

Report from the national interdisciplinary conference *Gender unwelcome?*
Socio-cultural dimension of sex and gender in the private and public sphere
(Wrocław, 4 December 2014)

Is gender unwelcome? This question has been the motto of the national interdisciplinary scientific conference organised by the Department of Sociology of the Public Sphere, the Institute of Sociology, University of Wrocław, along with the Polish Sociological Association, Wrocław Department. The meeting took place in Wrocław on 4 December, 2014 in Bike Cafe in Four Denominations District (ul. św. Antoniego 8). Due to the organisation of the conference in the widely accessible place as well as its non-academic nature, the organisers emphasised that the meeting is open and they created a chance to popularise the knowledge of socio-cultural dimensions of sex and gender. The issues of sex and gender are still topical, even though they have been acknowledged to be scientifically interesting for social sciences years ago. Social sciences are still interested in the socio-cultural aspects of sex and gender, for gender relates to both issues of individual identity and the social, political, and power structures. Furthermore, the condition of modern societies, which are immanently characterised by their dynamics and vast social changes, results in constant revision and actualisation of theoretical, methodological, and empirical findings. This also applies to the constantly changing socio-cultural dimensions of sex and gender, which appear to be more and more complex and ambiguous. The use of the scientific notion of gender in political agendas is an additional factor that influences an increased interest in the issues relating to gender roles. The said problem is no longer explored solely by scientists or theologians; it has become exciting also for the Polish public. Among others, this has been proved by the events from 2013/2014 when the anxiety and dispute concerning the “gender ideology” spread widely in Poland. The term, which had been established in the social sciences dictionary for many years, has been used as a tool in the fight to govern both minds and souls, the conceptual machinery of universe-maintenance legitimising, and/or deposing competing symbolic universes, a fine line defining political and social divisions. The practical dimension of differencing gender has clearly dominated a theoretical one. Certain ideas have gained new meanings, which allowed their instrumental usage in the public space. Consequently, the conference program council (comprising Dorota Majka Rostek, Associate Professor, Ewa Banaszak, PhD, and Paweł Czajkowski, PhD) proposed to discuss quite a broad spectrum of issues. Among those were: validity and possibility of modern application of gender and sex categories; the followers of essentialism, constructivism, and queer; the relations between gender, sexuality, and social class; socialisation patterns applicable to gender roles; the changing nature of the form of social relations related to femininity and masculinity; corporal gender strategies and gendered body; social perception of the notion of gender and its application in the “cultural war”; and the creation of moral panics.

The conference has drawn a lot of interest from scientists. Twenty-one speakers were invited. The debate was divided into three sessions corresponding to the following topical areas: theoretical reflection, everyday social practices and modern Polish public discourse. The guests were welcomed by the originator of the conference, Dorota Majka-Rostek, Assistant Professor (University of Wrocław), who delivered a short introduction into the meeting and held its first session. At this session, entitled “Gender in theoretical reflection”, four speakers held lectures. Barbara Grabowska, Associate Professor (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) presented a speech *About gender before gender, that is the 17th and 19th century’s reflection on social and cultural backgrounds of womanhood — Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill*. She revived the two figures that exposed the seeming naturalness of femininity models and indicated that some of the features deemed to be typically feminine are the effect of upbringing, and they did so even before the feminism or gender studies had been shaped. Wollstonecraft and Mill stated also that the model of unchanging women nature serves to reinforce the patriarchal power and they proposed an approach toward education and socialisation that would allow the development of individual skills. This reminder of an early reflection related to the gender and arguments for specific changes played a significant role in informing the public of wide changes that have taken place but also in realising how frivolously we treat what they have strived for so hardly. This has also widened a historical perspective of the gender studies — thinking in the categories of gender started much earlier than in the last century and it established grounds for a social and theoretical breakthrough. Professor Renata Ziemińska (University of Szczecin) presented a speech *Fluidity of sex and performativity of gender*. The speaker attempted to integrate the latest biological data on the topic of forming biological sex with the newest theses on the construction of gender. Moreover, she also introduced terms and findings from natural sciences which have proven to be especially valuable as they allowed scientists to cross a simplified relation of sex–gender and shown dynamic and multifaceted complexity of the sex itself that is usually omitted in the discussions on gender. Justyna Spsychalska-Stasiak, PhD (Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz) spoke *About the paradigmatic impasse in scientific discussion on the domain of gender*. The said “paradigmatic impasse” is a conclusion derived from the qualitative analysis of 14 Polish scientific monographs on sex and gender. The views on sex and gender present in the Polish scientific discourse, which were distinguished in the author’s study, make it tempting to claim that the discourse is in the state of epistemological chaos. This chaotic condition reveals itself in numerous aspects and it complicates the organisation of discussed notions. Perhaps, it is a creative and seeking chaos but it also encourages to make use of scientific discourse in order to legitimise, by different social powers in Poland, certain views on sex and gender reality. Jacek Pluta, PhD (University of Wrocław) delivered a speech entitled *Constructivism, gender and sociological mind*. The aim of this presentation was the paradigmatic disagreement in social sciences on the issue of theoretical concept of the status of sex and gender. This is due to the different conceptualisation of social reality. Two aspects of this mutual disagreement were taken into consideration; sociological reflection lacks conceptual tools describing gender and sex as meaningful to the reproduction of social order in the dimension of social practices, whereas gender studies are limited by constructivist assumptions on the basis of which the issue of gender is reduced to a discursive matter.

The second session, “Gender in everyday social practices”, was led by Ewa Banaszak, PhD (University of Wrocław). Nine speakers took part in this session and, thus, it was the most numerous one. Katarzyna Górniak, PhD (Warsaw University of Technology) presented a speech *Poverty is a woman — discursive images of women experiencing poverty*. The researchers of social inequalities and phenomena related to them, such as poverty, have realised only lately that living in poverty is not the same for women as it is for men. Women are more often subject to poverty and they are more burdened therewith. Such situation is created, among others, by the images of proper social practices which are attributed to women experiencing poverty (also by the workers of organisations and institutions that support them). Paradoxically, women are expected to perform actions that petrify their poverty, for they lack independence in decision-making and they are denied rights to their own needs, expressing those needs, making personal choices etc. Natalia Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak, PhD (University of Wrocław) pondered upon the issue of *A division of the family responsibilities. Metamorphoses or conservation of parental roles?* On the basis of in-depth interviews, the author analysed the practices of sharing family and professional obligations as well as their justification, and the areas of men’s and women’s interaction with children and their responsibility domains. The following issues were investigated: whether gender still defines family roles; whether paternity and maternity are redefined; and whether the definitional changes within the area of parental roles influence back the constructions of femininity and masculinity. Michał Cebula, PhD (University of Wrocław) tackled the issue of *Male and female shopping behaviour. Discursive differences or real divisions?* Since shopping is both an action of acquiring goods and a creative activity relating to self and life style, the questions concerning gender differences in consumption remain vital. The quantitative research among the citizens of Wrocław indicates that men are less enthusiastic towards shopping and more practical therein. They are also said to indulge more in the luxury-oriented consumption, whilst women engage more in the “bandwagon” consumption. At the same time, these tendencies are much less apparent in the qualitative interviews, which indicates that many of gender discrepancies could be of a declarative nature. Barbara Borowiak, MA (University of Gdańsk) spoke about women working in Gdańsk’s Shipyard in the times of Polish People’s Republic (*Women on cranes — Gdańsk’s Shipyard and gender*). Women comprised one third of all the hired workers and held not only subsidiary posts but also those in shipbuilding production. However, their participation in the everyday work of the shipyard is not present in the social images of this place, so significant to the modern Polish history. What did it mean to be a woman in such a masculine place of work and what was the influence of feminine gender on the functioning of female workers and their relations with colleagues? This can be reconstructed from the patterns and norms of behaviour which were expected from female workers by the shipyard’s community; from the forms of presence of female workers in the shipyard; from the exclusion mechanisms that are changing over time. Professor Ewa Malinowska (University of Łódź) analysed *Gender education — theoretical and practical aspects*. She asked about the role of educational system in the change of the Polish society from patriarchal to egalitarian. Introduction of the gender and anti-discrimination component into the curriculum at each level of education would be an empirical measure of the pro-egalitarian role of education. Nevertheless, the conducted analysis indicates that it plays a more positive role in the reproduction of patriarchy than engages in the creation of

egalitarian society. Piotr Winczewski, PhD (Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce) considered *Similarities and differences in illustrating women and men in the plots of teaching games*. If educational games applied by tutors and teachers depict a world in which women appear more rarely than men, and in which men are the actors of the public and professional stage, whilst women of the private one, we should propagate among these teachers and tutors gender sensitivity and encourage the reflection over their practices as well as search for methodological solutions to the described state. (There are some questions stemming from the fact that the speaker omitted the percentage of games with such plots in relation to the overall number of games, along with the frequency of application of such games as they do not have to be applied during classes.) Dagmara Kałkus (University of Wrocław) discussed an interesting linguistic issue in her speech entitled *Passive sex. The analysis of linguistic behaviours of women and men talking about love*. In both public and scientific discourse, the passive/active opposition is commonly connected with the social roles of men and women. This reveals itself also at the level of grammar: syntactic structures and semantic roles in the statements of women and men; passive and active communicational behaviours. Their presence has been confirmed by the research pursued by the speaker. Katarzyna Leszczyńska, PhD (AGH University of Science and Technology) took up an issue of *(Self)exclusion of women from the sphere of Polish Catholic Church. Social practices as the mechanisms of the reproduction of feminine models in Church organisations*. The speaker analysed discursive practices of women working in administrative-evangelising organisations of the Catholic Church in Poland and showed their participation in the reproduction of certain feminine models and exclusion of women from the Church organisations. Marcelina Smugowska, MA (University of Wrocław) reflected upon the topic of *Specificity of identity and social functioning of transsexual people in Poland*. Transsexuality is not a new phenomenon; it does not mean, however, that it is commonly discussed by the social sciences or that it is not surprising in the public sphere. Irrespective of the grounds for such situation, each and every new piece of knowledge on the topic of the social functioning of transsexuals, their exclusion from the social sphere as well as attempts to define this type of identity is an important contribution to the social sciences.

The last session was entitled “Gender in the modern Polish public discourse.” It was led by Paweł Czajkowski, PhD (University of Wrocław) and comprised five speeches. Anna Szwed, PhD (Jagiellonian University in Kraków) asked *Who is afraid of gender? The Roman Catholic Church in Poland and the category of gender*. From the presented findings, it transpires that the Church does not reduce the notion of gender to a purely biological aspect; it surely accepts its ahistoricity and limits the possibilities of its interpretation in the categories of social construct. The category of gender is criticised for being ideological not only at the local level of the Church in Poland but by the whole Church. As a consequence to the ahistorical view on the gender category, which is present in the discourse of the Catholic Church and in the consciousness of its representatives, the present gender contract is petrified. Michał Borkowski (University of Wrocław) presented *Feature of ‘Polish civil war of gender’ in the light of Pierre Bourdieu’s scientific field*. He traced the process of snowballing conflict around the vague and non-defined term of “gender” that took place in the years 2013–2014. The consequences of this conflict were manifestations, disturbances during lectures, appointment of the Parliamentary Committee,

or an open letter written by some of the research personnel working at universities and other schools of higher education. The attempts to grasp critically the fight over “gender” and answer the question about the relation between science and ideology were supported by Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of scientific field. Robert Florkowski, PhD (Eugeniusz Piasecki University School of Physical Education) entitled his speech *Gender non grata. Casus of moral paedopanic*. He pinpointed that in each and every society there is a dominant and rewarded model of sexuality, which creates the anti-thesis to the commonly legitimised sexual behaviours. Both rewarded and punished behaviours change over time; the latter become subject to moral panic. The reception and interpretation of the stigmatised practices in the sphere of public discourse appears to change less than the extremes. We often admit that paedophilia causes moral panic; nevertheless, we are unwilling to accept the consequences of using the term “moral panic” as an analytical tool. This raises considerable concerns. Katarzyna Serafińska, PhD and Dominika Wójcik-Chałupka, MA (University of Wrocław) concentrated upon the question *When does the gender haunt? Chosen conditions of the acceptance of equality education curriculum by Polish teachers*. They presented the results of their study on the situational conditioning of acceptance of equality education. The results indicate that the level of acceptance among the subjects of the study depends on the presented materials (the representations of boys and girls in the typical/atypical gender roles). The results may serve as a direction in the projecting and introducing equality education curriculum and in the actions aiming at accustoming public with gender. Elżbieta Klimek-Dominiak, PhD (University of Wrocław) presented a speech *Gender violence in Polish family — intersections of sexuality, class and ethnicity in public discourse and auto/biographic narratives*. The speech referred to the Polish auto/biographic narratives on the issue of sexual violence in the family and their social reception. The authors of the analysed publications are subject to stigmatisation due to the violation of social taboo, even though they try to present this issue in the complex context of different types of oppression and multigenerational trauma. Social divisions, economic dependence, and social norms are only few of the indicated factors contributing to the reproduction of dysfunctional family models, victimisation, and leaving the victims to their own devices.

Each of the sessions ended with a lively and engaging discussion. Due to fortuitous events, three speakers did not manage to appear: Monika Baer, PhD (University of Wrocław) with *From “an awkward relationship” toward “a community of critics”? Anthropology and gender/queer studies in contemporary Poland*; Kamil Lipiński, MA (University of Warsaw) with *Surely, my wife does not work*; and Jowita Wiśniewska, MA (University of Warsaw) with *Polish discourse about the “gender” as a manifestation of the changes in modern family*. Three of the speakers, namely Michał Borkowski, Barbara Borowiak, MA and Marcelina Smugowska, MA did already present their speeches during the conference for the students and doctoral students, *50 shades of gender* (organised by the Sociology Students Scientific Association in May, 2014; the conference was a part of annual Sociology Days in the Institute of Sociology, University of Wrocław). The conference program council had decided to invite the above-mentioned young scholars due to the high level of their presentations.

Organisers of the conference have also begun the co-operation with the editorial board of the journal *Culture and Education*. As a result, many of the articles relating to the issues

discussed at the conference will be published in the third issue in 2015. The rest of the discussed issues shall be presented in a peer-reviewed, open-access electronic publication.

Ewa Banaszak

Report from the 4th Network School and Annual Colloquium of the European FP7 Marie Curie Initial Training Network (ITN) "Changing Employment" (Wrocław, 15–22 November 2015)

The 4th Network School and 2nd Annual Colloquium of the European FP7 Marie Curie Initial Training Network (ITN) "Changing Employment" was organised by the network's team at the Institute of Sociology, University of Wrocław led by Dr Adam Mrozowski. The "Changing Employment" network, coordinated by the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, Scotland), provides doctoral and post-doctoral training to twelve Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) and three Experienced Researchers (ERs) at nine different universities and Associated Partners across Europe. Its research focus lies on the changing nature of European labour markets under restructuring triggered by on-going economic and social transformation. Grouped into three themes (Management and Employees, Inclusion and Exclusion, and Employee Well-being and Work Life Quality), the researchers look into how the aforementioned transformations have translated into changes in work relations and working lives of different groups of workers. The network meets bi-annually for the so-called Network School and once a year for the Annual Colloquium. The previous Network Schools and Annual Colloquia took place in Gothenburg (May 2013), Evry (November 2013) and Leuven (May 2014). This time the network's meetings were launched by the Project Open Day on 15 November 2014 during the International Conference *Social boundaries of work*, where all ESRs presented their individual research posters to the conference participants. Following this event the 2nd Annual Colloquium and the 4th Network School were held after each other in the week from 17 to 22 November 2014.

This year's Annual Colloquium, entitled *Comparative methodology and paradigms*, took place in Wrocław's city centre and brought together doctoral researchers, their supervisors, post-doctoral researchers as well as Associate Partners of the Network. During the three days of intensive meetings, ERs and ESRs presented the progress of their research and non-research work (e.g. dissemination, cooperation etc.) so far. Since the project involves not just individual research but also collective endeavours within each of the three themes mentioned above, one day was devoted to this particular aspect of the network. Furthermore, Prof. Miguel Martinez Lucio from the University of Manchester gave an invited lecture on studying worker participation and employment relations across national boundaries in a comparative perspective.

Following the Colloquium, the two-day Network School called *Comparative European social models* hosted several guest speakers, among them Rafał Tomasiak from Uni Global, Tomasz Stankiewicz from the Volvo Group's HRM team, Marek Rudziński and Izabela Krawczyk-Rudzińska from Neuroedukacja, and Aleksandra Tillman from the University of Evry.