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Gender representations in the Polish public space – an attempt to capture the dynamics of the discourse^{**}

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gender, hate speech, tolerance, discrimination, homophobia, sexism, anti-discrimination actions, politics

ABSTRACT

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Before 2013, the term ‘gender’ as used to define male and female social roles had appeared relatively rarely in the public sphere. However, it had not been completely unknown. Whenever this term did occur in utterances of public figures, it was mostly in reference to equality policies (gender policy) and the idea of gender mainstreaming in EU projects. It was commonly associated with feminism and has in this form entered the social consciousness, including the minds of major public figures, especially those with highest state positions. The situation changed radically in 2013. The term ‘gender’ started to be connected with ‘gender ideology’, a term coined by people associated with the Catholic Church. This article presents the ways in which the issues related to the broadly meant gender are presented on the right and left sides of the political scene. This analysis is based on selected interviews and other utterances of famous politicians as well as the articles in popular weekly magazines published in 2011–2015. This paper covers both kinds of utterances – those in line with the rules of political correctness and the examples of hate speech. All examples are provided to highlight the mechanisms of discrimination hidden in the language of politics.

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Gender and public discourse – theoretical framework

In the social consciousness in Poland, the issues related to gender identity usually connote with women rights, their presence in politics, reproduction rights, domestic violence, income inequality, sexual harassment and gay rights. These are difficult, ambiguous and controversial issues as they are inextricably associated with one's worldview, require legal regulation and need to be further specified politically as they concern entire social groups. No wonder that these issues are often discussed by politicians and those holding significant positions in the public space. The examples of such utterances compiled in this analysis come from 2011–2015. Gender-related issues have been presented in the form of various gender representations within the public discourse. Social representations are a difficult subject of inquiry due to the fluidity of the social process of knowledge development as well as the dynamics and nature of the representations themselves. They are variable, have blurry boundaries, change smoothly or quite rapidly; there are no fixed rules behind these transformations. The only thing that shapes them is the way the forces of the public discursive field operate at any given moment (Moscovici, 2000).

Of particular importance is the analysis of the dynamics with respect to new categories present within the social circuit – concepts and objects that do not have fixed meanings yet. One of such concepts several years ago was that of gender.

According to the definition provided by Serge Moscovici (Moscovici, 2000: 30), representations are one of the forms of common knowledge and make the foundation of social communication. The knowledge they contain fills the public sphere, provides it with some sense, consistency, orders it and provides meaning to its particular fragments. The knowledge contained in representations is a necessary condition for communication to occur. As far as gender representations are concerned, this helps us point to several different contexts of interpreting the concept of gender. They are related to various interpretations of this concept made by various social groups depending on their identity, beliefs (including political orientation), values, faith, visions of the past and the future and life goals. Theories that appear in the context of gender are historically changeable, which is connected with the changeability of social conditions in which gender is 'performed'. One can notice clear changes in this regard within the span of a few years. This paper seeks to depict these transformations in the public discourse in Poland. It employs the concept of critical analysis of the political discourse defined by T. van Dijk (Van Dijk, 2001: 352–358). In this perspective, critical discourse analysis is one of the types of inquiry into how the dynamics of power, violence, domination and inequality are instituted and supported within a given socio-political context

by means of text and speech. Such studies focus on the concept of control – some groups have more power than others if they have certain capacity to control the actions and thoughts of the members of other groups. This approach is often referred to as the concept of symbolic elites. This conceptualization was profoundly influenced by sociological concepts of Pierre Bourdieu. According to van Dijk, symbolic elites of a given society include experts, columnists, journalists, editors, writers, authors of school textbooks, clergymen, scientists, business people, intellectuals and politicians featured in the media. These are people and groups that have the immediate impact on the form of the public discourse. Symbolic elites decide about the hierarchy of matters that are important or unimportant, about valid moral and ethical values and even the patterns of interpreting scientific claims. They hold power in the symbolic realm and control the discourse from the cultural and normative perspective. The elites decide what is subject to public debate and shape the transformations of the so-called dominant discourse (Czyżewski, Franczak, Nowicka, Stachowiak, 2014: 7–20).

Power provides the privileged position to access scarce social resources such as strength, money, status, fame, knowledge, information, culture and many different forms of public discourse and communication possibilities. Various kinds of power rest on various resources employed to exercise that power. Military power rests on physical strength and military capacity; the power of the rich is based on the performative power of money; parental or teacher's power is based on knowledge, information and authority. It is worth noting that power is rarely absolute. Some groups can control others to some degree only, usually under strictly specified conditions or within certain realms of social interaction. Dominated groups may show a varying degree of resistance – with responses ranging from acceptance to adaptation to legitimizing the dominant power and recognizing it as 'natural'. The power of the dominant groups may be regulated by laws, regulations, rules, standards or customs. In many cases, the power does not manifest itself in openly oppressive actions; instead, it is hidden in an array of daily actions that are taken for granted, recognized as an unquestionable social fact. Power belongs to groups rather than individuals – it often happens that some persons of the dominant group are weaker as individuals than some individual members of the dominated groups. The more influential the discourse controlled by a given group, the greater the capacity and the more numerous the opportunities to control the thoughts and behaviour of others (Van Dijk, 2001: 352–358). Of importance is also the context, which, as defined by Van Dijk, is not just the kind of social environment, situation or social structure. It is more of a subjective mental representation, a dynamic model that is recognized by participants of a communicative situation at any given

moment. It is a mental 'definition of a situation' (a set of dispositions) that facilitates the control of the process of creating and understanding a discourse in a given community, on a given social ground (Van Dijk, 2009: 66).

The public discourse consists of messages occurring in various kinds of institutional discourses – operate as part of various social universes. Discursive messages reach a wide circle of recipients by means of the media. The media discourse consists of: TV, press and Internet messages. In terms of realms referred to by these messages, we can distinguish between the following kinds of sub-discourses:

- Scientific discourse (public utterances made by scientists);
- Parliamentary discourse (public utterances made by politicians);
- Discourse of the communities acting for equality (public utterances made by activists);
- Church discourse (public utterances made by senior clergymen).

The utterances made by the Polish symbolic elites on the concept of gender and quoted herein come from:

- articles in the dailies *Polska Times*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Nasz Dziennik*;
- articles published in the most influential opinion-forming weeklies in Poland (IMM data as of June 2013) – *Polityka*, *Wprost*, *Newsweek* and *Nasza Polska* and *Niedziela*;
- articles and news pieces on gender in the news portals *Wirtualna Polska*, *Salon24*, *Niezalezna.pl*, *TVN24*, *Konserwatyizm.pl*, *Przegląd Socjalistyczny*.

Such a selection of sources covers extreme discourses – both of the liberal and conservative communities. The present analysis is concentrated on the following questions: *Gender concept – meaning what? By whom is it used? What for and in what context?* It is worth pointing out that, due to the volume of this paper, it is only an attempt at defining the specific nature of the phenomena occurring in the public discourse in Poland around the concept of gender.

To provide the observations with some structure, the author has employed the concept of dominant mechanisms of the public discourse defined by M. Czyżewski, S. Kowalski and A. Piotrowski (2010). They have distinguished between four such mechanisms: agreement, ceremony, social drama and ritual chaos (Czyżewski, Kowalski, Piotrowski, 2010: 7–13).

These mechanisms fall under two main discursive orientations: 1) Orientation towards translatability of perspectives and 2) Questioning the principle of the translatability of perspectives. The mechanism of agreement means reaching shared conclusions (a productive path towards translatability of perspectives). In

this case, parties usually adopt a working agreement that enables them to pursue practical joint actions. A ceremony also falls under the path of orientation towards translatability of perspectives and is related to a situation where both parties adopt the position “we can reach some understanding anytime.” It is a kind of pretended agreement. The discourse in this case is controlled by excluding the voices that expose or highlight differences in parties’ positions. Classical examples are the censored media of totalitarian or totalizing states. Social drama is a mechanism whereby the principle of translatability of perspectives is put into question and consists of four phases: 1) Articulation of a conflict, 2) Escalation, 3) Conflict management (creative study of tensions; proposed solutions, and initiatives), 4) Ending, which may consist in some kind of a working agreement or stabilizing the previous state of affairs yet with a different level of social self-awareness. The ritual chaos is a situation where the orientation towards translatability of perspectives is ostentatiously broken and disregarded. It lacks the willingness to reach a compromise and so both conflict parties stay within a phase of escalation and voice their positions without much effect. It is a degenerated form of a social drama that got stuck in its second phase. In this way, a state of a communicative chaos emerges, with the appearances of situational stability. This is what the abortion discourse is like in Poland. A prolonged state of ritual chaos may lead to an anomie (Czyżewski, 2010: 49–119).

The dynamics of the discourse revolving around the concept of gender

One can distinguish between three stages of development with this discourse. The first one is the period 2011–2012, when the concept of gender appeared very rarely in the public discourse in the literal sense or phrased in this manner. At that time, we could have observed references to issues that gender scholars inextricably associate with this concept, yet the very word ‘gender’ appeared rarely. In terms of the topics of the analyzed texts, we can distinguish between three sub-discourses revolving around controversial topics related to the concept of gender: the issue of gender itself, civil unions and homophobia.

The year 2013 was a milestone – the word ‘gender’ appeared in the public discourse for the first time ever due to Catholic clergymen, mainly in the form of ‘gender ideology’. This stage can be associated with the ‘articulation of conflict’ phase of the social drama mechanism defined by Czyżewski, Kowalski and Pi-

otrowski. The whole year 2013 and early 2014 saw the phase of conflict escalation in the discourse between liberal and left-wing communities, on the one hand, and conservative and Catholic ones, on the other. Then, at the turn of 2014 and 2015, we can see the discourse in question develop with the multivocal use of the word 'gender', which corresponds to the phase of conflict management and then stabilization of the *status quo ante* (of the years 2011–2012) at a different level of social self-awareness. Presently, the word 'gender' still raises controversy yet the related debate is in gradual decline. Each party is insisting on their own definitions and representations; however, the debate itself has helped to raise the general social awareness of what gender means.

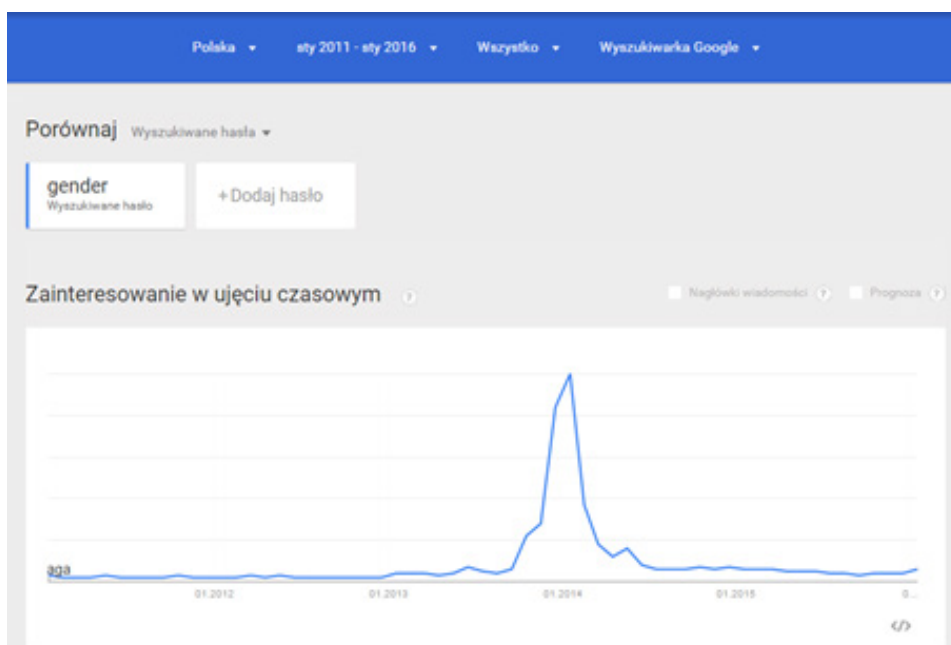


Fig. 1. Google search results for 'gender' in 2011–2015

Source: Google Trends app <https://www.google.pl/trends/>

These transformations can also be observed at the level of online interest in gender in 2011–2015. The chart with Google search trends (fig. 1) shows that the interest in the topic of gender started to rise in mid 2013 to reach its peak in January 2014 and then came to gradually decline, yet in mid 2014 it stabilized at the level slightly higher than in 2011–2012. This effectively mirrors the transformations in the discourse on this concept, further characterized later herein.

Gender in public discourse prior to conflict escalation (years 2011–2012) – ladies, dragons and knights (?)

In 2011–2012, the concept of gender occurred in the public discourse literally or phrased in this way very rarely. The compiled utterances point to three major sub-discourses focused on the most controversial topics related to the concept of gender within the Polish public discourse. These are sub-discourses on gender identity, civil unions and homophobia.

The topic of gender identity became present in the Polish politics mainly thanks to Anna Grodzka, so far the only transsexual MP in the Polish parliament. This part of the discourse featured lexical constructs clearly suggesting that one's sex should be understood as a social construct. In her public utterances, Anna Grodzka stressed that transsexual individuals are those who "feel their gender is other than that registered at birth." This is fully in line with the contemporary state of scientific knowledge in this field (cf. Śledzińska-Simon, 2010):

D: Are you going to propose a bill on how gender shall be defined? What would it regulate?

Anna Grodzka: The whole process of sex reassignment and the situation of transsexual individuals following the reassignment. In no way does the Polish law regulate the situation of those who feel their sex is other than the one registered at birth. The only thing we have is the decision of the Supreme Court, which allows sex reassignment under the Civil Code. To do that, though, you need to file a charge against your parents in court, which is ridiculous. (Wrzos-Lubaś, 2011)

Despite Anna Grodzka's efforts, the way transsexuals are treated by right-wing politicians has not changed, as shown by the statement Jarosław Kaczyński made in ¹2014:

We are going to have the authorities in Poland that will not be committed to delivering a cultural revolution and improving the situation for the transver... How do you say it? (...) For all of those different, those very weird, and providing them with exposure. (Kośmiński, 2014)

The former utterance features the neutral term 'legal regulations', the latter includes the positive term 'exposure'. Both utterances refer to the same activities –

¹ At that time, Polish politician, Doctor of Juridical Science, founder and president of the political parties Centre Agreement (Porozumienie Centrum) and Law and Justice, senator, MP, former Prime Minister, and a candidate for the President of Poland in 2010. All descriptions of the achievements of the cited politicians refer to the time when the analyzed statements appeared in the discourse.

transsexual people seeking to regulate their legal and social situation, and yet they reveal markedly differing views of the *status quo*.

Jarosław Kaczyński had commented on the issue of civil unions well before that statement:

There are no social prerequisites to have these [non-heteronormative – M.G.] orientations affirmed by the state (...). You need to distinguish between tolerance and affirmation.² (PO, PiS, PSL..., 2011)

In his statement, the politician used the negatively connoting word ‘affirmation’, suggesting that the concern with homosexuals is excessive and the proposed privileges – far-reaching. In his statements, Jarosław Kaczyński would not only address “this kind of orientations” but also the status of women. He played down the issue of sexual harassment by claiming he would address this problem by eliminating “team-building meetings in large corporations.”

Jarosław Kaczyński: We will certainly eliminate all those team-building meetings in large businesses, or such events. In this light, this has to be entirely eliminated. Female workers shall not be humiliated, shall not be subjected to various endeavours that I cannot name because it’s so embarrassing to me but the ladies know what I’m talking about³. (Kaczyński chce walczyć..., 2011).

He referred to sexual harassment as ‘endeavours’ pursued by men with respect to ladies and suggested that this was an embarrassing problem that should not be talked about. The hidden agenda of this statement implies that an attitude of strategic silence should be adopted for this issue (cf. Kopciwicz, 2011: 157–159). In this statement, women are thought of as vulnerable and passive individuals that should be protected. Jarosław Kaczyński views the protection of their rights (or actually of their female dignity) as something desirable and natural, as opposed to the rights of those with non-heteronormative sexual identities, or a homosexual orientation, the protection of which would be an act of excessive and undesirable ‘affirmation’ or ‘providing them with exposure’.

² A statement made at the Law and Justice press conference following the Democratic Left Alliance party filing a bill on civil unions.

³ A statement made at the Right-wing Women Congress of 9 July 2011, *Kaczyński chce walczyć o godność kobiet w Polsce*, Wirtualna Polska, 9.07.2011, <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/title,Kaczynski-chce-walczyz-o-godnosc-kobiet-w-Polsce,wid,13582633,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=1dc67>, accessed: 15.01.2012.

Jarosław Kaczyński has adopted a pseudo-knightly stance by pledging protection to the stereotypically viewed 'ladies' while at the same time voicing his concerns about all kinds of 'otherness' as far as sexual identities are concerned, thus seeking to fight and separate them from the rest of the society as if a threatening (unknown?) dragon.

Other examples of utterances made as part of the discourse on civil unions include the opinions voiced by Wanda Nowicka⁴ and Mariana Piłka⁵:

D: What are your priorities?

Wanda Nowicka: Our worldview package, that is the bills on in vitro, civil unions and abortion. (...) We support regulating available vitro surgeries. We are going to demand that these surgeries be funded from the state budget for anybody who needs them: both married and unmarried couples and single people. (Olczyk, 2011)

Wanda Nowicka presents the right to use the in vitro surgery, enter a civil union and undergo abortion as the rights all people are entitled to on the basis of equality. These goals were clearly termed by Marian Piłka, a right-wing politician, as 'promotion' of feminism, abortion and homosexuality:

Marian Piłka: (...) the promotion of feminism, abortion, homosexuality and other deviations is destroying the resources that are the source of spiritual and moral power... (Piłka, 2011)

The above statement features hate speech. Referring to homosexuals as 'deviants' was to show contempt to and humiliate political opponents, but Marian Piłka also considered 'deviants' as a threat to the spiritual and moral power. This use of language is congruent with the concept of Judith Butler, who argues as follows:

Thus the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyze the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response. If to be addressed is to be interpellated, then the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use language to counter the offensive call. (Butler, 1997)

⁴ A Polish social activist, feminist and politician, a classical philologist by training, a head of the Federation for Women and Family Planning, an MP and Deputy Marshal of the Sejm of the 7th term.

⁵ Polish right-wing activist committed to opposition activities since 1970s. Interned for about a year during the Polish martial law period. He had been part of the Law and Justice party until 2007 and then joined the newly established Right-Wing of the Republic (Prawica Rzeczypospolitej). In 2015, he unsuccessfully stood for the Parliament as a candidate of the Law and Justice.

This kind of a response, or the use of language against an insult, may be the use of the word ‘homophobe’ against conservative politicians. A phobia is a disorder related to the mental state of the affected individual. Hence, the pejorative term ‘deviant’ is countered with the equally negative ‘homophobe’, denoting presently a person who is not just fearful of and disgusted at homosexuals and reluctant to interact with them, but also intolerant, narrow-minded, having numerous complexes and showing unjustifiable hatred towards those with non-heteronormative sexual identities. In the situation in question, the subject interpellated by being referred to as ‘a deviant’ resorts to language as a weapon in the fight for their dignity and rights. The fear of otherness manifested with the word ‘deviant’ legitimizes the use of an equally negative address: ‘homophobe’.

Statements unfavourable to civil unions have also been made by Jarosław Gowin⁶:

Jarosław Gowin: I will vote against it. I don't think all party members will vote the same way. This is a typical matter of conscience. I believe the majority of the Civic Platform shares my stance. However, I cannot exclude that the Prime Minister's statements won't make some people change their opinions. (Grochal, 2011)

He assumed that the majority of the politicians of his party had equally conservative views as he had. He also invoked the concept of conscience and made a very covert claim that voting for civil unions would be wrong, against the conscience of a ‘normal’ human being. He also suggested that those who would vote ‘for’ would do so not out of their own free will but because they were forced to by the then Prime Minister.

Below are two extremely different quotes on civil unions:

Robert Biedroń: The statistics show that Poland is home to hundreds of thousands of couples who expect the state to regulate these issues. Both same-sex and heterosexual couples. We should think about how we can help these citizens. This costs the state budget nothing; it's an issue that concerns human rights, civil freedoms. (Relacja z audycji..., 2011)

Jarosław Gowin: A law on civil unions would smuggle in homosexual marriages by the back door. For me, marriage is by definition a relationship between a man and a woman. This is how it's defined by our constitution. (...) This whole project is not about specific people, it seeks to mount a cultural revolution and depart from the traditional morality. (Grochal, 2011)

⁶ Polish columnist, senator of the 6th term, an MP of 6th and 7th terms of Sejm, the Minister of Justice in 2011–2013. Since 2015, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Science and Higher Education.

What is the matter of civil rights for Robert Biedroń⁷ is viewed by Jarosław Gowin as an attempt to deliver a cultural revolution. From the conservative perspective, a union of a man and a woman is a moral union.

Robert Biedroń: It's a matter necessary for daily life. I am in a long-term relationship with my partner and, for the past 9 years of our relationship, I haven't been able to settle my taxes with him. Why, when we have a joint household, when we spend our money together, when we want to make decisions about our lives and health, when we want to inherit from each other, can't we do that in a democratic state? We are two adult men who have a joint household. This problem has been solved in the majority of EU states. Why should we not settle this in Poland, too? (*Relacja z audycji...*, 2011)

Jarosław Gowin: In fact, apart from the right to child adoption, there are all marriage rights and privileges – e.g. the joint tax settlement privilege. This is because marriages commit to raising children. And this is excluded for homosexuals.

D: Would you like to take this privilege away from childless couples, then?

Jarosław Gowin: This is a typical example of the demagoguery of political correctness. Marriage is essentially aimed at having children, although spouses sometimes resign from having children or – more frequently – cannot have children. A homosexual relationship essentially precludes having biological children. (Grochal, 2011)

What for Robert Biedroń (being in a long-term relationship with his partner) is a basic right (joint tax declarations) that can be exercised by a citizen of a democratic state is considered by Gowin unacceptable for homosexual couples. It should be noted that Jarosław Gowin has used a very ambiguous explanation for his views, one related to the (in)capacity to have children:

Jarosław Gowin: I cannot see any discrimination in this case. What we could view as discrimination would be a situation where different privileges are allocated to various groups of marriages. However, marriage and civil unions differ in nature, and so different regulations shall apply to them. (...) Let me reiterate it: marriage is an important social institution because it carries the obligation to raise children, fundamental from the perspective of social interests. Since homosexual relationships do not pursue this mission, they should not claim that their rights should be made equal. (Grochal, 2011)

He thus suggested that he feared a demographic decline, connected to a dramatic decrease in new births, which, as a matter of fact, occurs regardless of the legal status of same-sex couples in Poland. Conservative politicians often use cat-

⁷ An LGBT activist, a columnist and politician, an MP of the 7th term of Sejm (2011-2014), the Mayor of Słupsk (2014-2018).

egories such as ‘Poles’, ‘Polish society’, meaning the majority. For example, Robert Węgrzyn⁸ argued that the majority of the Polish society views the traditional family as the greatest value and presented himself as a protector of this value. He had no arguments to support his claim – he did not quote any research results nor any other facts to support his views.

Robert Węgrzyn: Polish politicians and – importantly – Polish society that elects them view the traditional model of a family as the utmost value. I hope that nobody will have to pay a political price as high as I did for defending that. Make no mistake, though: I don’t consider myself to be a martyr; I believe that those who wanted to oust me from politics for my conservative cultural views will realize in autumn they were very mistaken... (Meller, 2011)

This seems absurd provided the statements that eventually have contributed to MP Robert Węgrzyn’s political failure. In the light of this politically incorrect and morally controversial statement⁹, he would come across as a man with exuberant erotic imagination and unfulfilled needs (in common parlance, a wannabe womanizer) rather than a protector of traditional values. As time went by, he adopted the position of a proponent of traditional values and morality based on them. His defensive actions (his defence of his own position) were disguised as a noble (or even insurgent) struggle for the good of the society yet they ended up with a failure and martyrdom of the ‘defender’.

Robert Węgrzyn: I believe that the conservative wing of Civic Platform along with Law and Justice will prove strong enough for same-sex civil unions not to be legalized because this would open an avenue for other demands, including child adoption. (Meller, 2011)

In his statements, the law on civil unions appeared just as a tip of an iceberg of demands from same-sex couples. That was a clear manipulation – MP Robert Węgrzyn pictured LGBTQ demands as a threat that should not materialize as it would be followed by other consequences. According to MP Węgrzyn, same-sex couples will first want formal unions and will then ‘grab’ (our common) children, in the spirit of the proverb “give them an inch and they will take a mile.” It is an exaggeration and manipulation whereby all demands of the LGBTQ community are deliberately framed as a threat to the majority.

⁸ Polish politician, entrepreneur and a member of the local government, an MP of the 6th term of Sejm.

⁹ He said then: “Let’s stop talking about gays, but I would not mind watching some lesbians.”

Homophobia is another leitmotif. It is a word used as an insult by liberal and left-wing politicians. Some homophobic behaviours are associated with closeted gays. In some circles, Jarosław Kaczyński would be thought of as a closeted gay due to his negative opinions and hostile attitudes to LGBTQ people. The below statement is an example:

Robert Biedroń: Kaczyński is a homophobe. It is OK for Palikot to ask if Kaczyński is gay since Kaczyński is assaulting other gays. In the light of intolerance, there is no moral dilemma in such situations. I absolutely support outing such people! Bigotry should be exposed, especially regarding public people, including politicians. (Prekiel, 2011)

Asked about his homophobic behaviour or statements, the right-wing politician assumes such comments are an attack. He considers such questions to be dictated by political correctness (whatever is meant by that) and recognized as snide remarks made against them.

D: Are you a homophobe?

Jarosław Gowin: Your question is underpinned by the dictates of political correctness. I don't care about other people's sexual orientation but I cannot agree for homosexual communities to reforge the souls. No political correctness can force me to say that grass is white rather than green. Nor to question the argument that marriage is a union between a woman and a man. (Grochal, 2011)

Meanwhile, Robert Biedroń claims that homophobia has been out of fashion for a long time.

Robert Biedroń: These days, [Eliza Michalik¹⁰] considers homophobia to be uncool because she has done some reading, met some gays and lesbians and has changed. This is what we all aim for – changing homophobic attitudes. (Prekiel, 2011)

However, not everybody shared his view at the time. In his 'phobias', Robert Węgrzyn ventured as far as to claim that the undefined 'homosexual lobby' posed a threat. In his statements, he used the language of war ('enemy' and 'demands'), in which the said lobby would be a party supported by some media and wielding the weapon of 'hurtful words' (homophobia) and harsh arguments (opposition to child adoption by same-sex couples):

¹⁰ A Polish press and TV journalist and a host of the radio broadcast "Czekając na środę, czyli godzina niepoprawności politycznej."

Robert Węgrzyn: It would not be possible for them to blow this unfortunate and essentially trivial joke out of proportion if it had been not for the homosexual lobby, which regards everyone who dares to oppose its demands as their enemy and stigmatizes them. The lobby can do that because it is supported by the powerful media such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, whose columnists refer even to child-rearing by same-sex couples as an instance of homophobia. (Meller, 2011)

That statement also features the ‘because the majority claims so’ argument, which Artur Schopenhauer recognizes as one of the classical eristic techniques referred to as *argumentum ad verecundiam* (Schopenhauer, 2010, 47–52). The views of the majority are provided with a higher status. Majority views set the boundaries of ‘the normal’. What is beyond these boundaries, on the minority side, automatically becomes ‘abnormal’.

D: What is the stance of Civic Platform MPs on the demands of homosexual activists?

Robert Węgrzyn: The majority of them have negative or at most neutral views. This is why utterances made by the majority of Civic Platform politicians are vague and ambiguous – they do not want to come into conflict with homosexuals yet essentially they do not support their claims. The only force in Polish politics that wants to subvert the institution of marriage as a foundation of social order is the Democratic Left Alliance. (Meller, 2011).

The left-wing politicians supporting the demands to respect the rights of homosexuals were accused of undermining the foundations of the social order. This way of framing this issue seems to be skillful manipulation.

Gender-boom (the year 2013)

2013 was a groundbreaking year when it comes to the interest in the concept of *gender* and also a year when the word started appearing very often. One can observe the abundance of texts and statements made on this topic in the period in question. Examples of gender-related articles in the most popular weekly magazines that appeared at that time: *Trzecia płć* [*Third sex*]; *Co się stało księdzu Oko* [*What happened to Rev. Oko*]; *Pytania o homozwiązki* [*Questions about homo-unions*]; *Zaprosić pogan na dziedziniec* [*Inviting pagans to the courtyard*]; *Czy mózg ma płć?* [*Does the brain have sex?*]; *Życie seksualne pierwotniaków* [*Sexual life of protozoans*]; *Kobiety wychodzą z jaskini* [*Women are getting out of caves*]; *Szybie życia na miarę* [*Making life tailor-made*]; *Równaj krok* [*Keep the pace equal*]!;

Pyskówka nad przemocą [Squabble over violence]; *Gej też twardziel* [A gay can be tough, too]; *Kobiety!* [Women!]; *Witajcie w nierealu!* [Welcome to the unreal!]; *Wszyscy jesteśmy trochę homo* [We are all a little gay]; *Pierwsza rolniczka RP* [The First Female Farmer of Poland]; *Geje służą państwu* [Gays contribute to the state]; *W uchylonych drzwiach szafy* [In the half-closed closet door]; *Płeć wysokiego ryzyka* [High-risk gender]; *Siła kobiet* [Power of women]; *Albo miłość, albo seks* [Love or Sex]; *Uwięzieni w obcym ciele* [Trapped in an alien body]; *Homo poza normą* [Gays beyond norms]; *Homorewolucja* [Homorevolution]; *Była przystojnym facetem* [She used to be a handsome man]; *Zakazane związki* [Dangerous liaisons].

Based on the analysis of the content of these texts, the following mind map of the concept of gender in the public discourse has been developed.

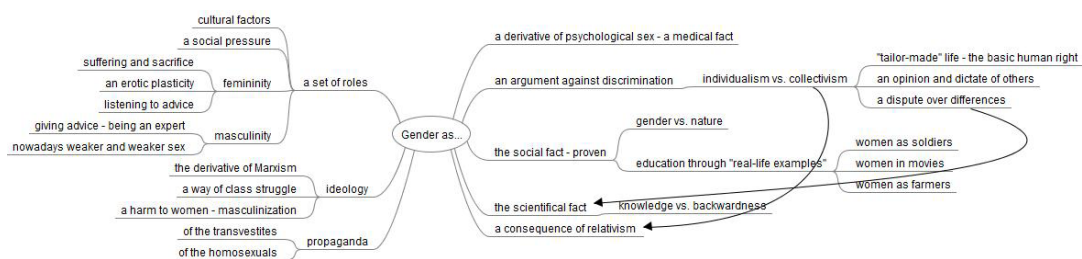


Fig. 2. Mind map of the concept of gender

Source: author's compilation

In the light of the analyzed utterances and articles, we can recognize 8 basic meanings assigned to the concept of gender:

- Gender as a set of roles – Within this framing, one's gender is viewed as a myriad of factors influencing the individual. This manifests in a pressure on the individual to play social roles assigned to them based on their sex. In this discourse, femininity is associated with suffering, devotion, sexual adaptability, women's taking advice, while masculinity – providing advice (being an expert) and complaining about the weakened status of this gender;
- Gender as ideology – As a derivative of Marxism, a new way of class struggle and aggrieving women by masculinizing them;
- Gender as propaganda – Connected with 'affirmation' of transvestites and homosexuals;

- Gender as a derivative of mental gender – A conceptualization rooted in science, a medical fact;
- Gender as an argument against discrimination – Gender is viewed as a manifestation of struggle between the individual and the collective; within this perspective, everyone can shape their life the way they want regardless of their gender; the concepts related to gender are thought of as a way to break free from the dictates of other people's opinions; in this discourse, it is also stressed that many different scientific concepts exist on the differences between men and women that are in constant dispute with each other;
- Gender as a social fact – Abundant evidence points to the significant role of cultural patterns in shaping social roles; the biological is connected with nature, all else is the cultural surplus; education is needed to change the limiting roles by means of 'living examples', e.g. women playing non-traditional roles – female soldiers, farmers, lead actresses and female film directors etc.;
- Gender as a scientific fact – In this discourse, the scientific knowledge on gender is unfavourably contrasted with socio-cultural backwardness; facts and myths on differences between men and women are often pointed to;
- Gender as a consequence of relativism – Relativism as *signum temporis*, a negative phenomenon, the abandonment of traditional values; in the discourse, it is presented as the abandonment of collectivism in favour of individualism.

Based on the type of arguments and rhetoric, gender discourses can be categorized as either: medical, scientific, social or associated with the Catholic Church.

The texts of the scientific discourse mostly would feature the results of research projects and names of male and female researchers, the authorities such as Alfred Kinsey, Fritz Klein and Lisa Diamond. They were used as an argument to validate information about gender. The arguments were also often supported with 'real life examples'.

Contemporary researchers claim that sexual orientation should be thought of as a scale between extreme binaries of homosexuality and heterosexuality. (Bratkowska, 2013)

In the public discourse, we witnessed a dispute between what is the 'natural law' and what is just a social construct. We could see the critique of the reasoning of right-wing politicians, contrasted with scientific views.

For a long time, **sexuologists** have admitted that there are no two sexes. There are ten of them, **according to the most popular concept recently**. (Bratkowska, 2013)

We could often see legitimizing attempts in the form of interviews with male or female experts.

Men talk less, but, **as evidenced by research results**, they are more direct. Women talk more but hope that the other person can guess what they mean and want. (Sowa, 2013)

The above quote comes from an interview with an expert and is an example of conceptualizing gender as a set of roles. This discourse is marked by intended objectivity, rationality and the use of facts rather than judgments.

The medical discourse operates in a similar fashion. This discourse also seeks to use authorities to validate the arguments. The examples of those who have experienced the phenomena in question are also highlighted.

(...) is a **transposition** that occurs as early as the foetal life, is **congenital** by nature, and thus it is permanent and unchangeable yet not **hereditary**. (Smolińska, 2013)

Medically justified legal regulations regarding transsexual individuals applicable in other countries were used in those texts as arguments to adopt similar changes in Poland. The high level of knowledge in western countries was often juxtaposed with Polish backwardness.

The aim is to make life easier to the children who are born with sex organs of both sexes at the same time (...) **the individually felt and experienced gender is one of basic human rights**. (*Trzecia pleć*, 2013)

Such medical lines of argument and the results of medical experiments are used to justify the claims of transsexual individuals and the differences between men and women:

(...) defects or dysfunctions of similar parts of the brain have **different consequences in men and women**. (Cieśla, 2013)

This is how medical facts shall shape social life. Medical authorities clearly belong to symbolic elites, who usurp the right to exert power by imposing dominant conceptualizations within the discourse.

The authority of popular athletes was also used to legitimize some claims related to gender and sexual orientation. This was done whether they were positive:

(...) gays in football are OK, they should come out of the closet, they will have full **support** from the **community**. (Jarkowiec, 2013)

Or negative, as exemplified by Jan Tomaszewski's¹¹ unfavourable opinions on gay people in football and the sports communities' response to his words. The culture of western football was used in this context as an anti-homophobic argument. The title of the above article features a figure of a 'tough gay'; in the article, the term 'gender' was understood as a set of roles that can and should be subject to changes as the civilization progresses. Professor Magdalena Środa, also committed to feminist organizations, would write her columns in this vein:

In the so-called women's magazines, men play the role of 'tough' advisors, e.g. **in financial and gynecological matters**. Women in 'soft' roles – as **psychologists, dieticians...** (Środa, 2013)

Authors of press articles would often invoke representations of cultural canons of femininity (including bodily representations), which is also a means to conceptualize gender as a set of roles. If they are stereotypical, they are criticized by liberal communities and praised by right-wing communities and the other way round.

Men shown this year in the festival screen make undoubtedly the **weak sex...** (Pietrasik, 2013)

The press discourse also demonstrates transformations in how social roles are played by men and women, which proves their socio-cultural nature.

In that period, the voice of the representatives of the Catholic Church in the debate on gender became especially visible, especially thanks to the major promoter of the argument that the 'gender ideology' is harmful – Rev. Dariusz Oko. Public utterances made by senior clergymen within this period were very specific. They were dominated by the discourse of war, which on many occasions bordered on hate speech and certainly encouraged hate speech against non-heteronormative individuals and those with feminist views. The following phrases are synonyms of gender in this discourse:

- “a deadly anthropological vision denying our status of creation, especially our identity” (Gracz, 2013);
- “pro-gender propaganda” (Gracz, 2013);
- “The path of misery” (ibidem) and the “symptom of human haughtiness” (Bruchwald, 2013);

¹¹ Polish footballer, coach, sports columnist; member of the Polish football national team; Olympic medalist; MP for the Sejm of the 7th term.

- “supporters of gender ideology are attacking” (Zwolennicy ideologii..., 2013) – they are the enemies of God, the enemies of Christians and the enemies of democracy;
- “genderism is a threat” (Oko, 2013), “Destruction of the family – destruction of the society” (Wesołowski, 2013);
- “an instrument of ruthless struggle for one’s own interests” (Cichobłazińska, 2013);
- “Gender more dangerous than Marxism” (Jędrzejczyk, 2013);
- Extremism in fighting discrimination.

They caused the rise in negative sentiment against those with views that stray from the doctrine of the Catholic Church and seemed to imply that the Church is at war with some vaguely defined gender enemy. The so-called ‘gender ideology’ was compared to Bolshevism, Communism, Marxism and Fascism. The battlefield became the media and schools, and social engineering was the weapon.

Many would demonstrate opposition to this way of conceptualizing gender. It was characterized by personifications of gender as an animal or a monster, including in the form of cartoons, distributed as online memes and ridiculing the unscientific approach of the Catholic Church to these matters.

Controversial quotes from the Bible were used as arguments for criticizing the Church for its unwillingness to accept homosexuality:

In the Scriptures, we will find practices such as polygamy, acceptance of slavery, women’s total submission to men as normal ones... (Środa, 2013)

The term ‘gender ideology’ coined by senior clergymen was also widely criticized:

Gender is a great invention for the hard times of the Catholic Church. A foreign word, not everyone knows what it means, so you can make it mean anything you want. (Tym, 2013)

It was interpreted as a red herring, aimed at distracting the public from real problems of the Catholic Church, related for instance to pedophilia among clergymen. The Church’s ‘gender ideology’ discourse was also criticized by compromising its main exponent in 2013, Rev. Oko.

For a professor of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical University in Kraków, [Rev. Oko] uses more and more astounding arguments. He suggests, for instance, that those who support gender ideology include “all enemies of God and religions, especially Biblical religions (...), including, of course, masons and the group of the richest American billionaires, who arrived at a conclusion that the world is overpopulated... (Burnetko, 2013)

The contexts accompanying the topic of gender in all of the above discourses are:

- Family and the changes it is subject to;
- Violence;
- War;
- Homosexuality;
- Transsexuality;
- Faith.

A stand-alone topic in the public discourse in 2011–2012, sexual identity, civil unions and homophobia became in 2013 a mere context appearing in the background of the debate on gender, with the latter clearly shifting to the foreground.

The content prevailing in public discourse in 2013 can be divided into two types:

- Neutral texts – Providing definitions of gender-related terms, helping readers understand social realities or providing information about gender studies;
- Emotionally charged texts – With negative undertones, present especially in the Church discourse; these texts present the concept of gender as a harmful ideology that endangers humanity; other texts deliver a harsh critique of clergymen's views.

This informational chaos could cause a sense of confusion in press readers. The war discourse did not encourage dialogue between opposing communities. Their representatives were blind to arguments other than their own. They used all kinds of techniques to ridicule or threaten the proponents of other views. Objective, scientific arguments were countered with those charged with extremely negative emotions.

In this way, differences between the warring groups grew more and more intense and the chances that they would reach an agreement and put the conflict to an end decreased. The coexistence of the two antagonistic communities in the public space has come with negative social consequences. Recipients of these messages might have felt uncomfortable. Support provided to any of the two parties would expose them to attacks from the other one. The consequences were also born by schools, helpless to ideological influences from various communities. On the one hand, schools should always present scientific facts; on the other, they are never free from teachers' judgements based on individual worldview preferences. Schools' curricula offer religious classes, which are by no means committed to presenting religious facts. Teachers are the bearers of various ideas they convey to their students. Extremely differing views presented at different classes may make students feel confused. The discourses present in the public space were reflected in daily school realities. On the one hand, in the form of letters from Catholic com-

munities, which warned school principals against ‘gender’, and, on the other, in the projects of emancipatory communities regarding reliable sex education, which at some point also came to resemble a battlefield. This has a huge impact on the process of children and young people learning social roles as it stirs chaos and thus a sense of confusion in them; they might also come to view traditional role patterns as the only ‘appropriate’ ones and in their adult lives experience low quality of life, a sense of failure and limited opportunities for self-development.

Gender in public discourse in the conflict-management phase (2014–2015)

In 2014–2015, gender-related concerns and judgments appeared in the press in a similar form – as a battle of two camps. This is evidenced by the following two examples:

A new idea has been coined in Poland: gender ideology. In practice, nothing like this exists; there is nothing by empty words behind this concept. Asked by Monika Olejnik, Rev. Dariusz Oko, who has been touring Poland for months with lectures on ‘gender ideology’, was unable to name a single person or institution behind this horrible, anti-family crusade. This ideology, “worse than Nazism and Marxism,” has neither a leader nor executors. I don’t know a single person or institution in Poland that is against the institution of family, wants to sexualise children, teach them masturbation, change their sex etc. There are no such things on the agenda of any party, institution or school, just as there is no ‘gender ideology’. (Kopiński, 2014)

Gender stems from having a wrong concept of freedom. In its radical version, it does not recognize God, his commandments, laws of nature, it opposes any lasting personal relationships. Genderists view the Christian indissolubility of marriage as something absurd. Everything is oriented towards doing whatever one wants. Any benefits of this ideology perish in the darkness of the blurry coating that boils down to changing the world and turning it upside down. Gender wants to mount a cultural revolution. But it won’t succeed. As any dark ideology, gender has no future. (Nizinkiewicz, 2014)

The Church’s blaming some studies or a scientific discipline for immorality is a misunderstanding. Gender is not the only one to blame for social changes, says political scientist Agnieszka Rothert from the Institute of Political Sciences of the University of Warsaw, an expert on feminist movements and gender studies.

D: What are actually gender studies?

Professor Agnieszka Rothert: In this kind of emotional discussions, this one being connected with the position of the Church, they are framed as some ideology, but none of it is true. These are studies investigating gender. (Rogojsz, 2014)

In that period, the public discourse in Poland was still dominated by the discourse of the Catholic Church. The way right-wing politicians in power understood the phenomena connected with gender was fully aligned with the decisions made by the Synod of Bishops:

Even before the Saturday vote, the Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schönborn said that “some people would be disappointed” as the document devotes scarce attention to homosexuals. The document reiterates the statements made in the previous-year’s post-Synod report, claiming that there are no grounds to draw analogy between homosexual relationships and marriages and family. The document also makes it clear that every person shall be ‘respected’ regardless of their sexual orientation. Schönborn admitted that the matter of homosexuals is ‘too delicate’ for bishops from many parts of the world. (Nałęcz, 2015)

Left-wing activists sought to clarify the inconsistencies in the senior clergymen’s statements and those made by politicians following them, but there was no willingness between these extreme positions to reach some mutual understanding and have dialogue:

It seems to me that any ignorance of what gender is must be due to the reluctance to consult the sources. The concept of gender has been a domain investigated by social sciences since the 1970s. This field of science explores the ways in which each gender responds to and acts in various situations. Women – due to the socio-cultural roles assigned to them – are discriminated against, for instance in the job market. This is what it is about. It is very easy to ridicule any new idea because, as I understand it, after all, this might be new to some people. Of course, the idea of gender does change the society – if women want to make decisions other than traditional ones, or play roles other than traditionally, then it will be a threat to many people with low self-esteem. Yet women shall not be treated worse only because they were born women. (Sawczenko, 2016)

Especially due to the change of the ruling party, the Church discourse came to slowly appropriate other parts of the discourse, including related to respecting the civil rights, the value of research studies and the prohibition of abortion:

The Law and Justice party has recommended to reduce the planned budget for the Ombudsman by PLN 7 million, saying that this money would go to the Institute of National Remembrance. MP Arkadiusz Mularczyk argued that the Sejm will not pay for gender. What was the problem for the Law and Justice party was Sylwia Spurek, the Deputy Ombudsman for Equal Treatment.

D: How did you approach that personal attack?

Sylwia Spurek: I am sorry to have become the focal point of that committee, even though that meeting was meant to be dedicated to the Ombudsman’s budget. This is true – I am ‘the

gender lady', I used to teach at the Warsaw University and the Polish Academy of Sciences. I have been committed to the issues of equal gender treatment for a long time now and believe that this is very important. (Ciastoch, 2016)

What came in for staunch critique was also the very idea of political correctness, something obvious across Europe:

Political correctness has become a discrimination tool. While it was meant to put an end to discrimination, it has become a discriminatory instrument itself. As any example of social engineering, it gravitates towards dictatorship. As any dictatorship, it vests power in the hands of the mediocre who weren't elected by anybody – it provides them with the right to control our minds. (Cieślak, 2015)

In Poland, political correctness continues to be considered as a tool used to discriminate (sic!) against the patriotic, Catholic majority. However, the discourse is no more within the phase of a severe conflict of late 2013. Although the two parties continue to cling to their views, the interest in the concept of gender has seen considerable decline and the situation in question – the plethora of definitions, opinions and explanations – has helped increase general knowledge and social awareness of the concept of gender.

Summary

The analysis of the gathered statements permits a conclusion that we can see various interpretations of identical phenomena and diverse ways of conceptualizing the interests of social groups. The following table presents a list of liberal discourse categories related to the matters of gender and relevant categories of the conservative discourse.

Table 1. The same phenomena – different understanding

Liberal discourse categories	Conservative discourse categories
Civil unions, a very important part of our life: human rights, civil rights; the rights related to inheritance and joint tax settlement; a problem to solve	Homosexual marriages, the matter of conscience, the defense the traditional family rights, paving the way for further demands, undermining the institution of marriage as the foundation of social order; moral revolution, destruction of spirituality and morals
Homophobia	Objection to entrusting lesbian and gay couples with the task of raising children

Fight against hate speech	Demagogy/dictum of political correctness
Equal rights activists	Homosexual lobby, homosexual activists
A problem for many citizens	Speaking on behalf of the majority: Polish politicians, Polish society, majority of MPs

Source: author's own compilation

The very concept of gender is assigned extremely different meanings in conservative and liberal discourses. In the liberal discourse, gender is defined as:

(...) a term borrowed from the English language to denote gender, which, contrary to sex, is socially constructed. The concept of gender is thus a set of traits, attributes, attitudes, social roles assigned to men and women by the widely understood culture. Whether one is a man or a woman is not due to their sex organs but, above all, their culture (in the contemporary gender theories, biological sex is viewed as a social construct, too), which assigns different gender roles to men and women that become behavioural patterns the society expects of its members. Gender roles are assigned by asserting gender differences, the division of labour, by legitimizing social status and by means of sexualization, and through a belief that differences in gender roles are unchangeable (cf.: right-wing male and female MPs). Gender studies has shown that the definition of gender varies subject to social, political and cultural conditions. Gender is not fixed and we can bend its shape, for instance to lift gender inequality. (Wilk, 2012)

Meanwhile, almost the same thing is said in the conservative discourse yet with a clearly derisive, ironic undertone:

Gender (translated as 'rodzaj' ('a kind') or left untranslated) – a trendy term for sex, conceptualizing that obsolete term as a cultural phenomenon rather than a biological one. This concept encapsulates the revolutionary discovery of feminism that a woman is not born a woman – she becomes a woman in the process of upbringing. The facts that she is built differently and, as the common stereotype has it, gives birth to children (as opposed to men) are not biological determinants – we have been merely told to believe so by the patriarchal, oppressive society. It ought to be admitted that the centuries-old patriarchal collusion, which has successfully strangled many generations of women, holds strong and you can still see some fascists who will negate or even ridicule the feminists' discovery. Nevertheless, billions spent in wealthy states on cultivating this doctrine as part of numerous specialized universities and institutes must bring expected results; as for now, they let scores of equal rights activists live comfortable lives. (Ziemkiewicz, 2009: 61)

The statements by conservative politicians feature hate speech, that is, as defined by L.M. Nijakowski, "the use of speech to insult, slander or incite hatred against an individual, a group or another actor defined by the speaker; however, 'the group may be – and usually is – slandered in a covert way (...), and so it is dif-

difficult to clearly demonstrate that a given message slanders a given group or incites adverse actions against it” (Nijakowski, 2006: 61). Agreeing with Judith Butler that hate speech interpellates the subject in a subordinate position (Butler, 1997), we can observe that hateful words consolidate positions of domination. Many suggestions of this kind can be found in the quoted statements made by Jarosław Gowin. His is hate speech in the ‘soft’ version. It ought to be stressed that such hate speech is even more dangerous than the overt and manifest hate speech since it is ambiguous and hidden, and thus allows no critical response that could make hate speech fail. Is political correctness then as dangerous as hate speech since it allows the latter to ‘go underground’ and operate subliminally, in a way at first sight invisible?

10 years ago, the main actors of the political scene would refer to homosexuals as ‘deviants’ or ‘perverts’. Today, the language of conservative politicians is much softer. We can see no bold statements, for example in the matters of women, such as the ones made by Marian Piłka in 2005, who claimed that women should make ‘careers’ of wives and mothers to avoid being jealous of other women’s achievements in this realm, and incited hatred towards feminists among ‘normal’ women:

The goal behind women’s emancipation are their careers and social advancement. At the price of the roles of wives and mothers. A price many of them pay. Career and money give satisfaction to a degree, though. What leaves is a sense of emptiness, bitterness, a sense of one’s failure and jealousy of those women who have families, and on many occasions hatred towards those women, too. To cover up the growing sense of emptiness, feminists seek to prolong the retiring age. One’s playing the role of a wife and mother does not need to collide with a career. God has given women longer lives compared to men. Having reared their children, women can fulfill their career and social goals. (Piłka, 2004)

There is no more consent in the public sphere for statements such as this one. It is a different case with homophobic statements in the Polish political discourse – the consent is increasingly lower but such statements continue to occur in very offensive forms, oftentimes revealing appalling ignorance. An ideal example is the text posted on Facebook by Marek Jakubiak – the owner of the Ciechan brewery and now also an MP of the Kukiz’15 party, addressed to the boxer Dariusz Michalczewski:

I wish you a mum with a dick instead of a breast. You will have something to suck.

Following his words, a series of clubs and individual customers resigned from buying his beer yet his statement did not prevent him from pursuing his political career.

The consequences of a controversial statement made by above-mentioned Jan Tomaszewski – the former goalkeeper of the Polish national team and now an MP with the Law and Justice party – were similar. The former football player said he could not imagine sharing changing rooms with a gay man and vowed support for the kind of gay policy that is pursued by Vladimir Putin. The comment was widely criticized by the sports community but did not thwart Tomaszewski's political career.

At last, it is worth quoting Magdalena Środa's words on the meaning of political correctness:

If people do not feel the brotherly love, they should at least pretend they can abide by its principles. This is what political correctness is for. It is to avoid hurting others with your speech. If a garbage man feels that the name of his profession sounds disrespectful and they would rather be called 'an ecological operator', why not call them that? (...) As for hate speech, again, we should not penalize anyone. It is best to stigmatize those who cannot act appropriately. Just as we would not admit anyone who farts and wipes their nose with a handkerchief rather than a handkerchief to the 'high society'. (...) Some accept that because farting seems extraordinary to them. It seems original and rare to them! (Kurc, 2009)

What is political correctness then – a political muzzle or the lack of consent for letting off farts publicly? This is up to one's perspective. One is certain – the issue of gender is of a political significance. The way we define phenomena and name processes sets the boundaries of power, and thus to discredit members of some groups is to put them in a subordinate position. The quoted statements show that in the Polish political scene we can see an incessant struggle of conservative and liberal discourses for the dominant position. In this context, gender issues are being appropriated by being given different meanings in line with the worldview and political orientation of a speaker. It is also a battle for the people's minds – for the capacity to control the minds of voters and the power that comes with it.

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