

The Contemporary Family in Poland: New Trends and Phenomena

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ABSTRACT: At the beginning of the 21st century, Poland can still be examined in the context of a political and economic transformation. The building of democracy and the intentional, ongoing reshaping of the Polish economy in the direction of a market economy are exerting significant influences on a wide range of issues that are affecting contemporary life. This article examines how these changes have affected women, men, and children as members of contemporary families. The article places the transformation to a market economy and to democracy within the context of the historical economic and social forces that have affected all modern states and concludes with a discussion of the potential short and long run impact of Poland's entry in the European Union.

KEY WORDS: economic transitions; economic transformation; European Union; families; Poland.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Poland can still be examined in the context of a political and economic transformation. The building of democracy and the intentional, ongoing reshaping of the Polish economy in the direction of a market economy are exerting significant influences on a wide range of issues that are affecting contemporary life. This transformation has been marked by radical social change. The process of change was so fast and deep that existing skills and coping strategies quickly became outdated. Polish society is also experiencing a transformation of norms and changes in individual and group patterns, which are subject to processes of change in relation to the primary existing values in the social system.

Families were also and continue to be subject to this transformation. As a result, new behaviors began to appear in Poland that diverged from the traditional system of values. According to some researchers,

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Polish title: Rodzina Współczesna w Polsce: Nowe Trendy i Zjawiska. Translated by Eileen Trzcinski, Wayne State University.

the process of socio-economic change, the initial exposure to the culture of Western Europe, and the influences of mass media triggered unfavorable phenomena in Polish families, which in turn established the basis for a crisis in the family and in family relationships (Ignatczyk, 1999; Minkiewicz, 1995).

Changes that are occurring in Polish families must also be examined in the context of modernization and postmodernization (Bauman, 2000a, 2000b; Giddens, 2001; Slany, 2001). When we perceive contemporary Polish families through the prism of these changes, we can attempt to answer the following questions: What kinds of features characterize Polish families at the beginning of the 21st century?; What kinds of new trends and phenomena are typical for Polish families?; How are the functions of families being affected by the transformation?; Are we currently able to speak about the disintegration of the family, a crisis, or perhaps instead about the emergence of a new face and form of the family, which has been altered through a range of different influences?

Transformations in the Societal Macrostructure

A picture of the transformation in the structure and functions of the family would not be complete without reference to the changes that are occurring in the structure of society at the macro level. Above all, these include social changes that have occurred as a result of technological progress and inventions. These changes have in turn produced both new and unprecedented needs for the individual and the possibility that these needs can be satisfied. Without question, these phenomena are linked with industrialization and urbanization, two processes that are continuing and that are triggering periodic new changes in individual and social life.

Although the evolution of the family is not occurring at the same pace and to the same extent in all societies, this evolution is affected by a range of social and external processes as well as by strictly individual and internal processes. If in the first case, we need to deal with changes in the social structure and in social functions, then in the second case, we need to turn our attention to changes in the functions of the family and to the structure of its needs.

External changes that have a direct influence on the family include the following: changes in the structure of employment; demographic changes in the age profile of the population (extensions in life expectancy, an increase in the number of older people in the society); a

shortening of the period of fertility in connection with cultural and employment changes; the progressive disappearance of multigenerational and large families as a consequence of the conditions of life in urban areas; the disappearance of direct intergenerational bonds; a division of the place of work from the place of residence; an increase in the employment of women, including married women; and changes in the character of relationships among neighbors (Adamski, 2002; Tyszka, 2001b).

Changes connected with the processes of industrialization and urbanization have brought about pressures with far reaching consequences and play a major role in the theory of the changes in the family. Because industrialization increases spatial activity, it weakens the frequency and intimacy of contacts among family members. Societal activity has also increased, which has led to a class diversification among members of the same family. Institutionalization together with a system of formalized activities calls into question the legitimacy of the existence of the large family, which was inclined towards self-sufficiency activities and towards the satisfaction of a wide range of family member needs. In industrialized and urbanized societies, a specific system of values develops that establishes pressure for the personal well-being and success of individuals. This pressure then leads to a lack of conformity in the desires and aspirations of family members as well as to the impossibility of controlling their behaviors. Finally, a high degree of specialization brings about the disappearance of social and occupational traditions of families, within the confines of which specific systems of values were transferred that had favorable effects on the continuity and cohesion of families across generations (Bauman, 2000b; Giddens, 2001).

When the family is examined in this context, these changes entail transformations of its structures, functions, and internal roles. As research conducted in the US at the beginning of the 1960s has indicated, industrialization and urbanization led to global changes in the image of the family. Included in these changes are the following: a significant increase in the number of nuclear families, a reduction in the solidarity of multigenerational families, the growth of physical isolation among older generations and children, and a fall in the number of functions fulfilled by families and kin (Jacher, 1987). According to these researchers, the decrease in the number of functions performed by families resulted in a loosening of the bonds connecting family members and at the same time contributed to its disintegration.

The industrial revolution, which occurred in Western countries along with the arrival of the enlightenment, resulted within the course

of one century in the creation of qualitatively new styles and conditions of life. Alvin Toffler, who has labeled the modern era as the Second Wave has enumerated its characteristics as follows:

1. Standardization—that is, ubiquitous standardization, including the standardization of parameters, languages, work, education, examinations, views, and values;
2. Specialization—a result of the far advanced division of work;
3. Synchronization—a phenomenon that raised the value of time and that was required by the need to coordinate the joint work of vast numbers of people;
4. Concentration—the accumulation of capital, industry and people in cities, prisoners in prisons, the sick in hospitals, etc.;
5. Maximization—the desire to maximize production, employment, and development;
6. Centralization—the result of the need to effectively manage large masses of people and to organize their work (Toffler, 1985).

As a result, processes have come into existence in which linear time never stops, and space has been compressed to the size of a television screen. Individuals who are isolated from contact with nature and cast into an anonymous crowd can only adjust with difficulty to the new conditions of life, and at the same time, they have difficulty adjusting to new conditions in the family.

It appears that major problems are now seen most frequently in large cities. The reduction in the size of the family, the lack of community, the low level of societal control, and the anomie of individuals are each leading to the destabilization of contemporary families. Life in contemporary society requires the family to establish a place to recover from the stress of everyday life. However, external stimuli sometimes do not allow this to occur. The city is also the place that has areas with an increasing level of crime and other pathologies. The widespread prevalence of these phenomena has a tremendous influence on families and may be a manifestation of a crisis in their ability to function effectively. As argued by Tyszka (1995), contemporary civilization is conducive to the social pathology of individuals, who can wreak havoc in families. In turn, families with pathologies (which are found more and more frequently) destroy individuals—that is, their own members.

For a variety of reasons, family researchers and theorists in Poland refer to the experiences of Western countries in terms of Western transformations in the family. Sociologists of the family (Adamski,

1997, 2002; Komorowska, 1975; Tyszka, 1991, 2001a) who are concerned with this issue now consider the image of the traditional Polish family to correspond partially to the image that is common in Western societies and also partially to the image in Eastern Europe. The state of socio-economic development and the level of urbanization of the pre-industrial period as well as the historical split of Christianity determine the current image of the family. A number of factors also determine the condition of the contemporary Polish family. These include the processes associated with globalization, which are contributing to the fact that Polish families are more and more frequently imitating families in Western countries in respect to legal affairs, patterns of behavior, as well as in respect to acknowledged models of married family life.

Specialization and Transformations in the Structure of the Family and its Functions

According to Tyszka (1991), changes in the forms of family life are caused by social processes that are occurring in the broader structures outside of the family, as well as by economic, social and cultural processes taking place in the context of the global society. Changes in the model of the family, roles for women and men, and the desanctification of the institution of marriage are occurring under the influence of the previously mentioned processes of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization. The concept of the family has taken on new meanings, and attitudes towards it and its functioning in society have changed radically. The change in attitudes towards the family, and likewise attributes of its new values, are bound together with deep transformations in the sphere of social control and in the influence of mass media on the life of contemporary people.

One of the basic forms of changes in the family is the decrease in its size. At present, the nuclear family and the modified extended family have replaced the traditional patriarchal family. The traditional family became ineffective because it lost its need for joint work on the land and for the craftsmanship of many generations. These activities were previously performed under the leadership of the centralized power of the father. In addition to material factors, it is also necessary to consider the transformations of customs and morals. Social control decreased, which gave small families freedom, and created an independent unit in an atomized society. Transformations of norms also influenced the increase in egalitarianism in internal relations and

decreased the level of reproduction for women, so that currently in small families, there are frequently no more than two children. Children no longer provide economic value to parents, but instead provide fulfillment of the need for parenthood (Żebrowski, 2001).

Frequently it is argued that nuclear families and modified extended families are not the most common type of family. Their popularity indicates on the one hand, the need to create a broader family structure, and on the other hand, the adaptation by the traditional family to contemporary social conditions. According to Adamski (1984), the isolated nuclear family is not currently able to satisfy all the needs of its members because it not able to fulfill many functions. It cannot guarantee help in illness and in old age, relieve the emotional tension that accumulates under the conditions of life and work in a massive and atomized society, or educate young generations without the active participation of the older generation.

The extended family constitutes loose connections among related nuclear families or common residence by several generations, which are held together by emotional bonds. The universal existence of this model refutes the thesis that with the progress of industrialization and urbanization, the family tends to lean towards the nuclear model. It appears, however, that frequent contact based on a wider system of kinship has disappeared neither in Poland nor in the West. According to comparable research conducted in 1970, among people aged over 65, the following percentages lived with their adult children or no farther than one-half hour away: Denmark 75%, England 82%, USA 77%, and Poland 88%. The percentages of the elderly who lived with their own children were Denmark 20%, England 42%, USA 28%, Poland 67% (Dyczewski, 1976).

Similar research conducted in 1999 and in 2003 by CBOS (2004e) found that the majority of respondents (70%) had the feeling of living physically close to members of their immediate family (parents, in-laws, children, siblings, grandchildren, and nieces and nephews). Every fourth respondent (23%) had family members dispersed throughout Poland, while 6% had close relatives throughout the entire world. Only 1% of the respondents indicated that they had no family.

According to the 2003 survey results, the majority of Polish people see their parents (72%), grandchildren (62%), or adult children (60%) at least one time per week. A smaller percentage report that they have weekly contact with in-laws (47%), siblings (44%), and grandparents (36%). Personal contacts with other family members are less intensive. From 1999 to 2003, the network of family relations did not change

fundamentally, although the intensity of contact between parents and grown children diminished somewhat.

In 2003, individuals who have families list on average seven members of their family as friends (one less than in 1999). Only 2% reported that they have no family members whom they count as friends. Only 6% of Poles have no friends outside of their family. In comparison with 1999, the frequency of visiting and meeting with non-family friends declined somewhat by 2003. Respondents indicated that they met with non-family friends more frequently than they met with in-laws, siblings, grandchildren, and other relatives, but less frequently than with parents, grandchildren, or grown children (CBOS, 2004e).

Transformations of the family also affect functions that are fulfilled by the family. Although in the long run the family is the most important group for maintaining culture in the society, and although the functions of procreation and socialization are in the long run the most important functions of the family, the decrease in the size of the family has also resulted in a decrease in the breadth of its influence. Currently a large part of the functions of socialization and education have been taken over by educational institutions and mass media, which now carry information, transfer ideas, and create attitudes.

It is also worth examining the emancipation of children, which manifests itself in the use of significantly more lenient forms of childrearing and in the procurement by children of an increase in the number of laws and privileges that pertain to family life. To a large extent, children today are able to direct their own fate and to independently make decisions concerning their future. It is also possible to observe that children also socialize parents. This occurs as a result of the extremely fast pace of technological and cultural change, which younger people are able to absorb more easily and to transfer to their parents.

On the other hand, however, growth has occurred in the meaning of social-psychological functions. For the durability and quality of the family, expressive-emotional and recreational-social functions are now particularly important. They constitute the basis for the building of emotional bonds, which are the basic bonds of the contemporary Polish family. The meaning of the emotional functions is at present more important than economic functions. In the long run, these functions are essential for the family, but the lack of joint economic activity results in less influence on the formation of families than economic bonds, which formed the base of traditional families.

Although the function of procreation has become more limited, the meaning of sexual functions of marriage has gained importance. These two previously linked functions have become split, with the result that a mutually satisfying sexual relationship for both partners has become an important element of successful relationships (Slany, in press).

Functions related to the determination of social class have also undergone a process of social change. The social and economic class of the family of origin no longer rigidly determines an individual's position in the social structure. Mobility in contemporary society is very open, with all class positions theoretically achievable. However, the family still strongly influences the position of a given individual through the group of origin, income, place of residence, and the transmission of culture.

Although the family has not lost its function regarding the legal regulation and social control of sex, children, and joint property, the meaning of this function has been weakened by cohabitation, where the legalization of this function is intentionally given up. The aspect of control has changed along with a transformation of social customs. A weakening of the influence of social control has in general weakened the influence of the family as well as weakened the internal influence of members of the family on each other. Along with an increase in egalitarian relations among family members, the degree to which individual members can control their own actions has also increased.

The transformation has also affected other aspects of family structure. Among the most important effects is the development of egalitarian relations among family members, which has occurred simultaneously with a reduction in the traditional division of roles between men and women. Because women have assumed the role of co-breadwinner to a large degree, men have been forced to become more engaged in home activities, which previously were considered to be the female domain. Changes in the nature of family bonds are connected with changes in the range of functions fulfilled by the family. The most important is the transfer from economic to emotional expressive functions. The primary task of contemporary families is the building of bonds based on love, partnership, and blood ties; however, these changes do not imply that material functions no longer have any meaning for the family. According to Jacher (1987), a consequence of these trends is an increase in democracy in internal family relations and resulting changes in the three roles of father, mother, and child, with a movement away from an authoritative to a partnership model within the family. Awareness has increased in contemporary families that strong family ties provide the conditions for psychic

equilibrium of family members, create the necessary conditions for optimal child development, and protect the older generation from loneliness, and in general determine the stability of the family (Jacher, 1987).

Small contemporary families are frequently incapable of understanding the chaos of the modern world and are unable to transfer consistent norms and values to the next generation. In some cases, relativism, the existence of lost or confused individuals, and the transfer of childrearing functions to other institutions lacking in love and harmony are not conducive to the formation of individuals who are capable of creating stable relationships. In addition, contemporary society significantly limits individual activity and production by substituting passive recreation and consumption. The transfer of all types of activities and interests of family members to outside the realm of the family easily creates a lifeless atmosphere (Dyczewski, 1994; Majkowski, 1997). Broader social and economic transformations have limited the range of family activities, thereby forcing it to adapt to new social conditions that have in turn led to a crisis in the institution of the family.

In summary, the changes in structure observed in families in Poland are similar to global changes observed in the Western world. The standard family model in Poland is no longer a patriarchal family, but a broadly modified nuclear family.

Work and Family Life

Of the many functions fulfilled by families, the economic function is among the most important. The turn of the 20th century marked a very difficult time for Polish families. During this period, Poland experienced a public financial crisis, a low rate of economic growth, and large increases in the unemployment rate. According to data from the Polish Statistical Office (GUS, 2001), the material situation radically deteriorated for a significant proportion of Polish families, with a resulting widening of the level of insufficiency and a growth in poverty.

The material poverty of families, which has resulted in difficulties for many families in fulfilling their basic functions, occurs in large part because of a lack of employment as well as because of the inadequacy of economic resources in cases where earnings are low (Graniewska, 1998; Kurzynowski, 1995).

An analysis of sociological and economic change in the Polish labor market shows that during the period of transformation, the relationship between work and family life became stronger. Research carried out by different research centers (GUS, 1984, 1991, 1995; Firlit-Fesnak, 1996; CBOS, 1997) unambiguously indicates that the nature of the relationship between spouses is dependent on level of education, geographical location (in villages there are considerably more traditional families), age of the spouses (in younger families, families are more egalitarian), cultural conditions, tradition; and behaviors and beliefs in the family of origin.

In the years from 1989–2001, very large differences developed in incomes and standards of living in Poland, which led to disparities in the situations of children and young people (Olejniczuk-Merta, 1995, 1999) and influenced how effectively children can be cared for and educated. Family dysfunction has appeared, which manifests as problems in childrearing and is intensified because of unemployment. This family dysfunction is brought about through economic insufficiency, that is, lack of income, poor housing conditions, inadequate education, and other inadequate resources for families.

The transformation process has not resulted only in negative effects on the fulfillment of the educational function by families deprived of adequate income resources. Positive effects are also evident in the process of raising children in contemporary Polish society, such as progress in science and research, decreases in the period of time needed for graduate study, the attainment of higher levels of education, and increased life aspirations (CBOS, 1992, 1999). Attaining a successful family life is considered more and more frequently as the most important goal in the life of young people, while the family is afforded the highest value. Young people now have greater life ambitions than youth of the same age at the beginning of the transformation (CBOS, 1999). Thus, the three most important goals and values for this generation are family, education, and work. The same factors determine whether these goals are realized: the income level of the family of origin, the educational level of the parents, place of residence, and access to childcare and educational institutions (GUS, 1996; Kołaczek, 1999, 2001).

Transformations in the Demographic Structure of the Family

Changes in Poland that are occurring in the context of the systemic transformation are having significant consequences for the form of Polish families, especially for marriage and procreation. Intensive

demographic transformations in Poland are observed in changes in the process of family formulation, development, and dissolution. These changes include a fall in the fertility rate, a postponement of the decision to have a first child, a growth in the percentage of children born outside of marriage, an increase in the tendency to remain single, and a delay in the decision to marry (Kotowska, 2002). The direction and nature of these changes is comparable to the process observed earlier in more developed market economies in Western and Northern Europe. The theory of the second demographic transition formulated by van de Kaa and Lesthaeghe provides a description and interpretation of these changes. According to this theory, Europe went through a series of phases in its demographic development. At the end of the 5th decade of the last century (according to Lesthaeghe) or the middle of the 6th decade (according to van de Kaa), the second demographic transition began, which was characterized by a revolution in the spheres of marriage and family life (Kotowska, 1999). Characteristic demographic changes for the second demographic transition include transformations in the model of the family and the principles that govern its creation and dissolution. They are the result and consequence of radical transformations in the system of values, norms, behaviors, and attitudes. In this stage of development, economic values, rising standards of living, individualism, rational decision-making, and the ability to make one's life choices were primarily stressed (Slany, 2002). A new hierarchy of values has emerged that are clearly different from the traditional values. These values are characterized by rising life expectations and the recognition of the need for autonomy and self-realization.

According to van de Kaa (1987), the following factors are typical for the second demographic transition:

1. A decrease in the meaning of marriage as a form of partnership in favor of cohabitation;
2. A transition from a model of the family as "a child with parents" to a model of "parents with a child";
3. A transition from preventative anticonception to intentional procreation;
4. A transition from homogeneous family types and households to diverse forms.

These changes are conditional on the process of socio-economic transformations, which are consequences of the rise of the postindustrial society and prosperity (Kotowska, 1999, 2002).

The typical processes of the second demographic transition can also be observed in Poland. However in countries in Western and Northern Europe, the development of the transformation occurred over a long period of time, whereas in Poland, the changes have been greatly accelerated. Such intensive changes in Poland have occurred within a time period of only 11–12 years. Concepts proposed by Kotowska (1999) can be used to attempt to understand how this transformation has reshaped the model of the family in Poland¹. She has distinguished between three different levels—structural, cultural, and technological—and has examined the changes from the perspective of the society, primary and secondary societal groups, and the individual.

Beginning in 1989, the process of transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy brought about clear-cut changes in the distribution of income; triggered changes in the economic relations between government, business, and households; shaped new conditions in the labor market; and initiated transformations in the political system. A subsequent element of these structural changes is the increase in the importance of education as a determinant of one's position in the labor market and one's chances of having a professional career. Social position and income depend on individual skill and competence, personal qualifications, and individual ambition, which in turn have a major influence on the life orientation for an individual. Increasing demands in the labor market, including rivalry and competition, create a situation in which competition exists between work activities and activities associated with the establishment and development of a family. A decrease in geographic mobility is an on-going factor that has introduced economic and social inequality into Polish society. This decrease is a consequence of the fall in internal migration that is occurring because of changes in the labor market and difficulties in the housing market. Along with transformations in consciousness connected to the position of women in the family and society, there has also been an increase in the current relevance of issues connected with the labor market participation of women and their independence in making choices among different life paths and careers.

Within Poland, opinions and values have spread that are typical in countries with developed democracies. Perspectives and views that are now emphasized include independence, individualism, and self-realization. Included in these processes is a greater acceptance of informal unions as well as a decrease in the tendency to create formal unions. A range of factors, such as greater sexual freedom, a growing acceptance of nonmarital unions, more possibilities for effective contraception,

and an increase in the social acceptance of childlessness, all exert an influence on attitudes and behaviors surrounding procreation.

Cultural transformations are reinforced by technological developments (progress in telecommunications, the abolition of restrictions in the personal communications, development of information science, the internet, and so on).

Transformations in the social and economic basis and functions of the family have influenced changes in the model of the family. Economic changes in the direction of a market economy have contributed to mass unemployment, to the growth of poverty, as well as to a decline in the feeling of social security. A result of these changes is the weakening of the position of the family. This situation has resulted because of a withdrawal of many government-provided services to the family, including a reduction in the range of institutions providing care for children. Because the legal right to these entitlements is tied to labor market attachment, a loss of employment results in a loss of entitlement to these services (Kotowska, 2002).

Transformations in the Internal Structure of the Family

Transformations in the internal structure of the family must be considered in terms of changes in the positions and roles of the spouses as well as changes in the position of children within the family. Other aspects that are important include the individualization of the family, the autonomy of the individual within the family, and the disappearance of traditional, institutional forms of marriage in favor of friendships. These changes facilitate the internalization of values and norms that govern the behaviors of family members and determine its cohesion (Adamski, 1997, 2002).

In order to examine changes in the role of women and men in contemporary Polish families, two issues must be considered. First, new patterns of behavior and different roles and methods of functioning in the family are most frequently observed in egalitarian families as well as in single parent families, in which the man is the only parent (Kluzowa, Kusz, & Slany, 1991; Kluzowa, 1999; Slany, 2000). The second issue concerns changes over time in how families are defined in Polish census data (GUS, 2002; Slany, in press).

The first statistical research on families was conducted in the 1970 census. In consecutive censuses from 1978 and 1988, the scope of themes concerning families was gradually broadened in order to gain an understanding of the effects of the changes that were widely

occurring in the sphere of family life. It is important to emphasize that in all the censuses, families were separated out from among the population living in private households; therefore, the analysis of the structure of the family requires placing this analysis in the context of these research categories.

The concept of the family itself has pivotal meaning. In practice, the Polish census uses a concept of a family that resides in a separate, private household and that is based primarily on biological criteria. However two censuses (1978 and 2002) conducted after the war also examined separate families functioning in the context of collective households. In the last census (2002), families were defined "as two or more individuals, who are related as husband and wife, who are cohabitating (only heterosexual cohabitation), or as a parent and one or more children. Hence a family includes either a cohabitating heterosexual or married couple with or without children or a parent with one or more children" (GUS, 2003, p. 19).

Major recent changes in the composition of families are observed in an increase in the number of single parent families. From 1988 to 2002, the number of single parent families increased by 29%, from 1,573.8 in 1988 to 2,030.1 in 2002. Most single parent households are headed by women, with an increase from 1,395.7 in 1988 to 1,798.2 in 2002. Single parent families headed by women constitute 17.2% of all families, 18.8% of families in cities, and 14.4% in rural areas. Single parent families headed by men constitute 2.2% of all families, 2.2% in cities, and 2.0% in rural areas. Although the absolute number of single parent families headed by men is small, the overall number of these families increased by 30.1% between 1988 and 2002. The increase was substantially higher in cities (35%) than in rural areas (22%).

In 2002, Census data indicated that 14,243,000 children lived in Poland. In comparison with 1988, there were 405,000 fewer children; 8,186,000 lived in cities and 6,059,000 lived in villages. Over 1.5 million children lived with single mothers, while only 328,000 lived with single fathers.

Change in the Position of Women and Men in Contemporary Polish Families

"Within the sphere of our civilization, the roles of women and men are clearly differentiated, through which men are in general expected to be competitive, dominant and to aspire toward success that is defined most frequently by material categories and prestige. From women, however, submission, caregiving, and cooperation are primarily

demanded (Domański, 1995, p. 44).” As this quotation indicates, it is frequently necessary to differentiate between women and men and to keep in mind that the feminist movement has not succeeded completely in providing equality between men and women. Thus, in large measure women continue to be prepared for the traditional role of mother, while any changes in their position in the last decades have depended primarily on the emancipation that occurred as a result of the political and economic transformation.

The most important change in the life of women entailed the entrance into paid employment outside the home. Tryfan (1989) lists the following reasons for the widespread degree of paid work by women in Poland after the war:

1. A transformation of the country from agricultural to industrial-agricultural, marked by rapid industrialization that increased the need for labor;
2. Universal education, which contributed significantly to the growth in aspirations of women;
3. Social and governmental supports that assured a guaranteed level of social assistance for mothers;
4. Transformations in the sphere of consciousness and changes in the model of the family;
5. Shared work by both spouses in order to achieve a rising standard of living.

Women gained the opportunity to work as well as the role of co-breadwinner in the family. This gave women a feeling of economic independence, which contributed to an improvement in their position. Frequently, however, the taking up of the new roles was not connected to an abandonment of the role of mother and homemaker. Therefore, many contemporary women are forced to reconcile paid employment with home responsibilities, which increases their burdens and does not have the best influence on the quality of the process of raising children or on family life.

Along with changes in the role of women, the role of men has also changed. They have lost their position of superiority in terms of traditional authority in relation to wives and children in favor of the building of authority in the area of emotional relations. In order to relieve women of their burdens, fathers more and more frequently concern themselves with the care of children and the preparation of dinner. Connected to the development of egalitarian roles between the spouses is the obligation of a just division of household responsibilities.

The development of egalitarianism and democracy within the family is most frequently found among white-collar families, while a traditional division of roles continues to characterize farmer and working class families (Tryfan, 1989). Finally, educational level, family of origin, and religiosity are determinants of the level of change in roles (Przybył, 2001).

In Poland, however, one can observe a distinct paradox. On the one hand, women declare that they hold emancipated views and want changes in the traditional arrangement of roles; however, on the other hand, they continue to replicate traditional patterns. In this way, they subordinate their own aspirations and desires to occupy a lower position. This acceptance is given with the conviction that the existing division of roles and responsibilities is something normal. According to Domański, "the majority of Polish people believe that the obligation of women is to be concerned with household, while men should be concerned with providing the monetary resources to live (Domański, 1995, p. 65)."

Because Western Europe was the cradle of the emancipation movement, it was there that emancipation achieved its greatest success. In Poland, the process of emancipation does not appear as far advanced and many young Poles, despite holding radical views, still attach considerable importance to very traditional perceptions of the family and the roles with which they are concerned. A steady taking up of Western patterns of life, the growth of education, and the changing aspirations of people present serious obstacles for the family as the traditional value for Poles.

Research conducted by Domański in 1995 showed the results presented in Table 1. It is clear that although respondents in large measure were in support of egalitarian roles (second opinion), the greater share was inclined in favor of the traditional division of roles (third and fourth opinions). Such attitudes have been observed in other research studies conducted in later years by Marody (1996) and Siemieńska (1996).

Change in the Position of Children in the Family

Another consequence of the process of democracy in family life is a change in the position of children within the family, which is expressed in their new roles in the home and family, the modification of their relationships with their parents, and above all in their previously occupied position in the hierarchy of family values. In the emotional sphere, an intensification of the bonds connecting parents to children has occurred. Hence, although children are no longer to be

TABLE 1
Attitudes Towards the Employment of Women

	Sex	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Difficult to say
Mothers who work are able to provide their children with the same level of warmth as mothers who do not work.	M	10.5%	44.9%	33.0%	7.9%	3.8%
	F	10.2%	36.9%	37.7%	12.5%	2.6%
For wives it is more important that they should assure that their husbands have the conditions for success rather than that they have their own success.	M	9.8%	39.9%	36.0%	4.7%	9.6%
	F	6.9%	35.7%	39.8%	7.6%	10.1%
It damages young children when the mother works outside the home.	M	27.6%	48.6%	18.1%	2.5%	3.2%
	F	27.2%	46.9%	20.2%	3.3%	2.4%
It is considerably better for the family when the husband earns money and the wife takes care of the home and children.	M	44.3%	42.5%	9.5%	0.6%	3.1%
	F	36.0%	47.6%	10.8%	2.5%	3.1%

Note. Source: Domański, (1995).

treated in the economic category, they have gained recognition for a range of other values.

On account of specialized institutions for childcare and education, medical care, and recreation, the dependence of children on parents is considerably limited. In contrast however, the period required for general and professional education has lengthened resulting in a prolonging of the time when children are dependent on parents in the material as well as in the spiritual sphere.

One can also observe changes in the consciousness of the parents, who now treat children as a source of personal happiness and less as a burden and responsibility. This attitude also fundamentally influences childhood, which now has taken on a completely different dimension. Parents treat their role very consciously and attempt not to impose their own patterns of behavior, but instead introduce their children to the culture of the society. Former authoritarian methods of childrearing have given way to democratic methods, adapted to the individuality of the child.

Factors that have influenced the change in the position of contemporary Polish families also include the growth in the aspirations of parents for the future of their children, egalitarian treatment of boys and girls, a significant emphasis on education (through acquiring education, one is able to acquire a higher societal position), and the growth of the participation of fathers in the care of children.

The changing position of children in the family and society is expressed both in greater material and spiritual demands and to a large degree in their satisfaction. Evidence of the appreciation for these demands within society is seen in the steadily growing toy industry, in the increased production of articles for children and youth, and in mass culture (such as magazines for children and youth, programs on television and radio). These products and activities take into account the specific needs of children and youth and are designed for their satisfaction (Adamski, 2002).

Individualization of the Family and Autonomy of Individuals in the Family

The processes of individualization also present another direction for change in the internal structure of the family. This is characterized on the one hand by a tendency towards isolation from the wider society; on the other hand however, processes are occurring that are leading to the autonomy of individual members. As results from a number of research studies conducted by Polish family sociologists have indicated (Jarosz,

1987; Tyszka, 1991; Kwak, 1994, 1997; Majdański, 2001), factors and circumstances that are favorable to the process of increasing the autonomy of individuals in the family are not able to disrupt irreversibly its partnership character. Under contemporary conditions, families have the chance to provide spiritual harmony or unity (Majdański, 2001), a place where impersonal bonds are replaced by intimate personal bonds that have greater meaning for the preservation of cohesion among its members. However, the intimate character of relations and the feeling of family unity can only survive as long as the separate interests of individual members are not threatened.

Internalization of Family Values

In contemporary societies, including in Poland, one observes the far-reaching institutionalization and formalization of human behavior. As a result, society attempts to impose complete patterns of thinking and action and through the agency of various institutions and organizations, it attempts to force their compliance. Simultaneously in the consciousness of the contemporary individual, a disinclination towards the formalization of behavior is growing together with an unwillingness to conform to prescribed schemes in favor of voluntary actions, desires, and one's own inventiveness.

With reference to contemporary Polish families, the above-mentioned phenomena are bringing about qualitative changes in families, which are manifesting themselves in the nature of partnerships, the weakening of institutional elements, and the fortification and growth of involvement by all members of the family, thereby ensuring full personal development for individual members and cohesion and functionality to the family group itself.

The Influence of Secular Processes

One of the crucial processes that has emerged in the modern era is the secularization of religion, which has contributed in large measure to the origin of the contemporary character of society. The essence of this process is the separation of the sphere of religion from everyday life. According to Adamski (1984), this process brought about the destruction of the unity of religious and secular interpretations of the world. It also destroyed the unity of the organization of life on the level of society, government, culture, and family. The influence of this secularization on the family is highly significant. It manifests itself in the

transformation of customs and morals, the rise of relativism in norms and values, as well as the removal of the sacramental view of marriage and the family, which has allowed for the carrying out of divorces. As a consequence, one observes the establishment of alternative forms of unions, dissolution of marriages, and a sexual morality that is mainly unconcerned with the rules of the church.

The departure from religiosity is a characteristic feature of all modern societies. Poland, however, appears here as a distinct case. The percentage of people who claim to believe in God is very high and the number of people engaged in the active practice of religion could give the church authorities reason to be proud. In large measure, however, this religiosity results from the strong influence of tradition as well as the still recent perception of the Church as a bastion of freedom in the face of the communistic yoke.

The Role of Religion

Steady participation in religious practices by over one-half of all Polish people does not entail an equally high knowledge of the truths and beliefs or depth of living religiously. According to Gowin (1995), "It is one of the most Catholic societies in the world, but it is marked by these traits: a very high number of abortions, the recommendations of church teachings on morality are widely ignored—and in private life as in public life, the disappearance of responsibility for the common good is widespread, the knowledge of the central truths of the faith is exceptionally low, and the traditional character of religion readily yields to erosion under the circumstances of pluralism and a society of unlimited choices" (p. 237). The processes of secularization and the departure from religion are connected with the lessening and transformation of the influence of societal control on the life of the individual.

Between Conformity and Individualism

The previous epoch demanded that every member of society strictly conform to societal norms. Societies had fewer members, which made it difficult to hide nonconformist behavior. Universally required norms, patterns, and values dictated every style of life and gave sense to life at that time. Any tests or probes of thought or action other than accepted ones were met by strong societal reactions and the setting up of sanctions. In the best case, an individual who broke norms brought upon himself ostracism and a life outside of the margins of society.

Without societal support, severe loneliness and isolation occurred for the individual.

Today, the support of the group is not as essential for survival. The progress of civilization and its accomplishments allow every adult to have an independent existence. To a considerable degree, group and neighborhood bonds have disappeared and family connections have diminished. Simultaneously, contemporary society has produced a state of anomie and a feeling of permanent isolation that are a result of the spatial and social activities of a life of anonymity and the bureaucratization and objectification of human contact (Dyczewski, 1994). The lack of existing patterns and strong social control lead to these consequences.

Today, discussion centers on the post-modern stage of the societal transformation. According to Mariański (1997):

Postmodern individuals accept the idea that all values are relative, subject to on-going development, and socially constructed. An orientation towards change and the relative ease of 'suspending' values are conducive to the selection and shape of life style. Values are not permanently determined; they depend on time, place, and circumstances. In situations where in everyday life, values that are contradictory appear seemingly or actually equivalent, and can even be contradictory for a single individual, many times an individual can lose his orientation and meaning of life (p. 40).

Postmodern society can be described as producing a more and more exhausting normative chaos, a feeling of anomie, and a lack of lasting moral patterns. Hence the need for religion appears, or for a system of values on which one might be able to lean. Therefore, the desire for submission to some form of social control is observed. Mariański (1997) argues that the paradox of individualization depends among other factors on setting the individual free from the compulsion and conventions that dominate closed societies, but simultaneously more and more frequently loosens social ties and makes the individual dependent on disparate factors of society, depriving him of the feeling of security and identity. Under conditions of individualization, an individual cuts himself off, so that collectively and comprehensively, it leads to an increase of personal failure and defeat.

The increase of pressure on the creation of individualistic attitudes influences the change in the meaning of the family and can be the basis for the emergence of diverse forms of crisis within the family. The new meaning of the family is evident in that it is now secular and

egalitarian, and may disintegrate if it does not deliver satisfaction. Children are also brought up under these conditions, which contributes to an increase in the number of divorces. As values and societal patterns become more heterogeneous and the pressure towards individualism grows, conditions then exist that are not favorable for lasting relationships and for the cohesiveness of families.

Conclusions

The basic goal of this article was to portray the significant changes that have been occurring in contemporary Polish families. These changes were discussed with reference to their direction and to the state of affairs that are currently resulting from them. The major tendencies of these changes have brought about a new comprehension of the essence, goals, and character of the family. Specifically, in Polish families, we now find a greater prevalence of a model of small families, the shaping of new patterns and models of internal relations that are a result of the employment of married women, as well as an unquestionable growth in the aspirations that parents hold for the future of their children. Problems were also briefly discussed that stem from the two opposing trends that determine the situation of contemporary families.

Perspectives on Family Disintegration

Within Poland, one of these tendencies is viewed as exerting a strong internal and external influence on family disintegration. The paid work of women and mothers is considered the most important in this respect because in Poland, this work is viewed as having a negative effect on the functioning of the family. Another element that also contributes to a weakening of the internal cohesion of contemporary families in Poland is the decrease in the range of tasks and experiences shared by all members of the family. A result is the loss by the family of its traditional functions, the individualistic influence of the character and place of work of the individual family members, as well as the limiting of the possibilities for spending free time together on account of different hours of work.

Separate from these negative factors and circumstances on the contemporary Polish family, a variety of integrating factors affect its durability and internal cohesion. Here one can mention ethical and social traditions that pervade the internal life of the family and that

reinforce the basis of its durability and its performance of basic functions. These traditions also exert a positive influence on the strengthening of the perceived family community. Another important integrating factor is the customary division of household-family responsibilities, which fulfill a very essential role in the process of family integration. Finally, the entire range of situations and circumstances facilitate joint consumption of mass culture and the joint spending of free time.

All of these processes and factors have a joint characteristic: they lead to a reorganization of the family. Without question, they bring many difficulties for the life of the married couple family; however, it is not possible to unambiguously state that they lead to a crisis in the institution of the marriage and family. These changing socio-economic and cultural conditions demand the taking up of action in the direction of making it easier to prepare youth for family roles, to prepare families for the new situation, and to ensure a greater level of maturity among people who are creating marital unions; the family and marriage may thus be able to function efficiently in the contemporary, changing world.

At the current time, should we then speak of the decline or the crisis of the family? Or perhaps the shape of the contemporary family, which is emerging in alternative forms, is responding to the newly existing changes and transformations that are occurring internally as well as externally. It appears that the phenomenon of alternative unions is a result of cumulative changes in contemporary society. For some, this exemplifies a symptom of a severe crisis of marriage and the family; for others, it is a form of adaptation by the family to new societal conditions. Within Poland, however, there is a consensus that alternative forms of married life present a sign of crisis for marriage and the family, especially for its institutional form as well as a crisis of traditional norms and preferred family life style. They are also the logical outcome of societal changes and represent a widespread social reality. They can provide the opportunity to function as substitutes for families, especially as they pertain to cohabitation. Nevertheless, in the context of Poland, neither cohabitating unions, which tend to be less permanent than marital unions, nor single motherhood, are able to provide stable families and to fulfill all socialization functions. In addition, the conscious choice of life "alone" or a childless marriage challenges the essence of the second function in terms of its importance, namely the procreation function. For many people in Poland, a relinquishing of this basic family function or its replacement by other forms appears to be a sign of a crisis for the family as an institution.

When one examines contemporary Polish families, problems do exist that must be confronted. Material problems, the feeling of a lack of stability, an excessive amount of working, passive recreation through television and in consequence, the deprivation of emotional needs as well as growing aggression in families have each contributed to the creation of a situation in which the family does not fulfill its functions, and which then leads to disorganization. It is thus possible to argue that the contemporary Polish family is passing through a definite kind of crisis; however, its symptoms are not as strong as in the majority of Western countries, especially when the level of divorces is considered.

The crisis may, however, be largely hidden. The danger of the development of a crisis in Polish families exists in terms of phenomena that are intensifying at the macro-societal level. Processes of globalization are bringing about the gradual acceptance of Western desires and aspirations, and therefore, they may result in an enlargement or exposure of a crisis in Polish families. It appears, however, that this problem will not emerge in the short run. In Poland, secularization is not yet as strong as elsewhere, emancipation has not reached a very high level, and customs are still strongly connected with tradition. In sum, Poles have not yet completely adopted the postmodern style of life. As in the past, the influences of tradition and of the Church continue to determine in large measure the stability of the family in Poland.

Poland and the European Union

Poland's entry into the European Union and the corresponding Europeanization of Polish social policies undoubtedly will bring about tremendous challenges in the social sphere at the micro as well as at the macro level. On the one hand, accession to the European Union requires Poland to adjust to social legislation, directives, and guidelines that have been formulated and determined by the European Union. On the other hand, it creates new opportunities and possibilities connected with full legal participation in the joint collaboration in this area (Anioł, 2003). Some researchers and theorists (Anioł, 2003; Głąbicka, 1999; Golinowska, 1999, 2002) contend that in the long run the development of the process of social integration will have dynamic as well as restrictive elements. Potential dynamic elements include:

1. A progressive process of globalization and regionalization of social, economic, and political life, which in practice will mean

acceleration in the internationalization of societal problems as well as a search for solutions for these problems in the international arena.

2. The persistence and intensification of a number of serious social issues in countries of Europe. Among these, the persistence of significant unemployment and the relatively low employment rate stand out. Moreover, new forms of poverty and social exclusion are appearing together with the alarming marginalization of social groups in underprivileged living situations, including the long-term unemployed. The nature of these new phenomena demand to some extent the implementation of a series of reforms via unified social policies, based on a logic that is similar to the logic that led to the process of European integration within the European Union.

In reference to the more restrictive elements, theorists mention a number of difficult conditions pertaining to the development of uniform social policies. These conditions include:

1. The consequences of globalization in the contemporary world economy. Increased competition signifies the reduction of the costs of production, restrictions in wage levels, and social benefits in all countries participating in the international division of work.
2. The persistence of pluralism in national solutions pertaining to social politics within the European Union. This includes the methods of instituting comprehensive reforms, which are occurring in the context of different histories and traditions in the areas of social issues and the creation of systems of social welfare.
3. Disparities in the level of economic development and the standard of living, which limit cohesion and the possibilities for the standardization of norms in the area of workplace protections and social benefits.
4. The unwillingness of the richest members of the Union to promote redistributive efforts in aid of the poorer regions and countries.

Given these factors and their influence on jointly-formulated social policies, it is reasonable to assume that any outcomes for the average Polish family associated with Poland's entry in the European Union will occur in the long run. Within a short time span of several years, it is also not expected that essential changes will occur in the living

conditions or in the image of Polish families to match those that are more typical in the rest of Europe (CBOS, 2004d). According to research conducted by CBOS in April 2004, a worsening in the declared standard of living of the family did not result in changes in the feelings of helplessness or the threat of poverty (2004b). Nor were changes reported in the extent of poverty in the country. Hence, in the first stage of Poland's accession to the European Union, it appears that major changes are occurring in the macroeconomic sphere with indirect and relatively small influences on average families.

One encouraging development that is viewed favorably by those who supported Poland's entry into the European comes from research conducted by CBOS in May and September 2004 (2004a, 2004c). The results from this survey showed a high level of social support for Poland's membership in the EU: 70% of Poles supported integration, while only 21% expressed opposition. Although still somewhat weakly formulated, the assessments of the effects of integration are better than expected in reference to the consequences that had occurred by the beginning of the year. Almost two fifths of Poles (39%) believed that Polish membership in the EU was bringing more gains than losses. Less than one third (30%) reported that the balance of integration was negative up to this point. More difficulties were reported when an assessment was given of the effects of the integration at the level of the individual. However, the first views on this issue must be interpreted with caution, since the assessments were not clear-cut—31% reported negative effects while 24% reported positive effects. Over two fifths of the respondents (43%) believed that the expansion of the European Union would result in greater gains for other countries than for Poland, while only 19% reported that entrance into the EU was above all favorable for Poland.

Note

1. This conceptualization is an attempt to examine the demographic changes in Poland on the basis of a conceptual scheme that is a modification of van de Kaa's arguments.

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