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Historical Re-enactment in Poland: Between Faithfulness to History and the Imperative of Spectacularity

Abstract: The article is the result of a research project devoted to Polish historical re-enactment groups which are becoming very popular and influential and can be seen as a part of the multi-sensory culture of the event. During ethnographic research, we raised the issue of the commercialisation of historical re-enactment and the alleged educational value of the related activities, deliberating whether it was possible to reconcile faithfulness to history with the demands of commercial events, the passion with the pursuit of profit, and teaching with entertainment. The research included the evaluational dimension and questions on the role of re-enactment in the cultural policy of the country. The findings indicated that the movement was ambiguous and multidimensional and that numerous answers existed to the question about the re-enactors' motivations essentially because the groups are divided into hobbyist re-enactors and commercial re-enactors. We found that re-enactment was effective in instilling historical knowledge, although not into the spectators, but into the re-enactors themselves. Re-enactment events usually failed to stimulate the spectators' interest in history. A considerable majority of these events remained intellectually passive, which caused any educational effect to be momentary and superficial.

Keywords: historical re-enactment, heritage tourism, living history, educational effectiveness, multi-sensory culture of event

Introduction

Re-enactors are enthusiasts and hobbyists who spend their free time re-enacting the outfits, weapons, technologies and social activities of the old times and past historical events in accordance with their best scientific knowledge. Historical re-enactment is a type of active hobby that turns into lifestyle. The increasing number of re-enactors and the year-on-year increase in the re-enactment infrastructure in the form of hundreds of re-enactment events, 'sports-like' re-enactor leagues, or the re-enactment-related handicraft industry make one consider them to be a socio-cultural movement with its own objectives, its own language, and an emerging distinct system of values and norms.

After 1989, the year of social, political, and economic transformation in Eastern and Central Europe, the Polish people have experienced a strong domination of the consumption culture, which is responsible for the evolution of cultural behaviours. One aspect to consider is the sphere of the multi-sensory consumption of the popular culture or the so-called multi-sensory culture of the event, and the other focuses on the 'silent' activities inside the virtual cultural sub-worlds. These new forms of participation in culture are becoming dominant in Poland (Szlendak & Olechnicki 2017: 11–30). The multi-sensory culture 'packs' cultural participation in mega-ceremonials, such as festivals, fairs, holidays of regions, and re-enactment events (historical re-enactment groups present their interests, artefacts, costumes, and skills on festivals attracting mainstream masses). The characteristics of the multi-sensory culture of the event include concentrated 'eventness', density of attractors, immediate sharing, evanescence of the experiences, seasonality, eventness, instantness, and strong links with commercial brand names, and cultural omnivorousness (Peterson & Kern 1996).

The Polish historical re-enactment movement was not born until the 1990s. Previously, in the times of the communist regime in Poland, there were occasional attempts to organise re-enactment events for propaganda reasons, and more rarely, as a tourist attraction. The first Polish association of this kind, the Sword and Crossbow Brotherhood (Bractwo Miecza i Kuszy) was registered in 1992. Since then, the movement has been developing exponentially and dynamically. Assuming the most conservative estimates, there might be at least several hundred groups (half of which are knight groups) whose activities engage approximately 100,000 people in Poland (Szlendak *et al.* 2012: 77–80). The unexpected aspect of this finding is that there is a very limited and incomplete body of literature, usually rather journalistic than scholarly. The scholarly body of literature is primarily fragmentary and deals not with the entire phenomenon but with its individual parts or dimensions. For example, Bogacki considered it a form of cultural tourism (2010); Pietrzyk-Jagielska analysed it in terms of the sociology of fashion (2015); Antoszewska wrote about the fantasy component in the re-enactment (2015); Olechnicki, Szlendak, and Karwacki examined the educational effect (2016); and Baraniecka-Olszewska explored the World War II re-enactment (2018). A more comprehensive approach was taken in a study by Szlendak *et al.* (2012).

Re-enactment groups arouse mixed, and often extreme, feelings. People with a pacifist attitude associate them with a dangerous war game, which is harmful in the educational dimension. Members of the feminist movement associate the re-enactment movement with an equally dangerous cultural niche, which enables the restoration of the past patriarchal male dominance (cf. Hunt 2008). The left side of the political scene perceive the re-enactors as the live media of the conservative national ideology. Numerous press releases and TV mentions, instead of attempting to understand this phenomenon, inform on re-enactment events almost exclusively as on entertainment, and sometimes, as a cheap sensation.

However, the re-enactment consists not only of performing historical war actions (although these are in fact key and the most important) but also of thousands of women involved in the re-enactment movement, and people of extreme views are a margin. Moreover, in spite of the fact that the summer holiday time commercial re-enactment events are supposed to provide the spectators mainly with entertainment, the movement has considerable potential to influence the Poles' knowledge of their own history and the micro-history of the place that they live in. The result of the functioning of a re-enactment group or of participation in such a group may be obtaining historical knowledge and learning the characteristics and cultural patterns inherent to the people living in the past times, in the close and the distant space. The transfer of knowledge resulting from the activity of the group may be considered a staged history class (for people having contact with the group) and the continuous education of those who form the group. Such alternative education by means of direct contact may be a supplement (in certain matters) or an alternative to historical education in educational institutions. Participating in re-enactment groups, people simultaneously build a unique cultural industry providing local communities and cultural institutions with means and resources, even in the area of mobilising and organising tourism (heritage tourism being built around historical re-enactment groups has been discussed by Crang (1996). What is highly essential for a country's cultural and historical policies is that owing to the growing movement of the re-enactment groups, the notions of the 'imagined community' and the history 'being made-up' are created (Coleman & Elsner 2004).

The main aim of our research was the exploration, analysis, and evaluation of the activity of historical re-enactment groups in Poland. We hoped to break the stereotypical convictions about re-enactors as harmless eccentrics; in particular, we wanted to offer a close look at their culture-building role. One can argue that re-enactment groups are exemplary of contemporary cultural activity and that being a member of such a group is most of all a new way of life. However, what is important is that the re-enactors are consumers and prosumers at the same time: this phenomenon has become a complex and rewarding cultural industry which generates various profits: economic, social, symbolic, and educational. We also pose the question on the broad sense of the educational value of the re-enactment activity and a better understanding of the multitude and the complexity of its participants' motivations. Does it make sense to use the re-enactment movement and support it at the level of the country's cultural policy and the local government's policy creation, as people participate so willingly in this fascinating group undertaking? How do re-enactment groups affect the citizens' historical knowledge and their social activity?

Methodology

The project Re-enactment groups: Reconstruction of heritage and culture in action' was carried out in 2011–2012 [1]. The field research into historical re-enactment groups was conducted in accordance with the paradigm of the ethnographic method. The methodology combined observation, visual methods, conversation methods, desk research, and Internet content analysis.

There were three aims posed in the research: 1) diagnosis, 2) documentation, and 3) evaluation.

1) The diagnosis was performed to generate the data estimations of the number of re-enactment events and organisations, number of their participants/members, their background (e.g. what social strata or professions they come from), the practice and calendar of such group activity, the description of a day in the life of a group member, and the costs and profits of the activity (on a broad scale: financial, time, energy, social, and educational), and to provide an outline of the history of re-enactment groups in Poland.
2) The realisation of the documentation aim meant the generation of the 'raw' data, the description of the respondents' statements by means of transcription, photographs, and

[1] Thanks to the grant from the National Centre for Culture Poland, no. 45/11.

field notes from the course of the re-enactment events, the scale of the actors' involvement and the viewers' interest, as well as the broader cultural context of such events.

3) The evaluation aim was to answer the following question: is it worth conducting the cultural policy of the state to (financially, institutionally, and symbolically) strengthen the re-enactment movement? The evaluation process identified the multidimensional effects of the functioning of re-enactment groups for their members, for people in contact with the activity of the groups, for the local community in which the group functioned, and the cultural policy of the state. The evaluation survey considered apart from the members of the historical re-enactment groups, re-enactment event organisers and direct recipients of their activities (the viewers and apprentices) along with local institution representatives, local government authorities, as well as cultural and educational institutions.

The research procedure was the following: The researchers went to perform the field work in groups composed of at least three people. This among other things ensured mutual control. The researchers conducted detailed anthropological reconnaissance using the necessary devices. They were interested in a comprehensive documentation of the infrastructure, actors, and the course of the re-enactment events. At the end of the day spent on fieldwork, each researcher was obliged to write an operational note containing two types of data. Firstly, he/she had to pay attention to anything specific that had happened in the course of the fieldwork and to describe methodological and environmental circumstances and particular occurrences worth paying attention to in the course of analysing the data, along with the detailed characteristics of places where conversations with the respondents had taken place, or events which could have disturbed the course of the survey/conversations. Secondly, and this was the more important part of the operational note, the researchers had to include in it their own reflections on the event and the collected material, which would help the research team understand the interviews and events, and to sketch their own emotions and the emotions revealed by the surveyed people, their personal opinions revealed off the record, and other types of curiosities. The operational notes were used for the analysis and the interpretation of significance, just as the interview scripts and visual materials were.

If participation in events in any engaged role turned out to be necessary, the researchers were obliged to take part. At least one research team member was obliged to play social roles (games, competitions, etc.) to which the organisers invited the viewers. If it was necessary to shoot a bow or make a clay pot, the researchers did so, carefully writing down their impressions and photographing the activities and the results. Trained, three-person research teams went to the event location sufficiently early to be able to capture the preparations for the event. They were usually the last ones to leave the place. Within the research team, it was necessary to divide the responsibilities: one person followed the course of the event, the second focused on the viewers, and the third concentrated on the surroundings; however, in practice, with regard to organisational requirements and the specificity of particular events, the researchers had to swap roles or perform two roles simultaneously.

The research consisted of in-depth interviews (according to extended scenarios) with significant actors and organisers of the events, as well as key figures of the re-enactment groups. The interviews required the trained field researchers to skilfully use several interview scenarios depending on the characteristics and position of the person they interviewed.

Different sets of questions were directed at the re-enactment group members, the event organisers, and the local government representatives interested in using the potential of the re-enactment movement.

The research also used the unique and rarely used method, mainly because of its potentially 'unobjective' dimension, of field ethnographic research involving a survey of the 'emotional effects' and 'impressions' which cultural events generate in their participants 'live on the spot'. The researchers conducted a 'quality measurement' of the events on the basis of the participants' impressions, confronting these impressions with their own, written down in the operational notes. The main component of the research was a short interview with purposively selected participants (questioning) during or after the end of the event. Such a survey resembles the classic reporter's method. Simple questions were also asked 'on the spot' to people 'caught in the act' of participating in the event during or just after the end of the re-enactment events. The aim was to 1) determine whether they liked the event and why, and 2) to compare the participants' statements with the researchers' own impressions recorded in their operational notes.

Re-enactment activities are primarily designed to be watched. For this particular reason, the basic research methods used in the project included visual research carried out by trained researchers who witnessed the activities of selected re-enactment groups by assuming various roles: those of the viewers, of the inquisitive observers of the 'backstage' and 'behind the scenes' activities of the historical re-enactment events, and of people 'following' the very participants, accompanying them during preparations, interactions with the viewers. and integration events within the community of re-enactors. The basic form of documentation was photography completed by short films.

The main aim of the visual research was to generate the 'raw' data, to show—by means of photographs, the film from the 'field,' and the field notes—the course of various re-enactment events, the scale of the actors' engagement and activity, the quality and accuracy of the used outfits, weaponry, vehicles, accessories, the audience's interest, the interactions between the public and the re-enactment actors, the commercial environment of the re-enactment events, as well as the broader organisational and socio-cultural context of such events.

Taking into account the directive of the most complex sample possible, the decision was to study and analyse nine re-enactment events:

— XXXV Wielki Turniej Rycerski (The XXXV Great Knights' Tournament) in Golub-Dobrzyń (the Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodeship).
— Strefa Militarna (The Military Zone)—convent of re-enactment groups and historical military vehicles, in Podrzecze near Gostyń and Piaski (the Wielkopolskie voivodeship).
— III Zjazd Wojów Wczesnośredniowiecznych: Dźwięki Wojny, Rezerwat archeologiczny (The III Convent of Early-Medieval Warriors: Sounds of War, Archaeological Reserve) „Kaliski Gród Piastów" (The Kalish's Castle of Piasts) in Kalisz-Zawodzie (the Wielkopolskie voivodeship).
— Bitwa pod Grunwaldem (The Battle of Grunwald), in Grunwald (the Warmia-Mazuria voivodeship).
— Wielki Teatr Historii — Malbork — Zwycięstwo historii (The Great Theatre of History—Malbork—The Victory of History), in Malbork (the Pomeranian voivodeship).

— Walkiria 2011 (Valkyria 2011), in Kętrzyn and Gierłoż (the Warmia-Mazuria voivodeship).
— II Zlot Grup Rekonstrukcji Historycznych Odyseja Historyczna. Epizod II (The 2nd Convent of Historical Reenactment Groups Historical Odyssey Episode II), Park in Leszczynek near Kutno (the Łódż voivodeship).
— Festiwal Słowian i Wikingów 2011 (The Slavs and Vikings Festival 2011), in Wolin (the West-Pomeranian voivodeship).
— Fotograficzna gra miejska Klisza 1944 (The Photographic City Game 'Film' 1944), in Warszawa (the Mazovian voivodeship).

In all, during the events, 14 researchers spent 27 days in the field, conducting 77 in-depth interviews with re-enactors and event organisers and 103 on-site interviews with the spectators and taking 84 ethnographic notes. In the visual part, the project document base contained approximately 15,000 photographs and several tens of video recordings. Additionally, from 2013–2016, several field observations and in-depth interviews with influential re-enactors were conducted to verify the original findings and investigate the development of Polish re-enactment groups.

Hobbyist Re-enactors Versus Commercial Re-enactors

The re-enactors' motivations are complex and multiple: fascination with history and military, willingness to escape the routine and dullness of everyday life, respect for the spirit of patriotism and love for cultural heritage (sometimes a local one), building new relations and enriching the social capital, pursuit of extreme experiences, showing-off and 'promoting' oneself, and pursuing an economic motive. The motivations are not separate; it often happens that a re-enactor mentions several motivations for joining the group (cf. Szlendak *et al.* 2012: 13–22).

One of the theoreticians and researchers of new social movements, Alberto Melucci, presented an interesting point of view indicating that an essential element in characterizing some new collective actors is the orientation towards 'regressive utopia' which is sometimes strongly tinged with the axiological component (Melucci 1980: 221–222). Such transgressions are partial and temporary, but in the case of the historical re-enactment group movement, even fragmentary and temporal experiences seem to give a holistic sense to the undertakings of the people involved in them: they become the most important part of their lives, also the everyday ones. The contemporary mega-market of the culture of consumption has introduced the possibility of immersing in the selected historical era to a degree which enables one to build one's 'alternative' identity. Being active in the re-enactment movement is not only immersion in the heritage or committing oneself fully to history or entertainment as an escape from the present moment, which for certain reasons is painful or boring. Such an interpretation, frequent among the educated who come across warriors, Vikings, or Wehrmacht soldiers walking down the streets of today's towns, is only partially true. It would be more accurate to say that the restoration of the past is a way to immerse in culture 'in general' and a lifestyle which successfully and creatively connects what seems to belong to the past with what is absolutely new. It is a way of participating in today's culture, in the culture which is definitely alive. This is not only a living culture but also a regressive utopia in action.

A historical re-enactment event is different from another historical re-enactment event in that the commercial culture of the festival is interwoven with the idealistic pursuit of historical faithfulness and authenticity. The differences primarily pertain to the role assigned to the very historical re-enactment and the attention to authenticity. The market forces revealed in the consumption culture attempt to appropriate almost all resources. History is becoming both their livelihood and their victim, sharing this fate with many other spheres of life and the world of values: the same happens to art, science, education, and even religion (Ritzer 1999).

The most general division of historical re-enactment groups is the division into hobbyist-re-enactors, i.e. the orthodox ones aiming at 'autotelic' objectives, and commercial re-enactors driven by material profits. The former group is primarily composed of enthusiasts, people for whom the potential financial profits are a side effect (an extra bonus) of their activity oriented, most of all, at preserving tradition and personal role models, teaching respect and discipline, and caring about the transfer of historical knowledge (Mynarski, Królikowska, & Graczykowska 2010; Kalshoven 2015). The latter group undertakes commercial activities and is mostly interested in remuneration and organising an attractive event.

A good example of such a division is the different treatment of the 'camp' or 'village' by the re-enactors during re-enactment events. The orthodox re-enactors build their common camp of village and often function in them 24 h a day; these premises are not closed for visitors at a particular time, which may loosen the re-enactment standards. Such a continuous common experience which strengthens the inner integration of a group also promotes the phenomenon referred to as a bridging discourse, i.e. active adjusting to the group's norms and, at the same time, co-constructing them (cf. Decker 2010). During re-enactment events, some participants try to live as though they were actually transferred from a different time. Even if they use some modern things, they are really concerned about hiding everything that is contemporary or unsuitable for the reality of the times away from the camera and the visitors.

In the commercial re-enactors' version, the camp is inhabited by them only during the hours when the visitors come, 'at a spare moment'; they usually have no time or intention to integrate with other re-enactors. Their priority is to 'tick off' as many events as possible and to make as much money as they can—or at least this is the picture noticeable in the opinions of some hobbyist re-enactors, who have been interviewed and do not perceive this as a big problem, but consider it an inevitable phenomenon resulting from general commercialisation and the huge financial requirements of this hobby from the participants.

The orthodox re-enactors are very concerned about different details: they not only use artefacts and outfits from the old times, but they also, obviously, wear appropriate glasses, and get tattooed if necessary; even their beards and haircuts must be suited to particular times. It seems that caring about the level of re-enactment does not exclude entertainment and commercial aims; however, a negative relation has emerged. This is the reason why some re-enactors are against connecting re-enactment events with festivals in which the dominant orientation is towards amusement and entertainment. Hence, there is a negative attitude to ‘commercial knights’ (the orthodox ones refer to such re-enactors as ‘pretenders’ or ‘knighties’) who, most of all, ‘make money’; these knights are criticised for their lack of historical faithfulness, for the poor quality of their equipment and outfits, and for making up ‘coloured up’ stories. In a group where its members value re-enactment and historical accuracy the most, the aspects of primary importance are passion and satisfaction, transmission of historical knowledge, and dissemination of culture irrespective of the costs—the most essential aspect is the historical re-enactment itself. Spectacularity or providing entertainment loses its priority status. Making money from one’s passion is perceived rather negatively, and such an activity is treated as a necessary evil at most.

Pot boiling and kitsch have their own, quite a prominent position on the map of re-enactment events, but they are not the biggest threat to the idea of historical accuracy. Plastic shields, colourful outfits, and different unsuitable historical elements may be easily noticed, and, paradoxically, the fact that they exist becomes a point of reference owing to which we can appreciate the hobbyist re-enactors’ effort. The re-enactors perform in the convenient context of a lack of re-enactment quality control (apart from, naturally, other re-enactors whose opinions may always be devalued as the opinions of competition, though). At best, the spectators make references to the pictures of the historical period that they remember from films, and not to expert opinions. In fact, nobody but historians—specialists in the material culture of particular periods—is authorised here to be objective, and in many cases, it is difficult even for historians to definitely ‘approve of’ a re-enactment attempt as accurate or reject one as inauthentic, as there are insufficient historical sources. Both historians and re-enactors invoke various historical testimonies, accounts, chronicles, and reports which are an interpretation of historical facts and not actual historical events. However, the constructivist nature of history is not surprising for the orthodox re-enactors: in most cases, they can substantiate their choices without appealing to axioms. However, for the ‘knighties’ and the viewers, a historically improper mace in the warrior’s hands is not at all a problem. It is much worse when the mace is not sufficiently attractive and inconspicuous; then, one can forget about spectacularity and commercial success.

Commercialisation of Historical Re-enactment

Let us now look at the influence of the commercialisation and the orientation towards spectacularity on historical accuracy. Consider the example of the re-enactment of the Battle of Grunwald, one of the largest and oldest historical re-enactment events in Poland. The style of this event is a historical-commercial hodgepodge. Most of all, the presence of the sponsor brands is visible everywhere (Kompania Piwowarska [a Polish brewing company] and its brand—Tyskie, and Coca Cola). The omnipresent, several-meters-long flags of sponsors make the entire event rather festival-like and absurd. Sponsors are obviously visible during all re-enactment events. In the case of drink/food producers, their products are also provided, and in the case of companies from other industries (banks, hotels, etc.), in form of banners, posters, and advertisements in the event brochure. The receipts from sponsors are an important source of financing for re-enactment events, similar to the funds from the local authorities.

In Grunwald, because of the accumulation and the gigantic sizes of advertisements, the viewers might get the impression that the entire event was just an addition to the commercial messages that dominated the space and that they were bombarded by the attendants by means of various media and from all sides. The stands of patrons, sponsors, and institutions were located around the central square where the monument is placed. Among them, there were for example Gazeta Olsztyńska (Olsztyn's Daily), the Polish Radio, the Ostródzki Poviat, and the Polish Army. The Polish Army was very visible (among other things because of the military vehicles). At the stand, they presented promotion and information materials (leaflets, brochures, and booklets) for the candidates to the National Reserve Forces who would be interested in professional military service. Along the wide avenue leading to the scene of the performance, there were booths and stalls. The researchers in field observed that the entire trading 'network' consisted of several hundred small stalls with various, more or less, country-fair products. The most popular were accessories which formed the 'toolbox' of a small knight: wooden swords, shields, Teutonic knights' coats, helmets, and soft clubs. At the stalls, there were also elements of football fan equipment (white and red caps, scarves, and T-shirts, as the battle could be watched like a match, supporting 'ours'), works made of wicker, handicrafts (for example, jewellery made of glass or with precious stones), garden plaster mini-figures (snails, geese, and other domestic animals), as well as various souvenirs with no particular use. In several places, there were large food zones with stands from which one could buy grilled food, chips, dumplings, bread with lard, knuckles, oscypki (smoked cheese made from salted sheep milk), obwarzanki (small ring-shaped buns) and other examples of traditional Polish food, colourful lollipops, jellies sold in meters, and obviously, the Tyskie beer.

In a separate zone, opposite to this one, there were camps of re-enactors–participants (according to the estimates, 4,000 participants, more than a thousand of whom took part in the battle). Next to the campsite, there was another commercial zone (also accessible to the spectators) which had the form of a medieval fair. There were stalls with 'old times' goods where one could buy elements of armoury (for example, handmade bows), linen underwear and clothing, accessories (leather sacs, jewellery, and headgear), and herbs. Also, among others, a woodcarver, a blacksmith, and a saddler had their stands there. All the merchants and craftspeople wore historic clothing, although full outfits were worn only rarely, and apart from this, these costumes gave the impression of the instrumental preying on stereotypes (a merchant dressed as a monk at the stall with liqueurs, etc.). In one of the avenues, there was a man in a medieval outfit with a big wooden box in front of him which contained an even larger live python. Those more courageous could have a photograph taken with the python for an affordable charge of PLN 5 (about 1 euro). The less courageous had the chance to be photographed with a falcon and its owner.

Therefore, as one can observe during re-enactment events, even those managed by reenactors with passion, the entertainment and commercial values of the event dominate all the other aspects. Irrespective of the views of the spectators and the re-enactors themselves, re-enactment practices must be accepted with the benefit of inventory, which results from the fact that historical re-enactment groups' events are surrounded by a complex of accompanying events which are connected to the event theme to a smaller or no degree. In this case, we observed that both the new models of cultural participation, namely the multi-sensory culture of the event and the escape into alternative cultural sub-worlds, were not altogether antagonistic; strong connections were observed between them (transfers of people, capital, and ideas) at various levels. A considerable part of the activity by the devotees of historical re-enactment occurs as an activity in an appropriate cultural sub-world where the participants meet similar enthusiasts on an everyday basis, exchange knowledge, discuss, or organise, but in the season of big open-air events, they come with their offer to the outside world, with their shows adding to the attractiveness of both the events which are thematically aimed at the re-enactment activity and the other events. This allows them to, among other things, commercially change the direction of their previously 'quiet' work, and the profits from this activity are in most part invested to develop their passions (Szlendak & Olechnicki 2017: 29).

The activity of re-enactment groups seems to experience a threat, which may be identified as the immanent though apparently insignificant conflict between re-enactment faithfulness, which to a large extent, has contributed to the success of such initiatives, and the needs of the contemporary cultural industry (i.e. the entertainment industry), oriented towards ludic values, evoking strong impressions and emotions and intensifying the stimuli attacking the audience's imagination to the maximum, to put it briefly, towards a show. The objectives of the re-enactors and the entertainment industry are concurrent to a limited extent; however, at a certain moment, the commercial objectives begin to dominate and the autotelic ideas of the culture in action are reduced to money-making.

The described conflict is inevitable, because everyone (including the participants of these activities themselves) wants to make some money or get a profit, not necessarily in the economic sense (it could be political profit as well), from the activity of the re-enactment groups. For political decision-makers in Poland, the participation in organising various entertainment events, festivals, open-air concerts, etc. has become the basic means of communicating with the voter base, the opportunity to present oneself as a politician open to people and their needs, a local administrator who is willing to spend money on the games. Historical re-enactment groups make intensive use of all the advantages that they can achieve by referring to the positively associated interest in history. Their activity is promoted and supported by cultural institutions and the local and central governments because of the assumption that learning history through historical re-enactment, through 'living history,' is simply the better and more effective way of achieving educational, upbringing, and patriotic aims. This ideology of re-enactment is less important for economic entities and businesses, which achieve their primary aims by engaging in re-enactment events. Historical re-enactment groups are used as a form of advertising for building a company's image, etc.

Variety of Educational Effects

One of the main objectives of investigations into re-enactment groups has been the assessment of their educational potential, the questions about which, obviously, have often been asked in the studies on historical re-enactment (e.g. Goodacre & Baldwin 2002). The assumption underlying the evaluation profiled in such a manner has naturally resulted from the conviction that history ‘provided in a lively manner and live,’ without the stiffness typical of schools or the academic ostentation, not boring, will be better acquirable by students and the fundamentals of historical knowledge will be instilled more effectively with the help of a re-enactor presenting the history ‘by means of himself.’ It is easier to learn something by touching it oneself, not indirectly from books which today’s junior high school and high school students want to read and trust to a lesser and lesser degree. The academic- and school-style teaching is ‘dry’; it does not allow for feeling the old times’ techniques, life, flavours, and tastes oneself. Without this multi-sense gunfire of information, it is impossible today to teach history to people accustomed to attacks on all of their senses in cultural areas out of school. It can be assumed that students (or more broadly, young people) acquire historical knowledge more effectively when they can try on armour, mould a pot, cut the air with a sword, or shoot a single-shot firearm.

The analysis of the research material does not allow for drawing any firm conclusions on whether the activities by historical re-enactment groups are actually executing educational and upbringing aims, but it provides certain evidence and indications. Looking at the photographs and watching the films from the events, we can infer that their role is that of entertainment and amusement and, at times, of an adventure for both the participants (re-enactors) and the spectators (the entertaining role as a defining one for re-enactment was elaborated upon by Agnew (2004)). The living history in these groups’ activities must primarily be a good show. The requirements connected with spectacularity usually outweigh the requirements of historical truth and authenticity, even if, from the point of view of the activities of particular participants, there is no agreement with respect to halfway measures, conventionality, and lack of authenticity. From the spectators’ perspective, faithfulness to historical role models is not an important value, for example because of the fact that during most re-enactments, because of the distance, it is impossible to distinguish between the seemingly professionally manufactured products. Even if it is possible to have a closer look at these artefacts, for example while looking at dioramas (‘live’ paintings or layouts presenting for example a single air defence action station or a control station in a fortification system), there are few people who possess the appropriate competence necessary to evaluate their historical accuracy. For the spectators, organisers, and sponsors, it is spectacularity and entertainment that matter. Here, history becomes amusement, a virtual reality computer game. In fact, there is no use of asking questions about the educational and aesthetic values of the material culture re-enacted or collected by the historical re-enactment groups, as the only thing that counts for the viewers is the attractiveness of the show. The issue of kitsch and authenticity is highly significant for some of the re-enactors, but it fails to influence the reception of the shows. Attractive history is history being made up, history with ‘a boost’ in the form of a redundant message, a mixture of eras and styles, open to everything which attracts the client and fills up the organisers’ pockets.

It is typical of the re-enactment events to ‘tune up’ and ‘push’ the spectacularity ‘to the maximum.’ It is not enough for the audience to see a real historical tank. It is only when the tank shows its power to destroy in practice, for example crashing a car (as part of a tank crash show), that the spectators will be fully satisfied. In a Hollywood production, a plane crashing because of a lack of fuel explodes as if it were stuffed with TNT. Similar things happen during re-enactment events which are subject to a similar rule of increasing the artificial density and intensifying attractions even against logic (historical or otherwise) and against good intentions and righteousness of the message which could have underlain the organisation of a particular performance.

In the interviews, the re-enactors themselves presented two mutually incompatible opinions on the educational effectiveness of their activities. When asked directly, they claimed that by playing knights or soldiers, they teach something, but in contrast, a few sentences later, they are convinced that the recipients, particularly young people, during the shows only amuse themselves and that their performance does not have any serious educational effects. When the researchers pointed out the inconsistency of the re-enactors, the re-enactors maintained that their performances indeed have an educational effect but on 'special' individuals who are predisposed to the re-enactment, on individuals interested in history or archaeology, and on the young people fascinated with the past. During the re-enactment events, many people get interested in history but, at the same time, get 'infected' with the re-enactment. According to many interviewed re-enactors, it is difficult to get interested in history when somebody is not reading, and then, a lesson conducted by a re-enactment group is necessary. Some re-enactors are certain that they engage not in a 'serious' educational process, but in edutainment, particularly emotional and sentimental pop-education. A young person, they believe, will never look into a book—it is obvious that 300 pages full of text are scary—and here, they can see tanks and knights live and can make some pots and shoot using old weapons. Therefore, re-enactment is the promotion of historical knowledge without a forced readership. The older the re-enactors are, the fewer are the illusions they have with respect to the young recipients' unwillingness to read. According to one of the members of the Polish Military Science Foundation (Fundacja Wojskowości Polskiej), such pop-education unfortunately is a 'picture history for illiterates.' While talking to the re-enactors, one may get the impression that they aim at encouraging the recipients to classic education, i.e. get in touch with the written word, by means of sentimental pop-education. The direct contact with the re-enactment group, the equipment, the uniforms, and the re-enacted battle is a stimulus for developing further interest. The question here is that, as the older re-enactors vividly describe it, there must be 'a boom, blast, and smoke' and then, possibly, something will start.

One ought to bear in mind that the audience of such events is not homogenous (hence, the expectation that their reactions are going to be alike is not realistic). One of the re-enactors characterised the recipients of his performances as follows: *They are different people. Often quite accidental. Like it is here now. They are mainly tourists who are here totally by accident. They have noticed that something is going on: people in uniforms are running around—they have come to see it out of curiosity. Or they are people who are—so to speak—connoisseurs of this type of events. They are interested, they monitor the calendar to know when such events take place. They try to travel to watch them if they can. For real, this is a very broad spectrum of recipients. I think that men are more interested in this type of activity. Personally, when I look at the spectators who watch us I notice women, men as well as entire families. Small children. The elderly who have witnessed this history. They could personally touch it. Hence, the spectrum of recipients is immense*. Based on ethnographic observation, a typology of the re-enactment event recipients may be constructed. In general, among the recipients, there are the following: 1) accidental tourists, 2) connoisseurs and not accidental tourists (they follow one event after another fascinated by the topic; their number is increasing), 3) entire nuclear families with small children, 4) male half-re-enactors (who, for example, have a son who is a squire or a page-boy in a knight brotherhood and travel together to re-enact), 5) uninterested women who are there 'though they wish they weren't' and look after their children, 6) local journalists who lack topics to write about or take photographs of during the summer holidays, 7) post-battle searchers (a type of recipient who after the battle enters the field to pick up the remaining things, for example bullet shells 'to bring luck,' 8) people at the edge of retirement who manifest nostalgia for what they did not experience, 9) young men, often drunk, showing their torsos and showing off in front of the 'screeching' girls who accompany them), and 10) members of fan communities, a type of 'fan' following his/her brotherhood from one event to another.

Syncretism, 'Dirty History,' and Re-enactment Gnosis

In order to cover its entertainment and commercial 'face,' historical re-enactment uses a fig leaf in the form of references to 'history.' However, historical re-enactment is history with humour, presented without any stress, in the form of cultural pap which does not demand any serious reflection, and is aimed at the widest possible circle of recipients. Obviously, the spectacularity does not have to mean simplification and vulgarisation of the subject matter. However, spectacularity and orientation towards the masses mean the necessity to obtain relatively easy reception, references to visual clichés and stereotypes, exaggerations, and giving colour to things. In fact, historical re-enactment is not limited to a particular age or topic, as the rule of spectacularity is welcomed by many types of historical combinations, or a historical mix: the early Slavs and Vikings, Romans and Celts, samurais, Roman legionaries, trappers, Slavic warriors, Teutonic Knights, heavy-armour knights, colourful musketeers, and all types of armies of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, all of them can meet at the same time and in the same place. This is a real mishmash, a historical mixture of everything, and with respect to the educational quality, a mixture that is rather unpredictable and possibly dangerous. After such a show, we wonder what remains in the memories of the spectators, particularly children. This unintentional historical re-enactment syncretism has an obvious entertainment quality, which in this case, however, may also be quite confusing for the unprepared recipients, particularly in the context of the participants' educational authority coming from their declared faithfulness to historical truth.

Interestingly, it happens that during the performances or events, the re-enactors are approached by historians hiding among the audience and tell the history of the places they currently reside in. In contrast, the re-enactors tell the same stories to other, less-educated viewers. Moreover, they are very ashamed if when asked by the audience, they fail to know something about this piece of history. The re-enactors are also approached by teachers of history who often feel embarrassed but not because of a lack of knowledge or knowledge which is shallower than the re-enactors.' The point to note is that the historical knowledge that the re-enactors 'sell' is politically incorrect, and at the same time, highly interesting, as it pertains to the 'dirty everyday life' which is not discussed during history classes at school. West argued that creating living history shows gives the re-enactors a type of affective authority in interpreting history, which is often inconsistent with the commonly accepted findings (West 2014; Agnew 2007). Such history in the re-enactment version does not consist of dates and names of the subsequent kings, but of the 'fleshy' mythological trivia, historical gossip, and stories filled with scandal, violence, and blood. Therefore, if history were taught in the way that the re-enactors speak about it during the performances, it is not an educational alternative to the form and practice of historical transmission at school. Admittedly, it has to be stated that history in the re-enactment version also contains some positive elements which the school transmissions in Poland clearly lack: micro-stories, elements of extended social history, and details of the past everyday life which enable people to understand it.

The passion for 'scandalous historical detail' typical of the re-enactors leads to the situation that their knowledge is frequently highly specialist, very in-depth, demanding weeks, months, or even years of appropriate individually undertaken studies. It is in fact a type of gnosis for people from outside the movement, and, in particular, it is revealed using the hermetic 'slang,' a mixture of strict scientific terminology with the socio-dialect of re-enactment used within particular re-enactment interest fields. This is illustrated by an anecdote about scientific competition among the members of the movement told by one of the 'Vikings': *Once we had this initiative of The Circle of Knowledge. It was a competition organized yearly in which the organizer found ten very difficult questions. They were really extremely detailed. I remember that for example one of them referred to the punishment which was effective in Gotland if a man touched a woman—another man's wife—on her elbow.[…] It was included in one of the codes of legal procedures—of Gotland, since they had this codification, it was possible to be found, but the questions were really hard and often obtaining the answers to the ten questions took about two weeks. However, in the meantime, somebody has looked through a couple of books or at least a couple of articles and learnt something*.

Does the Audience Learn Anything?

The historical knowledge of people taking part in commercial re-enactment events is not particularly deep, as revealed by observations and interviews with the spectators conducted in the field. Thus, can the audience, or at least part of it, actually learn anything from the re-enactment events? First of all, re-enactment groups inspire only those young people whose imagination has already been stirred up, and not by history lessons at school but by computer games and films, to acquire historical knowledge. The fascination with re-enactment groups and events is not connected with the historical message received during formal education, but with individual media education. This is the reason why re-enactors believe that the audience's knowledge of the past times is 'Hollywood knowledge' and that it is their task to 'correct' this knowledge during the re-enactment shows. They are only mere entertainment, treated as such by the participants. They are something like a 3D technology film with fighting and juggling acts in three dimensions, to be enjoyed while drinking beer. Most of all, a majority of the spectators only watch the re-enactors, as visitors to the zoo watch the animals. Just like the visitors do not learn anything about the zoo animals by watching them from behind the fence, the spectators do not learn anything about the ancient Slavs by vacantly staring at the re-enactors' performing in the camps. Here is an excerpt from a researcher's notes: *Answering the question on whether the spectators can learn anything here, [the reenactors] said that if somebody asks then they will learn something, but walking around and watching is only 'pictures,' so if somebody is not willing to get any information, they won't learn anything*. Certainly, the audience benefits considerably if the event scripts involve professional narration.

Re-enactors have a higher estimate of the educational effectiveness of the undertakings which involve the participation of an announcer vividly and skilfully narrating the historical details of the watched show. One of the re-enactors, when asked about which form of acquiring knowledge by young people is better—books, the Internet, or re-enactment—replied as follows: *the reenactment is only supposed to be a support. If the youth viewed our reenactment as the basis, they would in a sense get a somehow distorted picture, you know, as the people here who take part in the performance, they get up after it, get into their cars and go home. This is the reason why the announcer is so important in the show; somebody who informs about what is happening during the performance; they are the ones who talk about the context, and we are those who are supposed to help. Then, for sure it is easier to get interested in something*.

Very often, this type of pop-education is used by schools which invite historical re-enactment groups for special occasions, for example Children's Day. Schools also make many reservations for lessons conducted by re-enactors, or—even more interestingly—teachers attend courses conducted by re-enactors to learn how to teach the old techniques. The only problem that schools present involves the fact that they do not pay the re-enactors and many attractive educational activities are conducted informally. However, the materials and resources used in the lessons, for example clay, are expensive. Furthermore, re-enactors going to schools often decide not to claim remuneration as authors, but they cannot cover the costs of materials to activate children from their own financial resources. Schools and local authorities maintaining them should take this into account while planning their annual budgets. The level of many re-enactment groups is so high that the curricula could risk the introduction of sentimental education through the activities of re-enactment groups, but on the condition that the common 'announcer's' layer of re-enactment lessons be established.

Pop-education by means of the Internet is effective, at least in the plan for recruitment to historical re-enactment groups. The Internet is the basic channel of distribution of all knowledge on re-enactment. Without the YouTube channel, there would not exist any re-enactment group. This is the tool that the re-enactors should be grateful to for popularising this phenomenon and for the year-on-year increase in recruitment. An average video with the recorded re-enacted *bohurts* (realistic fights between re-enactors) has several thousand viewers, and the most popular films of this kind reach several hundred thousand views.

The re-enactors have observed that because of the uncontrolled proliferation of re-enactment events, often of poor historical quality, there has been a considerable decrease in the confidence of the re-enactors as a source of knowledge of history. As one of the leaders of the Walhalla Brotherhood said, "*This is visible when we visit schools to offer giving some lessons. It is paid, as we go to Toruń, to Bydgoszcz with these lessons, even for petrol. The teachers must collect PLN 1.5, PLN 2 per student, which is absolutely not a problem.*

But the thing is that you have to convince the head teacher or the culture teacher that it's worth. As these people see poor level events and view them more like a fun fair attraction than a history lesson, they don't trust us that we can teach something really valuable." It may be claimed that the re-enactment movement has been a victim of its own success: the larger the number of re-enactment events at every opportunity, the lesser is the confidence, because the share of the 'non-historical' or quasi-historical re-enactment increases (cheap money crowds out good money).

All these aspects contribute to the fact that the events which were supposed to be aimed at historical re-enactment have lost their original sense and character. Instead, we get to a supermarket of history where everything has been mixed and put on the same shelf. The events that could and should be a lesson of history have become the background for having another glass of beer, some grilled sausages, and popcorn in open-air surroundings. The pursuit of historical accuracy and any type of educational value is overridden by commercialisation in its cheapest, most popular version and the pursuit to maximise spectacularity.

It can be inferred from an analysis of the spectators' statements that a historical re-enactment, most of all, constitutes a form of entertainment and a way of spending leisure time, which fits into the pattern of a multi-sensory cultural event, and its function as a form of education and source of knowledge is very limited. The audience learns very little, treats historical authenticity without much regard, and devours close combat, raiding tanks, cavalry charge, and loud explosions. One of the spectators when asked what he learnt from the re-enactment of the Battle of Grunwald replied that he managed to memorise the date on which it took place (in Poland, knowledge of this date is perceived as elementary school information), and the other spectators expressed their dissatisfaction that the battle ends every year in the same way and that it would be more fun if at least one time Teutonic Knights would prevail! (Olechnicki, Szlendak, & Karwacki 2016: 77–78).

The situation of staging evokes strong emotions in both the spectators and the re-enactors. Historical performances are as realistic as theatrical staging or a film set—we do know that everything is happening is not for real, but the emotions generated by the situation acted out are often authentic. One may and has to ask about the purpose of acting out such events which in accordance with historical truth are difficult to consider to be anything but dreadful and cruel (it is not accidental that a considerable majority of historical re-enactments are references to battle scenes). The question here is whether the educational sensitisation, or rather the neutralisation of the real sense of war and fighting, desensitisation, playing war while dressing up and using historical weapons, is most of all a form of exciting entertainment, relaxation, or hobby? Maybe an extreme one, but is it still a hobby? One may argue that the performances are supposed to explicitly highlight the evil and cruelty of war; however, if one observes the behaviours of the participants and the spectators, this is not the case. Nobody suffers, nobody is sad, and there is no reflection or sensitisation; on the contrary, everybody is having great fun. The resemblance between the performances and computer games (though more perfect ones) is striking. 'The wounded' and 'the killed' soon get up and go for lunch. History becomes a pretext for the organisation of an anti-historical show, as, despite the attention to detail and the accuracy of the re-enactment, the most important aspects of history are not re-enacted, and the seriousness and the tragedy of war are overlooked.

Conclusions

Our study has indicated that historical re-enactment has most of all a strong self-educational and self-animation dimension. Re-enactment is a type of cultural self-animation; it inspires the re-enactors themselves to take action in the field of culture. Arkadiusz Karwacki is convinced that the re-enactment groups play an important role in educating their members, particularly the younger ones. Certainly, there is a differentiation of the axio-normative orders which reflexes the norms and values important for a particular historical entity, but most groups have a defined code of behaviour. There is also a differentiation in the level of regulation and social control within a group, and in general, members are expected to show consistency between the characteristics of a played role and their everyday behaviour. However, even if they often fail to do so, one cannot be an ‘unbuttoned’ knight and expect that such deviance will be forgiven (Olechnicki, Szlendak, & Karwacki 2016: 187–188). The re-enactors encourage one another, in a very effective manner, to organise cultural undertakings and learn a lot by doing so. Their knowledge of historical facts is frequently comparable to that of professional academic historians or archaeologists. However, their vast knowledge and animated enthusiasm fail to translate into cultural animation and historical knowledge of the spectators watching them act in re-enactment events. Historical education based on re-enactment is a failure, as re-enacting during events attended by spectators is a multi-sensory performance (cf. Schneider 2011), typical of all commercial or semi-commercial events, which involves the festivisation of the structure and form of the message.

While analysing the collected research material, we found that the antinomy of historicity and spectacularity, possibly still not noticed or perhaps unwillingly noticed by re-enactment enthusiasts, was returning like a boomerang. ‘Turning up’ the entertaining nature of the event, which is largely a necessity as the spectators get used to the stimuli and still demand something more, must lead to a conflict with historical values. Historical re-enactment has already lost its novelty value, and even though, there is probably no effect of surfeit yet, we are approaching this moment fast, and then, the choice between historicity and spectacularity will become even more difficult. We do not intend to argue that a well-re-enacted event cannot be involving and attractive in itself, as it obviously can; however, the requirements of multi-sensory pop-culture events will always promote values other than those which the most engaged re-enactors are concerned about. The actors in the show use such means of expression which enable them to reach the average spectator—it is not their fault that ‘there was a boom, there was a bang’ is an attractor which might involve the spectators more deeply. The open-air mass show is not a place for subtlety, for exposing the details or presenting the viewers with a broader historical context. The announcers who could complete this task adjust themselves to the rules of the game and try to entertain the spectators at all costs too, and if they dare to offer a more serious narration, they are often rewarded with whistling and rude comments. Still, the spectators mostly remain intellectually passive, which makes any educational effect momentary and superficial.

To some extent, it is comforting that the re-enactors have a relatively high awareness of the constructivist nature of history, which means that members of the re-enactment movement fully realise the importance of individual or group interpretations for the assessment of historical events and they are perfectly aware of the subjectivity of historical dress accuracy or the elements of 'historical' behaviour. This awareness is also important in understanding the re-enactors' resilience with respect to historical policy and their relatively slight engagement into politicians' attempts to influence the changes in the collective memory of the Poles even if their activity seems to be an ideal tool for such an undertaking. The high awareness of the constructivist nature of history arguably derives from the fact that the re-enactors come from the educated middle class, and as they read a lot, they are aware of the interpretation differences among the authors of historical or archaeological works. In their activities, it is common to deal with a plurality of interpretations and points of view, being different on the same topic, for example the shape of a tunic. Therefore, although they wish to be as accurate as possible with respect to the 'historical truth,' they are perfectly aware that this 'truth' is socially constructed, produced here and now, and is reached strenuously by activating imagination and developing it out of the numerous opinions of the many participants of the debate. Perhaps, one of the stimuli for such considerations is the numerous controversies and discussions which have arisen in the recent years around some performances referring to the events of the XX century history of Poland (massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia or decommissioning of the Będzin ghetto), as alive historical memory finds it harder to accept the use of human tragedies as a breeding ground for a festival performance, even if its banners contain the term 'living history'.

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The Impact of the Refugee Crisis on Polish Perception of the European Union

Abstract: This paper investigates the effects of the migration crisis of 2015 on Polish attitudes to the European Union. Superficially, there seems to have been no significant impact: even though the migration crisis resulted in hitherto unprecedented tensions between Poland and the EU, as well as a robust anti-immigrant turn in Polish public opinion, this crisis had little or no effect on the standard survey gauges of EU favorability in Poland. However, based on a comparison between the results of pre- and post-crisis Eurobarometer surveys (EB82.3 and EB87.3), our analysis demonstrates that while the overall perception of the EU became only slightly less favorable between 2014 and 2017, a substantial shift in the structure of public opinion did occur. Concerns over immigration were not associated with perception of the EU before the crisis but became dominant predictors after 2015.

Keywords: migration crisis, EU perception, Poland, Eurobarometer, Structural Equation Modelling, GLM Univariate ANCOVA

Introduction

The major migration crisis that Europe faced in the summer of 2015 presented a sudden, strong, and largely unprecedented challenge to the hitherto reliably positive Polish perception of the European Union. In spite of periodic political turbulences, the preceding (first) decade of Poland's EU membership had proven relatively uneventful from the standpoint of domestic public opinion, even though the times were actually highly challenging for European integration (Habermas 2012; Touraine 2014), as well as for the European socio-economic model (Baranowski 2017; Götz 2012). Some controversies arose over the rights, duties, and desired influence of Poland as a member state during the debates about the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (Wilga 2008; Wyrozumska 2007), and with respect to the status of Poles as European citizens, for instance, with respect to Polish minority rights in Germany (Czachur 2010). Nevertheless, no large-scale or long-lasting crisis had emerged that could have brought the European project into any serious public doubt in Poland (Czachór 2017: 15–17). The migration crisis of 2015 interrupted this long-lasting pattern. Reacting to the fall-out of the attempts to relieve migrant concentrations on the so-called Balkan-route in the summer of 2015, the EU instituted a mandatory relocation scheme that obligated each EU country to receive a set number of refugees. Given the visibly strong anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment prevalent in Polish society, this EU pressure to accept refugees was received poorly by the Polish government and the Polish public alike, and was perceived as a threat to Polish national interests and values. It turned Polish public opinion against the EU on migration questions.

Domestically, the immigration issue would not only feature prominently among key public concerns but opposition to EU-mandated policies also became one of the winning arguments underpinning the ascendance in 2015 of the right wing of the Polish political scene. This produced an immediate crisis at the systemic level of foreign and European policy: following the elections of October 2015, the new Polish government, led by the right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS), chose to take a deliberate stand against the EU and refused to acknowledge some of its binding policy prescriptions (Szczerbiak 2017). However, the crisis also had a clear social dimension, as the government's strong opposition to the EU's immigration policy seemed to fall in line with the popular mood. Thus, public opinion surveys registered a sizeable anti-immigrant sentiment shift in Poland, despite the obvious fact that almost no immigrants involved in the summer-of-2015 crisis ever appeared on Polish soil. For instance, in the fall of 2014 (EB82.3), only 44% of Polish respondents declared their opposition to immigration from outside the EU (European Commission 2017b), while in the spring of 2017 (EB87.3) such an opinion was expressed by 68% of survey participants (European Commission 2017a).[1] Similar patterns could be observed in other tracking surveys, such as the main Polish public opinion omnibus run by Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS): when asked about accepting refugees from war-torn countries in Poland, the fraction declaring opposition jumped from 21% in May 2015 to 61% in April 2016 and has since plateaued well north of 50% (CBOS 2017). Therefore, the immigration crisis put Polish public sentiment in direct opposition to EU prescriptions on an issue that both sides associated with a strong moral concern (human rights versus national sovereignty) and considered a high policy priority (assisting versus resisting migrants).

On the other hand, while the Polish public came to adhere broadly with the right-wing government position on the question of managing immigration, yet the very same public remained overwhelmingly and staunchly pro-European. The cooperative-to-antagonistic switch of the Polish government's positioning vis-à-vis the EU did not seem to have much of an impact on the standard survey gauges of the Polish public's support for EU membership. For example, EB surveys consistently placed Poland well above the EU average on most if not all dimensions of membership satisfaction and attachment, and when it comes to the specific question asked by CBOS concerning support for Poland's EU membership, the fraction of pro-EU answers continued to remain well over 80% in the period 2014–2017. This continuing pro-yet-anti stance amounts to something of a paradox. In spite of immigration becoming an issue of high public concern and being strongly conceived of as an EU-driven rather than a domestic problem, and in spite of the public being broadly in support of the national government's quest to oppose EU prescriptions on the grounds of

[1] Eurobarometer surveys rely on nationally representative probabilistic samples. For the respective surveys effective sample sizes were reported as 82.3—N = 1033, 87.3—1042; EB does not officially report its Response Rates; in terms of sample size EB surveys are similar to the standards set by the Polish CBOS.

national interest and sovereignty, the main trend indicators of EU favorability did not budge at the aggregate level.

Such an apparent disconnect seems surprising, as it would amount to a situation whereby an EU-associated issue of major political concern had no discernible impact on the public perception of the EU. We show, however, that a close examination of survey results does, in fact, demonstrate a clear shift in the structure of public support for European integration in Poland. Specifically, a comparison of EB surveys conducted before and after the 2015 crisis demonstrates that attitudes toward immigration became a key factor impacting EU perception in Poland and that this ascension forced other previously significant factors into the background. Our analysis of EB survey data provides evidence that pre-crisis opinions on migration had little or no bearing on Polish attitudes toward the EU, while in the post-crisis set-up, they came to exert significant and dominant influence.

The Immigration Crisis: Poland in the Regional Context

What happened in Poland was, to some extent, a variant of regional political dynamics in the face of the migration crisis. The Polish response to the 2015 crisis proved broadly consistent with moods in the rest of Eastern Europe, which espoused a complete refusal to accept refugees, based on arguments involving not so much perceived economic threats as the supposed essential cultural incompatibility of the newcomers with the host societies, in conjunction with an alleged link between the influx of refugees and terrorism (Mach and Styczyńska 2016: 27–29). While the force with which those sentiments came to be expressed in the public sphere may have been somewhat surprising, the rough outlines of a migrant-sceptic outlook in Eastern Europe were arguably well entrenched before the 2015 crisis (Bail 2008). Opposition to Brussels-mandated solutions to the immigrant influx could also have stemmed from the change, which these policies signalled, in Poland's role or position in the European Community: all of a sudden, Brussels expected the still "new" member states of Central and Eastern Europe to act not as consumers but as providers of solidarity, leading to heated disagreements over the meaning and normative implications of the concept (Grosse and Hetnarowicz 2016). Thus, at least to some extent, the migration crisis seems to have changed the received view of the EU: shifting it from a panacea and source of incoming transfers, toward being a community that requires sacrifices. Historically, the EU membership requirements, such as establishing a well-functioning market economy and a liberal-democratic state, were beneficial for the post-communist countries applying for membership (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2003; Sadurski 2004). However, in accord with Easton's (1965: 272–74) distinction between specific and diffuse system support, it might be observed that the migration crisis produced a specific challenge to diffuse membership support in a way that aligned economic concerns over the costs of managing immigration with an ingrained apprehensiveness with respect to cultural others.

Although it is worth exploring to what extent the 2015 crisis precipitated, escalated, or perhaps merely revealed regional rifts and cleavages within the EU (Ágh 2016), there is actually something special about Poland when it comes to this particular crisis, even as—paradoxically—it pushed the country toward greater convergence with the Visegrád

Group in terms of attitudes to European integration. The Polish combination of high social support for EU membership with strong economic growth and political ascendancy after accession could be interpreted as output-oriented legitimacy, that is, holding the belief that the EU governs "for the people," (Scharpf 1999: 5–6) while leaving policy details well below the horizon of public interest and glossing over questions of input, transparency, and accountability (Schmidt 2013). The events of 2015, however, challenged preconceived Polish notions concerning the meaning of member-state status and its effects on at least three aspects of output-driven legitimacy: the belief that the EU is an unambiguously beneficial enterprise in which to participate, optimism concerning Poland's economic growth prospects within the EU, and trust in the EU's institutional capacity for reasonable policy-making.

Those three aspects are strongly associated with the Polish experience of EU membership. First, when it comes to the clearly favorable public profile of the EU, the overwhelming political-party consensus in favor of membership and the prevailing high levels of public support for the EU must be emphasized. While political dissension in the post-communist period constituted the norm, one exception to the rule was that the prevalent Polish attitude to Europe had long involved the conviction that Poland is an inherently European country (Mach 1997) and the notion that EU membership is a political necessity. Post-accession public satisfaction with the EU had also proven exceptionally high, not only in Poland, but also among the rest of the New Member States (Cichocki and Jabkowski 2009). Second, the first decade of Poland's EU membership was also a period of rapid yet sustained economic growth, despite the global Great Recession. According to World Bank data, Poland's per capita GDP (PPP) almost doubled in the decade after the first year of full membership, having increased from USD 13.9k in 2005 to USD 26.9k in 2015). EU membership was considered instrumental in bringing about this growth through access to cohesion funding, the common market, and the boost to Polish credibility (Kolodziejczyk 2016). Given this seemingly smooth growth under EU tutelage, the public approach to EU policies was characterized by positive indifference, combining diffuse support with low interest in specifics, which seemed roughly resonant of what had once been known as permissive consensus. Heretofore, the EU was seen as a broadly beneficial force in little need of active public engagement (Cichocki 2011), or to put it in the terms proposed by Beetham and Lord (2014: 8–11), the legitimacy enjoyed by the EU was by consent rather than actual popular authorization. Third, when it comes to trust in political institutions, Poland exhibited an extreme variant of the broader regional pattern whereby low trust in domestic institutions coexists with comparatively high trust in European institutions (Heinisch 2017; Primožič and Bavec 2014).

With regard to attitudes to immigration, some evidence suggests that Poland used to be more welcoming than the regional Central and East European average. Poland has historically been a migrant-sending country with little experience with immigration. Since the eighteenth century, sizable numbers of Poles have consistently been emigrating to Western countries, and the most recent massive wave of outmigration was associated with joining the EU (Matkowska 2014: 124–30). In this respect, post-accession Poland was in tune with the larger trend of westward labor-force mobility among the citizens of the New Member States (Black, Engbersen and Okólski 2010). Consequently, the Polish public discourse on migration focused either on the effects of emigration on the domestic socio-economic situation or the conditions faced by the diaspora in destination countries. Thus, before the summer of 2015, there had been little public interest in incoming migration, given that in-migration was almost nonexistent. This led to the curious results of cross-national analyses suggesting that Poles were less reluctant to receive migrants than the European average (Andrejuk 2015: 14–21; Meuleman, Davidov and Billiet 2009). These studies use data that were collected before the issue of immigration became a major concern in the Polish public sphere, and it seems reasonable to suspect that those results took the respondents' indifference or lack of attitude to immigration for acceptance.

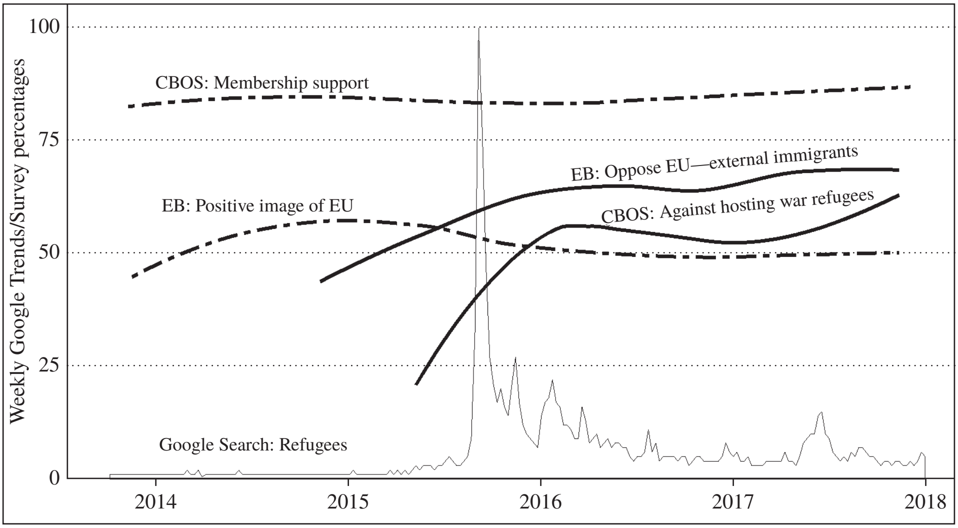
Attitudes to Migration and Perception of the EU

As already mentioned, survey indicators of public support for Poland's EU membership did not decline despite decidedly more critical public discourse on European affairs and an accompaniment of social and political mobilization over the "immigration question"—which was especially fierce in regard to suggestions of Poland's participation in any migrant relocation schemes. At the same time, when it came to anything directly touching migration, the crisis-driven opinion shift was swift and strong—from detached to negatively engaged. This bifurcation of attitudes can be seen clearly in Figure 1, which presents the trend lines of two nationally representative tracking surveys: Eurobarometer and the domestic CBOS, superimposed on an area-graph of Google Trend data for the topic "refugees" ["*uchodźcy*"] on the Polish Internet. The weekly search-data exhibit a precipitous jump in early September 2015, with a slow build-up since May 2015 and a long tail going forward. Specifically, the peak of queries occurred in the week starting on September 6, accompanying the main debate over the mandatory relocation quotas formally agreed upon at the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council on September 14, 2015. It is important to note that all this was happening during the Polish parliamentary election campaign and that the incumbent government committed a major policy turn at that time: having originally signed the anti-resettlement September 4$^{\text{th}}$ Joint Statement of the Visegrád Group, the Polish incumbent leadership then reconsidered its position under German and European pressure.

In contrast to indicators tracking attitudes to immigration, no obvious change in the measures of EU-perception can be ascertained in either CBOS or EB data. On the other hand, while establishing the baseline for immigration attitudes, it should be noted that the Eurobarometer introduced the "opposition to external immigrants" question in the fall of 2014, that is, before Poland entered its double-election year, with the presidential election scheduled for spring and parliamentary elections for the fall of 2015. Furthermore, the topic of refugees had not been prominent in the Polish public sphere at the time of the EB82.3 fieldwork, so despite the lack of prior data-points, this measurement can reasonably be treated as representative of the pre-crisis situation. Meanwhile, CBOS only started asking the "accepting refugees" question in response to rising concern with immigration in the immediate run-up to the refugee crisis. Here again, in spite of the lack of preceding data points, the first measurement may be considered broadly representative of the pre-crisis attitude levels.

Figure 1

Immigration and EU perception in Poland 2014–2017

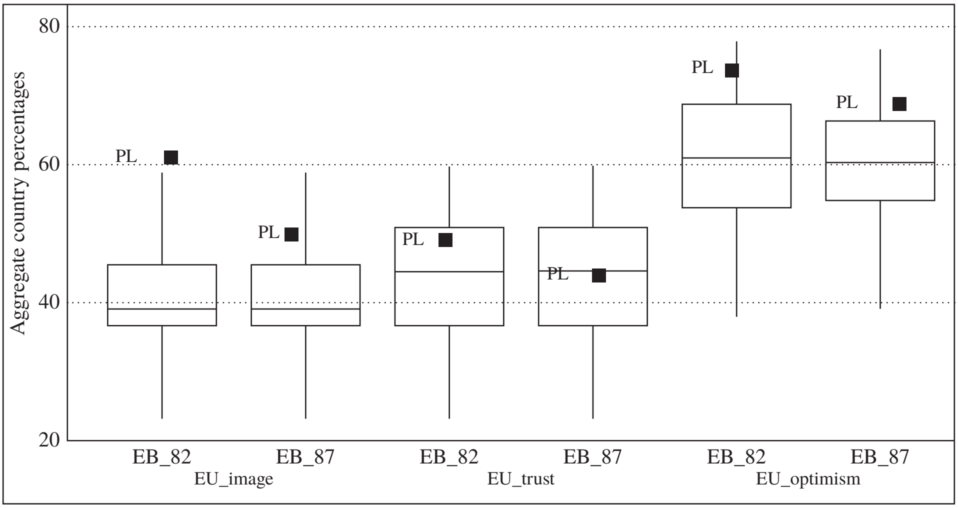


In order to break through the first-glance impression of there being no apparent relationship between the changing opinions on migration questions and the stable indicators of EU support, we decided to go beyond bivariate analyses of single variables. EU output legitimacy is a multi-faceted construct, and therefore, a measurement model allowing for its empirical investigation should also involve multiple indicators. For the sake of such analysis, we put forward a construct EU_perception, which takes into account three cognate dimensions of public opinion about the EU: (1) the present subjective evaluation of the EU, (2) the level of optimism about the EU's future, (3) overall trust in the EU project. Each of the three dimensions was operationalized with specific question-items that featured in both EB82.3. and EB87.3. The structure of the EU_perception construct was determined by theoretical considerations of the EU's output legitimacy in Poland, affected by the experience of the refugee crisis. It was also shaped by practical considerations related to (1) the availability of surveys conducted at relevant time points, and (2) stemming from the results of exploratory factor analysis, which indicated that some initially promising variables (e.g., attachment to the EU, a future outside of the EU) would not fit within the same measurement model. Figure 2 presents the country-level mean-percentages of EU_image (% of *fairly positive* and *very positive*), EU_trust (% of *tend to trust*), and EU_optimism (% of *very optimistic* and *fairly optimistic*), compared to the EU-median score.

At least three observations can be made about the distributions of the basic indicators. First, Poland typically scores above-average on all the indicators of EU_perception, despite the downward turn visible between EB82.3 and EB87.3. Second, while the EU-28 average has been stable, the consistently substantial differences between the values of individual country-level indicators should be noted. Third, when it comes to EU_image, the mean-percentage value of EB82.3 for Poland was actually a few percentage points higher than the long-run trend. Therefore, too much should not be read into this single-indicator value

Figure 2

Country-level values of underlying EU_perception indicators: EB82.3 and EB87.3



change. It should also be noted that the whole EB82.3 survey did in fact constitute the pinnacle of the positive trend in terms of perception of the EU in Poland, which had lasted for the few preceding waves.

Data, Measurement Models, and Statistical Methods

Data: Why the Eurobarometer?

Even though our analysis in the present paper is primarily concerned with public opinion shifts in Poland, the Eurobarometer remains a better choice for our purposes than any of the national tracking polls. Not only does it allow for contrastive positioning of Poland in the context of other EU member states at the descriptive level, but it also makes our close analysis of the Polish case comparison-ready with respect to any other countries or groups of countries. While our focus is limited to Poland and we did not test our constructs for any other country, this avenue is readily available as all the basic variables included in the analysis were present in all other EB-covered countries. Furthermore, relative to the Polish tracking polls, the Eurobarometer systematically includes a superior range of questions focused on opinions concerning European integration, which allow for probing various facets of the underlying attitude rather than relying on specific questions on membership support.

Choosing the EB as an empirical anchor for discussing attitudes to European integration is well motivated by the longitudinal character of the project, its geographical range, and thematic focus. First conducted in 1973, the survey has continued to produce studies providing insights into what Europeans think and how they feel about various aspects of European integration (cf., European Commission 1974). Due to the long-term, regular, and standardized character of measurement combined with the public availability of the data, it also serves as a major resource for cross-country comparative social-scientific research. Still, despite its spatial and temporal breadth, the Eurobarometer is perhaps underutilized since, unlike many of its present-day competitors, it is not a methodology-driven project (Kohler 2007). In addition, some skepticism seems warranted given the fact that the Eurobarometer's contracting entity is the European Commission, which cannot be seen as entirely impartial with respect to the process of European integration (Aldrin 2010; Nissen 2014). Methodological reservations notwithstanding, the EB consistently provides periodic measurements for a range of important indicators for a fixed set of countries. Therefore, even if other academically driven projects provide data of superior quality, their measurements tend to be less frequent and to have inferior geographical coverage. When it comes to country-specific survey monitoring, such as that provided by CBOS in the case of Poland, these surveys are typically conducted with higher than biannual frequency, yet they remain nationally idiosyncratic and of little use for cross-country comparisons.

Measurement: Perception of the EU

In order to operationalize the construct EU_perception in terms of trust, image, and optimism, a Multi-Group Structural Equation Modeling (MGSEM) approach was employed (Byrne 2016; Jöreskog 1971; Konarski 2014). The resulting measurement model allowed the different data points to be compared as it was possible to establish their configural, metric, and scalar equivalence for EB82.3 and EB87.3 (Davidov et al. 2014; Milfont and Fischer 2010). This approach provides major advantages over the straightforward univariate approaches—not only does it allow for construct multidimensionality, but it is also equipped with unparalleled tools for equivalence-testing in order to find out whether time-series comparisons are legitimate in the first place. The MGSEM-based approach was also used to evaluate measurement models representing some of the constructs featuring as covariates in the General Linear Model Analysis of Covariance (GLM ANCOVA) analysis.

EU_perception is meant to represent the three pillars of EU output-legitimacy that had historically been strong in Poland and then came under stress during the 2015 crisis: the belief that the EU is an unambiguously beneficial enterprise in which to participate, optimism concerning Poland's growth prospects within the EU, and trust in the institutional capacities of the EU for reasonable policymaking. Empirically, the construct is based on three indicators derived from EB trend questions regarding the EU: institutional trust (EU_trust), present evaluation (EU_image), and future expectations (EU_optimism). The EU_perception measurement model is presented in Figure 3, while the questionnaire items corresponding to the three dimensions comprise the following:

EU_trust: "I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it: The European Union" (*response options and recoding rules*: *Tend to trust* = 1; *Tend not to trust* = −1; *DK/missing values* = 0);

EU_image: "In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?" (*response options and recoding rules*: *Very positive* or *Fairly positive* = 1; *Fairly negative* or *Very negative* = −1; *Neutral* or *DK/missing value* = 0);

EU_optimism: "Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?" (*response options and recoding rules*: *Very optimistic* or *Fairly optimistic* = 1; *Fairly pessimistic* or *Very pessimistic* = −1; *DK/missing value* = 0).

Since the main goal of this study is to juxtapose response patterns at two contrastive time points, it was necessary to probe EU_perception for cross-study equivalence, that is, to test the assumption that the factor loadings and intercepts were equal across time. The chi-square test is the most commonly used diagnostic for MGSEMs; however, it proves highly sensitive to the sample size as it is prone to rejecting reasonable models when dealing with large samples (Reeskens and Hooghe 2008: 523), as in the case of EB surveys. Thus, instead of the chi-square test, we employ the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Norm Fit Index (NFI). RMSEA below 0.05 or the NFI above 0.9 indicate acceptable fit (Coovert and Craiger 2000: 47). We also compute the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to evaluate the reliability and convergent validity of the construct. CR values of 0.7 or higher indicate a reliable measurement, while the AVE value of 0.5 or higher indicates the validity of the latent construct (Huang et al. 2013: 219).

Figure 3

EU_perception measurement model: EB82.3 and EB87.3

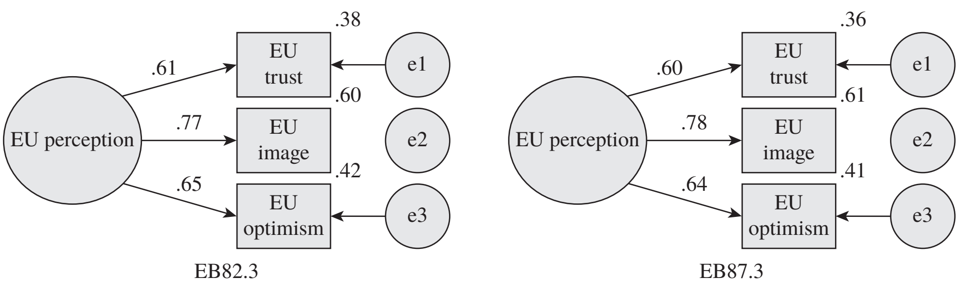


Figure 3 presents standardized factor loadings (regression coefficients) as well as the square of regression coefficients (R^2 coefficients) for each of the three basic indicators, as well as e_i indicating the random error component for each equation. The multi-group model assuming factor loadings and intercepts to be identical across time exhibits a very good fit (RMSEA is less than 0.001, and NFI is equal to 0.998) warranting the conclusion that these three indicators measure the same concept in the same way in EB82.3 and EB87.3. Moreover, for both time points, the CR of EU_perception is higher than the reference value 0.7, which indicates a reliable measurement process. Notably, AVE is less than the 0.5 reference value (0.47 for EB82.3 and 0.46 for EB87.3). However, Fornell and Larcker (1981: 46) demonstrated that if AVE is less than 0.5, but composite reliability is higher than 0.6, the convergent validity of the considered construct should still be treated as adequate.

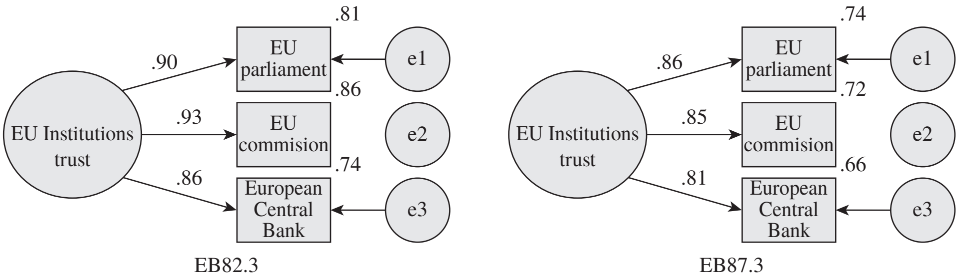
Measurement: Covariates, Factors, and Control Variables

Among independent variables, there are (1) covariates, that is, measures of institutional trust and evaluation of the present situation, (2) main factors, that is, immigration-associated variables, and (3) control variables. We discuss these variables below in this order.

Standard EB surveys contain tracking questions concerned with public trust in specific EU institutions, and these questionnaire items are separate from those concerned with trust in the EU in general. The construct EU_institutions_trust was built upon three indicators of trust in the main institutions of the EU: the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank. It represents public trust in the capacity of the supranational institutions of the EU, as indicators of specific trust in institutions can be seen as proxy for a generalized evaluation of their efficiency (Levi and Stoker 2000).[2]

Figure 4

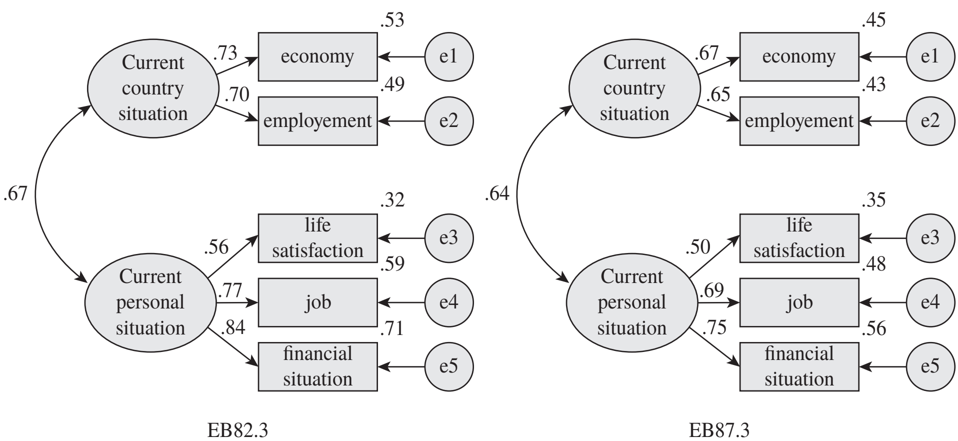
EU_institutions_trust measurement model: EB82.3 and EB87.3



When it comes to the evaluation of life situation, we distinguish between two closely related constructs: the individual (egocentric) and the collective (exocentric) evaluation. We tested a model where these two constructs are correlated, and obtained the following fit statistics: RMSEA < 0.001; NFI = 0.995; for EB82.3 (current personal: CR = 0.77; AVE = 0.54; current country CR = 0.68; AVE = 0.51) for EB87.3 (current personal: CR = 0.69; AVE = 0.43; current country CR = 0.61; AVE = 0.44)

Figure 5

Current_personal and Current_country_situation measurement model: EB82.3 and EB87.3



[2] The goodness of fit as well as the scalar equivalence of EU_institutions_trust has been tested along the lines described above: RMSEA < 0.001; NFI = 0.999; for EB82.3: CR = 0.72, AVE = 0,47; for EB87.3: CR = 0.72; AVE = 0,46.

Starting with EB82.3 in the fall of 2014, EB surveys have included trend questions concerned with the public perception of migration, distinguishing between within-EU (internal) immigration, and immigration from outside of the EU. This distinction is obviously derived from considerations of European citizenship. However, as was discovered previously through analyses of EB data, the formal legal contrast might not always have been discerned by the general public (McLaren 2001).

Internal/external immigration: "Please tell me whether each of the following statements evokes a positive or negative feeling for you: [Internal] Immigration of people from other EU Member States / [External] Immigration of people from outside the EU" (*response options and recoding rules*: *Very positive, Fairly positive* = 1 (ref. cat.); Very negative, Fairly negative = –1; *Neutral, DK/missing values* = 0);

Concerns over immigration are also registered indirectly, with the "most important problem" trend questions included in EB surveys, asking about two main issues facing the EU and the country at the moment. While such questions are commonly held as problematic indicators of attitudes due to salience effects (Krosnick 2018: 444–45), their tendency to overstate the importance of temporarily dominant talking points is an advantage when it comes to tracking the impact of events such as the 2015 crisis on public opinion.

Immigration: country and EU issue: "What do you think are the two most important issues facing [Country] (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? / [EU] the EU at the moment?" (*response options and recoding rules*: *Not mentioned* = 0, *Mentioned* = 1 (ref. cat.))

We also included the following socio-demographic characteristics as control variables: Gender (*Male*; *Female* (ref. cat.)), Age (*15–24*; *25–39*; *40–54*; *54+* (ref. cat.)) and Type of Community (*Rural area/village*; *Small/middle town*; *Large town* (ref. cat.)).

Model

The GLM Univariate ANCOVA model allows for testing the impact on EU_perception of main factors, that is, immigration-associated variables, and of covariates, that is, measures of institutional trust and evaluation of the present situation, as well as control variables. The interaction between Current_personal and Current_country_situation has also been accounted for, in light of the fact that the conjoined measurement model presumes their correlation. For both EB82.3 and EB87.3, the same linear model is tested:

EU_perception =
Intercept
+ EU_institutions_trust
+ Current_personal_situation
+ Current_country_situation
+ Current_personal_situation*Current_country_situation
+ Opinion about internal immigration
+ Opinion about external immigration
+ Immigration: country & EU important issue
+ Gender + Age + Type of community

Results

Results included in Table 1 allow for singling out those factors and covariates that exert significant influence on EU_perception. The direction and strength of the effects are demonstrated in Table 2. Within GLM Univariate ANCOVA, the interpretation of β coefficients is the same as in the case of simple multiple regression, that is, a one-unit increase in the level of any independent variable translates into a corresponding change in the level of the dependent variable. When it comes to categorical predictors, it is important to bear in mind that the β coefficient for a particular level of the variable is always interpreted in relation to the coefficient of the reference category. Note as well that the comparisons of β coefficients between the models estimated for EB82.3 and EB87.3 are warranted by the fact that we had established the metric invariance of the underlying latent constructs, as discussed earlier.

Table 1

GLM Univariate ANCOVA of covariates and factors effects on EU_perception

DV: EU perception		**EB82.3**		**EB87.3**	
		F-ratio	p-value	F-ratio	p-value
Covariates	EU institutions trust EB82.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1130}$	203.05	<0.001	414.46	<0.001
	Current_personal_situation EB82.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1130}$	6.45	0.011	1.29	0.257
	Current_country_situation EB82.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1130}$	29.21	<0.001	0.31	0.578
	Current_personal × Current_country_situation EB82.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1130}$	8.08	0.005	0.10	0.749
Factors	Opinion about internal immigration EB82.3: $F_{df1=2;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=2;\,df2=1130}$	14.36	<0.001	16.81	<0.001
	Opinion about external immigration EB82.3: $F_{df1=2;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=2;\,df2=1130}$	1.90	0.150	8.64	<0.001
	Immigration: country & EU important issue EB82.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1130}$	0.45	0.504	8.11	<0.001
Controls	Gender EB82.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=1;\,df2=1130}$	3.31	0.069	0.26	0.608
	Age EB82.3: $F_{df1=3;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=3;\,df2=1130}$	4.55	0.004	2.48	0.060
	Type of community EB82.3: $F_{df1=2;\,df2=1079}$; EB87.3: $F_{df1=2;\,df2=1130}$	0.28	0.756	0.40	0.672
Adjusted R-Squared		0.412		0.364	

Table 1 clearly demonstrates that the structure of EU_perception predictors did undergo noteworthy shifts between the two time points of EB82.3 and EB87.3. Before the onset of the migration crisis, perception of the EU was significantly associated with EU_institutions_trust, Current_personal, and Current_country situation (and the interaction of those two variables), opinion on internal EU migration, and the respondent's age. At the same time, neither the opinion on external migration nor the perception of immigration as one of the most important problems exerted a significant influence on EU_perception. After the migration crisis, these immigration-related variables not only started to play a significant role but have also, in fact, crowded out the influence of other previously significant elements.

Table 2

Estimates of β parameters in GLM Univariate ANCOVA explaining covariates and factors impact on EU_perception

DV: EU perception		EB82.3		EB87.3	
		β	p-value	β	p-value
Covariates	EU_institutions_trust	0.787	<0.001	0.328	<0.001
	Current_personal_situation	0.146	0.011	0.097	0.257
	Current_country_situation	0.389	<0.001	–0.043	0.578
	Current_personal × Current_country_situation	–0.082	0.005	0.011	0.749
Factors	Opinion about internal immigration				
	Negative	–0.152	<0.001	–0.122	<0.001
	Neutral	–0.100	0.013	–0.199	<0.001
	Positive—*reference category*	—	—	—	—
	Opinion about external immigration				
	Negative	–0.035	0.052	–0.104	<0.001
	Neutral	–0.035	0.375	–0.048	0.728
	Positive—*reference category*	—	—	—	—
	Immigration: country & EU important issue				
	Mentioned	0.055	0.504	–0.099	0.004
	Not mentioned—*reference category*	—	—	—	—
Controls	Gender				
	Male	–0.036	0.069	–0.011	0.514
	Female—*reference category*	—	—	—	—
	Age				
	15–24	0.112	<0.001	0.081	0.053
	25–39	0.017	0.521	–0.013	0.634
	40–54	0.009	0.745	–0.007	0.815
	54+—*reference category*	—	—	—	—
	Type of community				
	Rural area/village	–0.001	0.976	–0.017	0.518
	Small/middle town	–0.016	0.544	0.005	0.166
	Large town—*reference category*	—	—	—	—

When comparing β coefficients of EU_institutions_trust, it seems clear that while this variable retains a significant influence on EU_perception, the strength of the relationship is lower in EB87.3. Furthermore, before the 2015 crisis, a weak yet significant influence of the evaluation of both Current_personal and Current_country_situation could be attested, which subsequently ceased to be the case. When it comes to migration factors, respondents holding negative and neutral opinions about internal immigration had correspondingly lower scores on EU_perception in both measurements. However, it must be noted that while neither opinions on external immigration nor holding immigration to be an important problem were factors of any significance in EB82.3, all these variables would assume a strong and significant role in EB87.3. Thus, even though attitudes to the EU in Poland might seem stable and seemingly disconnected from the high levels of concern over immigration after the 2015 crisis, there is in fact strong evidence for post-crisis shifts in the determinants of Polish public opinion on European questions in the context of immigration concerns.

Summary

After the refugee crisis of 2015, Polish public opinion continued to favor EU membership strongly, yet this conviction now coexisted with strong if not outright vociferous opposition to specific EU-membership commitments resulting from the challenges of managing immigration. From the Polish perspective, the migration crisis led to the vital integration achievements becoming issues of public concern and criticism. Most notably, the Schengen area (as well as the broader freedom-of-movement principle), which had earlier been perceived as one of the greatest benefits of EU membership, came to be seen as complicit in the out-of-control migration flows and associated with other risk factors, including international terrorism (Murdock 2016: 74). The influx of immigrants, and especially Muslims, came to be framed in Poland in terms of an external threat akin to an invasion or raid, closely mirroring the discursive developments in Hungary (Goździak and Márton 2018). These systemic challenges quickly came to be translated into normative political questions concerning the fundamental presuppositions of the post-war liberal-democratic consensus, including both universal human rights (e.g., "the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (United Nations 1951)) and mainly European concerns with solidarity, openness, and tolerance toward other cultures. These concerns threatened the previously prevailing model of output-based legitimacy, whereby EU institutions were treated as efficient and trustworthy by default, even though the survey gauges of EU perception and favorability had yet to register any significant deterioration in Poland. This shift to viewing the EU through the prism of specific challenges has the potential to shift the perception of the process of European integration in the future.

Even though a superficial reading of standard indicators of public attitudes toward the EU fails to yield any firm indications of brewing trouble in Poland so far, our analysis provides evidence that the Polish perception of the EU has been affected by a definite shift in the structure of opinions, whereby attitudes to immigration have risen to the forefront of public concerns. Based on our investigation of the construct EU_perception, comprising indicators of EU image, optimism, and trust, it was possible to show that the overall level of positive perception of the EU has not been significantly affected in Poland by the animosities generated by the migration crisis of 2015. However, negative attitudes toward immigration became strong predictors of EU_perception after the eruption of the crisis, that is, Poles skeptical of the EU came to share concerns about the apparent mishandling of immigration policy at the European level.

Although little has changed on the surface of Polish public opinion, these underlying changes in the content of public support for the EU are important to monitor going forward. They may indicate the emergence of a new rallying call for Poles of a Eurosceptic persuasion, which could be politically targeted at those who, for the time being, still hold the EU in high regard despite having concerns over EU-led immigration policies. In the long-run, this could produce a deterioration of the hitherto unusually high levels of EU favorability in Poland through creating an aura of output illegitimacy. If strong concerns over EU immigration policies persist in the domestic public sphere, they could have the capacity to be dominant over other factors, such as life satisfaction or trust in specific European institutions. Furthermore, these concerns now seem firmly rooted in Pol-

ish public opinion and are thus ready-made for activation in response to any future EU crises.

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Traditional vs. Modern Art: The Status and Network Antecedents of Visual Art Preferences

Abstract: Sociologists traditionally focus on the power of socio-economic variables as drivers of aesthetic tastes and cultural practices, leaving other important factors outside the purview of analysis. As a remedy, this article makes use of recent progress at the intersection of the sociology of culture and network theory to show that individual interest in and preferences for art are also embedded in social relationships of a different kind. Data from a specially designed survey on personal networks and cultural tastes in Polish society is analyzed. Cultural taste is measured in detail by presenting respondents with ten color illustrations depicting different styles of visual art. These ten evaluations are then reduced to two significant dimensions (traditional vs. more modern art). The regressions analyses show distinct relations of network characteristics (such as heterogeneity, type of contacts, density, or associational membership) with the type of art preferred. The findings are interpreted in terms of social influence and affinity between cultural orientations (e.g., openness) and the manners in which social ties are developed and maintained. Additionally, the article sheds light on distinction patterns by arguing that status is claimed through specific (modern) preferences.

Keywords: visual art, preferences, social networks, status, social capital, position generator

Introduction

Although highly specialized, the subfield of the sociology of the arts has contributed much that is central to core sociology. Investigations of artistic engagement have fostered our understandings of the diversity of social phenomena, including, for instance, the processes of social change and social reproduction, the role of objects and practices as status markers, and the use of cultural objects and texts as media for constructing everything from individual identity to social movements and national heritage (Acord and DeNora 2008). As is observable in such seminal texts as Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982) and Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984), the cornerstone of the discipline seems to be that sociologists of art see themselves as "unmasking" the assumptions, values, and ideologies implicit in art-world practices, among which "essentialism" (seeing artworks as special kinds of object) and "idealism" (treating artists as "gifted" individuals and art perception as a "pure" or "disinterested" gaze) are predominant (de la Fuente 2007). Bourdieu (1984; 1993; Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper 1991) attacks both these tendencies, demonstrating the social, economic, and political factors that intrude on the supposedly "pure" or autonomous field of art production and consumption. In his view, the denial of the social is central to the art system's mode of operation. Artists and intellectuals, having special interests in the field, do not want to admit that fame, fortune, or power underlie their creative decisions, much as consumers do not want to recognize that seeing artistic contemplation as a spiritual and disinterested activity is a class-based form of distinction. It follows that sociologists do not try to define absolute features of "the artwork" (as performed in empirical aesthetics) or the concept of art in general (as intended in the philosophy of aesthetics) but rather focus on either the context of production and dissemination—subsumed under the category of the "art field," "art system" (Golka 2013), or "art world"—or the beholders, with their socio-demographic characteristics and processes of perception, to gain insight into what constitutes art (Tröndle, Kirchberg and Tschacher 2014).

Since the publication of Bourdieu and Darbel's *The Love of Art* (1991/1966), the socio-economic stratification of art audiences seems to have been the dominant observation angle in many studies. The most striking and consistent characteristic across countries and times is the high position of art museum visitors on different scales of social inequality, including in regard to their occupation, income, and especially education (e.g., DiMaggio and Useem 1978; DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004; Chan and Goldthorpe 2007; Silva 2006, 2008; Berghman and van Eijck 2009).[1]

The consistency of the elite nature of fine-arts audiences is usually explained by Bourdieu's theory of art perception and social reproduction (1984, 1993; Matuchniak-Krasuska 2010). Bourdieu envisions art perception as a mediate deciphering operation, meaning that artworks carry a message which can be decoded and understood. Simultaneously, the ability to decode and subsequently appreciate these works is not a matter of pure and spontaneous aesthetic judgment but a product of privileged social conditions marked by the level of social, cultural, and economic capital. "A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (Bourdieu 1984: 2). The "love of art" is thus not love at first sight, as it arises from cultural competence and special dispositions acquired and inculcated in the family and in an educational system that is often inaccessible to less powerful sections of the population. Consequently, only those with high levels of cultural capital feel at home with "esoteric" culture (e.g., modern art) and display an understanding of the language needed to talk about it, whereas those with low levels of cultural capital are disenfranchised and feel out of their depth (hence, the common phrase, "it's not for the likes of us") (cf., Newman, Goulding and Whitehead 2013). The command over some forms of culture is not socially neutral as patterns of consumption and lifestyles are active devices of sustaining and legitimizing inequalities. Access to higher social and professional circles is granted or restricted according to an individual's capital, that is, knowledge of the culture and mores of the dominant class, and this kind of social reproduction is the more effective the more it takes on the patina of grace (natural talent)—of culture turned into nature. Being unable to invoke the right of birth, "the bourgeoisie find naturally in culture as cultivated nature and culture that has become nature the only possible principle for the legitimation of their privilege" (Bourdieu 1993: 234).

Holders of a high volume of cultural capital, whose social being is most removed from the urgencies of material life, are the most likely to perceive art in a truly artistic manner, that is, to transcend the schemes and codes of everyday perception and appreciate the for-

[1] Similar findings are reported in Poland (cf., Drozdowski et al. 2014; Bachórz et al. 2016).

mal aspects of art (as required for the appreciation of non-figurative/abstract/avant-garde art). On the other hand, representatives of lower social strata, who are devoid of means of legitimate appropriation, tend to apply the most accessible schemes and codes, which are appropriate for everyday reality, to artworks, thus explaining their wish for realistic representation in art and their strong preference for functional aspects of works of art (such as emulating reality, or being entertaining or edifying) (Bourdieu 1993).

Although Bourdieu's legacy is a milestone in sociological inquiry into art and an unmissable frame of reference for many followers, his ideas have not remained unchallenged. Some skepticism is shared by scholars adhering to the so-called "omnivorism" thesis (cf. Peterson and Kern 1996), according to which cultural tastes and practices are open and fluid rather than tightly attached to specific groups, as consumers undertake and appreciate a diverse range of styles. While fruitful in fuelling intellectual debate within cultural sociology, the notion of omnivorousness suffers from a lack of clarity, having become pervaded with many divergent meanings (as a sign of the progressive decline of sociocultural hierarchies, a new form of social distinction, or a device of extending communicative competence) (cf., Warde, Martens and Olsen 1999; Cebula 2013).

Another line of criticism raised in art-audience studies, is that simply conceptualizing museums as predominantly middle-class institutions—whilst true enough—is inattentive to the variety of ways in which these cultural spaces are experienced and runs the risk of slipping into a kind of class reductionism (Hanquinet 2013a, 2013b). To grasp the cultural diversity among museum visitors (e.g., their different visions of art), it is necessary to bracket out the usual determinants of aesthetic orientations and to insert museum attendance into people's daily life. Visiting an art museum does not mean anything in and of itself but can only be interpreted if contextualized within the entire set of visitors' practices and tastes (i.e., their "cultural profiles"). This approach gains in value if we consider the re-configurations of cultural capital brought about by the evolution of the artistic and cultural field: the proliferation of different aesthetics or cultural repertoires that order and give meanings to practices and tastes, and the evolution of the art museum from a static upholder of high culture to a more spectacle-oriented, popular, and commercialized venue akin to a shopping mall (Prior 2005; Hanquinet, Roose and Savage 2014). Currently, people can draw on many more principles to classify tastes and practices than before (Cebula 2018), which produces a fractioning of art audiences and a proliferation of ways of preferring (Daenekindt and Roose 2017).

In the same vein, Koen van Eijck (2012) and P. DiMaggio (1996) have argued that moving beyond the "usual suspects" i.e., gender, age, and education, by adding cultural variables that tap horizontal rather than vertical social differentiation, may be helpful for gaining a better understanding of the ways in which people engage with culture. The idea underpinning their studies was that visual art appreciation and cultural participation are embedded in the wider structures of meaning or values to which people adhere. K. van Eijck (2012), for instance, examined the impact of religious identity and social orientations on appreciation for classical/figurative and modern/abstract visual art styles and found out that they both matter. As we learn, independent variables were better predictors for modern preferences, arguably because more contemporary artworks attract a more specific public. Those works (of abstract art, surrealism, and conceptual art) were particularly unattractive for people with more traditional values (approximated by communitarianism) or people who did not feel very comfortable in today's society (as evidenced by a high score on social disorientation and social isolation scales). It took a more liberal, playful, independent stance to appreciate those modern works, as could also be gathered from the positive effects of atheism and education. In summary, we can say that more traditional values do not go well with modern art.

This is in line with the findings of DiMaggio's study (1996). Seeking the difference between U.S. art-museum visitors and their non-visiting counterparts, the author found that the former were somewhat more secular, trusting, politically liberal, racially tolerant, and open to other cultures and lifestyles, and much more tolerant and interested in high culture than the latter (even after adjustment for the effects of age, education, income, race, and gender). The nature of that phenomenon was captured by a neo-modernization frame of reference, according to which the values and attitudes typical of museum visitors represent "a distinctly *modern* disposition, evincing, first, a faith in progress and in scientific (and artistic) authority; and, second, an open, cosmopolitan orientation to both people and cultures" (DiMaggio 1996: 161). In other words, there is some affinity between art museum attendance (and probably, cultural participation as a whole) and a modernist (and even postmodernist) worldview and the temperament that it epitomizes. It follows that artistic participation is not solely a form of cultural capital and an emblem of social distinction (as expressed by Bourdieu, 1984) but also a component of a modern, secular, cosmopolitan way of thinking, which may serve the function of establishing identities in a shifting social context and linking oneself symbolically to a variety of groups and networks (DiMaggio 1987). The open and cosmopolitan orientation that characterizes art museum visitors (and, more generally, much of the educated upper-middle classes), when trained on the social horizon, may facilitate the acquisition of social capital in the form of new relationships and access to new social networks. This same orientation, when extended to artistic genres, could provide access to cultural tools useful in making such social connections (DiMaggio 1996: 177).

These last conclusions are of great importance for this article as in it I adopt a network-analytic approach to the domain of culture (and art). As argued above, until now sociologists have traditionally focused on the power of socio-economic variables as drivers of art preferences and participation, leaving other determinants outside their purview. However, though in its early stages, a growing body of literature on the mutual links between the characteristics of social networks and cultural tastes (Erickson 1996; Lizardo 2006, 2013; Kane 2004; Puetz 2015; Cebula 2015) has shown the promising explanatory potential of network variables, without other factors such as class, education, or income. The current analysis presents a picture of art consumption that complements (rather than replaces) that provided by previous studies.

A central concern of the article is the embeddedness of individual preferences for art in the relationships of family life, organizational life, and friendships, because, I will argue, the way in which people are connected provides a context that frames their engagement with visual art. Inspired by ideas from P. DiMaggio (1987), especially the contention that classification in art (and in culture) is a response to a structurally generated demand for symbols of distinction and group affiliation, and that familiarity with cultural items (including the arts) may serve as a currency that facilitates interaction across a range of contexts and networks, I empirically address whether tastes in, and engagement with, the visual arts are still related to socio-demographic characteristics and to the status of beholders, as well as being structured by their personal social networks.

To that end, in the next section I introduce the terms "social capital" and "social networks" and invoke different conceptualizations and theories to demonstrate their significance to our understanding of art participation and preferences. A review of the main theoretical stances and prior empirical investigations on the mutual relationship between cultural and network variables lays the groundwork for new hypotheses, which I then explore by using the data from a large-scale survey conducted in Wrocław (Poland) in 2017. After discussing the main findings, I conclude by discussing some of the implications, the limitations of the current effort, and possibilities for future research.

The New Path of Research on Cultural Participation—Toward Social Network Theories

Recent research at the intersection of the sociology of culture and network theory has argued for, and provided empirical evidence for, two general propositions. The first is that larger and more diversified networks are connected to the variety of cultural items and activities consumed (to "omnivorousness"); the second is that cultural variety is connected to the possession of weak social ties or ties that span larger distances in social space (DiMaggio 1987; Lizardo 2006, 2013; Kane 2004). On the basis of cultural consumption in the security industry in Toronto, B. H. Erickson (1996) concluded that people with varied connections (measured by social class diversity) know more about different types of culture and develop omnivorous tastes that allow them to communicate with a maximum number of people in other groups and that that relationship gets stronger as the tie considered gets weaker. According to M. Granovetter (1973), weak ties are here conceived as "bridges" that link individuals to other social circles, thus giving them access to information and resources not likely to be available via strong ties. Although Erickson presumed the causal priority of network variety for cultural variety, we can acknowledge that both mutually reinforce each other, as cultural omnivores are likelier to find a common interest that can support an initial relationship, and those with large, heterogeneous networks are introduced to a greater variety of new cultural goods. That both processes are at work has been the subject of recent studies (Puetz 2015).

In summarizing research on the empirical question of why individuals have a relationship with people similar to themselves (known as the "homophily principle"—see McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001), scholars have mostly provided one of two plausible answers. According to the selection explanation, people are attracted to and form relationships with individuals with whom they have something in common. On the other hand, social-influence or diffusion-process explanations underline that people learn about new consumer goods or acquire new cultural pursuits from pre-existent relationships and become more similar to people in their personal networks over time. Actually, both models find confirmation in empirical material (e.g., Kandel 1978). K. Lewis, M. Gonzales, and J. Kaufman (2012), for instance, have shown that two students who prefer certain genres of movie (“dark satire” and “raunchy comedy/gore”) and music (“lite/classic rock” and “classical/jazz”) are significantly more likely than chance to form online ties with each other, while diffusion only occurs with reference to one genre of music (“classical/jazz”). As Lizardo (2006, 2013) wrote, deep-rooted metaphors of social networks as “the infrastructures of society” caused theorists to see social networks uncritically as material, stable, and causally efficient. This so-called “traditional network model” has recently been contested on two grounds: (a) acknowledgement that social relationships are themselves culturally constituted and (b) empirical evidence that network structure is itself fluid and constantly shifting (Puetz 2015). Both paved the way for analyses prioritizing the effects of taste preferences on social network formation. This new approach implies additional questions. If cultural tastes and orientations are “network opportunity structures,” how do people mobilize them to form their personal environment? At least two general mechanisms are considered. First, consumer goods or cultural content provide material for conversation rituals at the micro-level (Collins 2004; Lizardo 2016), which generate an emotional energy that eventually solidifies into social relationships. Second, consumer goods and behaviors (especially “conspicuous” or visible ones such as clothes, posture, manners) work as an “interactional hook,” a clue which others can treat as signalling the relevant membership category. It is theorized that individuals have affective, snap-judgement reactions to others’ self-presentional styles and use these automatic cognitions to establish their personal networks (Vaisey and Lizardo 2010; Puetz 2015).

Shifting our concern to the domain of art, an open question to be explored here is why we might expect art preferences and interest in art to be associated with the parameters of personal networks. The assumption that tastes in art (which are rather marginal in identity formation and as a topic of casual conversation, excluding specific groups of art lovers) may exert a formative influence on someone’s connections seems to be unlikely and counterintuitive. Therefore, it is necessary to provide some possible explanations (Kane 2004). First, it may be hypothesized that network heterogeneity increases the odds of exposure to less accessible “high culture” pursuits, as it increases the chances of including a member tapped into another network that circulates high-culture knowledge, who might then serve as a conduit of this taste to the ego (Kane 2004: 108). If that is the case, interest in art should be heightened if we maintain contacts with people occupying higher social positions (with the “cultural elite”). Second, an ability to appreciate art may be the effect of certain dispositions (or even of personal traits, such as openness to experience or extraversion—see Krajewska and Waligórska 2015) acquired and inculcated through exposure to specific configurations of ties, which are more diverse, sparse, and outward-oriented. In other words, some habits forged by communicating with different others (such as tolerance, sensitivity to other ways of thinking) may translate into the habit of decoding more “arcane” culture (that is, it could lead to the desire for culture that is not immediately decodable). In contrast, residing in more homogenous, closed networks (see below), in which communication is more restricted and context-bound and where a large portion of information and resources is shared, would seem to work against a taste for complex, ambiguous art. The network configuration is seen here as having an effect on (or being a part of) habitus (to use a term from Bourdieu’s theory), that is, the system of lasting, transposable dispositions of perceptions, appreciations, and actions (Bourdieu 1984). Note that this hypothesis is at odds with the most recent understanding of networks as rather an effect than a cause of our cultural profile (Lizardo 2006). Finally, both art participation and diverse, open, less confined networks may indicate the more general orientation (e.g., cosmopolitism) of which both are components. As was suggested by DiMaggio (1996), art museum attendance was associated with an open, tolerant, trusting orientation, an expansive cosmopolitanism, and faith in scientific (and artistic) authority, all making up a distinctly modern disposition.

The role of social networks in art consumption would be better captured if we refer to the term "social capital" and the theories in which it is embedded. While the concept has been applied to a wide range of actions (e.g., job searching and promotion, occupational status attainment, human capital creation) (Burt 1992; Lin 2001; Coleman 1988), and to both research macro levels (as economic development and resolving collective action problems—Putnam 2000; Sabatini 2007) and micro levels (well-being, health), there is a converging consensus that the core idea of social capital is that social actors (individual or collective) can accrue resources (symbolic and material) and secure benefits (intentionally and unintentionally[2]) by virtue of membership in social networks, groups, or other social structures (Portes 1998). In this vein, Bourdieu (1997: 51) defined the concept as "the the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (…)." What this definition makes clear is that social capital is formed of two elements: first, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and second, the amount and quality of those resources. This approach led to two conceptualizations of social capital. Depending on theoretical preferences, the main emphasis of scholars was either on social resources (that is, the resources accessible and mobilized for actions through a person's direct or indirect ties—Lin 2001; Van Der Gaag, Snijders 2005) or on social connections, that is, locations in a network (e.g., being a broker), or on the characteristics of networks and ties (e.g., density, closure, size, strength of ties) (Burt 1992, 2001, 2004; Marsden 2012). A disagreement begins when social capital is made concrete, with networks being models of what it means to be "better connected." Whereas Coleman (1988) adhered to the closure argument that social capital is created by a network of strongly interconnected elements guaranteeing effective sanctions, trust, and the circulation of information, R.S. Burt (1992, 2001, 2004) opted for the opposite situation. In his view, there are rather sparse networks or networks with "structural holes" that create competitive advantages for individuals and enable them to achieve better social positions. Structural holes emerge when people's networks are rich in non-redundant contacts, that is, contacts that are not connected to one another or that do not lead to the same sources of information (Burt 1992). The benefits of such connections are derived from early access to diverse and non-overlapping sources of information and resources, and from exercising control over people occupying opposite sides of the hole. People "connected across groups are more familiar with alternative ways of thinking and behaving, which gives them more options to select from and synthesize" (Burt 2004: 349–350). Those people may enjoy having "good ideas," that is, ideas considered to be valuable.

[2] In his later work, N. Lin (Lin and Ao 2008) pointed to the informal workings of social capital, or its "invisible hand," meaning that social networks may by beneficial without any particular action on the side of the actor (e.g., when social networks provide routine but unsolicited job information).

The non-redundant sources of information are usually available if a person's social network encompasses "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973). This is because the strength of a tie between the ego and alter increases the probability that both will have the same pool of acquaintances and friends and thus compose one social circle. By contrast, weak ties are more likely to be social "bridges," that is, to span remote nodes of social networks, facilitating information and influence flows. As Granovetter (1973: 1971) expressed it, "those to whom we are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles different from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive."

The conceptions of "structural holes" and "weak ties" may both be helpful in refining the structural mechanism underlying the aforementioned link between networks and art participation. Now we can speculate that there is a heterogeneity of network, weak ties, and brokerage across structural holes that make beholders amenable to new ideas in art and more prone to develop eclectic, omnivorous tastes. If this is the case, the opposite contention will indicate that more dense, cohesive, and homogenous networks are more conducive to narrowing the range of art preferences or enforcing a more conservative, restricted taste.

Hypotheses

To summarize, guided by research and theoretical considerations, I posit a connection between personal network characteristics and specific forms of art appreciation, in addition to the more familiar set of status-related background indicators. The latter, as evidenced by research dating back to the pioneering studies of Bourdieu and Darbel (1991), are still expected to matter in marking taste boundaries and lifestyles. According to Bourdieu's model (1993), appreciation of and familiarity with the high arts is a trained capacity, with access to this training unequally distributed among social classes (DiMaggio and Useem 1978). There are members of the dominant class (especially of its cultural fraction) who received an extensive socialization in legitimate culture (through family upbringing and in school), who have attained mastery of the symbolic language of the arts, and who are able to assimilate even the most challenging examples of the avant-garde and to view art as formalistic, aesthetic, and without function. As was noted by Bourdieu (1993: 217), "one of the reasons why the less educated beholders in our societies are so strongly inclined to demand a realistic representation is that, being devoid of specific categories of perception, they cannot apply any other code to works of scholarly culture than that which enables them to apprehend as meaningful objects of their everyday environment." This leads us to the following hypotheses:

H1. An interest in the visual arts is a function of socio-economic status (especially education and cultural capital acquired from family).

H2. An appreciation of modern styles of art (i.e., abstract, non-figurative art, in opposition to traditional art) is positively correlated with social-stratification variables, such as education and family cultural capital.

Traditional art, being the most comprehensible for almost everyone, does not serve the function of an emblem of social distinction and thus is not expected to be embedded in the stratification order.

The context that frames the engagement with contemporary or traditional art forms also entails personal connections and concomitant social orientations. As was elaborated above, network characteristics such as size, heterogeneity, structural holes, density, and strength of ties are of critical relevance to the art-consumption domain. It may be hypothesized, for example, that larger and more diversified networks, which are rich in structural holes, can increase the odds of exposure to less accessible high-culture tastes and activities, inculcate a preference for complex cultural material, or indicate a desire for a cosmopolitan identity. Therefore, they should be associated with attitudes toward art and preferences (Kane 2004). DiMaggio (1996: 177) suggested that an art museum may hold a special appeal to persons interested in exploring cultures different from their own. Thus, it stands to reason that the open, knowledgeable orientation that characterizes persons who are the most initiated in art (e.g., adherents of more "difficult" art), when trained on the social horizon, would lead to an accumulation of social capital in the form of new relationships and access to new social networks. Conversely, the more dense the social network and the more homogenous the community, the less important will be a command of more "arcane" culture and the greater the probability of a person's having traditional tastes. Network heterogeneity may also be a source (or an effect) of versatile taste, that is, a taste for different styles of art, as Erickson's study (1996) showed. She noted that the more diverse the set of contacts a person has, the more diverse will be the culture the person encounters and acquires. The reverse is also true: in order to maintain diverse networks, persons must have a wide variety of cultural tastes (Lizardo 2006, 2013). This does not invalidate Bourdieu's (1984) core idea that tastes may serve as a means of preserving elite boundaries. As we know, what allows entrance into the social circles of cultural elites is the ability to sustain detailed conversations that are predicated upon the ability to enjoy (decode) difficult cultural objects. Therefore, we may expect that a general interest in art and a particular liking for works considered more difficult to grasp should be a function of having connections to members of higher social strata (Lizardo 2016). On this account, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H3. Network heterogeneity is positively related to interest in art and preference for more recent styles of art (rather than for traditional works), after adjusting for stratification factors.
- H4. Network heterogeneity is positively related to a wide range of art preferences.
- H4. Network density is conducive to holding traditional preferences but negatively associated with preferences for modern art.
- H5. Social networks containing more outward-looking ties (e.g., non-family ties) are associated with more engagement with the visual arts and appreciation of its modern forms.
- H6. People having connections with persons of higher social ranks should show greater interest in art and prefer more niche art (e.g., modern art).

Data and Variables

In order to answer the research questions, I have used data from the survey "Social Structure, Networks, and Consumption Tastes and Practices," a unique research project integrating diverse measures of social networks/capital with extensive indicators of cultural participation and consumption.[3] In computer-assisted face-to-face interviews, 1,010 randomly selected respondents (the residents of one large city—Wrocław, Poland) aged between 18 and 75 years were questioned in detail about their cultural tastes, activities, and knowledge in a broad range of domains (including highbrow culture, e.g., art, as well as lowbrow or popular culture such as film, cuisine, music, traveling, or leisure). That a city or region may be a highly relevant research area for lifestyle differentiation has been amply demonstrated in previous research (cf. Prieur et al. 2008; Berghman and van Eijck 2009; Kajdanek and Pluta 2017).

Following the guidelines provided by Holt (1997: 117) for measuring cultural taste patterns at a level of specificity that allows for inferences regarding embodied tastes, I used information on ten styles of art, which were presented to the respondents on the computer screen (the so-called photo-elicitation technique). I decided to make use of a specific form of cultural participation, namely, visual art preferences (proxied mainly by paintings[4]), not only because in the collective imagination they represent a prototypical example of what art is, but also because they give us greater insight into cultural orientations and the social location of the interviewees. So far, scholars interested in cultural preferences have often had to make do with rather general and non-selective questions on the attendance frequencies of, for instance, museums, galleries, theaters, and so forth, which conceal much diversity in symbolic meanings. While informative at a general level, such indicators are not sufficiently sophisticated to reveal deeper layers of engagement. As was argued by R.A. Peterson (2005: 265), an advantage of respondents' self-reporting of their preferences over attendance frequencies is that the former better tap into the way the respondents use art in shaping identity and symbolically announcing their place in the world.

The respondents were made acquainted with a set of paintings/graphics with no information about the artists or labels identifying the styles or time of creation. As more than one work of art was depicted on the plates, respondents were asked to judge the general style on the plate rather than the individual works. For each set of works, the respondents were asked how well they liked the type of art depicted. The answers were given on a seven-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much" (the intermediate answering categories were numbered, not labelled). The styles were shown to the respondents in random order to omit the anchoring effect. The following plates were presented: impressionism/post-impressionism; late Renaissance/Baroque; Polish historical painting/academism; abstract art; abstract expressionism; nineteenth-century landscapes; surrealism/fantastic realism; primitives; street-art; pop-art (cf. Berghman and van Eijck 2009; van Eijck 2012) (see Appendix for a list of all the art works included). The respondents' answers were then used as input for a principal component analysis. The use of visual stimuli to gauge taste preferences seems to be a more suitable approach than using merely descriptive labels of styles, as these latter (in opposition to music, for example) are poorly recognized by the average survey participant and amenable to diverse interpretations. Visual stimuli can evoke quite

[3] The research was supported by grant no. 2016/21/D/HS6/02424 from the National Science Center (Poland).

[4] Although engagements with painting were privileged, I am fully mindful of a broader visual culture in the contemporary world, where the importance of images in photography, film, advertisement, and electronic media has great significance. Future research should take account of a more general field of visual culture.

intuitive responses among people who are not experts in a given domain. As Berghman and van Eijck wrote (2009: 354), "if you want to know how people appreciate specific styles or works of art, you can just show them pictures and have them evaluate those on the spot." The selection of styles of art and works was dictated both by theoretical intuition and previous studies showing, e.g., the distinctive nature of modern/abstract art or impressionism (Silva 2006; van Eijck 2012). The underlying idea was to include a range of types of art of varying degrees of "legitimacy" and styles (from "street" to "academic" art; from figurative to non-figurative art). At the same time, I shunned the most iconic works (e.g., "Mona Lisa"), whose presence on the plate could have influenced the reception and judgement of a given artistic style. Aside from tastes, general interest in the visual arts was a subject of research. It was evaluated using a five-point scale from 1—"not at all interested" to 5—"very interested."[5]

The key question I intend to answer in this article is how patterns of visual art preferences are inserted in personal networks and social capital. In the methodological literature we find at least three survey methods for measuring the latter, namely, the name generator/interpreter, the position generator, and the resource generator (Marsden 2012; Van Der Gaag and Snijders 2005; Sadowski 2012). All assume to a greater or lesser extent that social capital is the multiplicative outcome of the extensity of the social network (size, diversity) and resources embedded within it. In this study, social networks are measured using, among other things, the position generator (PG) (Lin and Erickson 2008), which remains one of the most reliable network tools and whose usefulness in the consumption domain has been corroborated in past studies (Erickson 1996; Cebula 2018). This tool captures the connections that people have to other people at different levels of the occupational hierarchy, on the assumption that knowing more different occupations and having access to higher status jobs generates more social capital (Lin and Erickson 2008). In the survey, the respondents were shown a list of 14 occupations (containing both low- and high-status jobs)[6] and then asked to indicate for each occupation whether or not they had "family members, friends/close acquaintances, or distant acquaintances with that occupation." Responses to this generator are usually combined into summary measures of the composition and range of the respondent's egocentric network. For the purpose of the study, I calculated, first, the total number of higher status positions, and second, the number of medium and lower status positions accessed.[7] This allowed us to assess what kind of social contacts matter as far as art consumption is concerned.

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[5] Although, as has been argued, our measurement of tastes make progress in comparison to previous studies that were based on attendance indicators, I agree that the comprehensive picture of art consumption should include information about preferences, attitudes, behaviors, and the possession of art objects (e.g., in homes). It is owing to a lack of space in the questionnaire that not all possible aspects of the art were incorporated. However, some of them (e.g., knowledge and attitudes) were elaborated elsewhere (Cebula 2015; 2018).

[6] The list included the following: lawyer, doctor, university lecturer, teacher, IT specialist, businessman/owner (other than respondent's employer), local politician, journalist, mechanic, book-keeper/accountant, artist/actor/musician, counter clerk, nurse, construction worker or finisher.

[7] Two groups of contacts were assessed on the basis of principal component analysis and hierarchical cluster analysis, which generated similar results, corresponding roughly with the standard occupational rank developed by Domański, Sawiński and Słomczyński (2009). Higher status positions included the following: lawyer, doctor, scientist, local politician, journalist, artist/actor/musician. The remainder from the list was counted in the category "medium and lower status positions".

To provide a more comprehensive picture of network correlates of art participation, certain additional network measures were added. One of these, network diversity (heterogeneity), followed K. Growiec's (2015) operationalization of bridging social capital, that is, capital involving people with different social characteristics than ego. As was assumed, diverse social networks give an opportunity to communicate with members of various social groups and thus to gain more diversified resources and abilities. Therefore, respondents were asked whether they had friends or acquaintances who were dissimilar to them in terms of age, political stances, lifestyle, material status, sexual orientation, etc. The positive answers were subsequently summarized in one index of social network diversity.[8] The second variable is network density, measured by a single question (cf., Słomczyński and Tomescu-Dubrow 2007). The respondents provided information about how many of their friends and close acquaintances knew each other, using the following categories: "all know each other—they make up one bunch of friends"; "most of them know each other"; "about half of them know each other"; "only a few of them know each other"; "nobody or almost nobody knows each other—my friends make up distinct social circles." The greater density was attributed to having more contacts interconnected.

As an interest in art and specific art preferences may be affected by exposure to cultural incentives and themes, I set out to assess the extent to which a personal social network comprises people who can influence the ego's lifestyle and cultural choices. Following the idea of a resource generator (RG) proposed by M. Van Der Gaag and T. A. B. Snijders (2005), the respondents were asked whether they knew anyone (a) who is a source of information about how they can spend their free time attractively (what to see or where to go), (b) thanks to whom they can try new things (e.g., dishes, sports, hobbies), (c) with whom they can spend free time outside the home, (d) who is a source of information about new technologies (telephones, computers), (e) who is a source of information about cultural matters (e.g., cinema, exhibitions, books, plays), (f) whose lifestyle inspires them, or (g) who is a source of job-related information. All items were used to construct one scale, tapping into the availability of the specific "cultural" resources embedded in someone's network.[9]

In addition, I included two separate measures on the frequency with which the respondents spent their free time with their household/family members rather than friends and acquaintances (outside the family). These contacts were measured on an ordinal scale, which ranged from 1—"never" to 5—"very often." As was shown by previous research (Cebula 2015), social contacts may be a good proxy for social capital (in terms of resources) and network extensity. By the same token, I figured in associational social capital. To that end, a single question on the number of associations (such as a political party, a professional

[8] The wording of the question was, "Among your friends and acquaintances, are there people (a) who are older or younger than you by at least 15 years?, (b) who hold different political views than you?, (c) who have a different material status than you?, (d) who prefer different kinds of music, literature, and entertainment than you?, (e) who lead a different lifestyle than you?, (f) who do not speak Polish?, (g) who are outside of your group of friends from the neighborhood or school?, (h) who have a different sexual orientation than you?" The following answer options were available: "No", "Yes, 1–2 persons", "Yes, a few persons," and "Yes, many persons." All positive answer categories were coded 1 and then counted to create one index of network variety (ranging from 0 to 8).

[9] Every item was measured on a three-point scale, where 1 meant "I do not know anyone," 2—"I know someone among my friends or family," and 3—"I know someone both from among friends and family." The final index has been calculated on the basis of the principal component analysis.

society, a labor union, a parent-teacher association, etc.) to which a respondent claimed membership was asked.[10]

The statistical analysis reported in the next section is based on techniques of binary logistic and linear multiple regressions, with measures of interest in art and visual art preferences as dependent variables and a range of socio-demographic[11] and network indicators as independent variables.

Results

As Bourdieu's (1993) model would lead one to expect, many "cultural needs" (including aesthetic ones) appear only in those who can satisfy them, that is, those who have received the means to appreciate them from their family environment and education. Cultural need thus does not precede cultural competence but is rather affected by or develops concurrently with it. Assuming at the same time that this competence is not easily accessible and far from evenly distributed across society, we may anticipate that general interest in the visual arts is a function of socio-economic status (e.g. education and family cultural capital). By analyzing the data in Table 1, we learn that this is in fact the case. The table depicts estimated binary logistic regression equations, in which interest in art is the explained variable, while background and network characteristics are the explanatory variables. The dependent variable has been dichotomized using a mean value as a split criterion. Thus, I try to predict who has a greater than average interest in art, compared to a reference category of those persons who are less interested or not at all interested in art.

Overall, the average interest in art was 2.79 (Median = 3; SD = 1.23) on a 5-point scale from 1—"not at all interested" to 5—"very interested." Of the total sample, 19.4 percent and 22.3 percent of respondents were, respectively, "not at all" and "rather not" interested in art, while 25.9 declared an average level of interest. A minority of people reported that they were interested in art: "in some degree"—25 percent and "very interested"—7.5 percent.

The estimates provided in Table 1 allow for two important conclusions: the declared art bias depended first on the variable characterizing social status (especially on cultural capital), and second, on network patterns. People with a higher level of education and more educated parents (and also enjoying a better standard of living) are more likely to be interested in art than their counterparts in lower social strata (see Hypothesis 1). For instance, an increase of one unit of parental cultural capital multiplies the likelihood of being interested in art by 1.27. This confirms the idea that art consumption reflects and probably upholds social boundaries. Moreover, some properties of the social network are of relevance, as evidenced by Model II. As can be seen, the change of size of Nagelkerke R^2 (which is interpreted as the proportion of variance of the dependent variable that is accounted for by the regression model) from 0.155 to 0.255 indicates that Model II better predicts category

[10] The scale ranged from 0—"no membership" to 4—"membership in at least four organizations."

[11] The socio-demographic variables were the following: age (in years), education (with 9 categories), family cultural capital (that is, a linear combination of the educations of the father and mother), social status (self-assessed on a 10-point scale from 1—"very poor" to 10—"very good"), economic standard of living (measured as a weighted index of the possession of eleven durable goods, such as a dishwasher, a smartphone worth over PLN 700, a laptop/notebook/tablet, a coffeemaker, a car, various sports equipment, etc.).

Table 1

Predictors of interest in art (logistic regression odds ratios)

Variables (predictors)	Model I		Model II	
	Wald	Exp (B)	Wald	Exp (B)
(Constant)	34.604	**0.178*****	24.051	**0.081*****
Economic standard of living	33.996	**1.188*****	8.260	**1.098****
Education	17.453	**1.225*****	8.804	**1.163****
Family cultural capital	8.937	**1.270****	2.764	1.153
Number of high status contacts (PG)			22.498	**1.241*****
Number of medium and lower status contacts (PG)			3.759	0.921
Frequency of spending free time with nonhome family members			0.356	0.947
Frequency of spending free time with friends and acquaintances			9.899	**1.316****
Network diversity			15.776	**1.151*****
Access to resources influencing lifestyle (RG)			9.089	**1.268****
Cox and Snell R^2	0.115		0.189	
Nagelkerke R^2	0.155		0.255	
–2 Log likelihood	1221.479		1135.256	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

membership. Four out of six network variables show a significant effect on interest in art, especially the frequency of spending time with friends and acquaintances (Exp (B) = 1.316; $p < 0.01$), followed by access to resources influencing lifestyle (Exp (B) = 1.268; $p < 0.01$). In other words, the more people socialize with their friends (but not with relatives outside of their home) and the more they are exposed to cultural incentives and advice, the more they are inclined toward art generally, net of stratification variables (see H5). The same is true regarding network heterogeneity. People having connections with a diversified group of other people are more likely to declare an interest in art, as expected in Hypothesis 3. Art involvement is also more pronounced among those having a greater number of ties to people occupying higher social positions (see H6). This confirms the presumption that command of some cultural forms (e.g., high art) contributes to enhancing class cohesion as a topic of conversation and shared symbolic system. This is all the more true when we consider the lack of significant association between interest in art and the number of social ties to persons in medium and lower status positions. Taste for the arts is not a valuable currency in this social environment.

An empirical question that has not previously been addressed is the relationship between specific visual art preferences and socio-demographic and network variables. So far, empirical studies have demonstrated that responses to visual art are determined by respondents' cultural capital, habitus, and social class (Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper 1991; Silva 2006), but a growing body of research lends credence to the contention that social capital also matters. To test this assumption, I will assess the effects of networks indicators on different tastes in art, using data on preferences for ten different styles of art. Previous research (Berghman and van Eijck 2009; van Eijck 2012) demonstrated that these styles can be reduced to two dimensions using principal component analysis. Accordingly, I distinguished two major art orientations. Five styles of more recent date (abstract art, pop-art, surrealism/fantastic realism, abstract expressionism, and street art) showed high loadings on component 1; the remainder (late Renaissance/Baroque, Polish historical painting/academism, impressionism/post-impressionism, and nineteenth-century landscapes) constituted a second component.[12] Because primitives held an intermediate position, that is, they belonged to both components, they were excluded from further analysis. Scores on these two factors were then used as dependent variables. Note that the structure of styles of art bears a resemblance to the taste patterns identified by P. Bourdieu (1991) as an opposition between modern/abstract/nonfigurative art (which is appreciated by members of higher social strata) and more traditional, realistic works, which appeal to the dominated social classes. For Bourdieu, taste is developed in relation to the conditions of existence of individuals, that is, their place in *l'espace social*.

Table 2 reports the results of two series of OLS regression models of appreciation for both aesthetic orientations. I start with Model I, incorporating only the control variables (age, social status, education, economic conditions, family cultural capital, and interest in art); then I introduce Model II with additional (network-related) predictors, to assess their independent contribution to the total variance explained. *Prima facie*, tastes for different styles of art remain entrenched in socio-demographic characteristics, but the pattern of association differs between them. Age proves to be the strongest predictor of art appreciation; it increases the level of preference for traditional art and decreases the predilection for modern styles.[13] Younger respondents are thus more inclined to like abstract/non-figurative and contemporary art and older ones to like traditional art. Because of the cross-sectional nature of the data, it is not possible to disentangle whether this is a cohort or an age effect (Newman et al. 2013). A possible explanation for the finding is that particular cohorts may have been socialized differently. For example, moves toward multiculturalism, globalization, the expansion of popular culture, and fun may preferentially influence people who were born or grew up in the post-communist period in comparison to their parents. Some scholars link a shift in art preferences with a more general evolution of what defines cultural capital. It is argued that traditional, elevated, "highbrow" culture is losing ground to the more commercialized, playful, and stylized culture familiar to younger generations (Silva 2008; Hanquinet, Roose and Savage 2014). Lastly, in line with the idea that taste is an expression of what, or whom, one does not want to be, eschewing traditional art might rest on a distinction strategy for young people. "The moderns" are looking for art that is, in their view, original or different and certainly not old-fashioned or simply boring (Berghman and van Eijck 2009: 361).

Explanatory variables, such as education, family cultural capital, social status, and general interest in art, are more strongly related to the appreciation for modern art ($R^2 = 0.310$) than to enthusiasm for traditional art ($R^2 = 0.118$), a corollary of which is that the former carries a certain level of cultural distinction. Modern art reveals more about the status and "character" of its audience, as indicated by the positive effect of cultural capital/educa-

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[12] The principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted. Eigenvalues were 2.749 and 2.335 respectively; the cumulative proportion of explained variance = 56.49.

[13] The term "modern," used to describe this cluster, refers to a broad spectrum of styles of art that have developed since the late nineteenth century. It is not fully precise as some of them (e.g., street art) are counted as a part of contemporary art.

Table 2

Predictors of preference for traditional art, modern art, and variety of preferences (standardized OLS regression coefficients)

Variables (predictors)	Traditional art		Modern art		Variety of preferences	
	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II
(Constant)	—***	—***	—***	—***	—	—***
Age (in years)	**0.312*** **	**0.298*** **	**–0.295*** **	**–0.260*** **	**–0.08 4***	–0.049
Subjective social status	**0.152*** **	**0.188*** **	**0.162*** **	**0.141*** **	**0.199*** **	**0.192*** **
Economic standard of living (weighted)	**–0.237*** **	**–0.147*** **	–0.054	**–0.099** **	**–0.146*** **	**–0.145*** **
Education	0.036	0.027	**0.102** **	**0.095** **	**0.077***	0.071
Family cultural capital	0.044	0.031	**0.082***	0.066	**0.127** **	**0.110** **
Interest in art	0.058	**0.112** **	**0.250*** **	**0.205*** **	**0.239*** **	**0.218*** **
Number of high status contacts (PG)		**–0.140** **		0.073		–0.026
Number of medium and lower status contacts (PG)		–0.018		**–0.077***		**–0.095***
Frequency of spending free time with home family members		**0.103** **		0.035		**0.082** **
Frequency of spending free time with friends and acquaintances		–0.025		**0.118*** **		**0.110*** **
Network diversity		–0.030		**0.124*** **		**0.143*** **
Associational membership		**–0.119** **		**0.083** **		0.038
Network density		**0.077***		0.044		0.043
Adjusted R^2	0.118	0.189	0.310	0.346	0.182	0.212
F—change (comparing to previous model)	—	ΔF(7.899) = 12.280; p < 0.001	—	ΔF(7.899) = 8.144; p < 0.001		ΔF(7.898) = 5.917; p < 0.001

* p < 0.05   ** p < 0.01   *** p < 0.001

tion (beta = 0.102; p < 0.01), social status (beta = 0.162; p < 0.001), and, to a lesser degree, parental cultural capital (beta = 0.082; p < 0.05).[14] These findings conform to our expectations (see H2). The only exception is the negative sign of the variable for economic standard (in Model II).

Adding network variables moderately increases the proportion of explained variance in both models. The picture that emerges from the data is that network characteristics have a different impact on appreciation of modern and traditional art. People who are more enthusiastic about the former spend more of their free time with their friends and acquaintances (but not with their family and household members), while the reverse is true for the latter (cf. H5). In addition, those enjoying modern art have connections with more diversified alters (in terms of age, economic status, cultural preferences in music, literature, or pastimes, sexual orientation, national origin, etc.), while this relationship is not significant for those opting for older kinds of art (H3). A possible explanation for these findings could have to do with the increased odds of exposure to less accessible culture, specific dispositions acquired through communication with diverse people, or a desire for a cosmopolitan

[14] The effects of these variables is partially mediated by interest in art.

identity (Kane 2004). It is worth noting that the network diversity items most associated with a preference for modern art were the following: connection with someone who has a different sexual orientation, or with someone who does not speak Polish, or someone who is older or younger than the respondent by more than 15 years. This may suggest that the relation under study is likely to occur since both cultural tastes and social networking orientations are part of one cosmopolitan habitus. Those developing and sustaining more open and outward-looking ties are also more willing to appreciate complex and multi-layered art. By contrast, residing in more inward-looking networks and networks of higher density could impede the acquisition of some dispositions and aid more conservative preferences, as indicated by a positive (although modest) correlation between network density and appreciation of older forms of art (beta = 0.077; $p < 0.05$) (cf. H4).[15] The same applies to associational membership. Respondents who declared their membership in a greater number of organizations scored higher on the scale of modern taste (beta = 0.083: $p < 0.01$) but lower on the scale of appreciation of traditional art (beta = –0.119; $p < 0.01$). Participation in voluntary associations (especially those composed of different people) is regarded as epitomizing so-called bridging social capital, a concept introduced by R.D. Putnam (2000) to describe networks encompassing people across diverse social cleavages and thus giving them access to external assets and information. In accordance with Tocqueville, membership in a voluntary association is considered a key source for the growth of trust between strangers and tolerance of differences between groups. According to our hypothesis, it may impinge upon attitudes toward and preferences for visual art and culture in general.

That said, not all social connections work the same way. As can be seen, the number of relations with people occupying higher social positions is inversely related to appreciation for older forms of art (beta = –0.140; $p < 0.01$), cognately as the number of social ties with persons in medium and lower status positions lowers affinity for modern artworks (beta = –0.077; $p < 0.05$). The results only partially concur with expectations (H6), as no significant relation between taste for modern art and contacts with persons in higher social positions can be ascertained.[16]

The last analysis will pertain to the effect of network heterogeneity on the variety of art preferences.[17] For this purpose, a special compositional index of variety[18] was constructed and then used as an explained variable in the regression model containing the same set of independent measures as previously (see Table 2). The conclusion to be drawn from the table is that independently of socio-demographic variables, the pursuit of variety (that is, preferring both types of art styles) is influenced to a significant degree by network diversity and that this relationship is even greater in terms of the beta coefficient than for the scale of modern art (beta = 0.143; $p < 0.001$ and 0.124; $p < 0.001$, respectively). As has been argued, having diversified tastes may be a “strategy” for extending vocabularies or repertoires in different genres, in order to be able to communicate with different audiences. The reverse

[15] Hypothesis 4 is confirmed only partially, as the relationship between network density and modern tastes is not significant.

[16] This relationship becomes significant if we remove the variable of interest in art from the equation.

[17] I use the term “variety” rather than “omnivorousness” as the latter connotes vertical boundary crossing (i.e., combining cultural items that hold different positions along the “highbrow—lowbrow” axis).

[18] Based on older and more modern items, extracted from the principal component analysis, I calculated how many pairs of each were found in a respondent’s taste pattern.

is also probable: exposure to diverse connections may result in acquiring by transmission a more heterogeneous cultural repertoire. The statistical fact that I wish to focus upon is also that the amount of variance explained by independent factors for the appreciation of modern art is significantly higher than for the index of variety, which suggests that the former bears more social and symbolic significance. In other words, social distinction is claimed rather through specific tastes (for "niche" art) than through likings for many styles of art.

Discussion and Conclusion

Over the past twenty years there has been a remarkable revival of interest in the nature of cultural participation. Forty years after Bourdieu conducted the fieldwork for his book *Distinction*, (1984), numerous studies (e.g., Chan and Goldthorpe 2007; Silva 2006, 2008) have shown how cultural differences remain entrenched in social divisions. Yet, although such results are welcome, they run the risk of masking other forms of diversity among cultural participants. In this article, I have reported findings that support the case for social networks (that is, a set of relations, associated meanings, and expectations that connect actors) as a context that frames engagement with visual art. In this regard, the present study is inscribed in a more sweeping tendency in the sociology of art perception and consumption (and the sociology of culture at large) to seek other than merely class or status antecedents of cultural participation (DiMaggio 1996; van Eijck 2012; Hanquinet 2013a, 2013b). Building on recent advances at the intersection of the sociology of culture and network theory (Lizardo 2006; Puetz 2015), as well as data from a specifically designed survey on personal networks and visual art preferences in Polish society, I have shown that the ways in which people are connected to each other, and the resources they obtain from these connections, are associated with their preferences and interests. More specifically, interest in art is shown to be a function of networks that have greater heterogeneity, are more outward-looking (friends-oriented), are rich in ties with higher status persons, and transmit cultural incentives and recommendations (even after controlling for traditional social determinants, such as education or economic capital). Similarly, adherents of different aesthetic styles (modern vs. older kinds of art) were embedded in networks of distinct kinds. Appreciation for the former was positively related to networks marked by some openness, as evidenced by the frequency of spending time with friends and acquaintances, attending voluntary associations, or having more diversified connections, while a liking for more traditional artworks corresponded to networks of greater constraint (family-oriented, informal, and dense). It is also worth noting that the status of contacts mattered, as enthusiasts for older forms of art had fewer ties with people from the higher social class and enthusiasts of "the moderns" had fewer ties with occupants of lower social ranks. According to the literature on networks (Lin 2001), searching for and obtaining new resources (e.g., of a kind useful in instrumental actions), usually requires transcending the inner layer of close relations and developing networks that involve bridges, structural holes, and weaker ties (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992). Perhaps a larger than average interest in art and a preference for its more "demanding" forms is an example of resources of this kind and is thus closely related with an open network.

The empirical evidence, owing to its cross-sectional character, does not directly distinguish between theoretical accounts of the significance of the main relationship. According to a point made earlier, there is no plausible reason to believe that art preferences cause network formation and differentiation (although it may be true of more general taste orientations). It is more probable that specific pursuits are the result of network configurations or characteristics (as expected regarding network heterogeneity) (Kane 2004) or the relationship is a matter of affinity—the possibility that art engagement and tastes are embedded together in one habitus or identity (e.g., a cosmopolitan one). An argument for the first interpretation is that interest in art (and to some degree preference for more recent forms) was correlated with an exposure to higher status contacts and contacts providing cultural stimuli. On the other hand, the effect of network heterogeneity supports the idea of cosmopolitanism, understood both in the sense of being able to fit anywhere and as a positive liberal commitment to tolerance (Warde, Martens and Olsen 1999: 123). An openness to new values in contemporary art when translated into the social domain may yield more contacts with people who differ from us in many respects. This issue should be addressed empirically in further research. The focus should be on the attitudinal correlates of appreciation for different kinds of art, to reveal whether people who are more attracted to modern works are also more approving of muliticulturalism or liberalism (cf. DiMaggio 1996).

Although the picture that emerges from the empirical data is that social networks are rather independent of (or additional to) class- or status-related variables in explaining art appreciation, we cannot entirely exclude that both social networks and the stratification variables used are just different aspects of more general background variables (or to put it another way, that network variables pick up some portion of cultural or economic capital that is not captured by formal education or standard of living, proxied by household equipment). What we need thus is to trace the antecedents of network participation (i.e., what kinds of social variables are responsible for individual participation in specific different forms of networks) and to check whether these are the same as those affecting culture consumption.[19]

This paper adds evidence to the debate on social stratification by shedding light on distinction patterns in the visual arts. Age, social status, and level of education remain the most important determinants of appreciation for the visual arts. As far as age is concerned, we cannot tell from our data if an age effect or a cohort effect is indicated. The latter seems to make more sense, as age reflects the growing importance of images and the aestheticization of reality, the rise of a new "screen" culture, and also the emergence of transgressive and new popular cultural forms and of entertainment values dating back to the sixties. At the same time, cultural consumption continues to reflect social inequalities and to uphold social boundaries, as implied by the explanatory power of background variables. The more pronounced socio-economic exclusivity of modern art enthusiasts allows us to infer that there is something symbolically significant about a taste for more contemporary and avant-garde art. In other words, cultural distinction and refinement are claimed rather through "niche"

[19] This is akin to the question of whether social capital (as well as cultural capital) is in the last instance merely an emanation of more fundamental economic capital. But such an interpretation seems to contradict Bourdieu, who distanced himself from economic reductionism, underlining instead the multidimensional nature of the social space (Bourdieu 1985).

tastes than through a breadth of art preferences or a liking for traditional art. Nevertheless, we cannot exclude the possibility that the preferences manifested in regard to kinds of art (used here as a proxy for cultural tastes) conceal some portion of cultural differentiation, as the same objects of culture may be appropriated in symbolically divergent ways (e.g., by aesthetic disposition or by applying non-specific codes of everyday life), as was hinted by Bourdieu (1984, 1993) and identified empirically by S. Daenekindt and H. Roose (2017). Although our measurement strategy is an advance in comparison to past research, the artworks that represented a given style of art were diverse, and thus similar evaluations may have hidden different meanings attached to these styles. To address these issues we need to go beyond the survey data.[20]

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Appendix

The list of art works shown to respondents during the interviews:

1. Impressionism/postimpressionism:
   - Claude Monet: Impression, Sunrise (1872)
   - Józef Pankiewicz: Targ na kwiaty przed kościołem św. Magdaleny w Paryżu [Flower market outside the Madeleine Church] (1890)
   - Vincent van Gogh: The Langlois bridge at Arles with women washing (1888)
2. Late-renaissance/Baroque:
   - Peter Paul Rubens: The union of earth and water (1618)
   - Peter Paul Rubens: Samson and Delilah (1609/1610)
   - Caravaggio: Supper at Emmaus (1601)
3. Polish historical painting/academism:
   - Jan Matejko: Batory pod Pskowem [Stephen Báthory at Pskov] (1872)
   - Henryk Siemiradzki: Pochodnie Nerona [Nero's Torches] (1876)
4. Abstract art:
   - Piet Mondrian: Composition no. 3, with red, blue, yellow, and black (1929)
   - Kazimir Malevich: Suprematist composition (1916)
   - Mark Rothko: Red, orange, tan and purple (1949)
5. Abstract expressionism:
   - Jackson Pollock: Number 8 (1949)
   - Clyfford Still: PH-118 (1947)
   - Adolph Gottlieb: Beautiful rug (ca. 1950)
6. 19th century landscapes:
   - Józef Chełmoński: Kuropatwy na śniegu [Partridges in the snow] (1891)
   - Józef Chełmoński: Świt. Królestwo ptaków [Dawn. The kingdom of birds] (1906)
7. Surrealism/fantastic realism:
   - Aram Vardazaryan: Caravan Dali
   - René Margitte: Golconda (1953)
   - Wojciech Siudmak: Secret armada
8. Primitives:
   - Nikifor Krynicki: Dymiące kominy
   - Karol Kostur: Rynek nowotarski
   - Marc Chagall: The betrothed and Eiffel tower (1913)
9. Street-art:
   - Banksy: Girl with red balloon (There is always hope)
   - Banksy: Maid in London
   - Anonymous mural
10. Pop-art:
    - Andy Warhol: Marilyn Monroe (60.)
    - Roy Lichtenstein: Whaam! (1963)
    - Peter Blake: Sources of Pop Art V

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Internet Discussions of Uncertainties and Risks of Contraceptive Pills in the Czech Republic

Abstract: The article deals with social discussions concerning the risks and benefits of using combined oral contraceptive pills (COCP). The discussions reflect sociological theories of risk, loss of trust in biomedicine, and active lay participation in health choices. The main goal of the qualitative content analysis of six internet discussions from 2006 to 2015 is to identify how former, current, and future users of COCP in the Czech Republic deal with the risks and benefits of this method, the possible alternatives being considered, and how information from these internet discussions influences the choice of method. The main narratives showing reflection of risk in internet discussions about hormonal contraceptives were called: Weighing the risk of taking or not taking COCP, Risk of side effects when using COCP, Risk of "post-pill syndrome," Sharing information and experience.

Keywords: hormonal contraceptives, COCP, internet discussions, risk, lay health beliefs

Introduction

Countries of the former Eastern bloc share a specific characteristic that is not seen in Western countries: a high, almost universal fertility at a young age, such as was typical in the era under Communism. Early family formation and childbearing was a social norm at that time, and reliable contraceptive methods were not widely available. When modern contraceptive methods became available in the 1960s, they did not reach the eastern European countries. Although most countries of Europe had total fertility rates of under 2 children even before 1989, low rates were achieved in western and northern Europe primarily through widespread contraceptive usage with abortion serving as a backup, while in eastern Europe abortion played the primary role (Hassoun, Jourdain 1995). This situation was recognized as big social and medical problem which was addressed at a conference called "From Abortion to Contraception: Public Health Approaches to Reducing Unwanted Pregnancy and Abortion Through Improved Family Planning Services," held in Tbilisi, Georgia, USSR in October 1990 (David 1992). The situation changed dramatically after the revolutions in 1989. In the 1990s, the life course was de-standardized, parenting became just one of many options, and the postponement of the first birth was typical. This value shift was accompanied by the availability of modern contraceptives. Both in the Czech Republic and Poland, hormonal contraceptives are issued by prescription from a gynecologist. Statistics in the Czech Republic show that availability of COCPs is the effective way how to lower abortion rates (Fait 2014).

The contraceptive behavior of Czech women has not yet been a topic for broader sociological debate. Researchers in sexuality and sexual health have thus far considered only the number of women who use reliable modern contraceptive methods. As this number grew over the last three decades, research reported a positive trend towards responsible family planning. Weiss and Zvěřina (2001: 131) stated that the steep rise in the number of women taking combined oral contraceptive pills (COCP) was unique even in comparison to other former Eastern-bloc countries. The rising proportion of women on COCP was associated with massive changes in Czech society during the 1990s.

Research in specific subgroups suggests that up to 69 percent of women use COCP. Even more women consider it to be a potential acceptable method for themselves; however, a large number of women experience negative side effects when using COCP (Kikalová et al., 2014). The book *Život bez hormonální antikoncepce* (Life Without Birth Control Pills) (Nováková 2017) tells stories of women who experienced serious side effects when using COCP; some of these women were even at risk of dying. The stories also show that women are not always satisfied with their chosen method; their choice is a result of compromise and risk calculation as well as belief in medical advice and limited knowledge of any alternative options.

Since the 1960s when COCP was introduced in the United States, extensive developments have been made towards the safety of the method. Millions of women around the world take COCP daily. On the other hand, ever since its introduction, there have also been extensive debates and fears about the side effects and possible dangers to women's health. During the 1990s, controversies arose related to the risk of venous thrombosis in new generations of COCP (WHO 1995; Barnett and Breakwell 2003). This led to a significant decrease in the number of users in some countries (e.g. Furedi 1999; de Jong-van den Berg et al. 2003; Hester 2005; Farmer et al. 1997). In the Czech Republic, the debate did not reach the lay public and no declining trend in the number of users was noticed (Fait 2014). However, a decline happened around 2008–2009, and the number of COCP users has decreased each year since then (Czech Statistical Office 2015). The reasons are not clear and have not been examined by a representative study.

This article is an empirical study covering the peak period of COCP users, around 2008, and the subsequent declining trend. It uses internet discussions from period 2006 to 2015 about hormonal contraception to explore the problems and issues women deal with when choosing or using the method. As the main controversies connected with relate to its safety, the interest of the analysis is especially directed towards the concept of risk and how the risk and safety dilemma is addressed in the discussions. Since side effects and safety and risk concerns (Rosenberg and Waugh 1998) are common reasons for discontinuing, changing, or rejecting COCP in other countries (Ali, Cleland, and Shah 2012), the author believes that the study is relevant even outside the Czech Republic, for countries that either have a low percent of women using hormonal contraceptives, or that, like the Czech Republic, face a declining trend in COCP usage.

Sociological Concepts of Risk

The concept of risk in terms of the probability of side effects of COCP comes from epidemiology. Debates in the lay public about the safety of COCP are inspired by and derived from this expert knowledge. At the same time, however, risk perception is influenced by the broad social context around the individual. Menon et al. (2008) stated that the perception of health risk is subjective; it differs from the actual probability of experiencing serious side effects. Each individual has their own perception of risk. This perception may be influenced by the incidence of side effects in the individual's family, by previous experiences, by health anxiety, or by exposure to information about possible danger. The lay public has complex theories about health and illness, health maintenance, and mechanisms of illness. The knowledge, perceptions, and theories influence real health behavior, willingness to consult or visit practitioners and the intent to seek alternative medical help (Nettleton 2013).

Risk perception and reflection by both the lay public and experts are characteristic features of a risk society (Beck 2011). Different kinds of risks are continually reconsidered and recalculated, with some being neglected and others elevated. Trust in biomedicine and science is decreasing. In contrast to the modern science of the industrial era, today's post-modern science is perceived not only as a problem solver, e.g. the inventor of a reliable contraceptive method that helped to meet the needs of millions of women, but also as a troublemaker that brought new health problems in the form of the side effects of COCP.

Beck (2011) wrote about universal risk produced by human action and inbuilt into the society. Novas and Rose (2000) stated that in the current era, risk concepts should be reconsidered along a genetic axis. In the era of enormous progress in the knowledge of genes and their meaning for developing different conditions, a new category of individual was produced: the individual who is genetically at risk. In contrast to biological determinism, being genetically at risk involves an active attitude with new life strategies oriented toward actively shaping life trajectories. This is also in accord with an active patient role that has been adapted in biomedicine. Every individual is responsible for their own health, and indeed their own life in a broader perspective. Scott et al. (2005) noted that genetic risks apply not only to people who have been tested for them; all individuals are potentially genetically prone to some illness. Given the vast and continuous progress in this research area, everyone needs to be concerned (Crawford 1980). Even a negative result is negative only in terms of the current state of knowledge; it could be reconsidered any time in the future. This situation of ever-present (genetic) risk for health issues produces a population of anxious hypochondriacs constantly striving to find more and better information and adopt more effective strategies to fight uncertainty and risk.

The Internet as a Source of Health Information

In risk society, the interpretation of information and advice from a broad range of experts form part of a wider reflectiveness (Beck 2011). Hardey (2001) showed that the reflective construction and publication of health narratives forms part of the reconfiguration of the health expertise that is available to internet users. Even though the relationship between doctors as experts and lay people as passive individuals seeking medical help started to change sometime before the internet (Tuckett et al. 1985), the massive availability of the internet granted people access to unprecedented amounts of information. Health information is among the most widely searched topics. For some people, searching for this kind of information and taking part in on-line discussions have become a hobby, sometimes even an obsession. Broadly speaking, the internet has an influence on people's everyday decision making. This includes all kinds of internet activities related to health—it could be on-line consultation with practitioners, purchasing drugs and medications on-line, blogging about health, and participating in health-related forums (Hardey 2001; Segal 2009). In terms of active blogging and taking part in forums, internet users oscillate between consuming and producing health information and co-creating contemporary medical pluralism (Cant and Sharma 1999).

Internet forums are good places for seeking advice because they connect large groups of diverse people and thus make advice and opinions from a heterogenous sample of people easily accessible. However, it is also possible that people get contradictory information or overwhelming amounts of advice and the final decision could be complicated (Eysenbach and Köhler 2002; Boase et al. 2006).

Existing studies have not reached an agreement on whether using the internet to understand health leads to patient empowerment. To feel empowered, health literacy and a feeling of self-control over life is crucial (Crondahl and Karlsson 2016). However, the information on the internet is not always reliable, searching is not always systematic, and the findings do not always lead to higher health literacy. Segal (2009) stated that to barriers to empowerment are a part of medicine as a system of expert knowledge, with doctors sharing only limited amounts of information in limited timeframes. Patients do not have the same information as medical experts, and even if they did, they would not understand all the consequences and the context because they do not have the key expert knowledge. Thus, patient's health decisions and health choices are always subjective. Similarly, Prior (2003) doubted the ability of lay people to understand complex health-related problems. Lay people pay more attention to other people as well as to their own experiences than to scientific information. Their health beliefs and health choices often do not reflect scientific findings. Despite this, even this limited stock of knowledge and understanding is a basis for decisions and choices.

The concept of an internet patient has been developed (Henwood et al. 2003). The typical internet patient is described as a responsible, reflective individual who wants to be part of the decision-making process concerning their own health. This definition presupposes a rational individual. Existing research, however, shows that excessive health-related internet searching produces a new kind of hypochondria-prone patient. Eastin and Guinsler (2006) call this kind of patient "cyberchondriacs". They are trapped in never-ending searches for more accurate and more convincing information; they tend to perceive the most serious scenarios as the most probable ones.

Flowers-Coulson et al. (2000) discovered that people sometimes consult the internet to fix emergency situations that need to be solved by medical experts. Some people also confer over professional diagnoses. For young people, the internet can be the only way to get information without their parents knowing. Young people may also use the internet to assure themselves that some conditions are normal in a way that meets the standards of a desired state (Harvey et al. 2007).

Data and Methods

Using the internet for research purposes has both advantages and disadvantages. There is a large amount of information and data to analyze and the amount grows constantly.

Moloney et al. (2003) describe internet discussions as virtual focus groups in which the interactions take place without a researcher's intervention. As people post and react to previous posts, the discussion flows fluently, and more information and data is produced than each individual could produce on his own (Holtz 2012). However, the anonymity is a limitation for the researcher, who gets a limited amount of information about the population that produced the data. The information deficit can be partly compensated by the analysis of the forum as a whole. This way, the researcher gets at least some general idea about the population (Holtz 2012). Data collection through discussions is an unobtrusive method.

Earlier articles using data from the internet include Soussan and Kjellgren (2014) and Kjellgren et al. (2013), who explored experiences with drugs and other substances. In terms of contraception behavior, Gainer et al. (2003) explored the motives and reasons for visiting internet pages about emergency contraception.

In this empirical study, the method for the discussion selection was inspired by Meyer et al. (2011). They used the three most common internet browsers. They typed in keywords in different combinations and chose the first few suggested links on each browser. They also considered other characteristics for the links, such as the target audience of the page and its relevance (Meyer et al. 2011: e17). In this study, we used the three most widely used browsers (google.cz, seznam.cz, and centrum.cz) to search for relevant discussions using the keywords "hormonal contraception discussion". The search was performed on August 2, 2016. The first five links suggested by each browser were chosen if they met the inclusion criteria: the discussion should be autonomous, not a reaction under an article, as discussions under articles presumably tend to be influenced by the content that initiated them. Six discussions met the criteria; they came from six different servers: doktorka.cz, mezoterapie.cz, modrykonik.cz, omlazeni.cz,wwwlinkhttp://vitalion.czvitalion.cz, and emimino.cz. All discussions were visible without any restrictions or registration requirements. The discussions cover a ten-year period from 2006 to 2015.

Only meaningful posts were included in the analysis, all the off-topic and short reactions without added value were excluded. The final sample consists of 930 contributions from 395 users. All the content was copied into a text editor, converted into pdf format, and analyzed using Atlas.ti program. Qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff 2013) was used. The unit of analysis is an individual contribution to the discussion. Each contribution was open coded for emerging themes and topics. Only manifest content was considered. For every code, keywords were selected. With every new emerging theme, a new code was created. Codes were compared and contrasted against each other.

The typical contribution mentioned multiple topics and responded to more than one user; it asked questions at the same time. Therefore, multiple codes were assigned to each such contribution.

Reflection of Risk in Internet Discussions about Hormonal Contraceptives

Weighing the Risks of Taking or not Taking COCP

The topic of risk in many possible forms was present in all discussions. The basic dividing line is between using and not using contraception. For using COCP, women were mostly concerned about its side effects. For not using it, the major concern was about the risk of unintended pregnancy. COCP is connected to a low probability of unintended pregnancy; women spoke about it in terms of reliability and comfort. On the other hand, some women who were not sure about the safety of COCP but needed a reliable contraceptive method wrote about compromising and balancing pros and cons:

I don't want to have a baby yet, because I'm only 20 and don't want to risk pregnancy. The Pill is the best option, I think. However, there are just few pros and the cons are even terrifying. If I was not afraid of getting pregnant, I would never take it (omlazeni.cz, 2010).

Women who are more afraid of unintended pregnancy than of possible side effects continue to use COCP. Their decisions are connected to a perceived low age for having a child, unfinished education, unstable partnership, or an unsatisfactory housing situation. Some of them have also a clear vision of their desired life course trajectory and they do not want to have their first child before they get married.

Besides the possible risks and side effects, non-contraceptive benefits that should lead to higher life satisfaction are considered. The most cited include improved skin quality, regulated menstruation, the possibility of prolonging the menstrual cycle, and postponing menstruation or even skipping it for a month or two in order to participate in leisure activities, sport events, or holidays. The Pill is also mentioned as a way to manage menstrual pain, severe cramps, and heavy bleeding. In contrast to women needing reliable contraception, women with health troubles connected with menstruation consider taking COCP mainly for this reason:

Am I the only one who is thinking of taking the Pill? Don't want to suffer every month anymore (modrykonik.cz, 2015).

Some younger women consider taking COCP, or admit already taking it, for treating acne-prone skin. In the discussions, this reason is considered irresponsible and these users feel pressure to justify their decision:

Sometimes even very young girls take the Pill, like I do, and it's only because of the skin. I needed to start; my skin was in such a bad condition that I would have had little scars all over my face for the rest of my life if I hadn't started (modrykonik.cz, 2006).

Using COCP mainly for non-contraceptive benefits reclassifies it as lifestyle drug (Watkins 2012). This category of medication was introduced not to treat serious medical conditions or deficits, but mainly to improve the quality of life and life satisfaction of individuals by treating unpleasant bodily conditions. As far as skin quality is concerned, COCP Diane-35, which is most often used for this purpose, is mentioned as potentially risky due to a high-level dose of hormones. COCP that contain lower hormone doses are considered to be safer. The lower-hormone COCP are also perceived as modern. Some of the women also associate higher prices with quality and implicitly associate quality with lower risk.

Risk of Side Effects when Using COCP

The risks of using COCP are mentioned in two contexts. The dominant context concerns side effects while taking COCP. The other context concerns the risk of long-term use of

COCP, with effects that appear after COCP discontinuation; this condition is called post-pill syndrome.

When talking about potential side effects, alternatives to COCP are discussed. Throughout the discussions, all the available methods are mentioned, and women talk about their experiences with these methods, their availability, their financial costs, the effectiveness or difficulties with using the methods, and obstacles to using them. For hormonal contraceptives in general, the amount of hormones and mechanism of function are important—thus, hormonal injections are considered to be dangerous because large doses are administered to the body at once. Some previous users also reported gaining weight after these injections, which is also attributed to the larger doses of hormones. On the other hand, contraceptive patches are recommended as a mild, economical, and user-friendly option. As far as non-hormonal methods are concerned, the discussions concern the availability of the method, the financial costs, and the risk of unintended pregnancy. IUDs (both hormonal and non-hormonal) are discussed in connection with risks to future pregnancy and the risk of gynecological conditions.

Fear of side effects can lead to a COCP discontinuation:

I have decided to discontinue before any troubles appear. Maybe it works for some people for several years without any difficulty; however, I've met many people who regret that they ever started on the Pill (modrykonik.cz, 2012).

Similarly, as Menon et al. (2008) observed, other people and their experiences influence the way people perceive risk. This perceived subjective risk is an impulse for action; in this case, the perceived subjective risk is an impulse for discontinuing COCP. The biggest concerns are serious life-threatening conditions such as stroke, venous thrombosis, and pulmonary embolism. A few women reported such experiences:

…and then I had a stroke. My vision is affected, and I also have some other troubles. The Pill was immediately prohibited to me and they [doctors] told me that the Pill causes heart attack and strokes quite frequently (doktorka.cz, 2008.)

Even though the number of women who suffer from these serious side effects is objectively low, the discussion participants spoke about this experience as frequent. Some women supported their statements by citing alleged medical authorities:

One neurosurgeon told me that they deal with these complications very often at their clinics (modrykonik.cz, 2011).

This information contradicts the information leaflet that present these side effect as extremely rare.[1]

Some of the contributions to the discussion are meant to be a warning for other women. Their general message is "Be careful, this happened to me, so it could happen to you or anybody else." Such warnings can be expressed as in this statement:

I used to take a combined contraceptive pill for 12 years, then I suffered a stroke. The reasons were the Pill and a hereditary heart defect (girls, be careful, the majority of us don't know about this condition, but about 20% of

[1] Information leaflet to Diane35 states that less than one in one thousand women suffers venous thrombosis during using Diane35.

the population have this defect; it is called an aneurysm). They tested me for thrombosis in hospital (so it is not true that your gynecologist would take care of these tests); it is a very expensive test, so it is almost never applied as prevention. However, even without this genetic mutation, I would probably suffer these health difficulties, so I'm not touching the Pill. The Pill is forbidden for me by my cardiologist, hematologist, and neurologist (doktorka.cz, 2013).

This contribution is not only a warning, but at the same time, it opens another topic, that of testing for genetic factors and thrombophilia. There is some awareness about genetic factors and thrombophilia among the women in discussion. However, the methods for testing these conditions are not always understood and described correctly. Some women confuse these complex tests with regular blood checkups.

Preventive blood tests and potential genetic testing are popular topics and women conclude that these tests should be covered by health insurance and done automatically before prescribing COCP. However, other women point out that stroke or thrombosis can happen even without genetic factors. Similarly with Scott's (2005) findings, features of genetic individuals appear. Women are aware that genetic testing is possible, and that at the same time these tests do not ensure that thrombosis will not happen. However, preventive check-ups are a mechanism for dealing with risk.

While using COCP, regular checkups are perceived to lower the risk of side effects. Also, practitioners who perform regular blood tests and other examinations are considered more responsible and more patient oriented. One woman calls attention to the fact that:

…since I don't know which year, it has not been obligatory for the doctors to do a blood test before prescribing the Pill or during its use. Only a responsible doctor will do it and most likely only by request (modrykonik.cz, 2006).

This contribution describes a special category of doctors: responsible doctors. It implicitly states that these responsible doctors care about the patient more than the other doctors who are not responsible. It also emphasizes a need for active patient involvement. As Smith et al. (1999) stated, the belief that health problems are preventable is a key precondition for an active attitude to health. The opinions presented in these discussions suggest that a certain (regular) set of tests should be enough guarantee that no serious side effects will appear. Parusniková (2000) stated that prevention and strategies to manage health threats are embedded in the current dominant medical discourse. As far as prevention strategies in these discussions are concerned, only strategies connected with medical practice are mentioned. Lifestyle factors, such as getting enough physical activity, not smoking, and eating a healthy diet, are not mentioned. Also, in connection with the role of medical practitioners, some women state that contemporary medicine is mainly a big business and profit is the most important thing for some practitioners who prescribe COCP as a "universal good". Women share their perceptions that practitioners benefit from the amount of COCP they prescribe, and this fact is the reason why they only tell patients the positive aspects of the method:

I used to be on the Pill for 10 years, and like many others, I was convinced that it is not that bad. Now I just say it's a big NO for me. Contraceptives are first of all big business for many companies and that's why we only hear about benefits and pros (doktorka.cz, 2007).

Connected to this is also the perception that other practitioners outside this business (e.g. alternative healers, homeopathists, or neurologists who deal with women having a stroke) are honest and inform patients objectively about the side effects and contraindications for using COCP. In line with this opinion, the Fécond Survey in France showed that the choice of contraceptive method is strongly linked to the interests of medical and financial stakeholders (Bajos et al. 2012). Women with this opinion share at the same a negative attitude towards COCP. Often, they support their statements with examples from their own experience:

I had gynecological problems for 7 years and I used to hear "do not discontinue the Pill" all the time. Finally, when I was having serious pains, I didn't consult anybody and just stopped using it. It's been a year and I'm absolutely OK now. All problems solved all of a sudden as if by magic (modrykonik.cz, 2011).

Risk of "Post-pill Syndrome"

Throughout the discussions, concerns appear about infertility connected with long-term use of COCP. Many women reported irregular cycles for several months after COCP discontinuation. Some of them also reported problems with conception. On the other hand, other women shared contradictory experience:

I used to be on the Pill for 11 years and I got pregnant immediately in the first month after discontinuation (modrykonik.cz, 2007).

A typical contradictory experience describes the long-term using of COCP for an irregular cycle and then serious issues with menstrual loss after discontinuation:

I had been taking the Pill since I was 16. When the doctor prescribed it, she spoke highly of it, she said that my period would be regular and light, and I would be free from unintended pregnancy concerns. When I discontinued the pill and wanted to conceive, I started to have enormous period pains, hormonal acne, an irregular cycle, and so on. Simply said, my body wasn't able to function properly without the Pill and it took a long time to make it work properly (mezoterapie.cz, 2015).

The previous citation also adds another meaning to the fear of post-pill syndrome and generally how the body would work without COCP. Some women are afraid of acne, hair loss, and weight gain; this is a reason for them to continue with COCP:

I'm really scared that once I discontinue due to planning pregnancy, I would get a terrible rash all over my face, shoulders and back and I would be unable to treat it because of the pregnancy (modrykonik.cz, 2006).

Sharing Information and Experience

The participants of the discussion use forums for basic general information about different contraceptive methods and options and their advantages and disadvantages. For some, the forums are probably starting points in their search for information. Others come with more specific questions based on their previous research and methods they are considering. They also share sources of other information—they link to popular newspaper or magazines articles and webpages. Scientific information is studied only through popular sources.

The internet users who took part in the analyzed discussions were former COCP users, current users, and women who were thinking of using it at the time that they were searching for information in discussions. Some of the women contributed to the discussion only once, by replying to a question or by writing about their experience or opinion. More active participants were trying to find solution for their problem, they came to the forum repeatedly, asking other participants questions or replying to similar posts with the intention of sharing their experience and acquiring some knowledge. Women who are in the process of searching for a contraceptive method ask others. A typical post asks about the experiences of other users:

I'd like to know your opinions on hormonal contraception and your experience with it. If you use it, what is your experience etc. Please share (modrykonik.cz, 2006).

Thanks to this kind of contribution, many women share their positive or negative experiences and they also write about their friend's experiences. Women mention a range of possible side effects, including less-serious issues such as gynecological problems, headaches, or dizziness, and some psychological effects such as depression, mood swings, hypersensitiveness, and lower libido.

Psychological side effects are reported to develop slowly over years, so that the women did not notice them immediately. Often, they noticed an effect retrospectively after COCP discontinuation, when the side effect disappeared. However, some women did not notice these effects when using COCP. These women retrospectively speak negatively about COCP and regret having started it. They also recommend that current users be careful about the potential side effects and to pay attention to their bodies. Women with negative experiences recommend that others choose non-hormonal methods.

Some women share their decision, based on the information from discussions, to discontinue using COCP:

I used to take the Pramino pill and everything was fine. Then I switched to Lindynette and since that time, I have experienced many side effects and health issues. This was combined with thrombosis in several of my friends and reading many internet discussions on the internet and the decision to discontinue came suddenly (modrykonik.cz, 2006).

The participants share the opinion that discontinuation is the individual decision of each woman and it is not necessary to consult a gynecologist or general practitioner, unless some health issues are presented.

Women who discontinued COCP some time ago and have already overcome problems with hormonal imbalance stated that they feel better, happier, free, and empowered, and that they are able to listen to and understand their bodies.

COCP discontinuation as a moment of freeing oneself from evil hormones is connected to the perception that COCP contains a dose of hormones and the body must somehow deal with this artificial substance. This statement is sometimes accompanied by the perception that the longer COCP is used, the larger the amount of hormones that accumulate somewhere in the body. As a strategy against accumulating hormones, temporary discontinuation for few months after six to ten years on COCP was suggested. However, not all the participants agreed with the suggestion. Some participants pointed out that a temporary discontinuation causes a drop and then a rise in the level of hormones, which is also demanding for the body to deal with it.

Subsequent discussions related to strategies of how to cleanse the body of hormones, to help it to deal with them, or to speed the process of regeneration after discontinuation; many self-help strategies are shared. Among these, using different herbs or food supplements is popular. One woman replied to another:

Just try to enhance the healing process, use for example psyllium (very popular here), chlorella, spirulina, Yucca (I have very good experience with it), Denoxinal or just a basic nettle or some other tea. There are many options… (modrykonik.cz, 2006).

Women describe hormone cleansing as a process starting with COCP discontinuation and accompanied by unpleasant body reactions such as acne, bad skin and hair quality, hair loss, weigh gain, and irregular or even no menstruation. Regular menstruation is perceived as evidence that body is working properly. Besides the recommendations for body cleansing, tips on how to re-start menstruation are also discussed. Women want to avoid injections of hormones and discuss self-help options.

I have good experience with cinnamon, it warms up your body. So, if, just drink hot wine and pour some cinnamon in it. I used to mix it with everything, even with yoghurt, when I had a similar problem (modrykonik.cz,2006).

Irregular or no menstruation after COCP discontinuation causes uncertainty and concerns. Sharing and discussing self-help strategies shows that women feel empowered to remedy the damage caused by hormones. When sharing advice or experience, the only criterion is if the strategy is perceived as effective, if it helped the woman.

I finally got my period 48th day of the cycle, try adding some cinnamon to your yoghurt at breakfast. It worked for me (modrykonik.cz, 2006).

No scientific evidence about this mechanism is mentioned, even the correlation is unclear, however the belief is the important factor in sharing this advice as functional.

Conclusions

Former COCP users, current users, and women considering using COCP took part in the analyzed discussions. Many lay perceptions and beliefs about COCP risks and how to deal with them were identified. The choice of a method or its discontinuation is part of a broader story considering current life situation, risks connected to using a method, and risks of not using that method. When considering hormonal COCP, the amount of hormones, financial costs, and potential non-contraceptive benefits are taken into account. Non-hormonal alternatives are discussed in terms of effectiveness, particularly the risk of unintended pregnancy and ease of use. Sometimes, non-contraceptive benefits are the main reason for starting and using COCP. This kind of user defends their choice in the discussions, as some of the other women call them irresponsible, gambling with their health. According to these critics, the risks connected to high doses of hormones in COCP for treating acne are inappropriately high for the benefits they offer.

The analysis of the discussions showed that the knowledge being produced through them is not generally new. All the side effects are described in the patient information leaflets. However, it is new for the women who acquire new information by sharing facts and stories with other women. Women are asked to share their experiences that are considered authentic, and medicine as a system of expert knowledge is discredited by the accusation that the main motivation is profit. As Hardey (1999) states, discussions are to some extent a challenge to expert knowledge.

Experience with using COCP and with side effects are shared as warnings or recommendations to others. Participants in the discussions become producers of health knowledge; the knowledge is embedded in their personal experience and this is a source of information for other women who compare their own experience against the referenced one. A similar process was described by Hester (2005). Sharing experience is a new dimension of knowledge; through reading about someone else's experience, women understand their own bodies and reconstruct the effects of hormones on their bodies. Some of them may even decide to discontinue based on this embodied knowledge. Statistically described risks of side effects are abstract and impersonal; side effects shared as stories are perceived as real and common. From the point of view of the participants of the discussions, new knowledge is produced.

Women who have already discontinued COCP share self-help practices of managing post-COCP syndrome. In this sense, discussions help women to feel empowered to solve their health issues. Lay beliefs that these strategies are effective in turn affect the experiences of other women.

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Moral Outrage and the Fight for the Reputation of Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Qualitative Content Analysis of Posts Below an Interview with Parents of a Woman with Down Syndrome

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to identify the causes of moral outrage expressed in the comments published below the interview with parents of an adult woman with Down syndrome who are also co-founders and co-runners of a "Bardziej Kochani" ["Loved more"] Association for parents of persons with Down syndrome. A qualitative analysis of the content of posts was carried out due to the status of the author of the comment (person related to the environment of people with disabilities or not). The article analyses status of emotions in sociology and discusses the perceived roles of the interviewees, especially their assumed responsibility as role models. Main causes of moral outrage emerging from the comments are presented: the way of talking about disability and people with disabilities, issues related to integration in education. Linguistic differences resulting from the status of comments' authors were also indicated.

Keywords: internet forum, intellectual disability, qualitative content analysis, moral outrage, emotions and sociology

Introduction

Current social sciences are more and more interested in the situation of persons with intellectual disability. They have not been present in social space until the mid-twentieth century. Norwegian researchers describe the three decades after World War II, 1945–1975, as the "Golden Age" of the welfare state: "The first 15 years of this period were also the 'Golden Age' of segregated services for intellectually disabled people. This goes both for long-stay residential facilities and special education" (Tossebro, Aalto, Brusen 1996: 47).

Over the past few decades, situation of persons with disabilities and their families has changed radically. However, the way of speaking remains conservative. Sophie Mitra writes about this: "The notion of disability is enigmatic, even confusing. The term itself 'disability' has negative connotations, which is no surprise given the prefix 'dis' meaning 'absence' or 'negation.' Beyond the everyday semantic muddle around the term 'disability,' how it is conceptually defined is also challenging" (Mitra 2018: 8–9). Sociologists writing about persons with intellectual disability have to take this challenge and taking this challenge is what we do in this paper.

Western societies are at present in the process of appreciating the role of persons with disabilities in the social life. "Disability may be considered a minority issue. After all, only about 15 per cent of the population—one in seven—is disabled. But there are at least a billion people with disability on the planet, plus all their relatives and friends. So, most lives are touched by disability in some way, and it's about time we understood it better" (Shakespeare 2018: 1). Besides many very good solutions, there is still much to change. "Data from around the world show that a large number of disabled people remind unemployed or economically inactive, more than 80 per cent in some countries […]. Unequal access to education and training, negative attitudes of employers and colleagues, inaccessible transport systems and workplaces and a lack of flexible work practices and employment support schemes present significant barriers to equality of opportunity in the labour market for disabled people" (Waddington, Priestley, Yalcin 2017: 73). Writing about linguistic, emotional, mental and factual issues connected with the presence of persons with disabilities in our surroundings could reduce the social distance.

In recent years, Polish sociologists have been dealing with disability issues relatively often. Recently, several significant works have been published thanks to which disability is the topic not only of pedagogical and psychological, but also sociological considerations (Gąciarz, Rudnicki 2014; Koperski 2018; Ostrowska 2015). What is more, disability has become the interest of interdisciplinary oriented researchers (see Natalia Pamuła, Magdalena Szarota, Marta Usiekniewicz 2018; Godlewska-Byliniak, Lipko-Konieczna 2018; Maciejewska-Mroczek, Radkowska-Walkowicz, Reimann 2019). In our paper, we are adding a voice to the discussion about sociological contexts of disability by analyzing the content of posts published on the internet below the interview with parents of a woman with Down syndrome.

The interview entitled "Co by było, gdybyśmy wiedzieli, że nasze dzieci będą miały zespół Downa? To nieuprawniony eksperyment logiczny" ["What if we knew that our children would have Down syndrome? It's an illegitimate thought experiment" [1]] was published in March 2018 in the weekend edition of the gazeta.pl portal. Ewa Wołkanowska-Kołodziej spoke with Ewa and Andrzej Suchcicki about people with Down syndrome [2]. The interview was published on the eve of the World Down Syndrome Day's celebration (March 21st). It was published on the Internet and thus could be commented on by the readers on the forum. Like most online publications, it also found an echo on other Web portals and forums, where users commented on both its content and its form. The interview concentrated on the everyday life of family with a person with Down syndrome. It presented mostly the parents' perspective.

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[1] Unless indicated otherwise, all notes in square brackets "[]" are by the translator, Wojciech Figiel.

[2] The interview, in Polish, can be found at http://weekend.gazeta.pl/weekend/1,152121,23107217,coby-by-by-bylo-gby-were-knowledged-zeze-children-beda-mialy.html. Ewa and Andrzej Suchcicki are parents of a woman with Down syndrome. They are also co-founders and co-runners of a "Bardziej Kochani" ["Loved more"] Association for parents of persons with Down syndrome.

Methodology and Analytical Procedures

This paper focuses on the analysis of posts that appeared directly below the interview, within two months of its publication. During this time, 346 comments were submitted to the forum. Qualitative content analysis was conducted with the support of Atlas.ti. After first overview of selected material, main analytical categories were established. Further readings driven by these categories resulted in developing codes that are more detailed. The qualitative analysis of the content of these posts is carried out against the backdrop of the concept of moral outrage caused by the remarks of the Suchcicki family. We reflect on what is the subject of this outrage. What provoked such intense emotions? Was it the form or the content of the interview? Who expresses the outrage—authors personally or professionally associated with disability or normates.

Only those posts that directly referred to the interview were subject to analysis. The people who posted their comments on the forum did not engage in a discussion, but rather present their opinion about the article, without referring to contributions made by other forum users. When analysing forum posts, one should take into account the features of the Internet forum as such. Forums, especially those that are publicly available, as is the case with the forum at gazeta.pl, are anonymous spaces. The sender of the post is not required to reveal his or her personal information (this is optional, and some contributors did so). Moreover, forums are usually characterised by quick comments, sometimes posted under the influence of emotions, sometimes in a careless, chaotic and ill-considered way. We are dealing only with the text and what we can read in it and in between its lines (see Markham 2011). We cannot determine the tone of voice, gestures, body language and intentions of the utterance (unless it is clearly expressed in the post). Therefore, the set of posts which constitutes the corpus for this analysis is characterised by utterances that are long, thought through and sometimes written in the form of a letter addressed directly to the person or persons giving the interview. These posts are examples of polemics with opinions expressed by the interviewees. Such polemics are written by people associated with the community of people with disabilities and are often signed by name and surname of their author. Whereas, comments posted by the normates are usually shorter and are not linked to professional or personal experience. Differences in the language used by authors are also observed.

Sociology and Emotions

During the "empirical" period of sociology, the concept of moral outrage was not employed often. For several decades of the twentieth century, the so-called "classical period", sociology was an empirical social science which, rather than being focused on the study of living human beings made of flesh and bones, concentrated on the analysis of rules and relationships. Bourdieu describes this specific reductionism and "professionalism" of academic sociology projects in the following way: "At one level, the sociological landscape has not changed much over the past quarter century. [The book from which this quotation comes first appeared in 1992—EZM] On the one side, the brunt of empirical research continues to address questions that are more frequently the product of "scholarly common sense" than of serious scientific thinking. And such research often justifies itself by "methodology" too often conceived as a specialty in itself consisting of a collection of recipes and technical precepts that one must respect, not to know the object, but to be seen as knowing how to know the object. On the other side, you have the return of a form of Grand Theory severed from any research practice. Positivist research and theoreticist theory go hand in hand, complement and compliment one another" (Bourdieu 1992: 175). This ironic description of research practices decorated with speculations made by armchair theoreticians devoid of any real-life references reflects in a slightly exaggerated, but in fact accurate way, the climate in which empirical sociology, as a recognised paradigm of science, was practiced.

From the beginning of 21st century a new sub-discipline of sociology has been initiated, namely the sociology of emotions. "Sociology of emotions as consciously separate subdiscipline maintains that emotions have a social dimension, that means they are created, lived and expressed in close connection with what is cultural and social" (Binder, Palska, Pawlik 2009: 8). Emotions are not only a topic of sociological considerations but can also permeate to the research workshop. Sociologists are living people and they have the right to express emotions freely if their considerations concern difficult and painful matters. Then "engaged science" is created which gains credibility just by revealing emotions (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2009: 211–212). This is also our case. We also engage in emotions to make our argument credible.

It seems that the sources of inspiration for the analysis of emotions, especially extreme ones that trump the rules of discourse of rational social actors, can be found in the works of sociologists of the "pre-classical" epoch. At that stage, sociology was only striving at an empirical paradigm, but had not yet reached it, and was dominated by the "pre-scientific" descriptions of disordered and non-categorised everydayness. William Graham Sumner was one of the early sociologists who wrote about everyday life practices and the moral codes that are constructed in their context. Marian Kempny and Krystyna Romaniszyn, authors of "Introduction to the Polish edition" to the Sumner's most famous book, write that he played a special role in American sociology, representing "a transitional phase in the move from the canons of nineteenth-century social science to the model of empirical sociology" (Kempny, Romaniszyn 1995: XLIV). Thus, he dealt with "residual" topics, which were abandoned by 20th century sociology.

Several important concepts introduced by Sumner into sociological writings may be useful for the analysis of emotions. These include "we-group", "others-group" and "ethnocentrism" (XXXIII). In particular, the latter concept, understood in a specific way, can be employed to made an attempt at interpretation of the phenomena that a group of people treats as rational and as "objectively" describing reality, whereas for another group, the presence of the same phenomena provokes moral outrage. Sumner suggests that we should conceive "'ethnocentrism' as a technical name for such a view of things in which one's own group is a center of everything and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. Folkways correspond to it to cover both the inner and the outer relation. Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, these excite its scorn" (Sumner 2008: 13).

Sumner's writings concern ethnically diverse groups, but nowadays, when deep, spectacular dividing lines cut across the criteria other than ethnicity, his concepts can be transposed onto social differentiations based on non-ethnic criteria. The criterion that we take into account in our analyses causes profound differences in viewpoints. This criterion is the fact of having a child with Down syndrome. Families in which a young child with Down syndrome is raised are in the modern society, for the most part, an enclave of strictly separated, and principled, views. It is of secondary nature to define the content of these views, as shall be discussed later. The most important thing is that the necessity to cope with Down syndrome triggers an intransigent attitude in parents and requires them to take a stance. In contemporary epoch, the times of "moral permissiveness", such attitudes are rare.

Sumner attributes a special role in the process of we-group consolidation to the use of epithets expressing contempt and abomination for others-groups, who regard as correct other ways of doing things. "Opprobrious epithets are derived from these differences. "'Pig-eater,' 'cow-eater,' 'uncircumcised,' 'jabberers'" (Sumner 2008: 13) are examples of such epithets presented by Sumner.

The Down beside Me[3]

The question of abusive epithets is one of the main reasons for the rise of a subculture of families bringing up a child with Down syndrome, a subculture that emphasises the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the group that presents the syndrome of the "besieged fortress." The latter manifests itself by the fact that members of the group, guided by noble motives, must constantly fight against the ignorant and people with bad intentions, who want to continuously humiliate their children, demonstrate contempt for them and total lack of understanding for their uniqueness. The use of epithets is one of the main reasons for attacks on people outside of the group. In fact, it is all about one epithet: "the Down." The use of the word "Down" in an interview, but also in many other contexts related to the problems of people with Down syndrome, acquires apocalyptic dimensions and becomes a question of insult and humiliation. The peculiarity of the relation to this word reveals fundamental differences between the way of thinking of subculture of families with a child with Down syndrome and that of "the rest of humanity." In the social perception, the word "Down" is a well-understood and linguistically functional mental shortcut that works as such in everyday language.

The following is an example of the use of this word in the interview: "I take my Down and we go on a trip." The authors of many comments posted on portals for representatives of the subculture of families express their outrage. They drag the name of the author of these words through mire, they attribute to her the worst intentions. What is more, they claim that using this word causes irreparable damage to the social perception of people with Down syndrome, because it controls people's thinking. They thus attribute to the person

[3] This is the title of a literary competition for primary, junior high and high school students that has been organised for several years by the "Bardziej kochani" ["Loved more"] Association.

employing this word the powers of a demiurge who can change the way the world works. Of course, this impact is destructive, making the besieged fortress the only bulwark for the defence of the dignity of persons with Down syndrome.

To this "dum," i.e. unemotional, colloquial expression, these people attribute the power of depriving life of its meaning, disintegrating of family ties, exclusion of people from the society. The causative power of this one word seems to be unlimited. Hence the moral outrage that results from the use of it is omnipotent. How to substitute, then, a word used in everyday language which, because it is intelligible to conversational partners, enables a smooth flow of everyday conversations? Instead of saying "I'm taking my Down on a trip," one SHOULD say "I'm taking my adult daughter Natalia, who is a person with Down syndrome, and we're going on a trip." Indeed, this phrase sounds 'better,' provided it is a short, "official" message, not a simple phrase taken out of the context of a longer conversation, during which such "official" phrases would have to appear many times, effectively preventing understanding in everyday conversations.

The second issue related to the "exegesis" of the alleged epithet has a much deeper dimension. It is noteworthy that moral outrage is directed not towards what "opponents" do, but towards what they say. Even more precisely: not towards what they say they are doing, but towards how they talk about it. Moral principles expressed through moral outrage have a purely formal dimension, they refer to the "methodology of speaking" and not to the philosophy of living together with a loved one with Down syndrome. Not a single comment to the interview raised the question of what kind of trip the mother took her Down on. What is the value of this trip, what cognitive, emotional, social, interactive, or God knows what other benefits the Down will have from this trip. Is going on trips a regular part of the Down's life? In addition to going on trips together, does the mother take her Down to other places? What do they do together? What does the Down like to do and does the mother respect these preferences? All these questions are left unanswered. For those expressing their outrage, correct words are synonymous with treating people in a dignified way. It is easy to be indignant about linguistic incompetence, and it is also very easy to avoid outrage by making minor changes to the vocabulary. That's it, problem solved.

Perversely, one could ask the indignant, which sentence causes their greater moral outrage: "I take my Down and we go on a trip" or "I take my son Wojciech, who is a person with Down syndrome, and I lock him in my shed, because I believe that this guarantees safety and promotes happiness of persons with Down syndrome." Perhaps the latter sentence would cause polemics instead of outrage?

It is no coincidence that Sumner stresses the role of abusive epithets as one of the strongest elements uniting the group. The attitude towards the epithet is 'beyond discussion,' i.e. its only function is to allow emotions to explode, rather than the discussion of the correctness of anything. Things that can be discussed may be the subject of fierce criticism, but not outrage. On the other hand, outrage is not a criticism in the sense that there is no room for any discussion. I therefore argue that the content of the viewpoint of those expressing their outrage is secondary to the primary role of the attitude of the intransigent, morally pure preacher of human dignity of (some) people.

Intellectual Disability and Social Interactions

Another bout of moral outrage is caused by the following remark made by the interviewee: "The integration of people with intellectual disabilities is inherently impossible. This is due to the logic of interpersonal relationships. Mentally retarded people do not have much to offer to their peers, so there cannot be equal relationships between these two. The only possible relationship is that between caregiver and caretaker."

In this case, the role of epithets is different, but also extremely expressive. The outrage is expressed by means of epithets. As in the previously analysed case, there is no reasoning whatsoever. The only purpose of the reaction to the words spoken by the interviewee is to show one's own moral superiority and the humiliation of the "adversary." This is evidenced by the use of such characterisations as: "typical, little, selfish Pole," "you Down" (sic!), "to the psychiatrist with him" or "you have turned the course of history back to the times of European fascism and exclusion, negating the value of the individual, negating the needs of a person with Down syndrome." Again, the role of the demiurge, attributed to the author of the sentence that is commented upon, makes one wonder: how on Earth a remark from an interview printed in a newspaper would make the world turn upside down? "With this single interview, you have destroyed what I have been building for the last 23 years"—it seems bizarre to compare 23 years of work on the rehabilitation of the child and raising social awareness against a single sentence taken out from one interview. This calls into question the belief of a person who expresses such opinion that their efforts bring lasting effects, since it is so easy to erase them. "As you know, I was the only Pole, aside from the Ambassador of Poland to the United Nations, Mr. Witold Sobków, who took part in the recognition and declaration of 21st March as the World Down Syndrome Day at the United Nations." This is great news. What is it supposed to tell us? That the author of these words is, by definition, right and stands on a much higher moral ground than a person who thinks that social interactions with a person with an intellectual disability are asymmetrical.

In general, it can be posited that moral outrage is caused by the claim that a person wit intellectual disability is disabled intellectually. One can agree with those expressing their outrage that it is cruel, especially when that intellectually disabled person is one's child. Perhaps things should not look like that, perhaps people with intellectual disabilities should not be in a worse social position where they "do not have achievements," "do not have friends," "do not have much to offer to their peers." But the world is as it is and not as it should be. Sitting in their "besieged fortress," those who express outrage are practicing enchantment of reality. They very much want the reality to be different than it is. Reminding them how things are, is an act of simple callousness. Outrage is a reaction to callousness. Unwrapping the candy of intellectual disability from the paper of sentimentalism and grandiloquence is regarded as cynicism.

Significantly, as in the case analysed above, moral outrage does not concern actions taken by "adversaries," but words that they say. These words relate to the philosophy of humanity and not to the pragmatics of everyday life. Moral outrage therefore leaves no place for the use of arguments, since it does not refer at all to any empirically ascertainable states of affairs. The use of the word "adversaries" (enclosed in quotation marks) in this paper should also be commented on. Sumner noted that in order to consolidate a we-group we need an others-group, and the most important law of social life

> is not the principle of sympathy, but the principle of competition […] nature in this way selects the best individuals in a given society. According to him, choosing this option means the development of society and the well-being of its best members, while opting for the principle of sympathy leads to social regression and favours the worst individuals (Kempny, Romaniszyn 1995: XXXIX).

In the context of the present analysis, the "worst individuals" are those who, according to those who express outrage, do not keep up with the spirit of modernity, show regrettable pessimism and backwardness, reversing the course of history, and as such are not worthy of being called partners in the conversation. Competition in this context can mean a struggle for the primacy of one's own philosophy of life. A philosophy that posits that human nature is so plastic that it can be freely shaped by means of rehabilitation, stimulation and supplementation. However, it must be noted that such an attitude is not "very modern," its origin can be traced back to the 18th century optimism of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the word "backwardness" is not a descriptive one, but just another epithet. The lessons we learn from history can be much more instructive than clinging to our own optimistic imaginations.

Sociologists have rarely analysed the social role of people with intellectual disabilities. Sumner addresses the issue of how these people function in the society in a book that was published in the first decade of the 20th century, i.e. in a period when the rationality of Western societies striving to maximise the economic potential of families had not yet led to the introduction of a policy of segregation. People with intellectual disabilities lived in society and occupied specific positions in the social structure. Following the period of several decades of the 20th century rationality, which demanded that intellectually disabled citizens be handed over to the specialists who managed them and isolated them from the society, in the 21st century we witnessed the "naturalisation" of the intellectually disabled as citizens and the return to their traditional roles that they had occupied until the early 20th century. It may thus be valuable to look at how early sociologists described the social structure in which there was a place for people occupying low positions in the hierarchy because of their low social value (Sumner 2008: 40–42), and to look for analogies with the present situation.

Can enlisting sociological texts written more than a hundred years ago to interpret modernity be called backwardness? Analysing a theatre play, Piotr Morawski writes that

> disability constructed in the 19th century, both in the social reality of the industrial era, as well as in circuses and theatres showing various 'peculiarities,' has now been presented in *Clowns*, a play that in addition ostentatiously refers to this tradition by its title. […] Disability is deconstructed, it appears on stage as a social construct, and not, as in the 19th century shows, as a confirmation of ideas about the norms of 'visibility.' (Morawski 2017: 356).

This famous director does not cut himself off from the past, but rather treats it as a cultural resource upon which he superimposes contemporary interpretations.

The Down and the Rest of the World

The subject of the analysis in this part is what constituted the reason for outrage of those among posts written mainly by people from the outside of the enclave of intellectual disability or disability in general. Therefore, only those posts are analysed where one can infer that the author is not personally or professionally linked to the community of persons with disabilities. Sometimes a perspective of non-normates is presented to underline the difference. These posts are usually anonymous and do not refer to the experience of being either a professional, or a person in any other way related to disability. What, then, causes the outrage of normates?

It must be pointed out that the language of posts submitted by the normates differs from the language of professionals or those related to the community of people with disabilities. Phrases such as "a person with disabilities" appear less often, while words such as "crip" or "handicapped," i.e. terms that have disappeared from the dictionary of political correctness some time ago, do find their way into those posts:

Finally, it must be said loudly, against this holy correctness: "a man without legs—is a cripp" . "a man who is in a wheelchair for other reasons—is a crip," "a deafmute man"—is handicapped , a man who is mentally handicapped for various reasons—is abnormal. Groaning and incanting the reality will not help it. (…) There are no people who are differently normal, differently healthy or differently abled.[4]

The post expresses the support of its author for stating things clearly and for setting clear limits. Down syndrome is Down syndrome, a zero-one variable—either you have it or not. The use of increasingly blurred terms for different types of disabilities means that these labels tell us less and less about the reality.

In contrast, it is worth looking at posts written from the perspective of professionals, people with disabilities or others who have some relation with them:

How can one say such things about one's child? How can one boast that "I was walking with a beer can in hand, there wasn't yet a ban on outdoor drinking, and with the Down in a carriage"?

(…) I do not fully agree with their approach to the life with their little daughter who has Down Syndrome, with these terms, with this lack of humility, of reflection, that maybe they can offend somebody who has equally ill child [this "little daughter" is an adult woman—MS].

On the other hand, the posts of the normates also display negative comments on the way that a person with Down syndrome is referred to:

The interview is very biased. The terminology in the interview regarding the persons with Down syndrome is unacceptable to me;

How can one say in this way, "Down," about anyone. I don't understand it. I recently have read an interview with a young, pretty woman, who was working, studying, doing a driving licence, having "normal" friends and dealing with everyone on equal terms, who… has Down syndrome. Only that she has been rehabilitated very intensely since her childhood. And now go and tell her "You Down," please… Really, no comments. After all, everyone wants the child to function as best as possible and to be treated normally, nobody wants to hear things like "me with my Down," "These Downs," it ought to be obvious. Apparently, it's not for everyone…

In their recent play entitled "The Revolution that wasn't," the actors of Teatr 21[5] shout and sing on stage "And I'm the Down!". This is a perfect illustration for another post:

[4] The forum posts were originally written in Polish and are presented here in English translation. All typos, spelling and punctuation mistakes reflect those made by the authors of original posts.

[5] Teatr 21 [Theatre 21] is the first theatre company in Poland with the majority of actors with Down syndrome. More information about their activities, in English, can be found at http://www.polishthe atrejournal.com/index.php/ptj/article/view/85/348—WF.

Of course, the way specific groups refer to themselves in their community is their own business.

And this seems to be a key issue when it comes to the way of naming disabilities. As a matter of fact, the interview also touches upon this aspect. The way a group talks about itself, what terms they use to name themselves is a matter for those belonging to this group. No one has a monopoly on the one and only correct term. And so we have "Mummins," Downs, etc. There are also new, more political terms such as people with disabilities, people with learning disabilities, etc.

What causes outrage insofar as terminology is concerned is not so much the fact that the interviewees refer to persons with Down syndrome simply as "the Downs," but rather the fact that the interviewees are themselves parents of a woman with Down syndrome and run an association for people with intellectual disabilities. As emphasised above, the interviewees are credited with enormous power. As if one interview could ruin someone's achievements, squander all the advocacy in favour of people with intellectual disabilities. The author of one comment (non-normate) writes:

What worries me, however, is that our Polish society listens to it, a society of people who are not involved, people without knowledge of Ds, people without respect for persons with disabilities. So how do such articles prepare our world, what respect for disability [do they foster]?

In some posts, the public role of the interviewees is emphasised. They are seen through the prism of their involvement in the activities of the association. They are the conveyors of a mission and the way in which this mission is carried out is subject to evaluation. The Suchcicki family is not seen as parents of a woman with Down syndrome, but as activists. The evaluation of their words contradicts the evaluation of the activities carried out by their association:

I value the books you publish. I read the "Bardziej kochani" magazine. I'm glad that you run supported housing. However, I object to this approach to people with Down syndrome, which can be seen in the interview. No person with Down syndrome is defective. As representatives of such a large organisation, which has the ears of so many people, you should take care of good PR for our children. You want people with Down syndrome to be treated well by society. This will only be possible if we, the parents, talk about people with Down syndrome with respect;

By setting up the association, you, Andrew, have assumed certain obligations. You have an extra responsibility for your actions and words, because they go out to the world. People are listening to you. Parents of children with Down syndrome listen, politicians who decide about the fate of our children listen, the average Mr. Kowalski listens and he will pass his conclusions on to his son, who, in turn, will share these with his friends at school.

A single interview is supposed to have a causative power, to change attitudes and squander all the work that has so far been done by the community of people with disabilities. One interview cannot be attributed with such powers. All the more so because it is full of irony and distance from reality and people with Down syndrome. And who, if not parents, can afford such irony and distance? Following the performance of "The Revolution that wasn't," the play that has been mentioned before, there were comments that people laughed when the actress with Down syndrome, who cannot speak, was performing on stage. She could only make some sounds and communicated differently. It was said that the audience made fun of her and her way of communication. However, I am convinced that it was the therapeutisation and pedagogisation of intellectual disability that were made fun of: in the play, the actress with Down syndrome received instructions on what sounds had to be produced in order to express laughter. Is it possible, then, to laugh in a different way? Why can we be accused of laughing at a person with disabilities when we laugh at what that person does? Why do we treat this laughter and this behaviour differently from laughter caused by the behaviour of other, non-disabled people? We promote terms that separate disability from a person (like a person with disabilities instead of a disabled person), but are we not able to look at such a person in a different way than through the prism of their disability? Because it is not right to laugh at these poor disabled, impaired people? Or maybe by expressing our concern for their well-being, non-discrimination and equal treatment we, in fact, treat them differently? Or is it all rather about the well-being of the normates?

The interview also triggered many posts on the integration of people with disabilities with the non-disabled. Andrzej Suchcicki said:

The integration of people with intellectual disabilities is inherently impossible. This is due to the logic of interpersonal relationships. Mentally retarded people do not have much to offer to their peers, so there cannot be equal relationships between these two. The only possible relationship is that between caregiver and caretaker. Our daughter Natalia is 28 years old and the volunteers in our association are younger than her, so the relationship between them is opposite to the one that is dictated by the calendar. No friendship or even acquaintance will result out of this. Retarded people feel best among themselves and we are trying to convince about it various inspired reformers, without success.

On the one hand, the posts stress that someone finally said the truth about integration as such. On the other hand, there is criticism of this way of looking at the relationship between the intellectually disabled and non-disabled. One person goes as far as to say:

YOU HAVE TO BE A REDNECK TO SAY THAT CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME HAVE 'LITTLE TO OFFER' THINGS ARE THE V E R Y OPPOSITE.—THEY HAVE MUCH MORE TO OFFER THAN AN ORDINARY CHILD …

Leaving aside the fact that a person who holds different views is called a "redneck," the above quotation illustrates the main thread that appears in the posts that relate to integration. The very idea of integration and its benefits are described, defined and interpreted in all ways. The authors of posts often ask the key question: who benefits from integration? For whom is this integration more beneficial? For whom or for what is it? To counter what Andrzej Suchcicki said, the benefits for the normates resulting from their relations with persons with Down syndrome are emphasised, for example:

People with Down syndrome or other disabled people, e.g. those who are only physically disabled, are needed so that others learn empathy, support, to see a man and not only the money, profit, benefit, to learn to live without egoism and to be able to spend their time with others;

I am in favour of integration, if only to make healthy children and their parents aware that such children (people) are among us, that they also want to feel accepted by society. And it is only on this point that I disagree with Natalia's father…;

firstly, I do not agree that people with Down syndrome have nothing to offer to healthy people. Neither will they be their intellectual partner nor will they equal in sports, but their presence in the classroom teaches healthy children that not everyone in the world must be beautiful and brilliant, but they can still be cool and worthy of respect;

I will go nuts in this country! How can you write in the headline that disabled people have nothing to offer? This is not true! Such persons by their very existence and presence TEACH others at school, on the street, in the society *the TOLERANCE and the ACCEPTANCE of otherness. And that's a lot. Every society should learn that there are people living next to us who are different in appearance, psyche, talents, tastes, skin colour, views, etc.;*

The point of integrated schools is not so much the integration of people with disabilities and the "normal" ones. In my opinion, the most important element of these schools is "to familiarise" children with the fact that there are a lot of disabled people around us (physically and mentally) and they are not a threat.

Perhaps comments highlighting the benefits that people with Down syndrome bring to the relationship were provoked by the idea that they have nothing to offer. Nonetheless, it is striking that there is not a single word in the posts about the benefits of the relationship, benefits of integration for the people with Down syndrome. Is the integration that is advocated for, thus, bringing equality? Under whose conditions the integration that is praised in some posts is to take place? And for whom is it? Who should feel good about it? Perhaps integration for the benefit of the normates is intended to calm their conscience: after all, we support inclusive education, we send our non-disabled children to these schools to learn empathy, respect and tolerance for diversity, and we are so open. But what do the normates, the non-disabled people contribute to this relationship? What are the benefits for people with Down syndrome? This topic is absent from the comments.

Instead, the question of the systemic implementation of the idea of integration is present. Integration as such is perceived positively, but some pathologies in its implementation are pinpointed to:

Yes but these educational professionals have nothing to offer and are sloganeering and after some time it turns out that it is a bluff but they are either retired or the responsibility has become time-barred and so they do not take any responsibility. Usually it's about money and working hours in education [sector] everyone wants to do this for bonuses and limits on working time or to do scams in general and not for the GOOD of these children;

Integration, as every idea, is a signpost, not a solution to the problem Solutions that we have are for the rich countries and we are poor and therefore the integration is stuttering Maybe its greatest value is that the society will see this problem at all;

It does not make sense to "organise" such classes under the same conditions as regular classes. The maximum number of students per teacher is about 10–12. Students without "limitations" should also be carefully chosen (taking into consideration their parents as well), there must be full understanding and acceptance of being in such a class. Finally: there must be proper technical conditions in the classroom. Otherwise all depends…;

(…) I wouldn't deny the [value of] integration classes—all in all it's a good idea… but let's start from the basics the normal class should not have 30 people but 15 max. outstanding individuals should be provided with profiled classes or additional classes, … and integration classes, which would be even less numerous, in which there would be additional teachers, which would have the appropriate support of specialists, logistic (e.g. appropriate teaching aids but also a minibus), of course in Polish conditions this idea does not work, but it is not that there is something wrong with this idea, it is this country that is f… up.

One can also posit a question about the limits of integration: where can the integration take place and who can participate in it, who can integrate and where? Here, again, the question of language arises: Down syndrome is not the only kind of disability, the latter represents a wide range of phenomena, including autistic spectrum disorders, mobility, vision, hearing and other impairments, e.g.:

Integration schools are for the "healthy," for people with MOBILITY impairments (which is NOT synonymous with intellectual disabilities, e.g. there are children who had traffic accidents) and children with e.g. a mild hearing *loss (who cope perfectly, with hearing aids), with minor speech impairments (which can be easily dealt with by several years of speech therapy and you will not notice that they have any problems, who apart from it are equally healthy and smart—or even smarter), etc., which are able to integrate perfectly. Yes, there are children who should not be there and yet they are there, they should go to more adapted schools but it is the fault of people who do not do everything well, and not the fault of this idea.*

The interview also provoked comments on sincerity or openness and lack of political correctness in Suchcickis' contribution. Many posts showed a very positive tone, which results from the perception of their ideas as honest, true and authentic, e.g.:

Thank you for this piece. It is bringing the unknown closer;

I am glad that finally someone honestly said what people think about the intellectually disabled. No one wants to hurt them, but on the other hand they are not partners for conversation, etc.;

Thank you very much for this interview. I know very little about the lives of parents of disabled children. And you are a part, and not a small one, of human society. I wish you a lot of health and cheerfulness;

A normal person, what a relief and support. He knows that it is the intention and not the words that makes an insult. He lives with a child (albeit an adult one) as it is…;

Finally, the voice of reason…;

A very wise artcle. It shows a sober reality. Showing a several-month-old child with Dawn syndrome in advertisements is a deception. A tiny child still looks delightful but then. Unfortunately, it is left to its own company and a good one [in this case]. A very reasonable man…;

The father's great wisdom, but is it politically correct ?Nowadays even the lame have the right to dance in a ballet.

The posts express relief that someone openly said, in common-man's language, without the use of all these correct and sophisticated formulations, how does the life of a person with Down syndrome and their parents or caregivers look. There is no place for saying that people with disabilities are "the same," because one must honestly admit that they are not.

The honesty and political incorrectness of the interview is not only an object of admiration and respect, but also a cause of criticism addressed not to the Suchcicki family, but to all those who express their admiration and appreciation for the interview:

You are all happy that finally someone has released you from remorse and political correctness. Thanks to this "great interview" with this "wise man" you can finally say "these Downs" and openly criticise the integration education that stops your wonderful healthy children from enjoying NORMAL education away from minorities, otherness and real life. At last you can feel BETTER, right? You pathetic, little people.

Again, the question arises: can one contribution by the parents of a person with Down syndrome about their experiences and perspective have such a causative power to free the normates from their supposed remorse? Do they have any remorse at all about how the education system, be it mainstream, special or integration, is organised? It is also hard to see in these posts a tendency to segregation and isolation. Rather, they are an attempt to understand this specific situation. There is also no sense of being better or worse. The above-quoted post is in line with the concerns expressed by people in the Down syndrome community that after reading the interview, the normates will have the wrong picture of people with Down syndrome and, on top of this, they will be happier.

The outrage expressed in the posts is caused by the way of talking about intellectual disability. People from the Down syndrome community go as far as to demonise the interview itself, pointing to its almost irreversible and devastating impact on the situation of people with Down syndrome and their relatives. They stress the public role of the Suchcickis and monopolise the way in which we should speak about disability. The outrage is caused by terminology, absent is the question of actions, i.e. what (and how) do the parents do with their (adult) children with Down syndrome. Posts that come from the outside of the community of people with intellectual disabilities use rather colloquial and therefore not always politically correct vocabulary. In fact, these politically correct terms are not always intelligible for the average reader: intellectual disability in the social perception can be close to mental illness, whereas mental retardation is already a familiar and intelligible concept.

The outrage is also built around the axis of integration (in education), especially the opinion that people with Down syndrome have little to offer to their non-disabled peers. The posts show that integration is the right way to take, because it somehow "forces" to see the otherness in the form of a person with Down syndrome or a person with other disability. Therefore, the normates are to draw benefits from integration. Few posts refer to the benefits for the persons with Down syndrome.

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The Trajectory of Suffering—Parents of Children with Intellectual Disability on the Future

Abstract: The aim of the research was to characterize the situation of intellectually disabled individuals and their families, with special stress on parents' doubts and dilemmas which grow as their disabled children mature and enter adulthood. The subject of the study was to analyze the processual character of transformations related to bringing up children with intellectual disabilities that take place in generational families, in particular, those which are related to transformations on the level of parents' perceptions, role, and identity. These notions were reconstructed on the basis of the personal experiences of parents of disabled children. The theoretical basis of the research was the concept of a trajectory of suffering, and the applied methodology was the grounded theory methodology.

Keywords: parents, children, disability, trajectory, qualitative research.

Introduction

The family is the space where a child's development and upbringing take place. It is where an individual first develops and acquires the characteristics and attributes of a "socialized person." In particular, in the first stage of life, a child is completely dependent on their closest caregivers. A properly functioning family, its permanent blood ties, and strong, stable, emotional, and social bonds are a condition for the successful development and upbringing of every child (Dykcik 2005: 28). It can be considered that both their life as well as physical and mental development are strongly influenced by the quality of care and contact with their parents.

Thanks to socialization and upbringing, a child becomes independent, and the parents of a properly developing child can proudly look at a growing young adult. Parents should enjoy the sight of growing children and the changes that take place inside them. These changes lead to maturity, in particular, to parenthood, and although the majority believe that it is one of the most important components that fulfill the lives of individuals, it is also related to numerous hardships, responsibilities, and many challenges. All the more, any changes and development of a child should be seen as a reward for the efforts of parenthood.

It is different in the case of people with intellectual disability, in particular, those of a significantly lower level of intelligence, because it is difficult to achieve the same psycho-social development level that could provide any basis for life autonomy or independence in social relationships. This, in turn, means that the expectations and requirements of people with intellectual dysfunctions must be different as well. The situation of families with intellectually disabled children is thus, by its very nature, specific, and at the same time, it requires separate treatment. Parents are not able to enjoy the independence of their intellectually disabled children, or the progress and transformations that lead to maturity. Despite the great effort required at every step, parents of children with intellectual disability (especially those with severe disability) do not usually have the opportunity to observe their development, as is the case in families with fully capable children.

Furthermore, long before the child reaches adulthood, the parents usually know that their offspring will never be fully independent and self-reliant. Living with such a vision, they continuously need to work on themselves, applying various techniques that counteract their negative perception of reality, and which allow them to preserve relative mental and emotional stability. Therefore, the aim of my research is to reconstruct the process of the trajectory of suffering of a parent of a disabled child. I attempt to place this process in the wider context of the psychosocial conditions associated with the difficult experiences of parenthood and a worrying vision for the future. At the same time, I look for factors and conditions that enable parents of children with disabilities to maintain relative peace and quiet, mental balance, and, above all, the ability to act as mothers and fathers, often combining these roles with other types of social or professional activity.

A Child with Disability in a Family

There is a long-standing tradition in Poland related to research into disability carried out by scholars with backgrounds in such sciences as pedagogics, psychology, or sociology. One area of attention is the situation of families with a child with disabilities. A diagnosis of abnormalities related to periodic developmental disorders, long-term illness, or permanent disability makes it possible that a family may experience serious disturbances in its adaptive and protective functions (Dykcik 2005: 30). Parents experience such a diagnosis deeply, and they are usually unprepared to face new and difficult tasks. Kościelska (1995: 43–65) details the whole range of emotions that accompany the relatives of such people. She suggests that these emotions mostly concern the mother (with a higher risk of giving birth to a disabled child), who experiences a series of anxieties and concerns that accompany her before motherhood, during her pregnancy, and primarily as soon as the child is born (ibidem: 43–55). While describing emotions related to identifying the defects and handicap of a child, Kościelska (1995: 46–50) presents the following range: the fear of hostility, concern about missed opportunities, the fear of their child confronting new life situations, as well as fear of the future. Another, equally difficult feeling that the parents of a child with disabilities are tormented with is the one Kościelska describes as "mourning," which includes "the psychological state of the parents that occurs right after they lose their dream child and are confronted with the child that has been born" (ibidem: 52). This group of feelings includes despair, sadness, apathy, depression, and discouragement.

The studies show that one of the effects of intellectual disability in a child may be the underestimated self-esteem of the parents. The sense of value that is experienced by parents raising intellectually impaired children is often lost, which in turn leads to social exclusion. Many families experience marginalization within themselves (Kowalik 2001). Society avoids any contacts with disabled individuals and their families, as they are afraid of their differences, problems, and sometimes strange, incomprehensible behaviors. This, in turn, leads to so-called apparent integration. In other words, we are in favor of it unless it affects us personally, e.g., we support integration, but we do not want our child to be part of an integrated class (Stelter 2013: 35–36). According to Kościelska (1995: 53–54), with the birth of an "irregular" child, some parents experience the "irregularity" of themselves, which may sometimes take the form of self-destruction or even an identity crisis. Such a situation determines the hostile attitude not only towards themselves but also towards their surroundings. Dykcik (2005: 37) concludes that the disability of a child in a family is often grasped in negative categories, namely crisis or conflict, or destructive ones, in particular, in the case of a significant functional imbalance. According to Mikołajczyk-Lerman (2011), the everyday difficulties of a family with a disabled child are related to all spheres of married-family life and to all members of the family. A characteristic feature of the functioning of families who care for a disabled son or daughter is the deteriorating physical shape of the parents associated with the aging of the body. When we compare that fact with never-ending—or sometimes increasing—problems of disabled adults, we can see that family resources shrink in the face of even greater family-life challenges (Cytowska 2012). The research carried out by Pisula and Dąbrowska (2004) shows that expectations of mothers towards their child's future differ regarding the age of the mothers and the children. Mothers of older children are usually aware of their offspring's limitations and barriers that are hard to overcome, while mothers of small children believe in positive and big changes in their child's functioning. On the other hand, the purpose of Żyta's (2011) research was to describe the thoughts, feelings, and reckonings about various life aspects of family members of people with Down syndrome. One notion that was often raised during the interviews she conducted was planning the future of intellectually disabled individuals, and the vision of the adult life of those with Down syndrome developed by family members.

Also, numerous foreign studies suggest that thinking about the future of disabled children is something permanent in their parents' lives, regardless of the period of life they are currently in (see Docherty, Reid 2009). The main topics of foreign research devoted to families of intellectually disabled adults can be determined therein. They include notions of parenthood and fulfilling the role of mothers/fathers towards adult children (Heller, Arnold 2010). The problems of adulthood and fatherhood of adults with various types of disabilities also appear (Hodapp 2007; Hodapp, Glidden, Kaiser 2005). There is also research into the challenges of parenthood roles in the context of long-standing care and support in generation families (Miltiades, Pruchno 2001). Researchers' interest is also stimulated by the aging parents of disabled adults (as well as the disabled people themselves), their challenges in everyday life as well as the position, roles, and features of the siblings of the disabled adults (Orsmond, Seltzer 2007).

Contemporary British and American studies carried out into families with disabled adults using the clinical research model raise the problem of adapting to the role of a parent-guardian. What is more, there is multiannual research carried out regarding the positive and negative impact of children's disability on the physical and mental fitness of parents and siblings in connection with their lifelong roles of guardians. Contemporary research also covers the issues of parents' aging, as guardians, and the aging of their adult children. Seltzer, Floyd, and Greenberg (2005) analyzed the relationship between the lifetime and long-term disability of children and the health status of their parents. They found that parents with an adult child that has been disabled for its whole life would face untypical caring challenges, which may cause stress and impact their health. In turn, Johnson (2000) notes that stress related to being a long-standing guardian for a disabled child is a risk factor that may increase the probability of there being physical and mental consequences for the parents. On the other hand, Richardson (2012), in her research into the level of stress, cooperation, and satisfaction of married couples with children with intellectual disabilities, found that the most difficult period for parents seems to be the period of childhood and adolescence. Those parents, as well as the parents of children with an intellectual standard, observed a decrease in the quality of the relationship during childhood and adolescence. However, there is an increase in the quality of mutual relations when the disabled child, despite their adulthood, still requires care, and the mother and father are often afraid of what will happen to the child after their death. Stelter (2013: 71), while interpreting Richardson's research, concludes that this increase is due to the fact that parents do not expect their child to be independent, so they are not disappointed that the child is still at home despite it being an adult. Additionally, over the years, parents develop satisfactory ways of working together as a couple to enjoy the relationship and each other, sharing responsibilities and coping with difficulties (Gorchoff et al. 2008).

Summing up, we can say that a family with an intellectually disabled child fulfills the same functions as a family with a healthy child. However, the difference is in the conditions in which particular tasks are implemented, and in the intensity of their influence. A family that brings up a child with mental disability functions in conditions of permanent overload. The distortion of the correct development of the child impacts the functioning of each family member, and it often poses a specific stress factor. However, the very presence of a child with limited mental capabilities within a family system does not make it dysfunctional at once; it is only the way in which families deal with the crisis of the child's disability in different situations and periods that determines its functionality or dysfunctionality (Stelter 2013: 33).

The Methodology of the Research

The methodological framework for the research is shaped by the principles of grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser, Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978) and the biographical method (Denzin 1990). As suggested by Domecka and Mrozowicki (2008: 139), the combination of those two methodologies is possible thanks to the cohesion of assumptions that they are based on (i.e., assumptions of the processual character of social reality and the bilateral dependence between the actions and the shape of a social structure), and it is recommended when the procedures of both these approaches are treated as complementary. On the one hand, the biographical data present a whole picture, which is composed of the actor, as well as the action, the context of the action, and the connections between those elements. Reconstructing these elements is a necessary condition to understand the researched phenomenon. On the other hand, the analytical procedures of grounded theory make it possible to go outside the individual life stories and explore general patterns and mechanisms that shape the social relations and the logics of actions (Domecka, Mrozowicki 2008: 139).

Selecting the above methods allows us to reflect on the processual character of reality (Glaser, Strauss 1967; Strauss, Corbin 1990) and to adopt a holistic view of the research subject. In the context of this research, it is also important that these methods provide a chance to gain an insight into the problems, seen through the subjects' eyes (Hirschfield et al. 2005: 252). It is significant, as the research assumptions were based on the desire to learn about the subtle nuances and to reach the subjective ways of perceiving the surrounding reality. As a consequence, an attempt is made to understand and interpret the individual meanings for categories of disability provided by the child's parents.

The research material adopted in this study is information obtained from parents who have experienced significant transformations in their lives related to the process of bringing up and taking care of their disabled children. Non-structured, free interviews were conducted. The use of this type of data acquisition tool meant that each of the interviews was individualized. This means that the course of each interview was moderated on an ongoing basis, and its content depended primarily on what issues were pointed out by the interviewee and how he/she emphasized the information that arose during the interview.

In total, at this stage of research, 35 reviews were carried out between 2017 and 2019 among parents of children with intellectual disability. The interviews were performed with 22 women and 13 men, between 36 and 78 years old. The interviews usually lasted from 1 to 3 hours. Before analysis, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, preserving the details of the interviewees' utterances as faithfully as possible.

The selection of subsequent cases for the research was of a theoretical character (*theoretical sampling*), based on the constant comparative method. Thanks to theoretical sampling, the researcher, while collecting, encoding, and analyzing the materials, makes simultaneous decisions about where and what data to collect (Glaser 1978: 49–50; Strauss, Corbin 1990: 177). While applying the constant comparative method in my search for other data, I attempted to choose cases that are both highly diverse and similar to each other, to grasp the maximum number of conditions that differentiate the presence of categories and their mutual correlations (Glaser 1978: 45–53; Charmaz 2009: 74). The selection of cases lasted until theoretical saturation was achieved, i.e., until the moment when subsequent cases confirm previous analytical findings (Glaser 1978: 142).

The Parenthood of a Child with Intellectual Disability—a Trajectory Process of Suffering

Only a brief description of the trajectory model will be presented here, taking into account the specific situation of parents bringing up a child with limited mental abilities. For this purpose, we will refer to the course of the trajectory process proposed by Riemann and Schutze (1992, 1997), and we will illustrate it with reference to the observations made by Zakrzewska-Manterys (1995) in her book entitled *Down and Doubt Syndrome. A Study in the Sociology of Suffering*.

The trajectory process is usually extended in time, and it rarely begins suddenly or spontaneously. Information that a child is intellectually disabled may be one such case. The very moment that a disability “appears” in the parents’ (and, more broadly, the whole family’s) lives is highly differentiated and can refer to the pregnancy (which often happens nowadays in the era of prenatal examinations), but also to some perinatal circumstances or various complications that accompany neonatal and early childhood diseases. However, regardless of when this moment is situated in their life space, it is always unwanted and brings a whole array of extremely difficult experiences and negative emotions. Using the nomenclature adopted by Riemann and Schutze (1992, 1997), these events can be described as an “accumulation of trajectory potential,” i.e., the possession of certain biographically conditioned dispositions to be wounded. In the case of the parents of intellectually disabled children, their expectations of the child (especially an unborn one) and of their parenthood may account for this potential, and thus herald the future trajectory. The average parent wonders who their child will be in the future and what it will achieve, as opposed to whether their child will ever speak, walk, or be able to live independently. It does not occur to them that their child may be far from perfect. As they do not think about any dangers of the potential trajectory, they do not have any resources accumulated to counteract it; therefore, the potential of trajectory has the conditions to grow (Riemann and Schutze 1992: 104). Accumulating the trajectory potential takes time, and it does not stop at the moment of diagnosis, which is often rather a presumption than a fact. This means that parents function between some calming thoughts—“everything is fine”—and the overwhelming and difficult to control fear that something bad has happened. As Zakrzewska-Manterys writes (1995: 88),

> this flickering of trajectory constituted a circumstance which, on the one hand, facilitated psychological coping with the situation, giving me the hope that maybe the ‘situation’ does not exist. However, on the other hand, the destructive power of the growing welter could not be ‘tamed’ by mechanisms of dealing with the situation, since the entire effort of consciousness was focused on dealing with the trajectory.

A consequence of these events is the breakdown of expectations towards the normal (and thus known) course of events. As Riemann and Schutze (1992, 1997) state, a person affected by a given problem cannot shape their everyday life through active patterns of action. This phase in the development of the trajectory process is described by the authors as “crossing the border between the intentional and the conditioned mental state.” The same applies to the parents of a disabled child, who are aware of the painful but irreversible truth that they can no longer live according to the schemes they know. Referring to her personal experiences, Zakrzewska-Manterys (1995: 93) describes those events as follows:

> All determinants of my identity become blurred, and they were replaced by a certain internally determined state of mind forcing me to put myself into one category only: a mother of a handicapped child. Some dominating feelings start to appear, telling me that me and my child will ‘always,’ ‘to the end of our lives’ be doomed, that nothing else will ever be important again.

Over time, an individual is capable of achieving a balance in the sphere of everyday matters, although this condition is difficult to be defined as stable, and this is related to the fact that responses to trajectories are usually inappropriate. Thus, this phase was defined by Riemann and Schutze (1992) as the ‘unstable equilibrium of everyday life.” It often leads to the phenomenon of "accumulated disorder" as a result of concentrating on one mode of problems and avoiding others, which generates side effects and leads to the overlapping of different problem systems. As a result of the "accumulated disorder" and irrational actions, an individual breaks down. They become a stranger to themselves, and they are no longer able to act as before; they do not understand themselves (Stelter 2013: 121). In hindsight, it can be seen that all kinds of actions from this period are not characterized by logic; they are not connected with each other. As Zakrzewska-Manterys writes (1995: 97),

> there is no time or 'logic' link between them; they are just a mosaic of different scenes. Visually speaking, my theater does not stage a play, but a cabaret where each actor performs a different sketch and their order is arbitrary. (…) The events 'swirl,' as if around the most important problem, namely the suffering, but they do not touch it directly.

Another phase of the trajectory process is the so-called "break-down of orientation towards oneself" (Riemann and Schutze 1992, 1997). An individual experiences disintegration of everyday actions. They stop coping even with simple things that they had dealt with in everyday life until then. There are doubts as to whether anything still goes on in the familiar mode. The world seems to be strange, and the individual stops trusting themselves. There are doubts regarding their possibilities, their own identity. As Zakrzewska-Manterys claims (1995: 99), the doubts also pertain to others—doctors, rehabilitators, welfare institutions, and the people closest to them. The situation becomes very complicated as, on the one hand, the person affected by the trajectory does not trust others, and on the other, they feel the need for support and understanding. At this stage of the trajectory of suffering, the parents of a child with restricted intellectual capabilities can focus all their effort so no one knows that their child is disabled. Alternatively, they can devote their time and effort to confirming/rejecting the diagnosis, or they can rehabilitate or care for that child (Stelter 2013: 121).

After the breakdown in self-orientation, an individual understands that what happened is something very important and will have a significant impact on their life. This is done through an attempt to explain the reasons for their own suffering and through the moral evaluation of the occurrence, namely the "rationalization of the trajectory" (Riemann and Schutze 1992, 1997). Redefining one's own situation is also an analysis of the influence exerted by the process of suffering on the previous, present, and future mode of life. A new self-definition may trigger the desire to escape or contain its dynamics (Stelter 2013: 122). This is how Zakrzewska-Manterys comments on this situation (1995: 106–107):

> This is when I started to realize that no one but me can be responsible for defining my biographical situation (…). I was becoming aware that the possibility of getting out of the trajectory will never appear as a result of 'doing something' with my child, but only as a result of doing something with the sense of my world. Anger and rebellion were the dominating feelings of that time. I rebelled against the world, which offered me various definitions of my son (…). I rebelled against my own helplessness and loss. However, I rebelled against something that could be called my symbiosis with the world.

Ultimately, with a new way to define his or her own life situation, an individual takes steps to either escape from or to gain control over the trajectory, thus undertaking practical work on the trajectory (Riemann and Schutze 1992, 1997). Escaping from the current life situation is not an escape from identity burdened with suffering. The only appropriate solution to this situation is an attempt to organize their world in such a way that will allow the individual to live with the trajectory. For the parents of an intellectually disabled child, burnt trajectory potential may mean accepting a child as it is and accepting themselves as parents. This moment is best reflected in the words of Zakrzewska-Manterys (1995: 108), who says: "the birth of my child was the most enriching, the most valuable experience of my life."

The trajectory does not always develop according to the above-mentioned stages. It may be a fuzzy process, where successive stages overlap. The chronology of the process—where deviations from the basic scenario may occur—will not be preserved. It is the process of following an individual path through suffering.

The Trajectory Process Continues…

After an extremely turbulent and dynamic time, when the parents go through the five stages of the trajectory of suffering already mentioned, the situation becomes relatively stable and work on the trajectory starts. However, it turns out that it is not a condition that can be described as a current state. On the contrary, it can be seen in terms of *unstable stability*, because in the life of a family with a child with disabilities, there is nothing completely stable and secure, and the dynamics of change often lead to inevitable perturbations. Despite that, to some extent, the parents succeed in taming the course of the trajectory of events in the sense that they are aware of it, they can comprehend it better, and they can redefine and work out appropriate strategies of action. However, such temporary "calming down" of a situation is interrupted when the child enters the next stage of development, namely adolescence, and later maturity and adulthood. This is also characterized by relative stabilization, but it is preceded with another "awakening" of the parents.

In other words, each breakthrough may not become a starting point of a biographical action plan, only a relatively short period when the trajectory is no longer a processual structure that dominates the lives of parents of a child with disability. This is true biographical irony because the trajectory process emerges from a highly active biographical process. Riemann and Schutze (1992: 98) point out that such a trajectory process, at least in the beginning, throws the individual into a state of shock, passivity, and even sometimes into a state of paralysis, especially when it comes to organizing everyday activities. It is often the case that in the middle of those breakthrough events, when the parents feel that they have just discovered some new potential to act, they are burdened with the upcoming changes which are related to the beginning of their child's adolescence. It is clearly stressed in the following statement:

Yes, well, unfortunately, when we thought we were past the worst, and that it would be just better, it turned out that we were just entering the time of real disappointment, because even though we managed to do a lot and let's say we were out of the woods with Maciek, there came the deadlock at the beginning of his adolescence, and gradually, instead of improvement, there was deterioration, returning to the previous state. So, my wife and I realized that we can't do more, or even that it might get even worse, which really worried us because we thought about the future right away [i.18.02] [1]

[1] I use indications of the cited fragments of my respondents' statements throughout the whole article, where the letter "i" means an interview, the first figure indicates the year when the interview was carried out, and the last figure is the consecutive number of the interview.

This fragment explicitly demonstrates that during a spontaneous narration, and the recollection process characteristic of this narration, the person is usually dragged into the stream of experiences for the second time, characterized by the chaos of expectations, orientations, and relations to the world and identity.

The "awakening" often takes place gradually along with situations that appear (more and more often), e.g., when the parents start to lack strength or when a child reaches a certain size, so it is hard to move the child freely and without much effort, etc. This is how the parents' lives (and other family members' lives) change after coming to terms with a disability, when it is again brought down to *reconstructing the way of organizing* various aspects of life. It means, in practice, that parents cannot manage their resources, for example, time, the way they used to, but they also need to plan for a variety of circumstances that pertain to their child.

For us, that meant turning our world upside down. That's the truth. When Tomek was born, everything changed. I needed to take care of the child, and I stayed at home. While Tomek was small and I had more strength, I coped on my own. But when he grew up, when he became bigger than me, it was no longer possible for me to take care of him on my own. So, my husband needed to help me more, and this was another moment that we needed to rearrange some things, change something in our life [i.18.10]

When a child enters adolescence, there is not only the need to reconstruct how life is organized, but there are also some new problems that the parents had not encountered before. Therefore, there is a need to update previous and developed formulas of coping with the everyday life of being a parent of a child with disability. In this context, a significant problem of parenthood is the parents' dilemmas regarding their willingness to provide their child with conditions for independence. It is often accompanied by questions related to the child's sexuality. According to Giryński, adolescence is a particularly important stage in the development of a mentally disabled person, when their needs in this area of their life begin to grow, regardless of the their psychophysical condition. Based on his research, Giryński (2005: 61) claims that parents and teachers are not always willing to support the psycho-sexual development of intellectually disabled children. This is reflected below in the fragment of a statement made by one of my interviewees:

He does those things, he does, unfortunately. He, himself. I don't know what he really does, but he feels and enjoys it. You don't need a fit mind to feel pleasure. But I'm not going to explain this to him, I won't tell him what it means. Because how I am supposed to do that? It is as if I was talking to a child about these things [i.17.04].

At the same time, as suggested by the statement above, disability means permanent unpredictability. Many parents point out that there is no guidebook that can show what to expect in a given moment of development. Often, disability is associated with a kind of puzzle and uncertainty as to where the disability ends and where the child's character traits begin. However, a particularly perceptible consequence of the disability of their child is the necessity to give up numerous things (Sałkowska 2015: 117). However, many parents do not identify this abstaining with sacrifice; staying at home and taking care of the child—especially for mothers—is usually treated as a conscious decision, not coercion (although this is how it is often perceived by those closest to them). Furthermore, the disability may mean giving something up, but at the same time, it can be a challenge for parents (ibidem 2015: 118).

No, it's not like it was a problem for me that I had to quit my job. There was simply no other way, but it was not like I broke down instantly; but every day, every hour that you need to plan—that was the challenge [i.19.07]

The issue of the future of a disabled child is both problematic and painful for parents. There are doubts, and there is also an important question they must ask themselves: what will happen to my child after my death? The more the child depends on carers, the more difficult the question becomes. The awareness of putting a child in a place that fails to guarantee development and support is often painful for the parents. Konieczna (2012) attempted to answer the question of how parents of people with intellectual disability respond to the issue of providing their child with a decent existence in the event of their own illness and/or death. It turned out that only a small group had thought this issue through and was capable of verbalizing their decisions. Almost half had left the decisions to other people, to institutions, or to God. Their statements show that they did not see a good solution to this problem. They were bitter because of the low quality of services offered by social welfare homes, and they experienced an abject lack of support from the institutions as well as their family and friends. Some directly expressed the belief that it would be better if their disabled child died together with the parent or shortly afterward (Konieczna 2012: 279).

I can't imagine what might happen to Magda when she's left alone. I say alone because I don't want to get my other kids involved in this. They have the right to their own lives. They must remember about their sister, but I can't expect them to give up their own lives for her. It's enough that I had to do it. But on the other hand, I can't imagine Magda going to an institution. Nobody will provide her with the help she receives from us at home. I prefer not to think about it because it simply terrifies me [i.17.04].

For parents, this means crossing another border or reaching a turning point, when they realize not only that their child is different, but also that there is a new version of this "otherness," which means their son or daughter will be unable to achieve subsequent stages of both psychophysical and social development. This leads to a breakdown in expectations for a normal (known) course of events that they were used to, and if it is not due to their previous personal experience (e.g., because they already have healthy children), it is due to their biography where they transferred from childhood to adolescence, and maturity to full adulthood. A parent realizes that they can no longer live according to the schemes they are familiar with, and the narration often brings such phrases as "always" or "for the rest of my life," which means that they start to realize the inevitability and unchangeability of the situation they and their child are in.

Reasons for Increasing Trajectory Potential

The majority of actions involved in taking care of an intellectually disabled child are related to nursing and working on a body. Feeding, hygiene, washing, administering medications—all of those actions are in the foreground, and they are the daily struggles of caregivers. The endless repetition of procedures accompanied by the accumulation of new responsibilities and interaction problems (there are often some tensions between the parents in the background) mean that, for the family members, adolescence becomes not only a time of other disappointments but also feelings of hopelessness and anguish. This is especially true as it is gets harder and harder for the parents to carry out particular actions with their son or a daughter as the child gets older and there are physiological changes.

At the same time, the changes in appearance and behavior of an adolescent child with a disability are not only a source of suffering for the parents, but they also threaten how they maintain relationships with those around them. Bodily changes often lead to a reconstruction of the way an adolescent child with a disability is perceived by others, and such children may directly cause reluctance or even disgust. The body, as a carrier of biographical identity, changes significantly and sometimes very visibly during adolescence. What an individual has been so far is irreversibly changed, leading to the need to reconstruct other people's vision of the individual.

A small child with a disability, even though different and often with a clearly visible dysfunction, is better received by the social environment than adults and adolescents. It also often happens that during childhood, especially in infancy, a disabled child is not very different from his or her fully capable peers. This makes it easier for the social environment to accept such children, and they trigger less intense responses to their disability, which directly influences the relationships between the parents and the "outside world" (external to the family). A new condition arising from a disabled child entering adolescence may mean that others are unwilling to deal with the disabled child, creating a greater distance between themselves and the child and, as a result, the parents. This refers not only to strangers but even the closest relatives who avoid serious conversations with the parents, are uncomfortable, and become not only emotionally but also psychologically distant. One should look for reasons for this condition in the socio-cultural perception of a body which is considered to be normative. Changes in the appearance of an adolescent child with a disability are a clear contradiction of this normativity, which makes them a barrier that is difficult to overcome for many, both in their perception of disability but also through direct contact with someone who has some visible and not concealed dysfunctions.

Unfortunately, as Staś grew, he no longer fitted in a regular baby stroller, so we needed to take him in a different, special stroller. And then it was no longer possible to hide that he is not a normal child because the stroller itself aroused some interest. But it was even worse when Staś's appearance changed, and he turned from a child that looked almost normal into a teenager and then an adult who clearly looked like an ill person [i.18.02]

Another cause of the increasing trajectory potential is the issue related to the growing gap between the expectations of parents and those around them, and the restricted psychophysical abilities of the disabled individual. Adolescent children taking over the roles and responsibilities of aging parents deepens the dissonance between the parents of healthy children and the parents of children with disabilities. There is a social expectation, and there are social "standards," but they cannot be met by disabled children.

Well, I know that Bartek will be an adult, but he will never have kids, and my husband and I will be older, but we will never be able to count on support from our son—this just won't happen.He will never achieve the level of development to be self-reliant, independent or responsible not only for himself, but also for others [i.18.09]

Parents desire self-sufficiency for their child; they hope that their son or daughter will do well at school and will have a successful career in the future. A child with special needs is not only a threat to those dreams, but these two aspects often rule out each other. It is worth noting in this context that adulthood is not only a metric fact but also a process related to achieving subsequent stages of maturity. It is composed of biological maturity (the end of growth processes and the arrival of the ability to procreate), social maturity (e.g., the ability to live independently), and emotional-moral maturity. Maturity can also be seen in accepting oneself and one's own limitations. This is also a period of undertaking family, social, and professional roles. Unfortunately, also in this aspect of life, the parents of an intellectually disabled child must usually come to terms with the fact that their son or daughter will never become a mother or father, they will never start a family or have a fully independent life.

I'd really want that, really, but I know that it's completely unreal. I know not only that I will always be a mother of a child that will never grow up, but also that my child will never be a parent. And because this is my only child, I will never taste what it's like to be a grandmother, because I'll never see my grandchildren [i.18.06]

At the same time, the frustration and disappointment of parents of a child with disability are intensified because of social requirements and expectations both towards the parents themselves and their offspring (especially an adolescent child). Parents see their child through the prism of social opinion, according to which one of the most significant values in life is having your own child. You must love it, take care of it, and do everything to provide your child with the best development possible. When a child is intellectually disabled, the parent realizes the negative evaluations ascribed by the social environment to those children. This leads to an ambivalent attitude towards a child that, on the one hand, must be loved, but on the other, is rejected because it is handicapped. This is the case with many parents—the crisis of values is gradually replaced by a new kind of a crisis, called a real crisis, which involves providing a child with proper care and rehabilitation. Overcoming the crisis is based on dealing with the problem of handicap, which the parents will need to deal with until their death (Kowalik 1989).

For me, now, it's most important that Magda has the best possible living conditions. I know I won't change how she is, and I can't do anything else to heal her. I can just give her a sense of comfort, peace, and the best life possible despite various unfavorable conditions and many barriers or limitations we need to face together [i.17.05]

The changes related to a child entering adulthood are replaced by the parents' concern about the quality of life, in particular, the process of aging and the vision of their death. According to Sałkowska (2015: 91) "parents at the beginning of their parenthood, when their child is still small, fear that it will experience a significantly reduced quality of life, because this is how they would feel in the place of the child, not being able to benefit from all intellectual opportunities or entertainment." These concerns grow over time as the child matures and becomes an adult (in a physical sense). The parents gradually start to feel not only the problems related to their aging but also those which result from the physical changes in their son or daughter which accompany the adolescence. The changes are largely related to their child's increased weight but also to their development stopping or even regressing.

Tomek is like my beloved cat. This is how I refer to him caressingly, because he fawns all over me, but sometimes he can also show a claw (laughter—note by JN). A big cat, as you can see, because he's already an adult man. He's an adult and I'm becoming old. This is where I see the problem for the future, he will be bigger with time and I, well, nobody will give my additional strength, and time is unfortunately passing [i.18.03]

The parents' concern is not only about caring for the child but also meeting his or her physical and emotional needs. They demonstrate their full and unconditional acceptance of the ill child with every gesture and action. In expressing such full acceptance, non-verbal communication channels, such as gestures or using the eyes, etc., prove to be the strongest forms of communication. Touch, as an act of communication, becomes the basis for a strong bond with the child; it is an expression of physical presence and, at the same time, the full acceptance of the child (cf. Kacperczyk 2006: 248). In Heslin's taxonomy (1974), touching someone in this way is merely functional and professional, which means that touching someone is purely instrumental, intended to accomplish a given task. In the accompanying actions, the person who is touched is treated more like an object than a human being. Thus, the parents' concern is that their child will be treated as an object; it will be deprived of the dignity and subjectivity that the parents have struggled to achieve and express through their own actions.

Who better than me will be able to understand Maciek? I've been with him for years, and I know his every gesture, every move, every grimace on his face. We have this language of ours here, a way of communicating. And you need to have the patience of a saint with him. This is why I don't know if anyone else would be able not only to devote as much time as he needs but even to try to understand him [i.18.05]

Intellectually disabled children are often helpless, dependent on others; a child that does not understand the surrounding world is unable to solve simple everyday problems. Such children often have problems with communication, cannot express their needs and feelings, and they are lost, even among relatives. This means that the parents may *feel mentally mutilated* when dealing with their child due to the child's restricted possibilities of self-realization. They are incapable of dealing with everyday problems; they are incapable of defining their feelings and needs; they are lost among people who do not understand their suffering. One of the dominant experiences related to being a parent of a disabled child is the sense of difference. Depending on the type of disability and its visibility (referring to Goffman's stigma category), as well as to the attitude of the social surroundings, the parents see the special way the society treats them, although the term "special" does not always have a positive dimension, as suggested by Stelter (2013: 76). The intellectual disability of a child means that parent may have the sense of a pejorative difference, and they may feel worse than the parents of healthy children (see Popielecki and Zeman 2000).

I'll put it this way: I don't mind it anymore like I did before, but I'd be lying if I told you that I don't care. I know that people are looking, I can see it, I see them pointing their fingers at me. Maybe not directly, but I feel it, and I know that sometimes someone can think "that's sad to see" or "how unsightly it is," and then I feel the worst because I feel like I am worse as a parent [i.17.09]

This feeling of otherness may accompany the parents for the rest of their lives. Its framework is initially determined by the birth of a "dysfunctional" child. Gradually, they are labeled "a parent of a disabled child," which is usually based on social stereotypes, sometimes prejudices, and a lack of understanding of their situation. This happens because the "otherness" is often synonymous with strangeness, and experiencing one's own otherness and the otherness of other people is one of the most difficult emotional and social experiences. A visible disability features stress as its foreground character in social perceptions; it changes expectations, responses, and ways of communicating, and even the readiness to enter into individual relationships. Just as being a woman in a biological sense does not determine a woman's role, being an individual with biological defects does not determine our strangeness categorically. It is only the emergence of the so-called negative feedback in our biography, where biological, psychological, and social factors overlap, strengthen, and intersect, which can trigger the pathologization of development (Stelter 2013: 8).

Strategies of Dealing with Trajectory

In order to deal with the previously discussed problems related to entering into the trajectory of suffering, the parents must develop certain strategies that could provide a measure of success when dealing with those key difficulties. Many of these strategies require the assistance and support of others (family members, friends, acquaintances) who could act as rescuing agents, protective agents, assisting agents, or control agents (Strauss et al. 1984: 17; cf. Kacperczyk 2006: 240). Although it is impossible to go into detail regarding the above-mentioned roles due to the limited volume of the paper, we should note that the basic strategies of dealing with key problems require organized actions, the presence of a certain organizational structure in the form of a family member, neighbor, or another arrangement which could help manage the obligations and requirements imposed by the situation of disability.

It would be hard alone, or even only with my husband. As a matter of fact, you're left alone in your need, but yet the help, if there was no help, either financial or direct in the form of activities, rehabilitation or simply care, even for a moment, is worth its weight in gold [i.17.04]

In the majority of everyday situations, the parents are left alone, and hence they need to deal with things on their own. In particular, there is no one and nothing that can substitute the mother or father in the most important activities, both the instrumental activities, referring to the fulfillment of physiological needs, and the more psycho-emotional ones. Therefore, it is extremely important for the parents to deal with the difficulties they encounter every day, when they have to deal not only with the household chores but also in a broader sense, with the society's lack of knowledge or understanding and sometimes even hostility.

All this has a direct impact on the behaviors and actions that take place between the parents and other people from their immediate environment. What Strauss and Glaser (1965) described as work on the context of consciousness, and what turns out to be one of the most important areas of building a relationship between parents permanently involved in the upbringing of a child with intellectual disabilities, is gaining in significance. From the perspective of the parents' lives, this means that they try to avoid "difficult" topics, both between each other and when dealing with the world. These topics might be related to the growing dissonance between the development of their child and their expectations which result from their knowledge about the normal mode of adolescence. The parents can, therefore, use a repertoire of behaviors and actions intended to avoid or significantly limit conversations on topics that are well known to them and which would carry to much emotional strain. The context of suspicion is used less frequently between parents themselves, but more frequently (if external circumstances and the condition of their child allow it) when dealing with the society, which means that parents try to hide or at least neutralize as much as possible any manifestations of their child's "otherness." For example, this may mean that parents try to avoid public places or choose times of the day for walks when they would potentially meet fewest people. This is perfectly illustrated by a fragment of a statement made by one of my interviewees:

Unfortunately, but our society is not yet mature enough to accept disabled individuals. I'm not saying that this is the case with everyone, but it is true that, in a lot of situations, people don't know how to behave when they see a person with severe disability. This is why I prefer not to be exposed to such behaviors or even to this intrusive staring at me and my child [i.17.05]

A parent's reaction to what happens to a child is often a violent outburst caused by powerlessness and awareness that the situation will not change. However, the parents will have had many more experiences (during the first years of the child's life) and will have already worked through what happened to them in relation to the birth of their disabled son or daughter. They also understand that what happened to them is permanent and irreversible, and that both their lives and the life of their disabled child will be permanently "burdened" with the load of "otherness" and imperfection. Therefore, the outburst more often provides an outlet for attempts to rationalize the trajectory, which means a search for alternative solutions and sources of joy and life satisfaction. New attempts are made to explain the reasons for their own suffering and to morally assess what is happening. Redefining their own situation is also an analysis of the influence exerted by the process of suffering on the previous, present, and future mode of life—both theirs and their child's.

It is as it is. I can't do anything about it. I can only do what's important for me and my child and what makes me see the sense and even some kind of joy in it, because every gesture, every grimace, or movement of the head, is a lot for me, and it makes me happy when I see the satisfaction in the eyes of my child. I don't know who I'd be without my child, what my life would look like, but I can't imagine this life without him without what we have experienced together. All of this is a part of me, and without him I wouldn't be the person I am now [i.17.02]

The parents try to explain to themselves that they cannot do anything about their child's disability, despite the passage of time, and that they can still provide the child with the best living conditions possible. At the same time, they are unable to prevent numerous adverse changes that take place when their son or daughter reaches a certain age. However, they must consider the fact that, over the years, there are no visible effects in the form of their child gradually becoming independent. The parents start to focus more on the present time, gradually shifting their activity from rehabilitation, which was previously intended to achieve the highest possible level of development, to supporting the child with the intention of maintaining the achieved level and supporting the child's independence. However, when it turns out that despite everything the parents have done their child's condition in adolescence and adulthood is marked with regression, the parents focus on providing the greatest quality of life possible, putting the main emphasis on care and nursing procedures.

As I have already mentioned, I'm not counting on a miracle, because it won't happen. But I also have nothing to reproach myself for, because I did everything I could to make my child as independent as possible. It might be too big a word because Dominika needs constant care, but she doesn't lie down all the time, she can move in her own way, so this is my success. And now I want to keep it at all costs and not make it worse. I want her to have the best care, rehabilitation, simply a dignified life [i.18.09]

Within their rationalization strategies, parents also adopt a procedure that involves searching for "more serious" problems that other families need to struggle with, both those with disabled children (e.g., with a more "problematic" dysfunction) as well as those that struggle with deviant behaviors. In this way, a mother and a father can take comfort from the fact that their child will not become a drug addict or a criminal. For them, a socially dysfunctional family requires more compassion than a family with a disabled child.

Particular attention should be paid to the various standardization strategies that are manifested in the pursuit of "normal" family life, "normal" social roles, "normal" motherhood, or being the mother or father of a "normal" child. The participants of the research stressed that their lives are not so different from the lives of those who do not have a disabled child—they have similar duties and difficulties combining professional and family life. What is also important in this context is the thread of using social welfare and other support institutions. There are some ambivalent attitudes here. Some parents find it a pragmatic way to justify the functioning of the family and make it function relatively normally. At the same time, there are opposing voices that say that using social assistance may be pereceived as the parents making excessive demands, which they try to avoid as much as possible. Furthermore, in their opinion, using the social welfare system may be interpreted as admitting to a weakness or the inability to cope (Sałkowska 2015: 119).

I know that those who don't have their own children, disabled children, and who don't know much about disability, in general, think that we are the type who would just keep taking money, rely on others, and give nothing back to society. It's sad, but that's what it's like, unfortunately. But I didn't choose this fate for myself and for my child. But I don't want to be perceived as a beggar, a man who "failed" in life, which is why, as long as I can afford it and have this financial independence, nobody will convince me to use any aid, especially state aid [i.18.02]

Another strategy for dealing with the trajectory is to *walk out of the disability,* which is largely based on blurring the signs of intellectual disability. As Woynarowska suggests (2010: 199–203), "a child with Down syndrome should be 'normalized' as much as possible." Therefore, all therapeutic and rehabilitation procedures are intended to eliminate the deviation from accepted standards. It seems that these procedures may somehow resemble subjecting a child or an adult to training, "taming" them, so the intention is that they learn how to behave in a given situation, what to do to look like a normal person (Sałkowska 2015: 110).

My husband and I have always tried to make Marcyś as normal as possible. We wanted him to live a relatively normal life, as far as his condition allowed. And when he was an adult, we tried to get him out of the house, namely, to make him start going to work, actually to workshops, but we always used the phrase "work" [i.18.03]

The need to "walk out" is also understood by some parents as one of the social expectations of them, or even a kind of coercion (Sałkowska 2015: 111). This makes them feel not only obliged to undertake actions that will "normalize" their child, but they also perceive all signs of this abnormality as doubly depreciating, especially when the attempts to rehabilitate the child fail to have any effect. They feel incompetent, both in relation to their child, for whom they are incapable of providing a higher level of development (reflected, among others, in a greater level of independence) and in the face of disability as a socially constructed stigma.

On the other hand, there are also parents who, in the case of a disability that is impossible to "cover up," or when the "normalization" process has little effect, decide not to pay attention, e.g., to other people's behaviors or their staring. The parents often stressed that they have learned not to pay attention to comments and looks, explaining them in different ways or simply getting used to them. In some situations, it even happens that parents decide to completely evade the stigma. They choose not to respond because they believe it would be a waste of their strengths and health (ibidem 2015: 142).

It will always be the case that somebody's gonna look at us a little differently. But it's normal, I mean, otherness always triggers curiosity. But some not only get used to it, but they can also show great understanding, while others will just keep staring and making up different things [i.18.03]

When dealing with those closest to them, the parents feel the already mentioned staring, especially at the beginning. It can sometimes be very difficult, and it causes them frustration or irritation. However, over time, this staring becomes "unnoticeable" to the parents, in the sense that they get used to the situations where people pay attention to their child because it looks different. At the same time, many parents see this staring not so much as the bad intentions of others but rather their curiosity and lack of knowledge about the disability itself.

It is worth noting that the fear of normal people staring, and their potentially negative reactions, may also be accompanied by a sense of shame. According to Scheff (2003), the sense of shame encompasses a whole group of emotions, which can be a threat to social bonds. In particular, shame is related to the feeling of guilt, humiliation, or embarrassment and appears when an individual senses some difficulties in a given social relationship. The feeling grows when an individual is concerned that they do not meet expectations or do not meet the applicable standards, and the parents of disabled children are often involved in such experiences (see Sałkowska 2015: 141).

I seem to know how it works, but there's still this element of uncertainty, the feeling that you could do more, and maybe you just don't do something because you can't, you're not able to. In any case, this is a feeling that you like the child, disabled in his or her own way, not physically or mentally, but socially. There is a feeling as if both you and the child are defective products, faulty in a way. I say this on purpose because what I want to express is that you have the sense of shame because of all of that [i.17.08]

When dealing with the society, the parents also adopt a strategy of *challenging*—mostly through their openness in speaking about their children's disability. It also has the advantage that parents who display this type of behavior usually do not hide their child's disability but immediately inform the world that their son or daughter is (or will be) disabled, often in advance. Therefore, they do not need to inform everyone ad hoc, and the relatives know in advance how to behave towards them and their child. Hence, the parents' openness is a starting point for the openness of other people, in particular, those who are in direct contact with mental handicap for the first time.

We've tried to follow this policy from the very beginning, if I can say so, that we won't hide anything or sweep it under the carpet. We didn't want to hide ourselves or our child from the world. Anyway, it's better to have it out and express yourself directly than to use some unnecessary camouflage. We have always focused on directness in relations, regardless of whether someone liked it or not. In the end, we don't need to meet or contact them [i.18.11]

However, it happens that the people may consider such openness as a behavior that is contradictory to the expected stereotypes of a mother or father of a disabled child. According to Sałkowska (2015: 144), this openness and acceptance of the response prove the transformations that take place in the perceptions of disability in general. It stops being just a family problem and a medical issue, and it becomes a social program (so there is a transition from a medical model to a social model).

Parents often seek the challenge by confronting the stereotypes normal people have with reality, thus showing that these beliefs are in no way reflected in everyday life. They usually point out that being the parent of a disabled child is not a reason for someone to show compassion or pity. The parents often stress that they they do not need people's mercy. If they need anything, it is help organizing everyday life, in going back to professional work, or financial support, because they often cannot go back to work. However, they do not expect any special treatment.

The truth is that I—and parents like me—don't need compassion or mercy. It just makes me angrier and makes me feel worse rather than better. I always say, "if you want to help me, then instead of sighing, just do something to make me feel better so I can actually help my child" [i.17.03]

Dealing with the society also reveals behaviors contrary to stereotypes, which can be seen in the surprise of the interaction partners, for example, when it turns out that a disabled individual can read and write. Members of "normal" society are often convinced that a person with mental dysfunctions is not able to carry out such activities. This results from, among other things, "lowering the bar" for intellectually disabled individuals (ibidem 2015: 148).

As a parent of a disabled child, I know that he is disqualified at the very beginning and classified as a child that "can't do anything," is unable to do anything—simply as being "worse." But what a surprise when, despite the visible disability, he is able to do quite well with clothes, food, and even such activities as simple counting or reading, something that is apparently reserved only for people with full capabilities [i.18.04]

This triggers various responses from parents, but they often try to use that surprise or amazement of the normal people by teaching them a lesson or, more often, by simply trying to educate them and make them aware. This is how they try to convince others that their stereotypes, often rooted in their childhood and handed down to their own children, are harmful to both sides (Sałkowska 2015: 149).

Conclusions

The natural life cycle of a family with an able-bodied child goes through subsequent stages: from a very strong, even symbiotic relationship between the child and its parents, through the child's gradual move from limited to full independence, and then leaving the family home. Than the aspects that distinguish the relationship between a parent and a child from other social relationships are the asymmetry of relations that disappear as the child develops, the strong, intimate, and emotional bonds, and how the child's life and development depend on the quality of this relationship.

The child's intellectual disability does not so much disturb the natural life cycle of the family as it hampers it, and the family often remains at the level where there is an asymmetrical relationship between the child and its parents, especially the mother. This strong and permanent bond between the parents and a child with intellectual disability had a fundamental impact on the functioning of the whole family. It may lead to some serious disturbances in how the family members get on with each other. There is often a threat to the feeling of community and the sense of belonging to a family. It distorts the emotional balance and the emotional bond between the parents, between the parents and the children, or between the siblings (Stelter 2013: 68).

The disability itself is not the only problem encountered by the affected family system. Physical symptoms that mark a person with dysfunctions push them to the margins of society. In turn, they push the parents away from professional work, excluding them from their previous roles (social and professional), and leaving them outside the sphere of active, everyday interpersonal relationships. The related difficulties are part of a broader syndrome that destroys the "natural" interaction order (Kacperczyk 2006: 240). This happens because the parents, who are heavily involved in the disabled child's life, encounter specific difficulties rooted in the developmental processes of their son or daughter. Seeing a child with limited ability maturing and entering adulthood is often a difficult experience for the parents, all the more that they rarely receive proper support, either social or legal, when contributing to the disabled child's development towards autonomy and social usefulness. Additionally, the great majority of parents are left to fend for themselves with the emotional and social problems that result from their intellectually disabled child's psychosexual development (Stelter 2013: 76–77).

A significant hindrance, or even a factor that blocks the development of a child with limited intellectual abilities, is other people taking control of the child's development. After analyzing parents' behaviors which effectively block a child with mental disability from becoming independent, Twardowski (2008) lists the following factors: a lack of conditions for independent decision-making, weakening of the motivation to take independent actions, relieving the child of its responsibilities, and maintaining strict control over the child's actions. Due to such behaviors of the parents, a disabled child does not acquire the feeling of competence, which has an adverse impact on its cognitive development and the shaping of his or her sense of identity.

The researched individuals pointed to the dominance of the ideology of youth, fitness, health, and rationality. Zakrzewska-Manterys (2010: 90) notes that as we place greater emphasis on rationality, and the fact that almost all of our experiences are subject to reflection, there is an increasing distance between "normal" people and disabled individuals. However, at the same time, the discourse of emancipation leads us to strive for the fullest possible inclusion of intellectually disabled individuals in social and professional life. The paradox is that as the integration or inclusion process progresses, we need to shorten the social and cultural distance, so disabled individuals must acquire the competences of rational and reflexive citizens. The need to preserve normality, or to give such an impression, is a denial of the right to abnormality (Sałkowska 2015: 87).

The model of the course of a trajectory that developed as part of the empirical research can be divided into several characteristic stages that show the gradual development of processes and mechanisms of growing suffering, the feelings of disintegration and chaos, as well as powerlessness and entanglement. The typical dynamics of the course of a trajectory are characterized by the following stages: the accumulation of trajectory potential, exceeding the border of the trajectory potential, the development of unstable balance, the state of destabilization, a breakdown of life organization and orientation, and biographical work on the trajectory.

Practical ways of dealing with the trajectory essentially involve attempts to "get rid of" the trajectory and free oneself from the dramatic chain of events and the accompanying reactions, or the attempt to regain control over one's own life. If an individual really wants to and is able to make the effort to think through certain issues independently, working on the trajectory in the context of one's own biographical experience can be significant and helpful in the process of rebuilding and reorganizing one's life (Rzeźnicka-Krupa 2009: 206).

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Dynamic Press Discourses of School Meal Reform in Poland: from Expertise Implementation to Resistance and Rejection

Abstract: The implementation of school meal reform in Poland in 2015 has been withdrawn in because of vast social resistance. The analyses of press discourse in daily newspapers reveals how the critics and resistance has been shaped. The use of content analysis and critical discourse analysis helps to identify how power relations and ideologies connected to the anti-junk-food law has been contested and redefined. The changes were manifested by abandoning healthist framing in favour of construction of new discursive worlds. In the discourse of resistance, cultural food symbols such as hunger and satiety, the ceremonial nature and pleasure of eating, economic freedom and consumer freedom were employed, and the status of taste in consumption among children was highlighted. Historical and cultural context has given the basis for such redefining and provided cultural meanings for undermining expert narrative, which has been reform's rationale and hegemonising frame.

Keywords: school meal reform; consumption among children; public health policy; social resistance; press discourse; food education

Introduction

In the 2015/2016 school year, an unprecedented change was implemented in Poland concerning the availability of various types of food in schools. The amendment to the law on food safety and nutrition that came into effect, as well as the accompanying decree of the Minister of Health, met with a strong reaction and triggered a debate on the school food environment and the role of schools in food socialisation.

The objective of this study is to present the dynamic of the discursive processes and semantics associated with the introduction of the anti-junk-food law in Poland. The starting point for the study was the unexpected and strong resistance towards new regulations that emerged from the very first weeks of implementation of the reform. The main research questions that arose were: Why was the reform rejected? How did the discussion on the anti-junk-food reform change throughout the successive phases of its implementation? How did the critics of the reform frame their responses, and what discursive resources were used to question the most common justifications of the reform?

By studying changes in the discourse on the anti-junk-food law, we can better understand the process of implementation of food and health policy. The objective of the food reform was to modify eating habits of children, thus making a far-reaching intervention in everyday social practices. The reaction to the reform was at first not negative, yet with time such strong opposition formed that modifications were made. This study aims to point to the processes in the realm of cultural meanings, ideologies, conflicts, and symbols that changed the field of discourse on food in schools. In order to answer research questions, three different methodological perspectives has been applied: content analysis, text-world theory inspired by semantic analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Press articles from five selected nationwide Polish daily newspapers forms the textual corpus and is considered here as main research material.

This study follows the model of critical discourse analysis, focusing on changes in ideologies and power relations (Wodak and Ludwig 1999: 12). The research concerns press discourse, but the critical, qualitative part of the analysis also refers to the legal, political, cultural and historical context.

Legal Context: Rationales for Food Policies

The political transformation of 1989 in Poland and accession to the European Union in 2004 are milestones of transferring from a shortage economy with limited food supply in the communist era, with its cyclical provisions crises, queues and food rationing, to an economy of the abundances of Western capitalism. Opening to highly industrialised food markets and the processes of globalisation transformed lifestyles and the associated nutrition challenges—including the diet-related health threats related to obesity and overweight (Piekarzewska et al. 2016: 76). Although the dynamic of the health of Polish society has so far been complex, owing to periodic crises and the transitions of the 1990s (Gomula et al. 2015), the thesis of an obesity epidemic provides a good description of the most general trends, and is an increasingly dominant narrative on public health in Poland.

Owing to the threats related to food models and public health, the state and other institutions have taken steps to engage in educational activities and legal regulation of the food environment. For decades, campaigns aiming to reduce malnutrition and to legitimise the fight against poverty were an inherent part of state social policies. A contemporary example is the school-oriented *State-supported supplementary nutrition* programme, where support is provided to groups particularly on the basis of income criteria, or supplementary nutrition programmes offered by other, non-public entities including Polish Humanitarian Action and Food Banks. The newer strategies and documents regulating food policy are more and more often a response to the obesity epidemic and qualitative malnutrition and emphasise general nutrition education (National Health Programme for 2016–2020, Decree 1492/2016).

The regulations from 2015 applied to all food offered in schools and pre-schools. The broadest distribution channels are school lunches, either cooked on site or ordered from catering companies, and school tuck shops, which are commercial points usually located in premises rented from the school. The decision to operate a canteen depends upon the school head teacher, and the conditions for its use, including payments made by users as well as reduced rates and exemptions, are determined by the school and local authorities. School meals in Poland are therefore not an element of state education policy, but partly social policy, and partly—together with tuck shops—a school catering option. In 2015/2016, approx. 22% of school pupils consumed school lunches at full rate, approx. 2% ate subsidised meals and 7% had their costs reimbursed (CSO 2016). Canteens were present in half of all schools, and are more common in primary schools than middle schools (CSO 2014).

On 3 October 2012, a private member's bill concerning the law on food safety was submitted to the Polish parliament. The bill's main objectives were protection of children and young people's health by limiting access to food not recommended for their development as well as reduction of overweight and obesity. This was to be achieved by regulating the food supply in schools and pre-schools. As a result, relatively intrusive instruments were introduced, which, although evaluated as effective (Bleich et al. 2017; Brambila-Macias et al. 2011; Driessen et al. 2014) and recognised by public health specialists, have met with the resistance of other stakeholders (González-Zapata et al. 2009). Surveys have indicated a general indifference among Polish respondents regarding various types of interventions promoting healthy eating, with the relatively highest support being expressed for information campaigns and school education (Szponar et al. 2007) and the lowest for intrusive steps such as top-down regulation of the nutritional value of meals in the workplace, or even a ban on advertising of unhealthy products for adults (Kozioł-Kozakowska et al. 2014). This study describes the process of rejection of the hegemony of such intrusive reforms and formation of a discourse permitting the expression of resistance to it.

The amendment to the law on food safety was passed by parliament almost unanimously on 23 October 2014; the Official Gazette of 28 August 2015 (Decree 1256/2015) published the accompanying *Decree of the Minister of Health of 26 August 2015 on groups of foodstuffs designated for sale to children and young people in educational institutions as well as the requirements to be fulfilled by foodstuffs used in institutional feeding of children and young people in these institutions*. The decree contains a list of permissible product groups, describing—in the attachments—the conditions that they must satisfy as well as the general rules of composition of meals and menus and their dietary properties. Achieving the stated goal mostly involved limiting consumption of food with high sugar levels, sweetening substances, fats and sodium, while increasing the intake of calcium and the proportion of fruit and vegetables in the diet. The decree therefore defines in detail the minimum or maximum amounts of individual ingredients, e.g. salt, sugar, fat, but also the content of meat in cold cuts or of tomatoes in ketchup.

The decree was published with an extensive rationale, discussing not only the results of research on the health aspects of consuming specific groups of products, but also the legal context, WHO guidelines, as well as the solutions adopted in other European countries. The strategies implemented are partly based on existing good practices, especially from the British system. The rationale is an 80-page expert report, dominated by health arguments, but also mentioning, for example, the social benefits of pupils eating a meal in school together. The second part provides a detailed discussion of the content of the new rules and is entirely dominated by the dietary perspective, based on an analysis of the nutritional values of the various food categories and daily and weekly diet norms. It is also worth mentioning that the amendment was prepared and implemented by the Christian democratic-liberal Civic Platform, which, within weeks of the reform, lost power to the conservative, populist and Eurosceptic Law and Justice party. This political change is a significant part of the extra-textual context, in which we can find various moral projects of individuals,' groups' and institutions' responsibilities for food choices (cf. Pike and Kelly 2014).

Changes in the field of school meals are the subject of health policies in other countries, described by researchers in various perspectives. Although the implementation of these policies differs according to the specific legal and cultural system, certain elements of reforms and certain research findings are repeated, e.g. resistance encountered in response to limiting pupils' consumption freedoms (Fletcher et al. 2014; LeGreco 2007). Critical analyses of school meal reform are also characterised by internal incoherence of the school food environment and a lack of a whole school approach (LeGreco 2007). Food education policies are very much dominated by an individualistic approach, according to which consumers are responsible for the choices they make, and as such are subject to nutrition education encouraging good choices, and turning poor choices into the ignorance of uninformed, and sometimes even brainwashed children and their parents (Gibson and Dempsey 2015). The importance of biopowers and semantic provisioning is also highlighted by critical studies on school meals policies (Pike and Kelly 2014; Roslyng 2011).

Study Design and Methods: Three Stages of Analysis

The study design is built along the following vectors: from simplified model to growing complexity, from quantitative to qualitative, from literalness to intertextual and contextual interpretation of meaning.

The first stage of analysis is based on quantitative techniques, resulting in a general outline of the dynamic of the discourse in the relevant time interval, showing the main areas of discussions, direction of change and its turning points.

The research material used in this study comprises 107 articles published in the daily press in Poland between 8 May 2014 and 14 November 2015. The articles were sourced from the archives of the five general news dailies with the highest readership. Based on Polish Readership Research data, the following titles were selected: Fakt, Gazeta Wyborcza (GW), Super Express (SE), Metrocafe (until September 2015 known as Metro) and Rzeczpospolita (RP). In the first internet search, I identified the articles on the food reform, using the newspapers' archives (GW, RP) and websites (Fakt, SE, Metrocafe). The search criteria included: food reform, amendments to the food law, school meal reform, school canteens, school shops, school food, anti-junk-food law etc. These were generated until new texts appeared, resulting in 146 articles. I then excluded articles not addressing the reform (rather concerning healthy food in general, or local initiatives), and those which only touched upon it (less than 20% of the text). In the case of dailies with local editions, I decided to limit the study to one of them (selected at random), if a number of them were published on a given day. In the newspapers with no internet archive of their physical publications, the search was verified in these paper publications. In the end, 39 texts were removed, leaving 107 remaining. The texts were arranged in chronological order, in three intervals: May–December 2014 (work on the amendment, 14 articles); January–June 2015 (after accepting but before the reform implementation, 8 articles), July–November 2015 (implementation process, 65 articles). In addition, the time of the most intensive discussion, from July to November 2015, was divided 5–7 weeks intervals, in order to study the discourse in its most dynamic period.

The corpus of texts was coded using text-driven codes referring to research questions, especially concerning opinions on the reform, arguments for and against, justifications, examples, comparisons etc. A sentence by sentence coding method was employed, thus permitting use of a standard unit in counting. The coding was open, and not exclusive (the codes are not disjoint) or complete (some passages are not coded). Codes have been organised into categories, and as a result, four main areas of discussion were identified. The frequencies have been summed and categories' relative proportions in particular time intervals have been calculated. Conclusions resulting from first stage od study became the starting point for in-depth, contextual, qualitative analysis.

The second stage of study concentrates on individual utterances in the discourse, highlighting the formal characteristics that render the discourse dynamic and make these utterances an element of a not coincidental, but also non-determined sequence of meanings, an event that leads to further events/utterances (considered here as statements in press articles). Here, I applied theoretical methods from discourse linguistics (Werth 1999), in particular the concepts of common ground and possible worlds reinterpreted by Andrea Rocci (2009). Common grounds and possible worlds, i.e. the scenarios of reality filling the discourse, are ordered and have a multi-level structure that I will reconstruct below. From the common ground, further narratives emerge, in the form of definition of the situation and highlighting of the threats, anticipated states of affairs etc. At the same time, the development of discourse means that common premises are subjects to changes called incrementation—in subsequent utterances, the common ground is expanded, redefined, modified and falsified.

The third perspective leads to intertextual and contextual analysis of selected semantic nodes that are important for the discourse, using several examples to show the semantic provisioning (Cook 2009), how the food discourse articulates meanings, becoming political language and an area of power and ideology. This is an attempt to answer the question of the hidden significance and broader cultural meaning of school meals reform. By applying Laclau and Mouffe's conceptual instruments, it is possible to discern the non-determined nature of meanings in discourse and the constant openness of discursive systems (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Laclau 2014). Hegemonising practices in food practices refer to diverse meanings and areas of cultures, alluding to myths and historical narratives, political perspectives, economic arguments, ethical systems, healthist ideologies, class habitus etc.

Each of three perspectives employs different kind of analytic unit: text corpus of 107 articles (content analysis), individual textual utterance (text words method), meaningful intertextual utterance (critical discourse analysis). Each of them brings out different aspects of the same material, resulting in multilevel "zooming in and zooming out" picture and eventually stimulating for further questions.

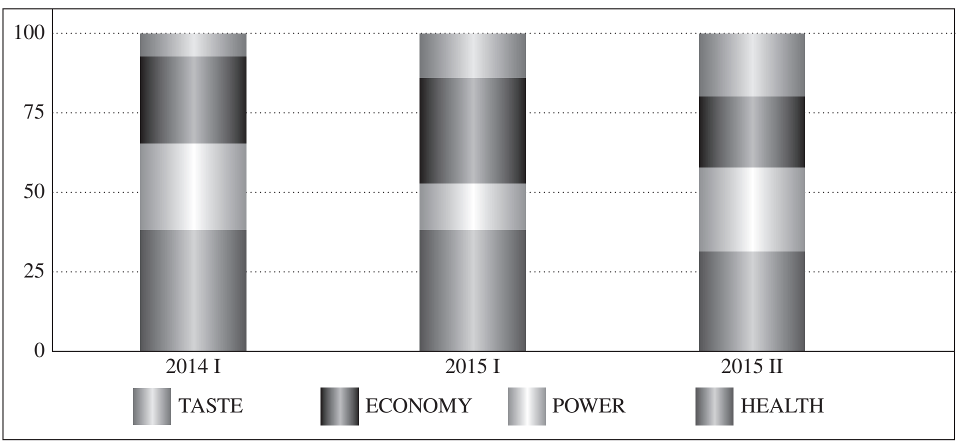
General Dynamics and Reform's Hegemonic Discourses

The arguments and discussion in the press discourse were mostly concerning four main, directly tackled topic areas. First, health arguments, the very rationale of the reform, referred to threats regarding excess body mass and excessive consumption of sodium, sugar and fats. These arguments encompassed lifestyle factors, i.e. balanced diet, appropriate rhythm of meals, and physical activity. The second category refers to economic calculation. Economic arguments usually concern the indirect consequences of implementation of the reform borne by the owners of school shops going bankrupt or by local authorities saddled with the greater costs of preparing healthy meals for children. Also appearing in this discussion are, on the one hand, household micro-economies, and, on the other, the costs of healthcare for lifestyle diseases and financing reform at state level. The third category concerns power relations and nutrition decisions, which were redefined by the reform. These arguments tackled the question of the scope and specific details of the regulations, the restrictiveness of the new rules, the rights of particular institutions to interfere in the sphere of consumption, the rights of individuals and groups to manage their own food environment, the rights and limitations of economic freedom etc. The final category, that of taste, is more specific to the discourse in question, playing a particular role in forming the language of resistance to the reform. The analysis showed that this seemingly vague, subjective category was in fact more exact and defining than that of health—ostensibly objective, yet powerful: disgusting sugar-free pancakes, soups without salt, ridiculous no-fry cutlets, birthdays without chocolate treats.

The relationship between the frequencies of the codes from the four main categories (Figure 1) illustrates the general dynamic of the areas of the press discourse on the new regulations. All numbers are expressed as a proportion of a particular category, with codings/sentences of four categories in a given time period adding up to 100 per cent (Figure 1, Figure 2).

Figure 1

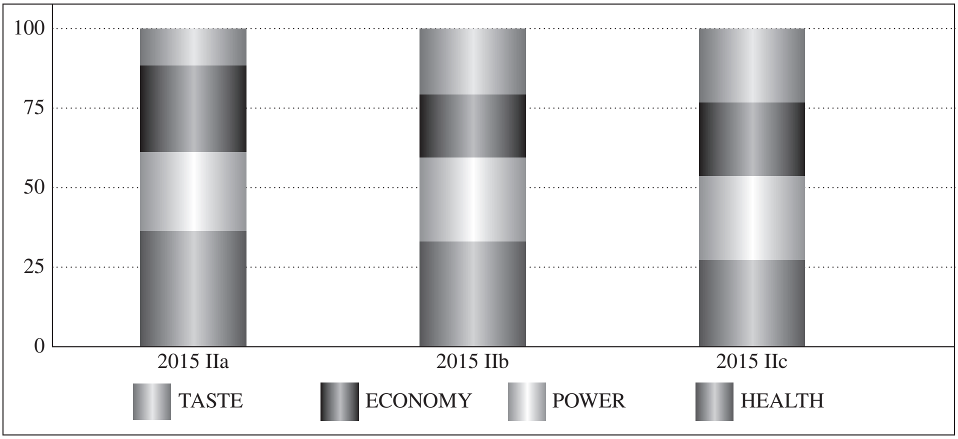
Proportion of frequencies of four main categories shown as per cent of category's sentences within all coded sentences. Long time intervals: 1 January–31 December 2014 (II 2014), 1 January–6 July August 2015 (I 2015), 7 July–23 November 2015 (II 2015).



Health issues are dominant throughout the entire research period. In the first period of the discussion on the reform (2014) and just before the implementation (first half of 2015) health-related issues consist of 38 per cent of all coded sentences. After the implementation, health arguments preserve their dominant position, with 32 per cent of all coded sentences

Figure 2

Proportion of frequencies of four main categories shown as per cent of category's sentences within all coded sentences. Short time intervals: 07.07.2015–31.08.2015 (2015 IIa, summer holidays), 01.09.2015–01.10.2015 (2015 IIb, school year, before *bun fight*), 02.10.2015–13.11.2015 (2015 IIc, school year, after *bun fight*)



(Figure 1). According to the legal rationale quoted above, increasing obesity and the growing risk of food addiction disorders justify the reform and attach positive value to it, and their domination in the discourse therefore comes as no surprise. Health-related arguments legitimate the the principles of the reform and come up nearly every time the anti-junk law is mentioned in press. The public health narratives of obesity and diet-related diseases are forming the dominant discourse in all studied periods. However, taking the closer look at months after the implementation (Figure 2) unveils the consequent decrease of health topic in articles. This decrease starts at the very moment new meals are served to students and continues until reaches 27 per cent and therefore loosing its monopoly.

Subjects of power and economy come with about one-forth shares in all analysed articles. Power topics appear right away when the discussion about regulation starts in 2014 (28 per cent, Figure 1), and the arguments are being formulated for regulations and therefore for moving the decision about children's menu from private to public sphere. The power discourse becomes quieter in the period between its passing and implementing (14 per cent), and becomes strong again after new regulations comes into force (26 per cent). Articles start to discuss and problematise again the very foundations of reform, when it becomes part of everyday school's and family's reality. For the sake of the health children, parents, principals, and shops' owners are partly deprived of their power agency and consumers' choice is limited. The legitimation of the anti-junk-food law becomes a controversial issue and lawmakers and state's officials are called out to withdraw the changes. The steadily growth of interest in power relations can be also tracked within shorter periods, from the summer holidays until the end of studied period (Figure 2). This data demonstrates the occurrence of conflicts, controversies associated with executing the reform, shifts in power relations and political changes in the statuses of the subjects directly or indirectly affected by the reform. Further qualitative analysis shows some of these shifts.

The topic of economy reveals in less regular way, however frequently during all studied period. Economic references are often raised within the context of negative consequences of new law. Healthy food is more expensive, the tight budgets of school canteens and family-owned tuck shops are under threat. In the preparatory period economy topic takes 28 (in 2014) and 33 per cent (first half of 2015, Figure 1), before losing some of the press interest with about 20 per cent when regulations come into force in September 2015 (Figure 2). It's also worth mentioning that in all periods tuck shops appear more often than school canteens, which may suggest that the controversies are more focused on consumption and market regulations than school meals themselves.

Where the most interesting discourse change appears is probably the category of taste. It never becomes the dominant topic of the articles, but its relative increase undermines the hegemony of health-based arguments. Taste topic remains quiet (less than 10 per cent) until September 2015, i.e. the beginning of new school year (Figure 1, Figure 2), when the new meals arrive on pupils' plates. Then it increases to over 20 per cent, becoming a real game changer, and questioning the position of health legitimisations, and therefore a reform itself. Taste and satiety were not considered in the context of the purposes, causes or consequences of the anti-junk-food law, but at the stage of evaluation of the new menu (September–November 2015), they proved to be almost as common as economic factors.

Having outlined the most general stages of discourse dynamics, the qualitative analysis will further interpret the changes within the its narratives, symbols, and cultural meanings.

Anatomy of Change: From Health to Morals, Politics, and Resistance

The varying presence of topics of power, economy, health and taste is not solely about fluctuations in interest in the various aspects of the reform. The more thorough qualitative analysis below is intended to answer three questions. 1) How do the structure of the utterances and the internal characteristics of the discourse themselves make the discourse dynamic? 2) How do the utterances from the various stages of the discourse on reform differ, and thereby what attitudes and actions do they frame? 3) In what way does the press discourse intertextually link meanings and move the issue of school food from the field of health to other cultural symbols? The first two areas—the structures of utterances and the discourse—apply critical linguistic analysis methods, and the last one shifts the analysis more strongly towards critical discourse analysis, and concerns specific articulatory practices, articulation of individual meanings that allowed new hegemonic projects to emerge.

The process of incrementation of the common ground is one of the mechanisms that dynamises the discourse. Common ground is part of the text worlds presented as the default state shared by the discourse participants, and thus providing the base for interaction. The common ground world is underspecified compared to the actual world, and is sketchy and contextual, but at the same time it provides the base for meanings which can be used in utterance. Within the discursive practices, common grounds are negotiated, reformulated, criticised, and developed. The second part of a discursive utterance, rooted in the shared common ground but determining the uniqueness of a given utterance, is the narrative of the possible world (Rocci 2009: 15). Possible worlds are constituted by modalities: they can refer to the future, for example as forecasts, utopias, suggested interventions, moral obligations, but they can also be diagnoses of the present or past, their alternatives or threats. Semantically they are sub-worlds, (Werth 1999) pragmatically they engage the addressee with a particular action. The connection between common grounds and possible worlds is therefore a micro-level of the process of stabilisation of meanings. Common ground and possible worlds are a reflexively dynamising dyad—the common ground is subject to incrementation thanks to possible worlds, and the possible world's legitimisation and sense stem from the common ground. As a result of this internal dynamic, an utterance becomes an event in a discursive sequence.

We can illustrate the above model using examples from three different moments of the research discourse. The first is an article published in the local edition of GW on 25 May 2015, i.e. after the amendment to the law was passed but around three months before the decree and its entry into force. As we have seen this was a time dominated by health concerns. Power and economy issues are strong, but slightly less sound, and definitely much less is being said about taste. The article entitled "We have an obesity plague" is a good example of health dominated discourse. The text cites a Food and Nutrition Institute report on obesity and overweight among children in Poland and features a number of utterances by an expert—a medical doctor working at a university and specialising in nutrition and obesity prevention. The narrative is couched in the idea of an essentially authoritarian-instrumental policy, where diet is a means for attaining a higher goal (health), rules are formed and put into place on a top-down basis and through legal obligation, and food is a disciplinary tool (Andersen et al. 2017).

This report, precisely the data specifying the percentage of obese and overweight children, provide the common ground. In this and many other articles, a picture of the world based on figures (percentages, trends, and also absolute numbers) creates an unquestioned level of discourse, a self-evident state of affairs. The picture sketched by these data contains topics that can be developed, going beyond the status quo and creating possible worlds. In the common ground we therefore have the statements of CG1 (first level of common ground): "According to the report, over 22 percent of pupils of primary schools and middle schools in Poland have excessive body weight" (as one of the sentences opening the utterance), and CG2: "Too high a body mass leads to heart attacks, strokes, type 2 diabetes and hypertension" (in one of the last paragraphs). Each of these utterances is embedded in an expert, scientific discourse, which reinforces its self-evidence and objectivity. They determine what is called hard facts, but are also an appeal, an invocation, directing further utterances and themselves dynamising the utterance and the discourse, as they contain a highly negative evaluation of the state of children in Poland. Most of the article consists of a diagnosis and identification of the causes of the state of affairs from the common ground. Expert utterances are invoked in the form of quotations or paraphrased, developed and supplemented. Three types of utterance densely overlap: the expert utterance, that of the author, and the cited statistical data from research on obesity and overweight (implicitly meaning the Food and Nutrition Institute report). The possible world presented in the text is one in which excessive body mass among children has been caused by bad lifestyle habits (W1), in particular: W1a: availability of harmful food at schools, W1b: children's lifestyle inherited from their parents, based on limiting afternoon activity to television (here the negative influence of advertising) and not going outside, W1c: unbalanced diet, deficiency of nutrients, W1d: parents' use of sweets as rewards, W1e: parents' excusing their children from participation in school sport, and W1f (less commonly): hormonal disorders and genetic diseases. Furthermore, some of these causes have their own, deeper causes, e.g. factor W1b is brought about by W2b, i.e. parents' tiredness after coming to work and their aversion to physical activity, W1c is brought about by W2, i.e. the belief that a greater body mass is evidence of a higher material status (a cared-for child is a plump child), and W1e by parents' demanding approach to the institution of the school (W2e) as well as the associated fear (W3e) that the child will get tired, sweaty and dirty. All of the utterances therefore comprise three levels. The first is the CG, sketch world, a statistics-based picture of obesity and overweight among children in Poland. This world constitutes the point of departure in the text, and the way it is constructed releases the narrative of possible worlds. The second level is diagnosis of direct causes (i.e. epistemic modality according to Rocci's model), indicating the behaviours and habits of children leading to an increased body mass. The relationship between CG and W1 comprises behavioural, physiological dependences, and the power of this relationship constitutes the authority of an expert. The third level is the W2 world, a more general diagnosis of society with attention directed towards the parents—as conscious or unconscious agents of the CG making incorrect decisions, lacking appropriate pedagogical competences (rewarding with chocolate) and dietary knowledge (qualitative malnutrition). An additional level that is not expressed outright but contained implicitly is affirmation of health and of the normal body mass that conditions it. This is the W0 world, constructed on bouletic modality and part of the CG, as incontrovertibly shared: we all want children to be healthy and to have a normal BMI.

The relationship between the CG and W2, although mediated by elements of the scientific/expert discourse of the W1, reaches a moral level and one of social criticism (Gibson and Dempsey 2015; Pike and Kelly 2014). Possible world W2 is an ordered, rational system in which one can point to responsible subjects, agents and original causes. Referring to Peter Jackson and Jonathan Everts's (2010) model of food anxieties, the W2 world is part of cognitive framing involving identification of the sources of threat. It is also a moment that makes it possible to prevent threat: by eliminating this source or removing it from the field of its action. The utterance analysed here therefore makes it possible to achieve the next step, i.e. to generate the following possible world using deontico-practical modality—but on condition that worlds W1 and W2 become the common ground of the developing discourse. If the participants in the discourse agree on the general and specific causes of childhood obesity, it will be possible to suggest ways of combating it. The above sequence from common ground to possible world shows how the authority of expert discourse can be used to validate managing individual food practices, and—which is a case here—limiting family's agency and parents capability of promoting healthy lifestyles.

The article "The government did not expect such a rebellion from proprietors of school shops" published in *Fakt* on 30 September, a month after the regulation came into force, illustrates the relative frequency of politics and power topics in different context. The common ground of this article and others from this period is entirely different from the common ground applying before introduction of the regulation—analysed above. It contains the following states of affairs: CG1—the laws are restrictive and encompass many of the most popular snacks (crisps, sweets, sweetened drinks, yeast buns—*drożdżówki*, similar to Danish pastries), but also sandwiches, *zapiekanki*—toasted cheese baguettes, and hamburgers), so the turnover of school tuck shops fell even by 70%, CG2—the problem of bad eating has not been solved, because pupils get their snacks outside of school. From this reservoir of semantic resources, the modality-based realities and causes of this, negatively valorised, state of affairs are developed in turn: W1a: the way the law was introduced was too fast, and business owners did not have time to prepare themselves for the changes, W1b: the laws curb the right to trading in food authorised in the European Union. The next modality level of the W2 concerns the intentions of business owners (participant internal dynamic modality), who will not give up and will go to the European Commission to demand justice. The new common ground allowed the discourse to be shifted to a completely different area than previous one—that of free trade, the scope of the authorities' power and the way it is exercised. The implemented regulations acquired significance as a kind of oppressive intervention, impinging on the right to self-determination. The business owners' opposition here is a rebellion, a bottom-up and violent reaction to the controlling actions of the government. It is no accident that the higher authority and ally here is the European Commission and European Union, which for the then liberal-centrist Civic Platform government were a significant node in the network of legitimisation of the political-legal order. In the process of articulating meanings, a "logic of equivalence" (finding allies) is applied, encompassing both business owners as the recipients of regulations and EU institutions as a guarantor and higher authority for economic freedoms and individual rights to self-determination. A key dual antagonism is played out between the subjectivity of parents, families and local communities on the one side, and state institutions, official structures, doctors, and public health experts on the other. Important for the former are individual freedom as well as consumer choice freedom, while what count for the latter are the values of health, civilisational development, and learning policies based on the experiences of other countries.

The healthism and expert discourse constituting the new regulations was a threat to the previous social formation and identities of school tuck shops and their customers. Prior to this, healthy eating policies had been located on the borders of public order: they had been either one-off special initiatives, e.g. picnics and competitions, or privatised and enclosed within the institution of the family or the sphere of personal nutrition choices. The new policy provoked dislocation and the associated tension in the identity structure. A strong narrative emerged that challenged the status of school tuck shops as an area of free-market micro-enterprise, with the interests of the owners as well as customers at heart. The nodal points of this previous formation were located in the sphere of freedom and self-fulfilment. The hegemonic formation of the new school meals policy made powerful connections around values of healthism, such as children's well-being, normal psychophysical development, dietary-based preventive measures etc. Yet this axiological monolith was challenged in the research period, first by the appearance of the aforementioned alternative nodes, and second by pointing to the incoherent, inapt and ineffective characteristics of the new regulations. As the expert monolith was weakened, it became possible to express an alternative common ground, e.g. one based on everyday experience. "They're making up nonsense. If the children eat breakfast, second breakfast, lunch, tea and supper, and get some exercise, no one will be fat" (school cook, in GW, 10.09.2015).

We can observe similar processes of challenges to the hegemonic position of the new regulations in the utterance published on 15 October 2015 in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Lublin local edition). This begins with the claim (CG1) that children do not like the new food. It is not sweet and not salty, and the children miss sandwiches on white bread, yeast buns and chocolate bars in the shops (CG2). In response, the children are planning a protest for 16 October (World Food Day) involving demonstratively eating sweet buns at school. The reference to the category of taste shows its particular power as a common ground. The argument about food not tasting good is not only treated as incontestable and not requiring justification, but also gives the discourse extra dynamism. The threat of hunger (W1) as a consequence of the new rules gives meaning and legitimises the sense of the seemingly dysfunctional, dangerous or ridiculous practices of pupils and parents such as buying food in nearby shops before classes or in breaks, smuggling in food, eating unhealthy snacks rather than healthy but tasteless school lunches. Closure of tuck shops as a result of the limited range in stock and lack of demand for healthy eating limits access to food: "If they close the shop down too, we won't have any food at all." Another consequence of the reform is the increased costs of lunches in school canteens (W2), which affects the poorest families, also restricting their access to food. As a result of the articulations between possible worlds, the concern about hunger and malnutrition, dimly hypothetical, but arranging meanings very well, was expressed using the sensory, present experience of taste.

Analogously to the previous example, the logic of equivalence is manifested by references to the individual's right to self-determination. The utterance of one participant in the protest points to the incoherence between the values declared by the educational institutions (W3) and the oppressive nature of the reform: "it's absurd that in a school, a place that ought to teach independence and sensible decision making, you can't eat what you want to." The article in question gives a negative verdict on the reform, expressed in the utterances of various subjects, from pupils to the Lublin regional deputy education commissioner.

The cited articles depict three different hegemonising narratives, which appear one by one in the stages of the discourse identified earlier. These do not cover all types of narrative, but are typical of specific moments of differentiation of the discourse. Each stems from a different common ground, a different base of judgements of the status quo, often based on figures, expert reports or observable, indisputable experience: obesity among children is growing; school tuck shops are going bust; pupils do not want to eat tasteless food. The varying reservoirs of meanings contained in these common grounds allow us to explain different, antagonistic discourse. These make use of the specific possible worlds emerging from the common grounds they adopt, and containing scenarios, dystopias, diagnoses, threats, objectives and solutions. Increasing obesity among Poles, almost unrivalled in dictating the discourse at the beginning of the research period, developed towards expert diagnosis, based upon health values. The implemented solution transferred responsibility and nutrition decisions from consumers to state institutions. The emergence of new subjective positions intensified at the moment when the new regulations came into force, i.e. September 2015, a point characterised in the quantitative analysis by a rapid increase of taste category and then undermining the hegemony of health topic. Apart from the subjects mentioned in the examples, discursive logics encompassed the Lewiatan employers' organisation, the Polish Dental Society, the Ministry of National Education, and individual politicians. Associations and dissociations were established, and the initial unanimity coherent with the rationale of the regulations gave way to diversified polyphony. In the logic of equivalence, a wide stream of criticism of the policy emerges.

The logic of equivalence (identifying allies) is constantly accompanied by the logic of difference (identifying enemies). The antagonism between the addressees of the regulation and its authors/proponents, at first distinct, with time is blurred owing to the weakening voice of the authorities. The pro-reform subject positions are subject to the logic of difference, for example during the so-called *drożdżówka* battle, or bun fight, led by Education Minister Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska, during which promises were made to moderate the decree. The newly elected (25 October 2015) government does not identify politically with its predecessors' decisions and stifles the monolithic expert-medical discourse. The antagonism is diminishing. In November 2015, the school meal reform loses press interest.

Cultural Reservoirs of Meanings as the Fuel of Change

The hegemonising power of possible worlds built on common grounds results from their location in archetypes and already articulated cultural meanings. The semantic nodes of possible worlds are a repetition of the historical experiences recorded in memory and culture. This repetition enables references to things that are relatively stable in the culture, i.e. myths and the elementary semantic structures of the collective identity. Examples of such reinforcement through ritual repetitions can be found in publications critical of the reform, which appeared mostly after it came into force. One such node is highlighting the incompetence of government, which is an unaccepted, external power (the "pen pushers" from an SE column from 29.08.2015) with no grasp of everyday realities. The law it has introduced is incongruous with the rules of reality, generating dual normative structures: legal and customary, e.g. the grey market. This model is a direct reference to the historical experience of the foreign power which is inherent in the collective identity and national myths in Poland. With it also comes affirmation of approaches of opposition: emigration to the private realm (e.g. bringing salt to school in a child's rucksack) or open disobedience, expressed by grassroots rebellion (the topics of organised resistance appeared as early as 9 September). This is accompanied by a specific discursive strategy of building distance and challenging the official expert hegemony, based upon the grotesque, absurdities and black humour. The semantic nodes of myths are also invoked using significant, almost ritual props, such as candles burned outside the school tuck shop (GW 9.09.2015, GW 18.09.2015).

Another free resource, a floating signifier which was very quickly articulated in the anti-reform worlds, was hunger and quantitative malnutrition. Previously in Poland, nutrition interventions had focused on providing access to food per se. Practices of providing milk to children in schools and subsidising lunches for the poorest have been present for decades, intrinsic in the cultural memory as a means of combating hunger and assuring satiety. Universal school nutrition education targeted at changing dietary structure is something new, at times contradictory to the previous narratives. Therefore, after adoption of the new regulations, which ultimately restrict access to food, the experience of hunger is invoked. “A lanky lad with 10 hours’ PE a week won’t be harmed by a chocolate bar—it will give him energy” (GW 08.04.2015). “Even healthy food advocates are warning: children are being starved at schools” (GW Katowice 18.09.2015). “At my school almost a third of pupils have their lunches paid by the social welfare centre. Our lunch is sometimes the only hot meal they get. It’s important to feed children healthily. But the most important thing is to feed them at all” (GW 18.09.2015). Increasingly often, the new regulations are presented as ridiculous, based on a false diagnosis, incorporated into an antagonistic dual model and easily devalued: “The youngsters from the primary school have lunches at school, but middle-school pupils—who spend up to eight hours there—will not sate their hunger with mineral water or low-fat bread. It’s a shame that the officials didn’t think of this” (*Fakt* 24.09.2015). The memory of food shortages, which remains alive and a feature of collective identity narratives, very quickly undermines the hegemony of the new values of healthy eating.

The final example of dynamising the discourse through articulation of floating signifiers is invoking of school celebration traditions and the community’s food culture. The hegemony of health values undermines the domination of food traditions, understood here as nodes of meanings. One of these is the symbolism of selected dishes regarded as the quintessence of the literal and symbolic taste of the community. Broth, pierogi, pancakes, and fried cutlets are the most homely, nostalgia-filled elements of the local cuisine. A large helping of salt or sugar is what constitutes them as an (erstwhile) distinguishing feature of delicacies, without which, as it were, they lose their emotional and sentimental meaning. The image of wholegrain pasta with unsalted broth (RP 16.09.2015, GW 17.09.2015) is a radical contradiction of meaning and taste: the very pleasure of eating. Broth without salt is not broth, and a birthday without sweets is no longer a celebration (GW 10.09.2015). One journalist quotes a well-known Krakow paediatrician, a specialist in child nutrition—“Childhood must smell of chocolate, that’s more important than having teeth as beautiful as dentures” (Olga Szpunar on Mikołaj Spodaryk, GW 10.09.2014). Sugar (sweetness) and salt (saltiness) are positive and semantically differentiating aspects of food. Without them, many dishes lose the traditional status of “dominant” in the local food culture, and become barren in taste and cultural terms. These empty spaces can be filled by positive elements such as new dishes, tastes, values and ingredients that are attractive in cultural and sensory terms with the ability to articulate meanings. The healthist discourse of school meal reforms has not been able to articulate the meanings of local, national culinary culture in a positive way, implicitly standing in opposition to tradition. In the analysed text corpus—as well as in the later stages of the reform—there is a lack of references to locality, seasonality, unique tastes (e.g. traditional herbal seasoning, pickling etc.), and local food economies, which could become nodes, enabling formation of semantic alliances around the reform and generation of a more inclusive discourse—as was the case, for example, in public procurement policy and school meal reform in Italy (Morgan and Sonnino 2007). In the new, disciplining policy and in the analysed discourse, however, there were few such elements. Meanwhile, as shown in possible worlds analysis, the health expert discourse managed to antagonise dieticians and lawmakers with addressees of the reform: parents, school cooks, and shop owners pictured as unqualified and unable to be agents of healthy diet change.

Conclusion

The introduction of the new nutrition policy in Poland was based on a strong healthist-expert hegemony. The discursive process triggered by the legal changes ultimately resulted in this hegemony being challenged, with new subjective positions emerging and their identities articulated, while cultural floating signifiers were articulated into new semantic nodes. These connected meanings, expressed in the structures of common grounds and possible worlds, reached far beyond the sphere of mere nutrition culture. All the parties in the antagonism could attest to the Minister of Health's assertion that "this is not about buns only," as the articulated meanings were about imponderables: identities (e.g. childhood), social institutions (family vs school), political statuses (consumption choice vs biocitizenship) or social change (civilisational development modelled on the West vs cultural continuity and local endogenous processes). Initiating new meanings accompanied the change in position, especially release from the status of objects of health policy and reinforcing statuses assuming agency, i.e. consumer or citizen.

Although the dynamic of the discourse is a continuous process, content analysis helped to identify the characteristics of several stages of the change: the dominance of health discourse, changing power relations, importance of economic aspects, finally the triggering role of taste and satiety references. This general outline of the whole process has been fulfilled with qualitative case analysis. The incrementation of common grounds which resulted in switching the starting point of discussion from public health issues to efficiency and validity of legal measures. In the various phases, myths and profound cultural structures of meanings came to the fore, which are expressed, for example, by invoking the indisputable experience of taste, then symbolic power of hunger, and the engaging ideas of freedom and individual rights.

The diagnosis resulting from the analysis points to two elements missing in the reform, which directly contributed to its critical reception. First, the perspective of the subjects of the reform was not take into consideration in its formation, i.e. when defining its objectives and methods. The authors of the anti-junk-food law ignored the entire nutritional context of consumption and the key actors of the school nutrition system, e.g. the healthy food market, owners of school tuck shops and the related networks, parents of pupils and the people who prepare school lunches. On the contrary, while implementing the reform, the demarcation line between knowledgable health experts and incompetent consumers has been drawn. The second way in which the intervention might have been more effective is by incorporating into the legitimisations of the reform positive elements of the local culinary culture: highlighting the tastes, traditions, as well as daily and ceremonial practices that could become non-health articulating meanings. Instead of this, the reform was mostly framed as an exclusionary register. This, I suspect, locked it into an antagonistic network of meanings and initiated a logic of equivalence between many subjective positions: from politicians and employers' associations to school heads, shop franchise holders, school cooks, parents and the students themselves.

At the methodological level, the above study demonstrated how quantitative code-based content analysis can be useful in discourse analysis. It was used as a starting point for qualitative analysis, but also a foundation for asking further questions, interrogating the relations between categories, and proceeding with more in-depth analysis: What kind of power and agency are employed within particular time periods? How do these power entities and processes relate to economic and health arguments? Do the ideological backgrounds of newspapers matter in the discourse dynamics? And would studying other textual resources, in particular legal documents, statements from NGOs, business representatives, and finally primary data—interviews, ethnographic observations, visual materials—would shine further light on the analysed process. Such an analysis would provide greater depth to the conclusions formed here and paint a more nuanced picture of the process. The results obtained in this study can also be applied to analogous discursive processes accompanying nutrition reforms in other countries.

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