

**POSTMODERN THREATS OF A TRADITIONAL FAMILY ORDER
IN EMPIRIC PERSPECTIVE**

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Život každého člověka se odehrává v rodinných kontextech. Bez ohledu na to, zda žijeme v rodině nebo vedeme osamělý život, jsme doprovázeni obrazem našich rodičů, představami o dokonalém rodinném životě a zkušenostmi jiných lidí. Obraz rodiny je tvořen nejen našimi vlastními a rodinnými zkušenostmi, ale je také formován kulturními mýty přítomnými v určité společnosti předávanými literaturou, hromadnými sdělovacími prostředky a činností politiků.

Klíčová slova: Rodina; tradice; empirická perspektiva; řád

The life of each man is involved in family contexts. Regardless of whether we live in a family or we lead a lonely life, we are accompanied by the picture of our parents, images of a perfect family life and the pictures of experiences of others. The picture of a family is constructed not only through experiences of our own and the generational family, but it is also shaped by the cultural myths present in a certain society transmitted by literature, the mass media or the activity of politicians.

The richness of transmission concerning the family causes an increase in stereotypes concerning correctness, making it difficult to notice the individuality and diversity of the family's characteristic features. Co-existence of different cultural patterns causes dissonance between the newly discovered values and these, which were shaped throughout the ages and are still embedded in our memory, mentality and tradition. On this basis there arise questions about the influence of the changes on the family, in what way people define the roles and duties in a family, and concern about whether the transformations are not the beginning of its end. On the social level these phenomena initiate a lively discourse between the supporters of liberalization of family life and its opponents – the conservatives.

The fundamental question defining the framework of the presented study is the question how **the postmodern phenomena influence the structures of families shaped in traditional culture transmissions**. The Poles, strongly devoted to traditional family values, perceive it as a place of meeting the most important life needs. The family is one of the fundamental social institutions responsible for reproduction, socialization, provision of the common flat and transfer of property. It lavishes attention and support on both the younger and older generations, it is responsible for realization of the economic, emotional and instrumental tasks. The way of organization of the family is changing, however, with the other social changes, such as the growth of the meaning of the market economy, growth of salaries, growth of production, urbanization, changes in the structure of education, changes in the ideology directed at individualization.¹ New achievements make life easier for people and give an appearance of new ways of existence. They bring many new stimuli, ideas and trends, new values, which greatly differ from long-standing and familiar ones.² For families the postmodern changes become a challenge for accomplishing reorientation in its functioning. As new ones they can generate threats for the order of some families, but for the others they can become a chance for a different,

¹ KWAK A.: *Rodzina w dobie przemian. Małżeństwo i kohabitacja*. Warszawa 2005, p. 9.

² SLANY, K.: *Alternatywne formy życia małżeńsko-rodzinne w ponowoczesnym świecie*. Kraków 2002, pp. 26–28.

but still functional life, moreover, with a quality better than before. Reflection on the most essential factors of diversity of quality of family life is interesting.

The value of a family and its optimal functioning remains one of the most appreciated values by the Poles.³ It means that symbolically, the family is still perceived as an area of potential self-development, achievements and determining own and mutual identity.⁴ Despite the declarations, the objective statistic rates register delay in the decision about entering into marriage in the population of young people, decrease in the number of formal relationships, increase in the divorce rate or decrease in the birth rate. Therefore, the family is a field of controversies, it exists and evolves in a field of action of many, sometimes mutually contradictory, forces. A family is an interpersonal relationship of a group of people who, constituted by their mental and physical characteristic features, shape the efforts to gain shared purposes in a broader social and economic context. The final effect of the mutual efforts results in a differentiated and individual picture of functioning of certain families, dynamically changeable in the successive stages of their development. During the previous years there are taken the discussions, theoretical and empirical research focused on establishing the common features of the families, in parallel with taking into consideration their complexity and distinctness. The scientific reflection and empirical explorations are justifiable, as we are exposed to intense social transformations. These processes can spread confusion in family life with their intensity and dynamics, especially as they occur over decades and not, as earlier, over centuries. From the system perspective a family is perceived as 'a complex structure consisting of the dependant groups, sharing history, feeling an emotional bond to some degree, and they enter the strategies of interactions needed by the individual members of a family and the group as a whole'.⁵ Thus, the family is a conglomerate of numerous subsystems, connected by common purposes and tasks. It is defined by two main dimensions: structure and task. The structural organization concerns the rules administering patterns of the interactions in the family system, which defines the characteristic family order. The tasks generally regulate the functions of a family in a certain context of social life. M. Plopa distinguished the rules of analyzing family systems, assuming that despite the uniqueness of the family, it can be predictably defined in what way the family members engage and influence one another. Family systems are characterized by the rule of **constancy**, it is formed by a definite group of people, making a contribution, which is synergetically larger than the total of individual contributions. This feature gives family the individual trait, but it also makes that in the research analysis of the family focusing on the particular elements is insufficient – the uniqueness of the family can be understood only through understanding the rules of interactions creating certain system. **Organizational complexity** results from the fact that the family is made of smaller subsystems or units. The most common are the original subsystems, i.e. spouses, parents, and children. The subsystems are determined both by the members of the family, but also by the tasks ascribed to them. The members of a family are linked together by an **interrelation**, continuously influencing and interacting. In practice it means that a change in one element of a subsystem changes functioning of the whole family system. The rules define the dynamics of the description of the family systems additionally inscribed in a larger reality, the system determined by political, economic, educational, religious or ethnical factors.⁶

³ CZESZEJKO, M.: *Współczesne wartości a plany rodzinno-mażeńskie młodzieży*. In: Miłość, wierność i uczciwość na rozstajnych drogach. Toruń 2008, pp. 110–124.

⁴ ROSTOWSKI, J.: *Współczesne przemiany rozumienia związku małżeńskiego*. In: *Psychologia rodziny. Małżeństwo i rodzina wobec współczesnych wyzwań*. Warszawa 2009, pp. 15–46.

⁵ PLOPA, P.: *Psychologia rodziny. Teoria i badania*. Kraków 2008, pp. 15–18.

⁶ Op. cit. pp. 15–19.

The family creates own patterns of interactions and strategies in striving for realization of their tasks. Making a specific set of rules it uses its own history, tradition or the cultural myths. The tasks of a family are focused on the development of identity, establishing and controlling external and internal boundaries with relation to a family system, maintaining the status by administering the resources, steering the cohesion of the family or managing stress and adaptation to crises. The quality of realization of the task in the family decides on the efficiency or inefficiency of the family system. In an effective family the interaction patterns are conducive to the quality of particular tasks and they enable maintaining the balance.

M. Plopa notes that the family systems built on solid structures are able to easier adapt to the changing internal and external requirements.⁷ This conviction was confirmed in the collected interviews with the parents, which are separate pictures of different constellations of elements decisive about the structure in a family system. Each of the interviews is a unique set of elements, and characterizes a unique system. The narrators – the parents – while relating, sketch a subjective picture of functioning of their family, happiness experienced in the role of a parent, and the difficulties they wrestle with.⁸ The analysis of the research material was prepared in a way that took into account the influence of the phenomenon on specific elements of the family structure, causing its efficient or inefficient functioning. The established assumption results from the fact that a family can interpret a certain phenomenon in a positive or negative way, depending on how efficiently the family managed it. In the analysis of the empirical material describing the family environment, a structural model of a family was used. It concerned the following elements:

- Organizational characteristics of a family – the way in which the subsystems are organized, their hierarchical relationships and clarity of the boundaries among them;
- Description of the boundaries among the subsystems in the family;
- Development level of the family members, resources and the organisation of the family;
- Ways of managing stress in the family, adaptation to difficulties;
- Patterns of the interactions among the family members;⁹

The elements of a family system contain many elements composing diverse configurations. The illustration for their different living conditions are the parents' narrations. From among many different themes running through the statements of the parents, the repeating examples of the phenomena relatively common in Polish families of last few years will be presented. The successive elements of the system were attributed one chosen phenomenon, presented in different versions.

The Threats in the Scope of Organization of the Family

Looking at the family from the perspective of the system theory, the invariability of organization of the family system is a condition of its identity. Sudden changes expose the family system to dysfunctions, disintegration and breakdown. The stability of the system as a rule ensures that it is created by a specific group of people bringing to its existence a customary contribution. The order at this level is arranged by many elements, and among other things by a division of duties in the parental subsystem. The parents are a significant force in modelling

⁷ PLOPA, M.: op. cit., p. 49.

⁸ The research material consist of the interview with parents of children from Lower Silesia conducted in years 2008–2009. The examined parents answered the question about the happiness and difficulties experienced in raising children nowadays. Some of the materials come from large town environments, the rest from small towns.

⁹ PLOPA, M.: op. cit., pp. 48–59.

mature models. Children in a clearly specified organizational and spatial order have good development conditions. The division of roles into masculine and feminine has been shaped for centuries, as was the place and role of children in a family. Postmodern changes in different ways modify the old order, bringing in chaos to many families at this level of functioning. Girls, at home formerly gaining practical knowledge about being a mother, today see their mothers encumbered /very often excessively/ by a double amount of duties. Analogically, boys are in a difficult situation, as their contact with a working father is insufficient. They can have a problem with the definition of the role of a man and a father in a family.

The previous patriarchal family created a clear system based on the unquestionable power of the father. The unambiguous, determined power of a man contributed to a kind of harmony, as it was accepted without any doubts by the other members of the family. The wife's duty was to care for the house, while the father was earning money for a living. The mother mostly looked after the younger children / in the rich families they had help from the servants/, the significance of the father did not allow him to take care of unimportant matters. The agreement, or at least the approval of the father, was the indispensable condition for all actions of the wife and children. The determined hierarchy of power and the divisions of duties in a family guaranteed a clarity of relations in a family. The warranty of the stability of the marriage and the family was the marital vows. The division of family duties was inflexibly distributed. The home was a kind of a multi-specialist and self-sufficient company fulfilling many different tasks. The family clans very often consisted of numerous subsystems: parents, children, grandparents, and sometimes other relatives. Although in the post-war Poland the Family Code from 1964 created conditions for changes, and the then social and political systems in many ways redefined old rules of the family organization, the old patterns survived as a rule. This fact seems to validate the judgement of A. Giddens, who for a lack of general debates on a family and its functioning in the post-war period, blames the authoritative government and the conservative groupings.¹⁰ Only the period of transformations suddenly transformed the former order of organization and hierarchy in the family in Polish reality, and it created a field for discussion and thorough transformations. It should be noticed that the models shaped in the family home can be deformed by sex stereotypes, or pictures of the perfect parents and angelic children promoted by the media. Realization of the assumptions resulting from the family structure guarantee realization of the important assessments as interpersonal interactions. It concerns the compatibility of partners, mutual openness, intimacy of relations and love, involvement and family support.¹¹ The problems of the process of searching for the balance in understanding the roles of the sexes appear clearly visible at the level of organization and hierarchy of the family. The understanding defines roles in the parental subsystem, and among parents and the children. Women, strengthened with the ideas of feminism more confidently aim at achieving what they were refused before: equality, fairness, access to education, work and power. They can realize their individual life projects in the family space, at work and elsewhere. The expectations towards the man are not so obvious. The patriarchal order and the stereotype of a man connected with the order is declining, which is causing the male role to become ambiguous, indefinite, and sometimes internally contradictory. As far as for a woman the role of a mother is determined by her physical rhythm and biological functions, the role of a father is getting more difficult to determine.

The statements of the parents in empirical material indicate that some families are faithful to the traditional division of the roles in the functioning of the family and they achieve a high

¹⁰ GIDDENS, A.: *Runway World*. BBC Reith Lectures. BBC World Service 1999, pp. 29–30.

¹¹ ROSTOWSKA, T.: *Małżeństwo, rodzina, praca a jakość życia*. Kraków 2008, p. 46.

quality of life. The family preserves the balance resulting from mutual acceptance of the state of affairs, the spouses stress the advantages of the permanent presence of the mother at home and her full dedication to the matters of children and family. In the group of statements signals are present that in the opinion of the wife and children, a father engaged in intensive work has too little time for their issues. It is characteristic that a group of families representing such a type of organisation preserves a relatively high material status, which can indicate that such an option of the role division is determined by quite a high husband's salary.

Woman, 48 years old, married, three children, the family has a large company:

I am a dentist, but I worked for a very short time after the wedding. Since the children were born I have been a conventional housewife, as well as being happy about life and myself. I have the feeling that I have done more in my life taking care of the family and home matters than if I had still been a dentist.

A significant number of families makes the effort of negotiating the role division between a professionally engaged husband and wife. With differing results they try to determine the fair division of the duties and care for children. Some families are characterized by a competitive attitude with a different intensity, and the factor causes difficulties with maintaining positive relations, because at present there are no (or they are in a fragmentary form) institutionally stated rules defining the relations between a man and a woman. These rules become the subject of the agreement, and the final product can be satisfactory or cause a feeling of discomfort. The further the couple goes from the pattern "domination – subordination", (as it appears) the higher level it reaches. This pattern is defined as a partnership and it is perceived as fairer, and gives an opportunity for the further development of the individual members of the family. The contribution of the salaries of both spouses makes them partners in responsibility for the burden, and it gives an equal position in the hierarchy of the family.

Woman, thirty years old, married, one child aged six, both spouses work:

Our family works as it should thanks to the equal division of the duties between me and my husband. At the beginning there were many arguments, my mother-in-law taught my husband that everything would be brought to him. Later on he becomes more engaged in home matters and the care of our child. Now we are getting ready, because we want to have another baby.

The threat to the family order is lack of determined and accepted by both parents rules of division of the duties. The situation of chaos can arise a discomfort. Doubts connected with the duties of a man in a family, where there is not an organizational order are visible in the following story of a father:

Father, thirty nine years old, higher education, two sons – aged 7 and 3:

I can't come to terms with the situation where I have nothing to say in the matters of the children. I grew up in a family where the father was an important person, he could decide on the important issues. I can't do it. When I come back from work, there is not much time. I can see then, that there is no place for everything I discuss with my wife. They are a group of close relatives, my work is to be a cash dispenser and a quiet participant of the family life. I have the impression that my sons do not need me, and what is worse, my wife could live without me, too.

The man, brought up in a family with authoritative ties and ways of regulating the relationships among the members of the family, created his relationship determined with an image of a perfect family on the model and resemblance of his family. He expected a granted authority, due to his being a head of the family and a man. His wife coming from a more liberal family cultivated her different expectances. The couple functioned between two distant ideas of the perfect family and did not determine their roles and mutual expectations. The effect of lack of discussion and agreement between the husband and wife is an increasing conflict, and involving

the son in a coalition with the mother more often evokes incorrect behaviour. The situation forced the couple to determine the problem and try to solve it. In the case of this statement the problem of organization of the family structure also concerns determination of the boundaries.

The Boundaries of the System

The boundaries in the family system regulate the way in which the family members interact and the direction, style and the range of communication in its extent. The internal boundaries appear among the subsystems in a family, while the external ones separate the family from the broader social systems. The proper external boundaries on the one hand make it easier to maintain privacy and intimacy, and on the other hand they enable the integration of the family with the society.¹² In the empirical material many statements suggest that the families maintain a half-open character of the system, living separately as a family and protecting their space, and letting pass the influence from the more distant family and a broader society.

The basis of a family is a strong and well communicating parental subsystem. It formulates the directions of its impacts on their children, and in the case of the siblings on the relations among them. These processes, however, need engagement, attention and energy. Their basic purpose is the achievement of the rules of coexistence, which protect the interests and needs of all members of the family. Lack of clear rules and boundaries can lead to a struggle, in which the commonly used strategies concentrate on entering coalitions and alliances of some against the others.¹³ In a well communicating family a dispute over the boundaries usually results in an agreement providing more effective functioning. The permanent process of defining, maintaining and redefining the boundaries (e.g., for the gradual growth of children) is a feature characterizing a functional family structure. Many families maintain a visible charm for this difficult communicational process.

Mother, aged 39, three children, aged 15, 9 and 6:

Each Friday we have a family meeting and a summary to keep everything working properly. We sit at tea and talk. When we did not do it, there were arguments all the time. Now each of us knows what the others want.

The noticeable thread in the statements of the parents is the faint awareness of modern parents concerning the need of defining the internal boundaries in the family. They think that customary knowledge of the rules guarantees efficient functioning of the family. In the old, traditional model of the family the regulation of the boundaries indeed provided for compliance with the rules taken from one's home. Nowadays, the diverse patterns of shaping internal boundaries impose the necessity of their negotiation on the members of the family. Lack of awareness in this field and passive waiting for the desirable behaviour of the close relatives can influence the occurrence of the problems, impairing the quality of communication and lack of satisfaction in the internal family relations.

Woman, aged 32, in the middle of divorce, son aged 12:

Ten years ago I waited for my husband to become a normal husband. He always yelled at me. I left him when my son started to shout at me and finally he tried to hit me. Now I am learning to say what I expect from my son, and we find the solutions of the problems together.

The problem signaled by the parents is the influence of the parents limited by the age of the child, a strong exposure to the influence of different institutions or a coeval group. The

¹² Op. cit., pp. 47–48.

¹³ CHOMCZYŃSKA – MILISZKIEWICZ, M.: *Rodzicielstwo. Między wiedzą a intuicją. Scenariusze zajęć*. Kraków 1999, p. 33.

parents, engaged in the issues realized outside the home, the professional matters and their own development, to a lesser degree are able to work on shaping and modifying the boundaries between them and the children or in their own relationship and influence on shaping the boundaries between each other and the children or in the subsystem of the siblings. Strong involvement of a parent in matters not concerning the family sometimes results in the family drifting apart. In a sense, although the child grows up in a family, it is more strongly influenced by other social groups, a kindergarten or school, local society or the media. Parents provide the elemental needs, but they have less influence on the developing personality of a child. A common thread is a conviction of a parent that the responsibility for the educational results belong to the educational institution. They blame the inefficient actions of educational institution when educational problems occur. And they excuse themselves the need of intensive work.

Father, thirty nine years old, higher education, two sons – aged 7 and 3:

When I come back from work I am fed up and tired. My wife wants something all the time, and my son wants to torture me. He jumps at me and wants to wrestle with me, he haunts me. I was hoping that when he starts school he would finally learn discipline.

In some (not numerous) statements of the parents there are expectations that help from specialists will solve long-term educational negligence unregulated in the family.

Mother, aged 35, vocational education, single-parent family, son aged 9, hyperactive boy, committed a theft at school:

I took him twice to the psychologist and nothing. What can such a young person know? She has not got children yet. I will look for an older and more experienced...

Shifting the responsibility for the educational problems to others, unreal belief in the power of the specialists free the parent from actively searching for the effective educational methods. It causes rejection of the necessity to correct personally and with engagement, although under the direction of the specialist. Such phenomenon can be ascribed to the growing expert culture, intensifying the belief that others will correct the relations in a family.

Unfortunately the assessment also reveals the pathologies of a family life, being a source of personal problems, it exposes other areas of the risk. This phenomenon is conducive to the creation of a need for a new special service market – outsourcing in a family.

The Level of Development of Family Members, Resources and Makeup of the Family

Poland today is an area of disproportions in the quality of functioning of the individual families, resulting from both social and economic factors, and the level of preparation of adult people to manage in difficult reality. There is a chasm between richness and poverty, resourcefulness and helplessness, elementary safety and feeling of threat of the fate factors (illness, unemployment).¹⁴ The factors that can decide about the quality of life in a family become the level of development of the family members, and maintaining an adequate status. In the sense of a socio-economic phenomena, the often excessive (and harmful to the quality of the processes of educating children) engagement of parents in the professional and educational space is made clear and understood. It is characteristic that many parents – narrators are people employed and at the same time continuing further studies. They increase their qualifications and they make similar demands of their children. In education of their children, Polish parents look for the chance of protection from unemployment and poverty in the future.

Amongst the number of threats in this area, attention should be drawn to the increasing phenomenon of ascribing a superior meaning of the quality of a child's education at school to

¹⁴ KAWULA, S.: *Rodziny ryzyka socjalnego we współczesnej Polsce*. Pedagogika Rodziny, nr 1/2006, pp. 43–46.

other development areas. Sensible, ability-connected requirements of the parents towards their children stimulate motives to learn and be successful. In the multidimensional perception of a child and its different areas of activity, the parents have the chance to find a place to shape the child's interests, opinions, values and aspirations. They observe and strengthen development of personality in many dimensions. They can describe the child through its strong facets and weaknesses. They strive for the effective training of correct and socially accepted behaviours, obeying of rules, they work with the child on its social, moral and emotional development.

Mother, aged 28, single-parent family, son aged 5:

I am probably the only mother in the group, who only accompanies the game, reads and talks. I do not know if I do right and if I will not regret that. My friends teach their children foreign languages, reading, mathematics, horse riding, and much more. Borys only wants to play, and during the English classes in the kindergarten he usually plays and talks to himself in Polish.

In the case of one-dimensional orientation on the educational effect the parents start to perceive their child through the grades received at school. They diminish the significance of different developmental dimensions, including the physical, social and emotional needs.

They perceive the non-intellectual forms of activity as a waste of time in a process of competition with the coevals for the status of a good student. The perfectionist parents seriously treat school education, engage their resources in an attempt to achieving higher and higher levels. It also happens that they cannot realistically estimate the abilities of a child.

"The rat race" begins earlier and earlier, and its results among the others are visible in the social relations among children.

Mother, aged 35, higher education, daughter aged 11:

My daughter was ill for almost three weeks. When she felt better we started to contact her friends. We wanted to borrow the notebooks and work on the lessons. Each of four asked friends refused, and I finally went to school to get the homework from the teachers.

The intellectual work of the child reduces the free time to the minimum, which makes that children have no opportunity to free organizing their activities, movement, reading or doing something else. Most of the offered classes for children are sets organized by the adults, conducted by specialists and having clear aims. It is certain that it is favourable to the cognitive development of the participants, but long-term ignoring of the other areas can create an essential threat for the normal functioning of a child adapted to a psychophysical rhythm of life and its behaviour. One-sided perceiving of education as a superior value can persuade the parent to plan the adult life of the child and severe realization of the laid-out project, especially if they treat the child as a special investment.

Father aged 39, higher education, sons: 13 years old /diagnosed Asperger's syndrome/ and 6 years old / diagnosed ADHD – in the middle of the tests/:

The older son has been rebelling a lot recently. I cannot recognize him. After school he has dinner at home. I help him with the scientific subjects, and my wife with the humanistic arts. He has a terribly slow rhythm of work. We finish late, sometimes at 11 p.m.(...) he passed the mock exam with the maximum scores...

Mother, aged 35, secondary education, daughter aged 14:

My daughter will study medicine. She has had private lessons in the necessary subjects for a long time. If she does not make it, she will be a professor of Roman philology, like her grandfather. I have not finished medicine, but it is a well paid job.

What does she want to do? Silly things, she wants to dance ... We know better what is good for her in life...

It seems that for many parents education and training of the specialist competences is a guarantee for a future life of their children. Such purposes seem to be justifiable and understood in the postmodern life. It is essential that the parent perceives a child as a mental and physical whole and does not block the development of other important areas, and the development of the values, attitudes and norms by excessive intellectual activity. The immediate consequences of excessive requirements can be disclosed as the continuous frustration of the child, and later on as decrease in the feeling of self value, belief in own abilities, emotional and social difficulties.¹⁵ Excessive investment in the development and one-sidedness of activity can become a brake on correct development.

Over exposition of the values in education for purposes formulated in educating seem to concern the uncertainty of parents experienced in the reality of everyday life and on the difficult labour market. Driven by care of the child, they engage financial resources, time and energy in the possibly extensive education of the child. Indeed, the perfection position of the parents is a projection of their own fears onto the child and a kind of answer to social and economic reality. The purpose of a family is, however, to attempt a release from the trap of the myths about perfect parenthood and a perfect child.

Managing Stress in a Family and Adaptation to the Stress

In a systemic depiction of a family, the family should strive to maintain the balance at the same level. All its members continuously adapt to the changes taking place inside and outside the system. Crises have different characters: childbirth, beginning school education of the child, leaving home of the adult child, illness, death, loss of work and many others. They become a challenge for the family, so that the changes do not cause the destructive effects. The correct balance between the morphostatic mechanisms /set for maintaining the former balance/ and the morphogenetic mechanisms / increasing diversity of the system/ provides for maintaining the identity of the family at the concurrent flexibility.¹⁶

A potential threat to the functioning of the Polish families is the financial migration of one or both parents, and in consequence transformation of the family as temporarily incomplete. The rate of the problem is visible in the statistics, at the end of year 2006, almost two million Polish people were working abroad. The analysis of the empirical material shows that the phenomenon is located usually in a version of the migration of survival, and the decisions are dictated by the intention of providing the family with good material existence and for its good. The perspective of improvement of the conditions of the family existence is superior to the cost in the form of separation. The situation of the temporarily incomplete family is determined by the absence of one or both parents, and this state changes radically the functioning of the family members, and the changes concern the groups of all its functions.

The material and defining function is determined by the rate of earnings of the emigrant. The money earned abroad in the case of 'migration for survival' is usually allocated for payment of debts, fees and meeting other elementary needs. It should be noticed that in such a case the parent's trip increases the social security of the family and its financial independence. It is also essential that the emigrant can acquire additional competences abroad increasing his/her attractiveness on the local labour market and in the native community.

Separation connected with migration puts at risk the condition of realization of the sexual and procreation function of the spouses, particularly visible in case of a long-term trip. The

¹⁵ BABIUCH, M.: *Jak współpracować z rodzicami „trudnych” uczniów*. Gdańsk 2002, pp. 95–98.

¹⁶ ROSTOWSKA, T.: op. cit., p. 52.

lessening of the sexual relation between a husband and wife at the time of separation exposes the relationship to unwelcome temptations threatening its durability. Whereas weak relationships can break up, for strong couples temporary separation can increase the attractiveness of the partner again. The cohesion of the couple essential for bringing up the children can be strong thanks to the providing of the need of security, cooperation, acceptance, emotional and erotic closeness. A strong parental subsystem in a situation of long-term migration is exposed to risk, it can disintegrate, or get stronger.

The absence of a father or a mother also significantly influences the level of realization of the **socializing and educational function** in a family. The characteristics of such a family tend to burden one partner with all functions, so the quality of the educational processes is endangered. An excess of duties can cause a lack of time for children, irritability, or impatience of the parent left in the native land.¹⁷ The consequences of the separation of a child and a parent have recently become a subject of research on the phenomenon of the 'euro orphanage'.

The inevitable transformations in a migration family naturally take place in the field of the emotional function. Although an economic trip happens to be a symptom of care of the family of the leaving parent, it can be conducive to its financial security. At the same time a long-term absence of the father or mother causes yearning and a feeling of solitude, and in extreme cases it can be identified by the child as a kind of an infidelity, valuing financial values over the value of everyday presence. Lessening the emotional ties becomes a risk, which in a more or less conscious way becomes a companion of the family. The scope of the transformations on the premises of the particular functions in a family presents the migration trip in the context of a crisis, in which it is important how the family manages stress and adapts to it. The families consisting of strong structural elements are able to maintain the balance between the mechanisms of morphogenesis morphostasy at the time of migration.

Mother, aged 49, son aged 12, husband has been working in Norway for 3 years. Also the adult son with his wife are working in England.

Four years ago after my husband's company went bankrupt, the debt collector came to our home. (...) We sold the house and bought a small flat. My husband went abroad and I started work. In another year and all debts will be paid. Then my husband will come back home. (...) Our son is a home philosopher; we like to spend time together, talk and laugh. He is a very good student and I don't have any problems with him. When my husband was leaving, I knew I would have a double role (...) now I am proud I managed it. My husband talks to him on Skype every day, he is "an Internet dad"... My daughter-in-law often talks to my younger son in English through the Internet, so he does not need private lessons.

In the case of a family with chaotic structural elements the migration trip can lead to disintegration. The members left in the homeland may inefficiently manage the stress intensified by the absence of their parents or the spouses, and adapt to it awkwardly.

Son aged 18, mother has emigrated for 10 years:

After my mother left I stayed with my father. He wasted the money she sent on drink and games. For a time I was with my elder sisters, but later they left home, too. (...) I left school after a Junior high school (...), I have a guardian. (...) I wish my mum would come back...

The cited narrations reflect the diversity of family reactions to the experienced absence of one of its members. The currently common migration separations can help some families to

¹⁷ KIERCEL, D.: *Rodzice za granicą, perspektywa zmiany warunków bytowych a rozdzielenie systemu. Dylematy terapeutyczne*. In: *Małżeństwo i rodzina w ponowoczesności*, op. cit. pp. 121–132.

achieve desired social security, and solve real problems. In other families they can bethe beginning of a progressing disintegration of the relations among the individual people, disintegration and breakdown of the family. The radical changes in a system can generate serious crises and disrupt its correct functioning, impose performing roles upon the members of the family they are not always prepared to. The family at the moment of a crisis must be able to take actions ameliorating its negative effects – individually or with help of people outside the family.

The superiority of the morphogenetic dynamics of actions can determine the best actions in a constructive way. Domination of the morphostatic tendencies and duration in own roles can contribute to disturbances, and in consequence to a reduction in the quality of the family life.

Bonds in family relations – binding

The position of the child in the family has changed lately. A child used to be perceived as unimportant. Nowadays its role is more appreciated. As is noticed by Slany, although a child is economically worthless it has become emotionally priceless. A child gives the parents' life an aim and a direction, it is a source of personal satisfaction and emotional reward. Raising children is treated by many parents as a very important sphere of self-realization, a chance for experiencing continuous pride and joy of an offspring. Proper development of a child and its accomplishments become evidence of the parents' competence, a living proof of valuable genetic material, a confirmation of their own value in society's opinion. Parents give a child the right to individual development, self-realization, experiencing their subjectivity.

The quality of the parent–child relationship has changed together with the continuing process of individualization. On the one hand parenthood for an adult is an obstruction in the process of individualization because it demands exhausting strength and resources, on the other hand a child becomes strongly attached to a parent and continuously improves the tools of the “dictatorship of need”.¹⁸ A child manipulates parents' behaviour using laughter or tears. Parenthood becomes in this way the last, indissoluble, unchangeable, social relationship. Partners may change, but a child stays. Thus, parenthood makes up for the longing for indissolubility of a relationship, constancy, a child is a special remedy for loneliness. This phenomenon favours the child's placement at the centre of the family – becoming “*king child with parents*”. Parents frequently drop behind children to a certain degree, reduce their own processes of individualization, to create a space for their offspring to realize his needs and processes of individualization.

Placing a child at the centre of the family may slightly contribute to the creation of favourable conditions for development. Children's “release”¹⁹ should result from the positive creation of bonds between parents and children. Bonds should evolve commensurate to the child's age and commensurate to its growing competences. Bonding (centripetal force) should be in harmony with the processes of individualization (centrifugal force). When centripetal forces become stronger, there is a risk of knot instead of bonding. A parent may then behave in a way characteristic for the past phases of development.

Mother, age 41, married, unemployed, a son aged 15.

I can't go to work. I have a lot of duties at home. My son is very delicate and sensitive. He is often ill. I drive him to school. He has not eaten much since he was born and I really have to try to make him eat something. (...) I teach him each afternoon and I read books from reading list aloud to him. (...) He does not have any friends, I have to fill his world.

¹⁸ BECK, U.: *Spoleczeństwo ryzyka*. pp. 180–181.

¹⁹ TERMIŃSKA, K.: *Rodzina i Ty, Fenomenologia wiązania*. Warszawa 2008, s. 14.

I sometimes argue with my husband. He does not understand Tomek.

Parents' narrations include many descriptions concerning alarming inadequate bonds with children. They appear in the early phases of development and continue later on. Unjustified breast-feeding (sometimes even for several years), circumscribing independent activities, dressing children when they could do it successfully by themselves, bathing children of school age, finally, telling children what to do or what to feel are only several examples of behaviours of a parent who "constricts" his offspring. "Constriction" behaviours lead to many negative consequences in a child's development – lack of independence, feeling of addiction to parents, objectification, lack of autonomy, a feeling of passiveness and helpless functioning. Blocking children behaviour connected to centrifugal force may determine the appearance of serious problems in his future. Justification of such behaviours and presenting them as necessity is also characteristic. It seems to be appropriate to intervene from outside the circle and help a family in which this problem is visible. Escaping from emotional traps in a parent–child relation, identification of a feeling which evolves from love to an egocentric and dangerous feeling, seems to be a task which demands vigilance from parents and specialists.

When a child is in the first place in a family, his position may be a source of its power, which increases the probability of realizing complete development. In extreme cases it may be a blocking factor for development and a source of agony. Retaining balance between devotion of a child to the family and his independence and creating a separate identity is an important task for the contemporary family. Avoiding emotional traps in parent–child relations, conscious vigilance of relations with a child appears to be a very important task for parents.

Summary

Theoretical considerations about upbringing in a family may differ from the process itself in that they are deprived of emotions and the overwhelming feeling of responsibility. It is easier to notice the occurrence dependencies when we are objective.

The family functioned as a kind of defensive system for many centuries, which could give a chance for physical survival. Then the family was a kind of productive organization giving financial stability to its members. Nowadays people may lead a satisfactory life and they do not need to live as a couple, and they can realize their projects separately. Despite this possibility, young Poles declare that family is one of the superior values. They assume symbolically that there is a place in the family for potential development, achievements and creating independent and common identity.

Marriage and family have changed from an economic transaction to an emotional transaction. This may be the reason why people tend to take more interest in the knowledge of the family and continuously desire to exist in a properly functioning family. Myths about perfect parents present in tabloids, magazines, movies and soap operas express an idealistic view of the family and upbringing. The best spouses and ideal parents are in most cases those who did not enter in a relationship and do not have children.

Postmodern changes in the last two decades have created many various models of family coexistence. The family has to build up its shape in particular elements of the structure. Previous family experiences are useless in this case, intuition is not enough. It is essential though for the members of the family to make a continuous effort in creating constant structures, retaining the family's ability to balance between morphogenetic and morphostatic mechanisms. The above examples have illustrated various behaviours of families in the context of exemplary factors. Families which have strong, balanced structures retained their functionality in different

situations, even at critical moments, other families, which have weaker structures, would reveal dysfunctional features more easily. Experiencing difficulties, finding solutions to problems seems to be a stimulus to development of the strong family and for individual members of the family. A weak structure of the family expose the family, despite the effort of individual members of the family, to the creation of unclear boundaries, chaos, and even a dissolution as a result of crisis.

It is worthwhile to emphasize, on the basis of the presented empirical material that building a strong parental subsystem and investing in development of a relationship is essential. Occupational problems, home duties, educational ventures and many other undertakings are sometimes the reason for negligence in the sphere of the parental subsystem, especially at times when time and the level of energy seem to be the most deficient resource in a contemporary family. Meanwhile, a strong relationship of parents is at the same time the strength of the children. It helps to create a feeling of identity and individuality. It is easier for parents in a strong relationship to work together, make the rules of coexistence and execute them, it is easier for them to execute parental power without using compulsion or violence. A strong parental subsystem is more effective when it comes to children.

The strengths of a postmodern family are communication skills, emotional and social intelligence, a constant reflection on life and family, axiology and awareness of professed values, or a reflection on gender stereotypes. In this context, excessive loyalty to models existing in the family for ages may be a strength or an obstacle in the process of creating an authorized project of our own family which would be adequate for contemporary situation.

Shrnutí

Postmoderní ohrožení tradičních rodinných pořádků v empirické perspektivě

Silou postmoderní rodiny jsou komunikační dovednosti, emoční a sociální inteligence, neustálé úvahy o životě a rodině, axiologie a povědomí o hlásaných hodnotách, nebo úvahy o genderových stereotypech. V této souvislosti nadměrná loajalita k modelům existujícím v rodině může představovat silnou stránku nebo překážku v procesu vytváření vlastní rodiny, který by měl být adekvátní k současné situaci.