	Pretty important	32.0	86
	Very important	26.4	71
Church attendance	Never	13.8	37
	Sometimes a year	35.7	96
	About once a month	8.6	23
	Two-three times a month	14.9	40
	Once a week	26.0	70
	Every day	1.1	3
Total		100.0	269

Source: own elaboration.

Results

In this section we present the descriptive statistical analysis that we conducted using the collected questionnaires focusing on the attitudes concerning fatherhood, motherhood and gender-based violence. By cross analysis of selected statements concerning parenthood and gender-based violence, we created contingency tables to explore the changes in these two fields when compared with those concerning gender stereotypes. In this way we assessed the degree of gender egalitarianism that characterises our sample and explored how the changes in all these fields relate to one another.

Fatherhood, motherhood and parenthood: practices are changing, stereotypes are not

In order to avoid the tendency to give stereotypical answers, we chose questions that represent egalitarian attitudes and some that deal with conservative attitudes, both randomised in the questionnaire. In this way respondents are forced to reflect upon the sentences and the risk of choosing polarised answers is reduced. Note that where husband or wife are mentioned, this also includes unmarried, cohabiting couples and is used for simplicity.

Concerning the roles of mothers and fathers, Table 2 shows the percentages of participants who agree with each of the egalitarian statements.

Table 2. Percentages of agreement/disagreement around egalitarian statements concerning parenthood

Statements	(Strongly) Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	(Strongly) Disagree
The husband and wife should have equal responsibility for housework other than childcare	57.2	22.3	20.4
Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income	57.2	29.0	13.8
A working mother can establish just as a warm and secure relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	58.7	28.6	12.6
Men should be allowed to have paternity leave without fear of losing their job while they are away	71.7	17.5	10.8
The responsibility of taking care of infants should be equally divided between parents, irrespective of their gender	65.4	24.5	10.0
Women should be allowed to have maternity leave without fear of losing their job while they are away	72.9	17.8	9.3
Fathers and mothers should be treated equally by the law in child custody cases. It should be the parent's circumstances that matter, not the parent's gender	70.3	21.2	8.6
Husbands and wives should have equal roles in decisions about the education and care of their children	77.7	16.4	5.9

Source: own elaboration.

The statement that received the most agreement is “Husbands and wives should have equal roles in decisions about the education and care of their children”. This is interesting because it may highlight changes in the way the authority in the family is conceived: no more an authoritarian parental role in a family where the man is in charge of the household, but a family where

men and women share the authority and take decisions together. This idea of equal rights and duties emerges also from other statements concerning the treatment in case of divorce and child custody and the right to parental leave.

Even if these are encouraging signals of social change, they do not tell us anything about the practices of care and housework and the engagement in paid employment. Indeed, far less encouraging is the number of respondents who agree (around 13%) and those who do not take a clear position (around 30%), about mothers who work outside the house, whether this work does or does not compromise the relationship with their children and how this affects attitudes towards women's contribution to the household income. Finally, it deserves attention that 20% of respondents who do not think that men and women should share and have equal responsibilities in housework other than childcare. This is important – and leads us to the following part – because it signals that the changes concerning parenthood and fatherhood do not necessarily imply a change in gender stereotypes concerning the most appropriate 'domestic' roles for men and women. In fact, in the sample there is more agreement around the non-stereotypical statements than disagreement around stereotypical ones, as demonstrated in Table 3. Particularly striking is the number of respondents who agree and strongly agree with the statement that "women are better suited than men to childcare" (almost 38%) and with the statement "The husband should have primary responsibility for contributing to the family income by working" (almost 28%). Indeed, around 20% of respondents agree also with the fact that men are better suited to work in the labour market and that families suffer when a woman has a full-time job.

Table 3. Percentages of agreement/disagreement around conservative statements concerning parenthood

Statements	(Strongly) Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	(Strongly) Disagree
Women are better suited than men to childcare	37.9	24.2	37.9
The husband should have primary responsibility for contributing to the family income by working	27.9	29.7	42.4
All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job	20.8	27.9	51.3

Men are better suited than women to work outside of the house	18.2	26.0	55.8
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works	17.5	32.3	50.2
Human beings evolved for women to do the work at home and men to do the work outside of the home	15.2	30.1	54.6
The wife should have primary responsibility for childcare	13.8	24.9	61.3
A man's job is to earn money, a woman's job is to look after the home and family	13.4	23.8	62.8
If one parent has to care for a child, the child develops better if it is the mother rather than the father	11.9	30.9	57.2
The wife should have primary responsibility for housework and childcare	9.3	19.0	71.7

Source: own elaboration.

Therefore, again, it seems that the practices are changing but the stereotypes are not, and they are changing differently for men and women. This is made evident by the contingency tables created by cross referencing some of the statements in this section (see Table 4 and Table 5 below).

Table 4 shows the different attitudes concerning women's roles as caregivers and men's roles as providers (breadwinners). The green boxes show the consistent answers (43%); these two groups of respondents either think that women are better suited for childcare and that men are more prone to work outside the home or vice versa disagree on both statements. The interesting cases are those in the red boxes that represent the 20% of the sample and, in particular, those who situate in the right upper quadrant: for example, 42% of those who strongly agree that women are more predisposed to care for a child do not think that women are less capable to engage in the labour market and disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that men are better suited than women to work outside of the house. This is an important and interesting result, because it shows that even if the practices are changing and that women are more involved in the labour market, gender stereotypes around masculinity and femininity persist.

Table 4. Contingency table of stereotypes around femininity and masculinity*

		Men are better suited than women to work outside of the house					Absolute frequencies
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Women are better suited than men to childcare	Strongly agree	38% (10)	12% (3)	8% (2)	19% (5)	23% (6)	26
	Agree	1% (1)	29% (22)	22% (17)	32% (24)	16% (12)	76
	Neither agree nor disagree	2% (1)	6% (4)	58% (38)	20% (13)	14% (19)	65
	Disagree	3% (2)	5% (3)	17% (10)	45% (27)	30% (18)	60
	Strongly disagree	2% (1)	5% (2)	7% (3)	10% (4)	76% (32)	42
Absolute frequencies		15	34	70	73	77	269

Source: own elaboration.

* Note: Percentage of respondents is followed by the actual number of respondents placed in brackets.

The change in practices but not attitudes is also confirmed when we look at childcare and care arrangements between a couple. Table 5, placed below, shows that even those who strongly agree with the fact that women are better suited to care, do not necessarily think that the division of work at home should be unequal: 73% of these respondents also agree and strongly agree that the responsibility of taking care of children should be equally divided between parents, irrespective of their gender. Therefore, it may be inferred that many respondents believe that fathers should be involved in childcare and that mothers can and should be involved in the labour market.

Nearly one third of the respondents think that the worst arrangement in a family with children is that both parents work full-time and 39.8% of the respondents were of the opinion that the worst scenario is that the mother stays at home while the father works full-time and vice versa (Table 6). Therefore, it seems that the ideals of involved parenting are spreading among this population, as is the importance of paid work of for both parents, possibly signalling a convergence between women's and men's life courses.

Table 5. Contingency table of stereotypes around femininity and division of childcare*

		The responsibility of taking care of children should be equally divided between parents, irrespective of their gender					Absolute frequencies
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Women are better suited than men to childcare	Strongly agree	46% (12)	27% (7)	15% (4)	8% (2)	4% (1)	26
	Agree	42% (32)	26% (20)	22% (17)	9% (7)	0% (0)	76
	Neither agree nor disagree	45% (29)	12% (8)	34% (22)	8% (5)	2% (1)	65
	Disagree	52% (31)	12% (7)	27% (16)	7% (4)	3% (2)	60
	Strongly disagree	64% (27)	7% (3)	17% (7)	2% (1)	10% (4)	42
Absolute frequencies		131	45	66	19	8	269

Source: own elaboration.

* Note: Percentage of respondents is followed by the actual number of respondents placed in brackets.

Table 6. Attitudes towards working patters of parents

Statements	Percentages	Absolute frequencies
In your opinion, which of the following options would be the LEAST desirable?		
Both the mother and the father work full-time	31.2	84
The mother stays at home and the father works full-time	20.1	54
The father stays at home and the mother works full-time	19.7	53
Both the mother and the father work part-time	14.5	39
The mother works part-time and the father works full-time	12.6	34
The father works part-time and the mother works full-time	1.9	5
Total	100.0	269

Source: own elaboration.

Table 7, concerning the ideal sharing of parental leave, points in the same direction as above. Almost half of the sample thinks that the father and the mother should equally share paid leave periods and almost 40% thinks that fathers should take at least a part of it. However, we cannot neglect the fact that 10% thinks that fathers should not take any leave.

Table 7. Attitudes towards parental leave

Statements	Percentages	Absolute frequencies
In case the law grants paid parental leave, if both partners are in a similar work situation and are eligible for paid leave, how should this paid leave period be divided between the mother and the father?		
The mother and the father should each take half of the paid leave period	46.8	126
The mother should take most of the paid leave period and the father should take some of it	37.9	102
The mother should take the entire paid leave period and the father should not take any paid leave	11.2	30
The father should take most of the paid leave period and the mother should take some of it	3.3	9
The father should take the entire paid leave period and the mother should not take any paid leave	0.7	2
Total	100.0	269

Source: own elaboration.

Gender based violence

In this section we first present the results concerning attitudes towards violence and knowledge/myths about violence, and explanations for violence. Then, as in the previous section, we will cross reference the data about violence with the results from the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA), in order to compare attitudes toward gender models with those regarding violence.

Table 8 shows the percentages of agreement/disagreement regarding attitudes towards violence. The two statements which received the lowest agreement (5.2%) are “It is ok for a boy to push a girl into having sex if he has

spent a lot of money on her” and “It is ok for a boy to push a girl into having sex if they have been dating”. This is an encouraging result that signals awareness about the importance of consent in sexual relationships and the fact that pushing a woman to have sex constitutes sexual assault.

Looking at physical violence, the respondents agree and strongly agree in 5.6% of the cases that a partner can hit the other if he or she is constantly argumentative, irrespectively of their gender. The percentage of agreement raises to 6.7% in the case the woman has been unfaithful and it is interesting to note that the male respondents who strongly agree or agree are the double (12.5%) the female respondents (6%).

Verbal abuse is considered legitimate in the form of insults in approximately 8% of cases, again with no significant gender difference. Shouting is considered acceptable in 16% of cases, if a woman is not treating her partner with respect and in 17.5% in the reverse case. Verbal abuse in the form of shouting if a partner nags or is argumentative, is considered legitimate by 12.6% if it is a man and by 15.6% if it is a woman shouting. It seems that the respondents consider it to be less severe or more legitimate if the violence is exerted by a woman. Secondly, it is interesting that around 20% of respondents neither agree nor disagree about the legitimacy of exerting verbal abuse, irrespectively of the gender of the abuser. Finally, the limitation of freedom of a partner is considered legitimate by around 10% of the respondents, with 22–24% of respondents who neither agree nor disagree.

Table 8. Attitudes towards violence

Statements	(Strongly) Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	(Strongly) Disagree
It is ok for a man hit his partner if she has been unfaithful	6.7	13.4	79.9
It is ok for a man to hit his partner if she is constantly nagging/arguing	5.6	13.8	80.7
It is ok for a man to push a woman into having sex if he has spent a lot of money on her	5.2	11.5	83.3
It is ok for a man to push a woman into having sex if they have been dating	5.2	15.2	79.6
It is ok for a man to set limits as to where his partner goes	9.7	24.2	66.2

It is ok for a man to insult his partner in front of others	7.4	18.6	74.0
It is ok for a man to shout at his partner if she is not treating him with respect	16.0	19.3	64.7
It is ok for a man to shout at his partner if she is constantly nagging/arguing	12.6	23.8	63.6
It is ok for a woman to hit her partner if he is constantly nagging/arguing	5.6	19.6	74.8
It is ok for a woman to set limits as to where her partner goes	10.4	22.3	67.3
It is ok for a woman to insult her partner in front of others	8.6	16,7	74.7
It is ok for a woman to shout at her partner if he is not treating her with respect	17.5	23.4	59.1
It is ok for a woman to shout at her partner if he is constantly nagging/arguing	15.6	20.8	63.6

Source: own elaboration.

Looking at the myths about violence (Table 9), one of the most striking results, in contrast to those presented in the previous Table, is that 8% with the respondents (strongly) agree and 25% neither agree nor disagree with the statement “When a woman says “no” to her partner’s sexual advances, this often means “yes”. These high percentages open the gate to possible justification of marital rape, which is the most common form of rape and the less recognised and reported to authorities (FRA, 2014).

Furthermore, there is a significant number of respondents in agreement with the statement that if a man gets jealous about his partner, it proves that he really cares for her. 55% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree with this statement, 19% agree and strongly agree, and 26% neither agree nor disagree. Moreover, around 1/3 of the respondents think that women are just as likely as men to be violent towards their partners and 1 in 4 respondents thinks that for a woman, it is more common to be sexually and physically abused outside of the family. Finally, it is interesting that only 40% disagree or strongly disagree with the fact that financial difficulties are the most common reason for violence in relationships. It means that 60% of the sample is convinced that intimate partner violence can be explained by contingent factors and not structural ones such as the social construction of gender. However, it is true

that financial difficulties trigger men's violence, especially if it is the man who has lost his employment and therefore enacts compensatory practices of masculinity (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009).

Table 9. Knowledge/myths about violence

Statements	(Strongly) Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	(Strongly) Disagree
If a woman is being abused, she could just exit the relationship	65.4	23.8	10.8
Women are just as likely to be violent toward their partners as men	36.1	35.3	28.6
Women are more likely to be sexually and physically abused by a stranger than by someone they know	25.3	36.8	37.9
If a man is jealous about his partner, it proves that he really cares for her	19.0	26.0	55.0
Financial difficulties are the most common reason for problems that involve violence in relationships	16.7	40.9	42.4
When a woman says "no" to her partner's sexual advances this often means "yes"	8.2	25.3	66.5

Source: own elaboration.

The data concerning the explanation for violence, show that the patriarchal culture is the statement that received the least agreement: only 41.6% of the respondents strongly agree or agree and 32% cannot or do not want to take a position (Table 10). On the other hand, the use of alcohol or drugs, the need to control and jealousy, are the most quoted explanations for violence followed by biological explanations linked to men's superior physical strength. Again, this signals the diffusion of biological and psycho-pathological interpretations of men's violence against women that are problematic at least from three points of view. First, considering violence as grounded in men's biology takes the responsibility away from men and legitimises the blaming of the victims as they were responsible for the violence they experience. Second, the abuse of alcohol or drugs can be a contributing factor, but if it is used as an explanation of violence, it is not clear how it is possible that violence is so diffused and common also among men who are not addicts.

Table 10. Explanations for violence

Statements	(Strongly) Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	(Strongly) Disagree
Some men are violent towards women because they consider themselves superior to women	50.9	29.0	20.1
Some men are violent towards women because they want to control women	63.2	22.3	14.5
Some men are violent towards women because they are allowed to by society	41.6	32.0	26.4
Some men are violent towards women because they are jealous	59.5	27.1	13.4
Some men are violent towards women because they are physically stronger than women	55.0	21.6	23.4
Some men are violent towards women because of alcohol or drug use	67.3	18.6	14.1

Source: own elaboration.

The AWSA statements show that most respondents (between 70–80%) do not think that men and women should be treated differently and think that they should have the same freedoms and equal opportunities (Table 11). However, gender stereotypes are still quite traditional with 30% of respondents thinking that virginity is more desirable for a woman than a man, 23% thinking that men are more rational than women, 21% that it is a biological fact that men are supposed to pursue women in courtship and 37.5% that most men like to go out with women just for sex.

These results are particularly interesting if we look at the data concerning the importance given by respondents to the statement about families and schools socialising children without gender bias. Almost 54% agree or strongly agrees, while the 30% neither agrees nor disagrees and 16% disagrees that there should be concerted efforts to raise children with a non-sexist orientation, at home and in schools. It is of note that the sample is equally distributed between the three modalities in cases where the statement describes government involvement in promoting gender awareness and fighting gender stereotypes. Moreover, only 45.4% of respondents thinks that more men should go into nursing or elementary-school teaching and this is particularly interesting if we consider the fact that the respondents are attending a pedagogical university.

Table 11. Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA)

Statements	(Strongly) Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	(Strongly) Disagree
Men should not think badly of women who ask them for a date	74.3	14.1	11.5
Boys and girls should have equal opportunity and should not be treated differently	72.9	16.7	10.4
There should be concerted efforts to raise children with a non-sexist orientation, at home and in schools	53.9	30.1	16.0
In my opinion, virginity is more desirable in a woman than in a man	49.1	19.3	31.6
More men should go into nursing and elementary-school teaching	45.4	33.8	20.8
Most boys like to go out with girls just for sex	37.5	30.1	32.3
It is not the business of government to worry about the different roles played by men and women	33.1	33.5	33.5
Men are more rational than women	23.0	24.5	52.4
Human beings evolved so that the man pursues the woman in courtship, not the other way around	21.9	39.0	39.0
In my opinion, it is more acceptable for a boy to have many sexual partners than for a girl	20.1	21.6	58.4
Boys are naturally better at math and science than girls	17.8	20.4	61.7
Human beings evolved so that men need more sex partners than women	12.6	20.1	67.3
Girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers rather than desiring a professional or business career	11.2	22.3	66.5
Girls should not have the same freedom as boys	8.6	12.3	79.2
On average, boys are smarter than girls	7.8	14.5	77.7
More encouragement in a family should be given to sons than daughters to go to college	5.9	14.9	79.2
Men are better suited for higher education than women	5.6	10.0	84.4

Source: own elaboration.

Conclusions

In Polish context, much has been already said about gender roles in pedagogical contexts (c.f. Kopciewicz, 2003, 2005) and about the changing models of fatherhood in Polish society (Sosnowski, 2018). Bajkowski (2010) wrote about the perception of femininity and masculinity amongst academic students, but his work was not focussed solely on future teachers. Whilst, in this case, once again (like in Chmura-Rutkowska, 2002; Chomczyńska-Rubacha, 2006, 2011; Odrowąż-Coates, 2016), it is women themselves, including teachers, especially in early childhood education, that appear to be perpetuating gender roles' stereotypes.

From the data it emerges that attitudes towards involved fatherhood and fathers as childcare providers are changing faster than those regarding gender-based violence and especially, those regarding gender stereotypes. It has been established that gender stereotypes and the biological vision of masculinity and femininity persist, despite respondents' recognition of the illegitimacy of any form of violence, the right to have both parents employed and also for them to be present at home and involved in child care. At the same time a conflicting picture emerged as respondents continued to consider women as better suited than men to childcare; men as more rational by almost half of the respondents and respondents considering the physical strength of men as an underlying reason for violence (55%). These results signal the diffusion of biological and psycho-pathological interpretations of men's violence against women that are problematic from at least three points of view. First, considering violence as grounded in men's biology takes the responsibility away from men and legitimises the blaming of the victims as being responsible for the violence they experience. Second, the abuse of alcohol or drugs can be a contributing factor, but if it is used as an explanation of violence, it is not clear how that violence is so diffused and common also among men who are not addicts. Lastly, when the social circumstances are taken into consideration as explanatory factors of violence by the respondents, it is in the form of financial difficulties. Therefore, the role of structural reasons behind men's violence against women is not recognized, but it may be true that financial difficulties trigger men's violence, especially if a man loses his employment and therefore enacts compensatory practices of masculinity (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009).

These results are important for two reasons. Firstly, it informs different ways of framing “children’s rights”, with the acknowledgment that children need presence, care and love from both the father and the mother, and the importance of not experiencing violent relationships at home. However, there is no acknowledgement of the fact that the changes in gender and parenthood practices are passed on through changes in gender stereotypes and attitudes. Secondly, the persistency of gender stereotypes affects the way gender-based violence is conceived, but also the existence of the phenomenon itself. Gender-based violence is the result of socially constructed gender models and the lack of acknowledgement by the respondents (only 41% think it is a cultural and social problem), risks the reproduction of the power dynamics from which violence originates. Since violence is framed as illegitimate but somehow symmetrical, a risk exists that there will be widespread consensus around the fact that violence is not linked to gender, but it is part of “normal” couple dynamics. In this way, violence may be justified and the imbalance of power between men and women would be neglected in a reformed social order.

To conclude, this data is important because it was collected amongst women that will be teachers and socialisers of the future. Through their answers concerning gender roles, it seems that they are not fully aware of their role in this area. On the contrary, their personal core beliefs on gender may compromise the efforts of governments or schools to promote a non-sexist orientation among children.

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