Symbolic Interactionism in Poland

by

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An Introduction to the Special Issue of QSR: "Symbolic Interactionism in Poland"

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The symbolic interactionist tradition initiated by the Chicago School, and later advanced by such great theoreticians and scholars as George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, as well as Carl Couch, Erving Goffman, Anselm L. Strauss, Norman Denzin, or Robert Prus, to name a few, still receives recognition, as evidenced by the number of publications embedded in the perspective at hand, as well as many successful attempts to institutionalize contemporary researchers' interest in symbolic interactionism (SI). There exist several such associations like the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction or the European Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Also, the following journals devoted to this sociological perspective are acclaimed: *Symbolic Interaction*, *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*. As to the Polish context, there is the Section of Qualitative Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism of the Polish Sociological Association and a scientific journal promoting the ideas of SI—*Qualitative Sociology Review*. The idea behind inviting Polish scholars to contribute to the special issue highlighting the impact of SI in Poland has been twofold—first, it is about advancing the concepts underpinning this theoretical and research perspective, second, it aims at popularizing the activity of Polish symbolic interactionists community.

Many discussions undertaking the concepts of SI and concerning issues such as the self and identity, the mind and the definition of the situation,

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taking the role of the other and socialization, deviation and constructing social order, interaction processes, communication and language, visual and material symbols, the processes of becoming, and exclusion are still timely. There are also several surfacing areas of research on interactions, such as the issue of corporeality and embodiment, as well as the awareness of the body. Moreover, new research methods aimed at capturing one's experiences, as well as lived experiences of everyday life emerge.

The authors present and discuss the research and theoretical achievements of Polish sociologists, pedagogues, social work specialists, and anthropologists whose studies are guided by SI (see the article by Konecki & Kacperczyk). Since the Polish SI community displays great interest in doing research both inspired and framed by the concepts underpinning SI and the Chicago School perspective, presenting and discussing their achievements in the area seems to be vital in the context of grounding their research and analytic efforts. The papers dwell on theoretical and research issues (including the methodological ones) exemplified by specific theoretical achievements and/or experiences from the field, as well as respective analyses of one's or another researchers' work. This issue of QSR also offers articles presenting case studies.

As the readers will see, a lot of research employing the SI perspective that has been conducted within the Polish context concerns the issues of work, economy, and organizations. The identity work is investigated within the occupational contexts. The tradition of the sociology of work in Everett Hughes' terms seems to be very strong. The perspective at hand is a good fit in case of research on the meanings of work, like in the study of urban marketplaces (see the article by Marciniak), the time and space of work (see the article by Dymarczyk), emotions arising within the work context (see the article by Pawłowska), the study of freelance workers (see the article by Miller), of mobbing (see the article by Chomczyński), and regarding the work in the escort agencies in Poland (see the article by Ślęzak). There are also reflections on the influence and inspirations deriving from sociological research and methods of the Chicago School, such as uncovering the marginalized social groups (see the article by Kacperczyk). The researchers also analyze the interactive dimensions of cultural artifacts (see the article by Wiśniewski & Bukalska), the issue of dealing with the stigma of disability (see the article by Niedbalski), and embodiment (see the article by Byczkowska-Owczarek). One can also learn how non-heteronormative mothers negotiate the meaning of motherhood in the course of interactions (see the article by Wojciechowska). The articles included in the issue exemplify diverse substantive interests of the researchers; still, each is focused on the issues regarding the process of constructing social reality, identities, space, time, and the social worlds at the time of interactions.

Symbolic Interactionism in Poland. Inspirations and Development

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Abstract: In the paper, we present the development of symbolic interactionism (SI) in Poland by tracing and discussing its beginnings, as well as the influence the Chicago School had on the reception of SI in Polish sociology. Furthermore, we differentiate between *two trends* in the development of SI in Poland. One is connected with the early theoretical elaborations of the SI orientation and translations of classical books representing this perspective; another is linked with empirical work underpinned by SI concepts and the grounded theory approach in empirical research and data analysis. Stressing the importance of translations of classical texts of SI in its reception in Poland, we emphasize the role of field research and applications of SI concepts in sociological investigations that we shortly charac-terize.

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While attempting to write about the development of symbolic interactionism (SI) in Poland, one must indicate the main inspirations and works that helped popularize this theoretical orientation, and that used the methods and concepts of SI in empirical research.[1] We write about the works that directly refer to SI as a perspective used in sociological theorizing, as well as field studies. We do not widely discuss the works that mention the SI perspective marginally, with no analysis of its fundamental assumptions or application of its concepts in empirical research, nor which use them only as an "adornment" by mere reference to this orientation. Our emphasis is on the works that combined empirical research with the perspective of SI.

One can argue that the development of qualitative sociology in Poland was directly connected with the theoretical grounding of the qualitative sociological research in the Chicago School and SI (Hałas 1987; 1994; Wyka 1988; Konecki, Kacperczyk, and Marciniak 2005). Even if this development is not referred to directly, it is included in the general perspective of the qualitative studies—in the concepts of *identity*, *self*, *the definition of the self*, *the transformation of self/identity*, *the definition of the situation*, *social organization*, or *social worlds*. These concepts are the effect of the influences of SI but also derive from the Chicago School, with its works that embraced the personal, subjective view of reality, the social organization, human practices in everyday life, and work processes with particular emphasis on the field studies, fieldwork, and qualitative methods of research, including personal documents (Schatzman and Strauss 1973; Strauss 1987; 1993).

The Beginnings—Theoretical and Methodological Orientation

It is assumed that the works of scholars at the University of Chicago had an impact on the development of SI and qualitative sociology. Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess, propagators of fieldwork, inspired their students who conducted investigations of Chicago urban life to apply observation as a data collection method (Węgleński 1983; 1988; Szacki 2005; Czekaj 2007:163). Their *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Park and Burgess 1921), ennobling field research by "making it a fully-fledged academic undertaking and the foundation of sociology as such," remained the basis for the theoretical preparation of sociologists throughout the interwar period (Szacki 2005:604 [trans. AK and KTK]). And, for Polish readers, this work was accessible thanks to Florian Znaniecki, who published its translation, *Wprowadzenie do nauk socjologii* in 1926 (see also: Wincławski 2012:5).

Before that, Florian Znaniecki (1882-1958) and William I. Thomas (1863-1947) made a landmark study on migration. Their book, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-1920 [1958]), was one of the most influential pieces using qualitative research (Sinatti 2008:2, 5; Stanley 2010:141; see also: Blumer 1969:117) that offered the analysis of personal life-records (letters between family members sent to the newspapers, the documents of associations, the autobiographies, the life histories), and—according to the authors—these were excellent sociological materials. Using them was an important methodological innovation since the combination of such data has not been applied in any sociological study before.

The qualitative analysis of personal documents elucidated that attitudes and actions are shaped

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by social and cultural milieus (Sinatti 2008:7). Znaniecki and Thomas also disclosed that an individual's actions are shaped by how their personality, social attitudes, and situations are interconnected (Thomas and Znaniecki 1976; Konecki 2017). Moreover, in their opinion, a social analysis should be focused on social change, since biographical and personality changes accompany it. Still, according to Znaniecki, a person is immersed in the culture. Thus, an innovative or a changing self could only happen within this culture (Hałas 1983:350). For Znaniecki, what is essential for action (interaction), are cultural values and systems of norms (Hałas 1983:350; see also: Kaczmarczyk 2020). His orientation is not only interactive but also normative and culturalistic. What separates his point of view from Blumer's is that in Znaniecki's approach the norms are already given in the cultural context. Whereas, in Blumer's view, it is the individual who creates them situationally and actively refers to them in their interpretations, contestations, and redefinitions. This seemingly minor difference paved, in effect, the way for conceptual differences in theorizing about the social world by successive generations of Polish social researchers. Not all of them developed approaches typical for Blumerian SI.

When it comes to life histories analysis, the crucial point is the concentration on the processual aspects of social phenomena (e.g., the process of adjustment and social organization, the process of changing family forms, etc.). The authors of *The Polish Peasant* have shown that qualitative sociology treated processes as "subjects" of the research, what allowed following the changes (e.g., the sequence of events in the *becoming* process) and to determine the "subjective meaning," as well as how one's definition of the situation is impacting

upon diverse processes. *The Polish Peasant* and other works of Znaniecki,[2] as well as his activities promoting the use of personal documents in social research, defined the development of qualitative sociology and marked the scope of substantive areas of rural and urban sociology, sociology of nation (Konecki et al. 2005), including the sociology of migration (Sinatti 2008; Dolińska 2020; Fiń 2020), and the development of biographical methods in sociological research (Schütze 1983; Włodarek and Ziółkowski 1990). Thomas and Znaniecki belonged to the Chicago School of sociology. At the beginning of the 20th century, not only the method of personal documents has been developed by the disciples from the Chicago School but also field studies, nowadays called field research or sociological ethnography (Konecki 2017). The social mapping of the cities was another important tool of research, and social diagnosis implemented by the scholars from the University of Chicago (Czekaj 2007:183, 205-229), and one can notice the influence of the methods of mapping in the situational analysis by Adele E. Clarke (2003; 2005).

The reception of the Chicago School and later SI sociology was strongly connected with the works of Znaniecki, especially the one produced in collaboration with Thomas—*The Polish Peasant* (Kaczmarczyk 2018). It has created the intellectual atmosphere for the subsequent reception of the SI in Poland. The concepts of the definition of the situation, the definition of the self, and/or joint action were easier to accept knowing the works published

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[2] Among them should be mentioned: *Cultural Reality* (1919), *Introduction to Sociology* (1922), *The Laws of Social Psychology* (1925), two volumes of *Sociology of Education* (1928; 1930), *The City in View of Its Inhabitants* (1932), *The Method of Sociology* (1934), *Social Actions* (1936), *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (1940), *Cultural Sciences* (1952), or *Social Relations and Social Roles* (1965).

by Znaniecki and the group of his collaborators. The interest in the subjective, situational, cultural, and personal approach in studying the communities was popular since the very beginning of institutional sociology in Poland. It was under the influence of Znaniecki, who laid the foundations of Polish sociology and, at the same time, personified the link between the American and the Polish sociology schools. His influence on Polish sociology was through his endeavors, important methodological publications (Znaniecki 1934; 1976), as well as his organizational work. In 1920, he established the first Institute of Sociology in Poznan (Dulczewski 1992; Czekaj 2007), creating the Department of Sociology and Philosophy of Culture, and started his famous sociological seminar under the same name (Dulczewski 1992:140). By founding "a school of theoretic and applied sociology," Znaniecki introduced the idea of "gathering and elaborating" sociological materials on Polish soil. Being highly interested in the autobiographical method, he invented a new way of collecting personal materials through memoir-writing competitions. In 1921, he announced the first memoir contest addressed to physical workers and received 149 autobiographies. The success of that first competition gave way to the forthcoming "social memoirs" (*pamiętnikarstwo społeczne*). Collecting autobiographical writings as a form of developing knowledge about contemporary society became a very popular method of data gathering in Poland. In the interwar period, the memoir competition shaped under the influence of such great Polish scholars as Florian Znaniecki, Ludwik Krzywicki, Józef Chałasiński, Jan Szczepański brought a monumental collection of diaries: by youth, peasants, emigrants, physical workers, miners, teachers, social activists, physicians, new professionals, the unemployed, and other social categories.

Eleven years after the publication of *The Polish Peasant*, Znaniecki's student and close associate, Józef Chałasiński, continued his mentor's inquiries. In his habilitation, *The Ways of Worker's Social Advancement* (*Drogi awansu społecznego robotnika*) published in 1931, he elaborated on autobiographies collected during the first memoir contest (1921) organized by Znaniecki. Directly pointing to the close methodological and thematic relationship linking his analysis with the work of Thomas and Znaniecki, Chałasiński emphasized that:

> Only autobiographies allow us to learn about those aspirations that underlie the social advancement of an individual. They tell us about what people in a given environment consider to be a social promotion (a social distinction), to improve their social position and what they are satisfied with, in this regard. Finally, they, and only they, allow us to understand the role of the social environment and various social institutions in the social advancement of individuals, in the shaping of their social consciousness. No other material, however significant from a different cognitive standpoint and helpful for a sociologist, can replace the autobiography in this respect. Economic data tell us about the objective, factual structure of society, or its classes. However, they do not say anything about what this structure is in the social consciousness of groups, what meanings it has for the social aspirations of people, and their collective life. [Chałasiński (1931) 1979:20 (trans. AK and KTK)]

Chałasiński applied this method in his subsequent studies on peasant and working class. As a result of the competition announced in 1936-1937 by the Editorial Board of the magazine *Agricultural Training*, 1,544 memoirs were obtained from young rural activists all over Poland. The topic of this competition was "A Description of My Life, Work, Plans,

and Hopes." In 1938, based on these autobiographical materials, Chałasiński published a monumental four-volume work entitled *Młode pokolenie chłopów* (*The Young Generation of Peasants*). Znaniecki wrote the *Preface* to this book, stating that:

> Sociologist studies, "the mutual influence, development, transformation, and decay of social forms, modes of action and functions, or, in other words, ways of adapting social groups to new and changing living conditions"…For this kind of sociological analysis, autobiographical material is the best material. It describes the author's social situations, as well as their attitudes and actions in these situations. The subjectivism of this material is therefore not a weakness, but an advantage, because the attitudes and aspirations of an individual and their behavior are not the result of objective, but subjective situations. An individual's responses relate not to the situations as they are independent of the individual, but to how the acting individual sees them. An individual's starting point is their definition of the situation in which they find themselves. [Znaniecki (1938) 1984:XXXII-XXXIII (trans. AK and KTK)]

This way Znaniecki's student implemented the idea of *the humanistic coefficient* in the study on the young Polish generation of peasants, their life, and struggles for the advancement in social position. Education was one of the agents of the liberation of the young peasants from the shackles of the local community and assigned social position.

Chałasiński knew the American pragmatists' works, which was evidenced by his article *Dewey as a Democracy Educator* (Chałasiński 1927). Following his teacher and mentor in sociology, Chałasiński also visited the United States of America. In 1931-1933, using a scholarship received from the Rockefeller Foundation, he conducted studies on Polish eco-

nomic emigration and the American education system. The fruits of these studies are two monographs in Polish: *Parish and Parochial School among Polish Immigrants in America* (1935) and *The School in American Society* (1936). However, it is difficult to find direct references to George H. Mead and Herbert Blumer in his works. The influences of pragmatic thought permeated rather through the works of Thomas and Znaniecki, concerning the personal and subjective view of social reality, and possibly through the works of Dewey, if we think about the educational reflections and democracy. The works of Znaniecki and Chałasiński were not called "symbolic interactionist" neither by them nor by others, but they bore the hallmarks of this way of thinking about social reality in Poland and created the grounds for the reception of SI perspective.

The relation of Znaniecki's concept of *the humanistic coefficient* with the assumptions of SI is more problematic (Hałas 1983). However, their influence on the biographical studies was immense. The memoir's competitions invented and implemented by Znaniecki became a very popular method of gathering the empirical material for sociological analyses. Before World War II and later, they were widely used by social researchers in Poland to reach various professional and occupational groups (Chałasiński 1971; Szczepański 1976). Between 1921 and 1966, there were over 300 memoir contests organized in Poland (Jakubczak 1966:3).

With time the memoir competition created the basis for the development of the approach being recognized as "the Polish method," which was founded on methodological directives worked out by Florian Znaniecki and Ludwik Krzywicki concerning the use and analysis of diaries. Franciszek Jakubczak describes this method as characterized by:

1) scientific, materialistic theory of social reality and the laws of social development, 2) recognizing memoirs as an adequate image of social reality and valuable source of materials, showing in harmonious connection the facts of consciousness and facts in the field of material living conditions and objective social relations, 3) practical implementation of the principle of binding and mutual verification of diary research with empirical field research, 4) applying to diaries, apart from the sociological principle of content analysis, also the economic and statistical method of analysis—regarding relevant indicators on a national scale, 5) the principle of social service in publishing the authentic auto-chronicles of representatives of the working classes, to illustrate their actual situation and spiritual face, and to shape the awareness of society and link the workers and peasants' culture with the national culture. [Jakubczak 1989:265 (trans. AK and KTK)]

According to Ludwik Krzywicki, the diaries' analysis represents the principle of social service—the authentic working-class' narratives are published to illustrate their actual situation and social awareness (Jakubczak 1989). In his understanding, the Polish method assumed clear principles of diaries analysis. First, all the content of a single diary should be complexly analyzed. Then, its content is compared with other diaries in the collection. If any previous particular collection exists, a comparative historical analysis is applied. Next, the diary is contextualized with statistics and economic data related to the studied problem. All the materials should be considered regarding the accomplishments of contemporary sociological knowledge and general knowledge in the field of a studied research problem. As a rule, during the analysis, the personal experience of the researcher and professional knowledge of the diary's author should be taken into account. And,

finally, Krzywicki recommended the principle of complex, humanistic content analysis in which the evidence for descriptions and generalizations are: (1) excerpts from diaries; (2) diaries presented *in extenso* in the appendix; (3) the entire collection of diaries in a particular study (Jakubczak 1989:265-266).

Although the influence of Thomas and Znaniecki, and after them, Znaniecki's students, on the further development of qualitative sociology in Poland could be argued and discussed (Szczepański 1976; Konecki et al. 2005), there is no doubt that Znaniecki not only founded but also practically formatted the Polish sociological scene, delineating the way of thinking about sociological research and conceptualizing social reality. For a long time, his works imposed themes and methods of social research and were a kind of mediator between the legacy of the Chicago School and the cradle of the Polish sociology. This influence faded with the decline of qualitative methods and the rapid development of the quantitative approach, survey research, and statistical methods of analysis, which began to dominate in the Polish sociology from the 1960s.[3]

Inspirations and Translations

From the 1960s, the reception of the still-developing thought of SI was mainly mediated by the original works of Western researchers or by their translations.[4] In the 1970s, among the classical texts of SI translated to Polish, the Polish audience had access

[3] Already in the 1950s, Chałasiński was accused of absolutizing the personal document method and overestimating the role of memoirs as a source for sociological research (Drozdowski 1970:123).

[4] We should remember that the first translation of the monumental work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-1920) to Polish was published by Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza only in 1976. It was late but provided Polish scholars with a more friendly reading of this classical book.

to the translation of G. H. Mead's work *Mind, Self and Society* (1932 [1975]) and H. Blumer's text, *The Sociological Implications of Thought of George H. Mead* (1975). In 1977, a translation of the part of Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* appeared (Łapiński 1977). And in 1981, the translation of Goffman's book, *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life* (1959) by Helena Datner-Śpiewak and Paweł Śpiewak, was published. This work, which is the basics for the dramaturgical perspective in sociology, addressed both the issue of identity/self and the interactive involvement of the individual and the group in the presentation of the self. The work was based partly on ethnographic research, as well as SI inspirations, and thus gave some incentives for ethnographic research of interactions, defining the self and others in specific situations and cultural conditions. It was an important piece of work for Polish sociology. A similar inspiration for Polish researchers was another translated work of Erving Goffman, *On the Characteristics of Total Institutions* (1975), based on ethnographic research and formal analyses of various documents. This text about total institutions, together with *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, inspired the Polish sociologists in their research and analyses of identity presentation processes, and identity changes (see, e.g., Konecki 1987). Those two works by Goffman seemed to be the most popular references for the sociologists oriented to interactionism in general and to SI in particular at that time in Poland.[5]

There were not many translated works in the field of SI at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s (Blumer 1975; Blumer 1984), mainly fragments, seldom the whole works. Numerous translations appeared only in the next century, after 2000 (Goffman 2005; Blumer 2007).

For a long time in Poland, the reception of SI was possible mostly in English, while research and analyses were mainly conducted in Polish. Therefore, the introduction of symbolic interactionist notions was implemented through translations of the concepts during their application in particular empirical research.

The translations of theoretical works were also important so that the terminology of SI, as well as pragmatic progenitors of this orientation, could be used to develop the theory (Hałas 1994). The erection of theoretical concepts and the work of analyzing empirical materials, or biographical studies (Kaźmierska 2004), permeated each other, weaving the knots of the SI paradigm. We can notice some influences of SI in biographical research,[6] especially regarding the concepts of Anselm Strauss ([1959] 2013; 1993) related to the biographical work, the transformation of identity, or immersion in specific social

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[5] We are aware that the relation of Goffman with SI is problematic. He does not define himself as a symbolic interactionist at all. However, his early works, especially *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* referring to Everett Hughes and Howard Becker; *Asylums* taking inspirations from Everett Hughes; *Stigma* discussing the issues of identity and referring to Howard Becker, all of them testified to the fact that Goffman, indeed, drew inspirations from SI and entered into a dialogue with its conceptions. He used, for example, the concept of "moral career" (in the books *Asylums* and *Stigma*). Generally, the idea of a career, especially the moral career, indicates the processual character of the biographical work that is done by

the subject. "Definitions of the situations," along with the biographical path's changes and the "the definition of the self" shifts indicate some relations to SI too. We can also find the "identity ambivalence" as an important topic of the work of symbolic interactionists and also Erving Goffman's. So, we can see some common theoretical interests in the perspectives of SI and Erving Goffman, in his early works. However, we should also indicate that his perspective is aimed at deciphering the formal features of interactions (especially in ritual interactions), their types, and their structures. The later works of Goffman are more structurally oriented than the earlier ones.

[6] The main publications presenting a comprehensive lecture on biographical methods in Poland were works edited by Jan Włodarek and Marek Ziółkowski (1990), and later by Kaja Kaźmierska (2012a).

worlds (Kaźmierska 1999; 2008; 2012b; Rokuszews-ka-Pawełek 2002; Kaźmierska, Piotrowski, Waniek 2012).[7]

However, Elżbieta Hałas writes about "the uncertain status of biography in the orientation of symbolic interactionism" (1990:198 [trans. AK and KTK]), pointing out that biographical (auto)reports, while being recommended by symbolic interactionists (Becker 1966; Blumer 1969; Denzin 1970), do not provide access to those aspects of the social process on which SI focuses its attention, that is, to current communication processes as a mutual interaction. Hałas (1990:199) comments on the significant neglect in using the biographical data in SI due to the perceived advantages of the interview and participant observation—considered the best methods and preferred in this approach. On the other hand, she expresses regret that central categories of SI, constructing and negotiating interaction order, relate only to cognitive processes, and yet "experience has richer dimensions than just meaning," and "understanding can never be reduced to rational comprehension" (Hałas 1990:201 [trans. AK and KTK]).[8]

The achievements of the Polish school of biographical research with the use of personal documents could be included in the interpretative paradigm, although with some reservations (see: Wilson 1970; Czyżewski 1984; Piotrowski 1998:3). SI has certainly given strong inspiration for the research on the relationship between biography, the definitions of identity, and transformations (Piotrowski 1985; 1998:47; Bokszański 1986; 1989). These issues were addressed by Polish sociologists in the 1980s (Ziółkowski 1981) and later, especially among scholars from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Lodz (Czyżewski 1984; 1986; Bokszański 1986; Piotrowski 1998). Theoretical foundations for the analysis of identity processes were created, reaching for interactionist inspirations, including SI (Strauss 1959). Identity transformation processes were analyzed (Bokszański 1986), as well as identity models in SI (Iowa School and Chicago School in SI; Bokszański 1989; Piotrowski 1998:55).

SI was also presented in light of other theoretical orientations, such as phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology (Ziółkowski 1981; Czyżewski 1984). These studies later resulted in research on the language of the description of experiencing the world in biographical research (Kaźmierska 2008) and discourse analysis (Czyżewski, Dunin, and Piotrowski 1991; Czyżewski, Kowalski, and Piotrowski 1997). On the other hand, symbolic interactionist research developed in various places in Poland, especially in the Department of Sociology of Organization and Management at the University of Lodz. These studies more concerned the social practices and experiencing social worlds than only analyses of the language.[9]

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[7] In analyzing the interactions between the Polish narrators and the Soviets and Germans as occupiers, in her book *The War Experiences of Poles* (1999), Kaja Kaźmierska used Strauss's concept of the awareness contexts, as well as the concept of identity developed by this author in *Mirrors and Masks* (1959). Also, studying the experiences of the Shoah survivors (2012), she referred to the identity, the sense of biographical continuity, and biographical work. In her research on war narratives of Poles, Alicja Rokuszewska-Pawełek (2002) invokes the Straussian concept of trajectory and uses it analytically to individual and collective processes in a sense given to it by Fritz Schütze.

[8] The author indicates the usefulness of the symbolic interactionist perspective for research on changes in biographical experience, especially those deliberately carried out, such as in the case of political indoctrination, religious conversion, or psychiatric therapy (Hałas 1990:206). Generally, however, she accuses contemporary SI of excessive formalism, limited interest in the issues of values, and the historical dimension of social life (Hałas 1990:202-203), emphasizing that humanistic sociology is not only a cognitive endeavor but also a moral one (Hałas 1990:206).

[9] On the issue of experiencing and experiences in social research, see: Anna Wyka (1993), and for the analyses of the relation between the language and the society, see: Andrzej Piotrowski (1986).

Theoretical Elaborations

In the 1980s, an extremely important book that popularized symbolic interactionist tradition in Poland was the work of Elżbieta Hałas (1987; then from the Catholic University of Lublin), *The Social Context of Meanings in the Theory of Symbolic Interactionism*, which started from the analyses of the social context of meanings in the SI theory. The author referred to the idea of *the humanistic coefficient* by analyzing the concept of meaning in Znaniecki's works, and its relation to the concept of meaning in various approaches in SI. Like researchers from the Institute of Sociology of the University of Lodz, she tackled the issue of identity and also analyzed in detail the relation between the concept of identity and the social role. Hałas (1992; 1994; 2001) developed many issues in which she undertook SI, and published many works on this subject. Her contribution to the development of SI in Poland was very significant. She developed and elaborated on the concept of conversion—an extremely interesting interactionist problem, one of the types of identity transformation—and showed it in a broader anthropological and historical perspective (Hałas 1992). She brought the Chicago School classics to the students by publishing the elaboration of three important progenitors of SI, Ch. H. Cooley, G. H. Mead, and H. Blumer, and also translations of selected texts of the above-mentioned classical interactionists (Hałas 1994). Theoretical inspirations and issues undertaken by SI can also be observed in other works of the author (Hałas 2001).

A little bit earlier an important elaboration of Cooley's works was published by Janusz Mucha (1992), and some translations of his classical texts appeared. Another significant author who familiarized the Polish reader with SI was Ireneusz Krzemiński from the University of Warsaw. He wrote a book about the connection between SI and sociology, analyzing Mead's influence on sociology, and later on Blumer's thoughts. He also considered other researchers' influences (Krzemiński 1986). He used the inspirations from SI in his research and theoretical deliberations about the Solidarity movement in Poland (Krzemiński 1997; 2013; 2016).

The concepts of SI were later developed by other authors, who attempted to link and understand the ideas of SI from the point of view of other theories or to analyze SI from a critical perspective (Tittenbrun 1983). Grażyna Woroniecka ([1998] 2003) tried to connect hermeneutics and the notion of pre-understanding with symbolic interaction. She analyzed how the actor's subjective point of view is related to and translates into the intersubjective world of communication. An introduction to more contemporary variants of the epistemology of SI was provided by Anna Kacperczyk (2007a; 2007b; 2016a) in her attempts to review, discuss, and critique the approach defined as "situational analysis" by Adele E. Clarke (2003; 2005). Fundamental theoretical analyses of social situations from the perspective of SI were done by Aleksander Manterys (2000; 2008), who critically elaborated on the limitations of some classical symbolic interactionist concepts that apply the negotiation perspective to the analysis of social situations and the definitions of the situations. Also, Piotr Sztompka (2005) introduced the SI perspective to the visual research describing interactionist and symbolic interactionist inspirations and possibilities in using the photographic method in sociological research.

All of these activities gave the students of sociology a chance to get acquainted with historical, theoretical, and empirical works created in the interpreta-

tive paradigm, and offered new circumstances for the further development of SI in Poland, especially after the year 2000.

Learning about SI through Translations and Doing Research

As already mentioned, many books on symbolic interaction were translated in the years 2000 and later. They were not only very helpful in the development of an empirical trend in SI in Poland but also in establishing the interpretive paradigm. Considering the interactionist perspective, there were mainly translations of Erving Goffman books in Poland at that time. In the beginning, we only mentioned those items in Goffman's oeuvre which were most similar, although in part, to the orientation developed by Mead and Blumer. So, we now mention the translated books: *Stigma* ([1963] 2005), *Interaction Ritual* ([1967] 2006), and *Asylums* ([1961] 2011).

The translation of the original Blumer's work *Symbolic Interactionism* ([1969] 2007) by Grażyna Woroniecka was quite a late achievement of Polish sociological translations, although very important. It certainly helped to teach students on this perspective and provided epistemological foundations of SI. Finally, the translation of *Mirrors and Masks* ([1959] 2013) improved the reception of the concept of identity in SI. Moreover, the publication of *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser and Strauss [1965] 2016) was a very practical and methodical example of using the field study for the analysis of interaction and awareness contexts in the interactions.

Since Polish scholars could study SI easier having the main concepts of the orientation in their native language, it was also easier for them to use these concepts in the research conducted in Polish. Un-

dertaking the investigation process in the frame of SI allowed strengthening this approach and implementing it in theorizing on social reality. Learning on social reality meant for Polish researchers to do extensive field studies, ethnographical research, and analyzing thick data. A very important role in assimilating the perspective of SI in Poland was the familiarization of Polish researchers with the procedures of the grounded theory methodology, which transferred into the field of empirical research many assumptions and general interpretative framework of SI.

Concerning empirical research, two translations were very helpful and important in the field study and analysis of qualitative data. One was Glaser and Strauss's book *Discovery of Grounded Theory* ([1967] 2009), and the other one was *Constructing Grounded Theory* ([2006] 2009) by Kathy Charmaz. These two, very inspiring and constructive, books helped propagate not only qualitative research and data analysis but also SI as a paradigm since the roots of grounded theory can be traced to Blumer's processual vision of reality and Straussian negotiated order of social reality (Konecki 2000). From 2008 Polish readers could get acquainted with the ordering of different varieties of the grounded theory from the book *Procedures and Emergence* by Marek Gorzko (2008).

But, before that, for many years, Polish researchers had access to only a few works on the subject of grounded theory methodology. Before 2000, there were only two published works available for Polish readers that addressed grounded theory: Konecki's (1989) "The Methodology of Grounded Theory in the Research of the Situation of Work" and the paper by Zakrzewska-Manterys (1996) "De-Theorizing of Social World. Basics of Grounded Theory." Both authors emphasized not creating the theory before the

gathering of the data in empirical research. In 2000, the book *Studies in the Methodology of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory* was published by Konecki. It was a manual that indicated the connection between grounded theory and SI (Konecki 2000:32-47), spreading the idea of qualitative research in Poland. The book became a set of indispensable tools for the sociologist using qualitative methods of research and data analysis, and the interpretative paradigm (Bukalska 2019).

Some of the important translations for the development of SI in Poland appeared in the journal *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej*. It was the paper by Robert Prus, "Drinking as Activity. An Interactionist Perspective" (2007).[10] The author shows that drinking alcohol is situationally and interactionally conditioned and constructed. Another translated text by the same author traces the pragmatic themes, thoughts, and symbolic interactions creating the communities in ancient poetry (Prus 2011).

There were also issued the translations of the very important interactionist works that helped to broaden the view of contemporary interactionist orientations and especially the methodology and epistemology of SI. The Polish translation of Charmaz ([2006] 2009) gave support to the constructivist approach in methodology that was implicitly included in Anselm Strauss's works. Here, the perspective of SI in the methods of research has been highlighted.

Kathy Charmaz also directly referred to the symbolic interactionist and pragmatist inspirations in her constructivist approach in grounded theory (Charmaz 2006:7, 22). She looked for the Chicago School

legacy in the approach of Anselm Strauss as he was one of the founders of grounded theory methodology. The concepts of enacting change, meanings, and the construction of reality, the self, and society in an interaction could be found in the grounded theory epistemology and methodology.

Institutionalization

A very important feature of the development of SI in Poland was the institutionalization of the research interests and channels of communication. During the XII Congress of the Polish Sociological Association in 2004 in Poznan, the thematic group "Constructing of Self and Society. The European Variants of Symbolic Interactionism" was created. The sessions of this group were very popular, and the effect of deliberations and discussions was the publication of the book in Polish, edited by Elżbieta Hałas and Krzysztof Konecki (2005), under the same title as the name of the group. The book summed up the research and analyses that were undertaken at that time on SI by Polish scholars.

Also the year 2005 was important for the development of SI in Poland because in this year in the Polish Sociological Association the section under the name Qualitative Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism[11] was created. The section started to organize conferences and lectures on SI and qualitative research. A few years later, it also started the competition under the name of Anselm Strauss awarding the best Polish symbolic interactionist publication of the year.[12]

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[10] This article originally appeared in 1983 in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 44(3):460-475.

[11] Information about the section is available at: https://pts.org.pl/en/sekcje/sekcja-socjologii-jakosciowej-i-si/.

[12] Katarzyna Kowal received the award for the article "Między ziemią a niebem… Doświadczanie własnej cielesności przez osoby praktykujące podwieszanie ciała – studium socjologiczne [Between Earth and Sky…Experience of Own Corporeality by

In 2012, the members of the section accomplished a collective work by publishing the *Dictionary of Qualitative Sociology* (Konecki and Chomczyński 2012) with many entries referring to SI, such as: sociological ethnography, front stage, total institution, constructivist grounded theory, biographical method, accounts, biographical work, articulation work, social world, techniques of neutralization, labeling theory, identity, trajectory, generalized other, humanistic coefficient, significant other.

The section collaborated with the Qualitative Network of European Sociological Association, and in 2016 organized the conference "Qualitative Methods and Research Technologies" in Cracow. The topic of that conference corresponded with other events held by the section, whose interest embraced the issues of: social worlds and subcultures, new methods of qualitative research, qualitative research and pragmatism, the teaching of qualitative methods, et cetera.

In 2017, in cooperation with the European Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, the section organized another international event, the conference "Studying Everyday Life. Generic Dimensions of Interactionist Inquiry" (July 04-08, 2017) held at the University of Lodz. The event aimed "to provide an interdisciplinary and international forum within which to utilize and extend symbolic interactionist theory and methods in the thick description and exploration of human lived experience,"[13] and was a great opportunity to meet researchers from Europe and North America and to discuss the ways in which empirical endeavors of SI contribute to a more generic understanding of human group life.

A vital element of the institutionalization of the symbolic interactionist approach in Poland was the creation of the journals with the mission of connecting researchers who work in this tradition, "for whom interpretative paradigm and qualitative research methodology are basic perspectives of studying social reality, in order to enable a free flow of information and to integrate the community of qualitative sociologists," as states the flyer on the cover of every issue of the *Qualitative Sociology Review*.[14] In fact, the Department of Sociology of Organization and Management at the University of Lodz created two journals with that mission, one is the *Qualitative Sociology Review*, which publishes papers in English, and another is *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* that publishes mainly in the Polish language. Each of these two journals, popular not only in Poland, produces four issues a year. The journals are indexed in many important databases. Many foreign scholars collaborate with the QSR and PSJ journals and support them with their expertise. One of them is Robert Prus from Waterloo University in Canada, who has published many essential papers on symbolic interaction and pragmatic issues in ancient philosophical texts and concepts, for example, referring to Aristotle or Plato (Prus 2013a; 2013b).

People Practicing Body Suspension—Sociological Study]." 2018. *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* 14(2):84-119, and Honors went to Katarzyna Kalinowska for the book *Praktyki flirtu i podrywu. Studium z mikrosocjologii emocji* [*The Practices of Flirting and Pickup. A Study in the Microsociology of Emotions*]. 2018. Torun: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

[13] Full information on the event is available at: https://www.britsoc.co.uk/umbraco/plugins/umbracoContour/files/631209c6-532e-4f02-a832-c9e14e6fec63/CFP_2017_EUSSSI_1_.pdf.

[14] "All sociologists who make use of an interpretative paradigm and qualitative research methodology are welcome to submit their articles and support our initiative. We especially welcome researchers who use symbolic interactionism perspective, but also grounded theory, sociological ethnography, autoethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and who use the methods of observation of actions and analysis of lived experiences." See: http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/index_eng.php.

Considering the range and scope of symbolic interactionist research projects and published works, it seems that the Department of Sociology of Organization and Management at the Faculty of Economics and Sociology at the University of Lodz remains an important Polish center of symbolic interactionist research (Byczkowska-Owczarek 2012; 2015; Chomczyński 2008; 2014; 2015; 2017; 2018; Dymarczyk 2008; 2018a; Konecki 1987; 1989; 1994; 1997; 1999; 2000; 2005a; 2005b; 2005c; 2007; 2008a; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2014; 2015; 2017; Kubczak 2011; Marciniak 2008; 2016; Niedbalski 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d; 2017; 2019; Pawłowska 2012; Ślęzak 2009; 2015; 2017; Wojciechowska 2012; 2015; 2020). Anna Kacperczyk is another scholar from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Lodz connected with this center. Many master's and doctoral dissertations were created there. Several of them were of high quality and received prizes in local and nationwide competitions.[15]

Polish SI has had a strong empirical trend. The growing matrix of executed and ongoing investigations strengthened the world of SI, providing the data for deliberations and theoretical discussions. The communication channels were very important since due to publishing activity, conferences, and workshops created a space for the exchange of thoughts, research experiences, and outcomes.

The Subjects of Empirical Research and Publications

In the following part of the article, we consider the efforts of Polish researchers studying symbolic inter-

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[15] The following persons' monographs were awarded in the contents welcoming dissertations that used the symbolic interactionist perspectives in the research and analyses: Łukasz Marciniak, Jakub Niedbalski, Piotr Bielski, Marta Zwolińska, Magdalena Wojciechowska, Piotr Miller, Izabela Ślęzak-Niedbalska, Michał Lesiak.

action mainly based on the activity of interactionists from the University of Lodz (mainly scholars from the Department of Sociology of Organization and Management and Institute of Sociology). Expressing a view that in symbolic interactionist investigations, the theory, methodology, and empirical data are to be indispensably interrelated and internally linked, we intentionally focus on empirical studies that meet this criterion.

The most crucial orientation used by Polish researchers was the grounded theory methodology, and the main theoretical foundation was SI with strong inspirations from Anselm Strauss's work. Krzysztof T. Konecki (1987; 1989; 1994), who met Strauss personally and studied for one year under his supervision, has been using the grounded theory and interactionist perspective for many years. In the years 1994-1995, Konecki investigated executive search companies in Silicon Valley and consulted the research outcomes with Anselm Strauss during his seminar at UCSF (Konecki 1997; 1999). Although it was not the first application of grounded theory by Konecki, the joint work with Strauss convinced him of the clarity of grounded theory methodology procedures and their applicability in teaching. In 2000, he published the first Polish manual of grounded theory: *Studies in Methodology of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory*. The publication of the book encouraged other researchers and students to use grounded theory procedures in their investigations and, above all, gave them tools to make qualitative, interactionist research and empirical data analysis possible. The book, apart from methodological and epistemological considerations, also had an instructive part focused on gathering qualitative data and particular grounded theory analytical procedures. All of Konecki's inspirations coming from Glaser and Strauss's books (Glaser and Strauss 1965; 1967;

Glaser 1978; Strauss 1987) were not widely known in Poland at that time, thus the first manual in Polish was a very important source for the scholars interested in qualitative analysis of interaction processes.

The following publications of Polish symbolic interactionists were mainly in the Polish language. The publication of the articles—most often reporting the conduct and results of the investigations that used many theoretical concepts applied in the concrete empirical situations and case studies—revealed the ideas that created the **general perspective** of symbolic interactionist studies. There were the following notions constantly present in these studies: role-taking, self, looking-glass self, the definition of the situation, sensitizing concepts, total institutions, impression management, significant other, shame, pride, and so on.

The methodology of grounded theory was predominantly organizing the course of the study and data analysis process. The method of sociological ethnography prevailed in the fieldwork (Prus 1996; 1997). Techniques of data gathering included: unstructured interviews, observations, participant observations, collecting and/or creating visual data, and collecting documents for analysis as the extant data. The significant methodological publications that helped to improve doing the qualitative research in the SI style were the book by Konecki (2000) on grounded theory and qualitative techniques of research, and by Kacperczyk (2016a) about the methods of research and the analysis of social worlds.

The vital endeavor was undertaken by the journal *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* that published a series of monographs under the name of "Becoming..." edited by Anna Kacperczyk (Hernik 2007; Konecki 2007; Marciniak 2008; Bielski 2009; Ślęzak 2009; Miller 2010; Słowińska 2010). These were the studies

in which the central category was the process of becoming, and thus constructing identity, transforming identity, and understanding it in specific social worlds. These were directly related to the issues and theoretical concepts undertaken by SI, including the issues of labor and occupational sociology (Hughes 1958; 1997). The monographs were published on becoming a new worker in a factory (Konecki 2007), on converting students of theatrical art to an artistic and actors' perspective (Hernik 2007), on becoming an academic teacher (Marciniak 2008), on becoming a poet (Ślęzak 2009), on becoming an organic farmer (Bielski 2009), on constructing the identity of a mountain rescuer (Miller 2010), on constructing identity in the world of carrier pigeon breeders (Słowińska 2010). All of these were related to the analysis of identity, identity work, and identity change. The identity was somehow one of the central categories focusing attention during the analysis of the process of becoming (see: Wagner 2005; 2011; 2015; Kubczak 2011; Mróz 2012; Bunio-Mroczek 2015).

A very interesting contribution to the field of empirical studies in SI was made by Izabela Wagner. She is a Polish-originated scholar, who studied sociology in France under the supervision of a Sorbonne professor Jean-Michel Chapoulie, the specialist of the Chicago School. For this reason, her sociological education included intensive training in qualitative methods, conversance with works of Everett Hughes, Howard Becker, and a strong orientation towards the intellectual tradition developed by sociologists from the Chicago School. Her PhD thesis, *La production sociale des violonistes virtuoses* (*The Social Production of the Virtuoso*), was based on ten years of field research and was about the socialization of soloists and the career-making process in the artistic elite world (published in 2015). Wagner continued the ethnographic research of elite professional

worlds, addressing the problem of scientific elites' migration (2011), and expanding theorizing about biography in the symbolic interactionist frame in her latest book *Bauman: A Biography* (2020). Besides her interesting field studies on career coupling (Wagner 2005), international mobility of creative professionals (Wagner 2011; 2016), or becoming a violin virtuoso (Wagner 2015), she established an interesting group of researchers inspired by SI in the Institute of Sociology at the Warsaw University. In 2008-2017, Wagner conducted the course "Chicago School and Social Problems" at Warsaw University. She also led the students' research club and supervised their PhD theses. Her students, Beata Kowalczyk and Mariusz Finkielsztein, investigated the identity issues in the processes of *becoming* and careers. Mariusz Finkielsztein started a very intriguing area of research on boredom. In his PhD thesis entitled *On the Social Significance of Boredom. The Phenomenon of Boredom in a University Milieu*, he focused on boredom in higher education (Finkielsztein 2017; 2019). He also organized the International Interdisciplinary Boredom Conference in Warsaw. Another young scholar, Beata Kowalczyk, worked on the thesis *"Transnational" Art World. Career Patterns of Japanese Musicians in the European World of Classical Music* (see also: Kowalczyk 2014; she will soon publish a book [Kowalczyk in press]).

SI as a theoretical perspective, along with the methodology of grounded theory, was used in the research on **work, professions, and interactions in diverse workplaces**, organizational cultures, and organizational subcultures (Konecki 1994; 2007; Wagner 2005; Dymarczyk 2008, 2018a; Lesiak 2019), and also on professions and educational organizations (Byczkowska 2006). The interests in organizations, management, and economic actions (Konecki 2008b) were meaningful in empirical research. There was

research on the social organization of the flea market activities where the interactional tactics were traced, and spatial and social hierarchy, as well as the division of work, were described (Marciniak 2016). The grounded theory and interactionist perspective were also used in analyzing financial markets and the profession of individual investors (Pyfel 2015).

The works worth mentioning are also publications of Anna Kacperczyk (1998; 1999; 2002; 2006) on **palliative care** that gave the input to the analysis of hospice and palliative care development in Poland through the case study of the care-teams organization and the interaction processes between the participants of the situation of dying where caregivers meet terminally ill recipients and their family. The awareness contexts of the interactions between volunteers, personnel, and dying patients in hospices were investigated. The author reached for the concepts of Glaser and Strauss (1965) that appeared useful in the analysis of the interactions in the terminal situations.

Another interesting research study was done on **stigmatization and deviance.** For example, there was the analysis concerned mainly with the micro-level and the workplace as the terrain of creating the victim in the process of mobbing (Chomczyński 2008). The point of view of participants was widely represented and workable categories of analysis were created based on their narrations. The concepts were also associated with the issue of professions and work. There were essential researches on prostitution and escort agencies that used the concepts of stigma and work on identity (Wojciechowska 2012; 2015) and the concepts of work (Ślęzak 2015), but also the category of violence in sex work (Ślęzak 2017). Magdalena Wojciechowska also analyzed the identity work (normalizing practices) among non-heteronormative women partners having chil-

dren (Wojciechowska 2020: chapters 7 and 8). The influence of concepts from SI is noticeable in these works (Strauss 1993; Prus and Grills 2003).

The problems of **rehabilitation** connected with stigmatization and deviance were also developed in the research. SI was connected with cognitive-behavioral theory and situational action theory, especially in pedagogy (Bernasiewicz 2011; 2012; 2017). There was also a field study of youth shelters and correctional facilities that analyzed interactions between staff and inmates (Chomczyński 2014) and between the correctional facilities' charges (Chomczyński 2015).

Social rehabilitation was also in the center of interests of another symbolic interactionist researcher, Jakub Niedbalski (2015), who researched on interactions of personnel with mentally handicapped charges in social welfare homes. His interests later evolved in the direction of sport and the sociology of the body, when he studied sports practiced by people with disabilities and analyzed psycho-social rehabilitation by sport (Niedbalski 2016a; 2016d). The author also analyzed the careers of disabled sportspeople from the symbolic interactionist perspective (2016c).

The latest, very important development was in the research on the **body and embodiment**. Although it seemed to be a forgotten or taken-for-granted dimension of interaction in symbolic interactionist studies, the body remains an indispensable part of social settings and interactional situations. The analysis of the body was conducted in the following subjects: the interaction of humans with animals (Konecki 2005b), the body practice and embodiment in dance (Byczkowska 2012; Byczkowska-Owczarek 2015), the hatha-yoga practice (Konecki 2015), climbing (Kacperczyk 2012; 2013;

2016b), and in the sport of disabled persons (Niedbalski 2016c). The notion of interaction was important in all the aforementioned terrains of study, and in climbing, it was also analyzed as the interactions with material objects and with inanimate nature (Kacperczyk 2016a).

Another important topic was connected with the arousal of **emotions** in interactions (Pawłowska 2012; Pawłowska and Konecki 2013). There were publications that related to the theoretical issues of emotions in SI, the elaboration of Theodore Kemper's theory (Pawłowska 2014), and Thomas Scheff's theory (Konecki 2014). But, there also were researches on the emotions experienced in many diverse situations, interactions, and organizations, as in teachers' work, hatha-yoga practice, climbing, and correctional homes (Pawłowska and Chomczyński 2012; Kacperczyk 2013; 2016a; Chomczyński 2014; Pawłowska and Konecki 2014).

The development of the visual analysis in the SI style can be seen as an achievement of the Polish SI brand. The elaboration of the **visual grounded theory** was one of the moments that advanced the visual analysis (Konecki 2005c; 2011). The constructivist flavor dominated the study. Among the various visual artifacts that had been researched and analyzed were photos of the interactions of animals and humans (Konecki 2005b), video recordings (Konecki 2008a; Byczkowska 2012), and war posters (Ferenc, Dymarczyk, and Chomczyński 2014). One of the researchers in visual studies is Waldemar Dymarczyk (2008), who published one of the first visual analyses based on grounded theory. His analysis of the war posters aroused a big interest on the Internet (Dymarczyk 2014). He also analyzed the use of esthetics and fascists symbols in the contemporary iconosphere (2018b).

By discussing the examples of the work and achievements of one research center in Poland (located at the University of Lodz) that concentrates activities and investigations of scholars and enhances their efforts by the operation of the Section of Qualitative Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism of the Polish Sociological Association and two important journals, we tried to show the diversity of investigated areas and analyzed topics in the symbolic interactionist perspective, and, at the same time, its internal coherence.

Conclusions

In Poland, we can differentiate **two trends in the development of SI**. One is connected with **early theoretical elaborations** of the orientation and translations of the classical books of SI, and another is mainly connected with **empirical research** that used SI concepts and the grounded theory approach to investigate social reality.

The translations of classical books in symbolic interactionist tradition to Polish were slightly late. The majority of them were done after the year 2000. However, this does not mean that the reception of SI was not possible earlier without these translations. Some Polish theoretical elaborations that analyzed in detail the classical texts of SI and the pragmatist roots of it were available—the thought of SI was intermediated by the works of Ziółkowski (1981), Tittenbrun (1983), Czyżewski (1984), Piotrowski (1985), Bokszański (1986; 1989), Hałas (1986), Krzemiński (1986; 1997). However, the translations were a very important element of influencing the reception of SI in Poland. The translated books and papers influenced the research and theoretical analysis practice of the scholars. The translation of Goffman's works and methodological books on grounded theory was very important in the development of research

practice, especially to sociological ethnography and grounded theory methodology as a style of gathering and analyzing data.

The field research that was done in the theoretical frame of SI and the methodology of grounded theory resulted in raising epistemological and methodological reflections of Polish researchers (Konecki 1989; 2000; Kacperczyk 2016a; Chomczyński 2017; 2018; Byczkowska-Owczarek 2019). The methodology that used sociological ethnography as a method (Prus 1996) was elaborated critically also in ethical terms (Niedbalski 2016b; Niedbalski and Ślęzak 2016; Chomczyński 2017). Thus, the empirical trend of SI embedded in extensive field research has been very strong in Poland.

One may conclude that SI in Poland has been developing in many dimensions. Methods, ethical issues, epistemological reflection, and varied topics prove that the growth of SI was dynamic. The inspirations from other theoretical orientations were also noticed. The influence of Bourdieu's theory, Foucault's works, ANT orientation, grounded theory, constructivism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and recently autoethnography and contemplative studies is noticeable. Although the combination of many different orientations is difficult to realize, the inspirations from different perspectives are, however, not only possible but perhaps somehow unavoidable. We should stress that the methodology of grounded theory in the version of Strauss (1987) and later Charmaz (Gorzko 2008:403, 407-408) was very important for the researchers who used the symbolic interactionist perspective, and it was a fundamental procedure for the analysis of empirical data.

Finally, we should remember that Znaniecki's works and their continuation by other researchers

(Chałasiński, Jakubczak, Krzywicki, and others) prepared the ground for the reception of SI in Poland. Their reflections and theoretical solutions still resonate in newer empirical works and contemporary research, combining Polish SI with the Chicago School traditions.

The development of SI was also connected with crossing the boundaries of the perspective. The researchers are not dogmatic and broaden the view to find new inspirations and to deepen the approach of SI, as, for example, by using situational analysis (Clarke 2005; see also: Kacperczyk 2007a; 2007b). There is a noticeable turn to autoethnographic research (Kacperczyk 2014; 2017) and contemplative studies in social research (Konecki 2018). We believe that other orientations will enrich SI theoretically and also make its development substantial.

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Spatial and Temporal Dilemmas of Managers and Entrepreneurs. The Reconstruction of Neutralization Techniques

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Abstract: It is often assumed (in line with social expectations) that being a business manager and/or owner implies the feeling of omnipotence. Not only do organizational leaders run businesses, but they are also qualified to do so and are well-organized to physically and mentally cope with their duties. Thus, permanent (external and internal) pressure forces key organizational actors to use self-presentation strategies that meet social expectations.

Narratives of organizational leaders show that other aspects of their lives are subdued to the sphere of business activities or are even incorporated by it. One of the most dominant strategies is to present oneself as an inner-directed individual in control of one's career (a "self-made man" or "self-made woman"). At the same time, such an attitude results in "tensions" between irreconcilable roles or activities undertaken in various spheres of life.

These tensions are depicted in the paper. The author shows different types of neutralization techniques used by organizational leaders to overcome or mitigate these tensions. Eleven neutralization practices have been outlined. These techniques have been identified in the course of the nearly decade-long research into spatial and temporal dimensions of careers of managers and entrepreneurs.

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This article presents a set of neutralization techniques, that is, rationalizations-justifications applied by organizational leaders—managers and entrepreneurs—when they violate universally binding standards and consequently experience the feeling of guilt and shame. The list of these techniques was developed based on the data collected during the narrative and unstructured interviews collected as part of two research projects. The first one, conducted in the middle of the previous decade, studied the "temporal dimension of managerial careers" (Dymarczyk 2008; 2011; 2013), while the second one was implemented in 2010-2016 and focused on the "spatial dimension of managerial and entrepreneurial careers" (Dymarczyk 2015; 2018). In both cases, the primary objective was to reconstruct actors' organizational career patterns and their characteristic stages. In both research projects, it was possible to discover and describe different career patterns, their stages, and the broad context of their preconditions. In the course of the analysis, an additional theme transpired (was noticed by the author), that is, the use of the mentioned neutralization practices by the interlocutors. They appeared despite and in contrast to the dominant narrative form and style of organizational leaders. This narrative form and style of many personal accounts can be described as "self-ravishing presentations" aimed to expose organizational actors' successes and merits which allowed them to achieve, maintain, or strengthen their position in the organizational hierarchy.

In short, it is about presenting their career as a controlled and persistently implemented plan, as a personally "constructed career" (see: Savickas 2005; 2011; Domecka and Mrozowicki 2008). While listening to these narratives, one could get the impression that organizational actors can be defined as "self-made men" or "self-made women," which is not surprising. Firstly, organizational leaders are usually inner-directed and well-motivated individuals. Secondly, well-structured and credible self-ravishing presentations are a result of socialization which organizational leaders (usually) undergo in the process of long-term training, applying for and achieving higher positions in the organizational hierarchy.

Therefore, it was all the more surprising and at the same time challenging and worthy of special attention that interlocutors—usually after some time, due to the exhaustion of the repertoire of "ready-made narrative scripts"—discontinued self-ravishing presentations. Ready-made scripts were replaced by accounts of (usually enduring) role conflicts, that is, those between a successful businessman/businesswoman and a spouse, parent, partner, colleague, or member of the local community. At the same time, these accounts were accompanied by the abovementioned justifications—explanations, that is, neutralizations. Moreover, it is noteworthy that business actors subjected to pressure (system of rewards, penalties, regulations, promotion rules, ideology, etc.) must revise their views, motivations, and concrete actions to adequately fulfill their roles and at the same time "be at peace with themselves." In other words, they must perform permanent "identity self-work" (Konecki 2007). Reconciling the requirements of a "system" they are part of with those of other social worlds in which they live has its costs. This paper discusses one of the ways of dealing with these costs, that is, neutralizations.

Theoretical Considerations and Literature Review

Career from an Interactionist Perspective (with Particular Emphasis on the Context of Time and Place)

Everett Hughes (1997:389) described his concept of a career as "a person's course or progress through life (or a distinct portion of life)" and in a more narrow sense as "a profession affording opportunities for advancement." He distinguished between the objective and subjective dimensions of a career. Hughes (1964:63) defined "the objective career as directly observable, measurable, and verifiable by an impartial third party." However, from a subjective point of view, "a career is the moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him" (Hughes 1964:63). In this paper, the author focuses primarily on the second point of view, the perspective of a social actor.

It should be emphasized that the problem of individual and group careers has always been an important issue in symbolic interactionism, and especially in the Chicago School. Obviously, the Chicago interactionists' approach is known not only for noticing the subjective dimension of a career. According to the Chicago School, social life cannot be understood without analyzing the context of time and space in which a social actor lives. In other words, Chicago sociologists assumed that "no social fact makes any sense abstracted from its context in social (and often geographic) space and social time. Social facts are located" (Abbott 1997:1152). For example, back in 1927, Frederic Thrasher described the gang career in a spatial context with a map of a network of brothels, residential hotels, businesses, et cetera. Clifford Shaw analyzed life histories of people who ran afoul of the law in his *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (1931) and *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* (1930). He showed the importance of an interactional field in "making a criminal," that is, the neighborhood and enabling a novice to practice under the supervision of an experienced criminal. In the organizational and institutional context, Howard Becker, using the example of a teaching profession, drew attention not only to the obvious—"vertical"—aspect of a career (understood as a movement across the hierarchical structure of a school) but also to the "horizontal" dimension, different positions at the same level of the hierarchy. The temporal aspect of a career was explicated by Thrasher and Clifford Shaw and others in the above-mentioned books. Shaw noted that a delinquent's career consists of a series of typical stages. Subsequent Chicago School representatives developed this topic. They spoke of periods, phases, or cycles and referred to the descriptions of careers of various social actors, for example, dancers (Cressey 1932), physicians (Hall 1948; Becker et al. 1961), or marijuana smokers (Becker 1973). At the same time, the career path does not usually resemble a simple and unproblematic, ascending line of promotions and status transitions. It might be full of numerous crises, conflicts, and dilemmas (Hughes 1971), incidents, intertwined circumstances, and turning points (Strauss 1977).

This paper is based on research that is characterized by, so to speak, "double" embeddedness in the Chicago School tradition. First of all, the very approach to a career implies focusing attention on its temporal and spatial dimensions. Secondly, since

these dimensions are the main axes of interlocutors' reflections and narratives, both the interviewees and researcher focus on what has always been the key context for research and reflection of the "founding fathers" of the interactionist school and their followers.

Guilt and Shame as a Source of Neutralizations

As mentioned in the introduction, the dominant narratives were "self-ravishing presentations" that exposed interviewees' agency in shaping their careers. The researcher was especially interested in situations when the organizational actor was "breaking character," for example, when one of them said: "My family lives here, I see them only during the weekends, which is a bit unfair," while a female manager who has a lot of business trips and stays in different cities mentioned: "As I said before, I wanted to be more successful, but in the long run, spending time away from home, especially long business trips are destructive. To be fair, I have my family's support, but I feel that it isn't fair. That is why I have a guilty conscience." Thomas J. Scheff (1984) paid special attention to such cases (see also: Scheff and Ratzinger 1991; Konecki 2008).[1] He pointed out that chronic overt shame can be present in an individual's life for so long that it becomes barely noticeable. Shame can

be ignored or overlooked thanks to two mechanisms: "bypassed shame" and "overt-undifferentiated shame." In the first case, the individual exhibits "unnatural" verbal behavior and gestures (e.g., obsessive, turgid, and emphatic thinking, talking, and acting) to avoid the feeling of shame, as in the quotation below:

> [A spontaneous and highly emotional response to the interviewer's question: "How many children do you have?"]:
> No, my children are already grown-ups, **I've got no problems with them, anyway I've never had**! [said very rapidly, emphatically—author's note]. They are very placid, they have good grades. What is more, they had to learn how to cook really early on. My son was 7 when he started preparing pork chops because he liked them.

The so-called "overt-undifferentiated shame" is associated with low self-esteem. In such a case, the individual's response could reveal confusion. S/he can be making pauses and use euphemisms:

> I don't really remember what it means, what a normal [smile] home means... but I am a contemporary mom, mind you, who can do everything on her own [laughter], well... almost on her own [smile]…It's not the end of the world just because I leave for work.

Individuals have to cope with negative feelings, such as guilt and shame, to play an active role assigned to them and maintain a positive image of themselves at the same time. Thus, some problematic issues related to the physical (and sometimes mental) absence of actors from their friends and family revealed in some interviews required further **explanations** to maintain their positive image. We are referring to **neutralizations**.

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[1] From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, emotions do not only or primarily boil down to general responses to external stimuli. As McCarthy (1989:57) stated, "My feelings are social, that is, they are constituted and sustained by group processes. They are irreducible to the bodily organism and to the particular individual who feels them." In the context of emotions emphasized in this article, Susan Shott (1979) made an important contribution, namely, in her opinion, "role-taking emotions," and in particular shame (and empathy), are strongly associated with the social self. We cannot, for example, feel shame without taking into account the "generalized other." Guilt cannot embarrass us, even when nobody is around, if we do not feel social responsibility (see: Fields, Copp, and Kleinman 2006:158).

Neutralizations

Neutralizations are understood here primarily as interactional techniques applied both as part of a dialogue with the interaction partner(s) and the internal dialogue with the generalized other. They aim at preserving a positive image of oneself and presenting oneself in such a way that, despite the violation of a generally binding standard, a positive impression is given off (see: Goffman 1967). It is noteworthy that social actors occupying high-profile positions in the world of business have a limited scope of maneuver when it comes to their image. In this world, roles are relatively standardized, self-presentation scenarios are quite clear, while the definition of the situation leaves little space for negotiation. Face-saving is a strongly internalized necessity and neutralization techniques are useful whenever, in his/her opinion, a business actor commits a *faux pas* in his/her self-presentation (Goffman 1959; 1967). It is also noteworthy that organizational leaders are mostly people with high social competencies, including advanced communication and, of course, linguistic skills. Against this backdrop, it seems worthwhile to look at how these competencies are used for self-presentation and repair.

Two American sociologists, Gresham Sykes and David Matza (1957), proposed a neutralization theory largely in opposition to the then developed theories of deviant behavior (mainly social control theories and cultural theories) which served as a source of inspiration. The abovementioned sociologists developed their own, original concept. In their research into the juvenile delinquency environment, they reconstructed five neutralization techniques commonly used by criminals to justify their behavior, at least to a certain point. In oth-

er words, these techniques help to avoid complete rejection of the universally binding social standard which has been violated and only temporarily "suspend" it. *The denial of responsibility*, *denial of injury*, *denial of victim*, *condemnation of condemners*, and *appeal to higher loyalties*[2] are so common that the rationalizations described by Sykes and Matza can be classified as substantive theory. Later on, the theory was supplemented with additional, also commonly used techniques (Klockars 1974; Minor 1981; Coleman 1987; 2002; Lyman 2000; Nelson and Lambert 2001) such as *emotional obfuscation*, *the denial of negative intent*, *claim to normality of the behavior*, *metaphor of the ledger*,[3] and similar rationalizations such as *the claim of the relative acceptability of the behavior*, *appropriation and inversion*, *evidentiary solipsism*, and *defense of necessity*.

The abovementioned neutralizations are used not only by criminals. They are triggered whenever an individual is at the crossroads between an official, largely conformist system of values accompanied by the normative system and a "subcutaneous," unofficial, and often deviant system of values which are followed in practice. There are well-documented examples of rationalizations reconstructed in environments very different from

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[2] In short, these neutralizations can be described in the following way: "(D)enial of responsibility—negating personal accountability and breaking the link between oneself and one's actions. (D)enial of injury—claiming that no one was injured by one's actions, thus breaking the link between the act and its consequences. (D)enial of the victim—claiming that the injury inflicted was, in fact, retaliation or punishment, thus transforming the victim into the wrongdoer. (C)ondemnation of the condemners—attacking one's critics, claiming that their own condemnation is unjustified. (A)ppeal to higher loyalties—highlighting one's conflicting roles and adherence to higher principles in choosing one action over another" (Bryant et al. 2017:4).

[3] The metaphor of the ledger is best described as follows: "I've definitely done more good than evil. These few infamous actions will not outweigh my merits anyway. I have a credit to use."

those studied by Sykes and Matza. For example, William C. Brennan (1974) described neutralization practices used by women who decided to have an abortion, as well as medical staff performing it. Pregnant women who decided to terminate their pregnancy justified their decision by the existence of different types of restrictions and lack of support in terms of welfare or additional assistance especially for the poor or excluded women (in the categorization of Sykes and Matza, *denial of responsibility*). They also referred to the costs of having an unwanted baby (*appealing to higher loyalties*). In turn, representatives of medical staff, that is, physicians and nurses justified their consent to perform an abortion by negating the human subjectivity of the embryo, that is, through its depersonalization (*denial of injury*) and the use of such abortion techniques as vacuum aspiration whose visual effect is only a mass of used, soiled tampons (*denial of injury*). In her research into the environment of young physicians, Dominika Byczkowska (2006) reconstructed rationalizations corresponding to the rule of the denial of responsibility. The most frequent justification for accepting bribes was the conclusion that the current system of managing and financing national healthcare is "sick" and it thus prompts unethical behavior. Bribery was also justified by appeals to higher loyalties, for example, to the need to provide for a decent life of a physician's family.

Speaking of the group of managers and entrepreneurs studied by the author, let us refer to the well-known research conducted by American sociologist James W. Coleman (1987; 2002). He analyzed cases of unethical and criminal steps taken by the white-collar staff and described a number of neutralizations accompanying such deeds. Thus, the most frequently employed rationalization techniques include the "denial of the necessity of the law," a technique based on a statement "everybody else is doing it" and the "claim of entitlement." The popularity of the denial of the necessity of the law is explained below. Namely, managers' efficiency, which is usually reflected in generated profits, is the *raison d'être* and basis for the evaluation of their performance. Working under constant pressure, in a competitive environment, business managers are tempted to use shortcuts to achieve measurable results in no time. Therefore, managers and entrepreneurs in general frequently face a dilemma of whether to follow the rules, adhere to all standards and formal arrangements, or break legal constraints to satisfy role-related expectations. The pressure an individual is subjected to encourages the use of the denial of the necessity of the law technique.

The approach "everybody else is doing it" is applied by managers and entrepreneurs who comprise a relatively homogeneous group. They usually belong to similar social strata, have similar education, follow similar consumption patterns, et cetera. Most importantly, they operate in a similar milieu which values competition and success. Thus, when actors observe behavior that violates applicable laws or morals, they are willing to do likewise, especially when they can expect rewards for the results achieved this way. The claim of entitlement (to violate the norms) seems understandable given the high status of managers and entrepreneurs. This status stems, among others, from good financial standing and high prestige of business managers, as well as advanced competencies and personal qualities necessary to effectively fulfill this role. Therefore, the *noblesse oblige* rule can easily be replaced with the *noblesse privilege* rule.

Data and Methods

The analyzed material comprises 44 narrative and unstructured interviews with business people, managers of various managerial levels (from operational to strategic levels) working in medium and large profit-oriented organizations, as well as entrepreneurs (owners or co-owners of businesses). The group of interviewees is diverse in terms of age and professional experience. The interviews were conducted as part of two research projects. The first one was carried out in the mid-2000s and focused on "the temporal dimension of managerial careers" (Dymarczyk 2008; 2011; 2013), while the second one was carried out in 2010-2016 and it studied "the spatial dimension of managerial and entrepreneurial careers" (Dymarczyk 2015; 2018).

I applied the descriptive version of grounded theory in my analysis (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; 1994; 1998). The procedure of data collection and analysis recommended by the founders of grounded theory enables one to preserve the context of discovery (serendipity),[4] which is one of the main advantages of the exploratory research type. The abovementioned projects are undoubtedly exploratory in their nature. Due to an exceptionally flexible approach to the research problem, subsequent research stages, and collected material, the researcher has a chance to discover phenomena that have previously been

unnoticed or ignored. This is undoubtedly true of reconstructed neutralization practices.

Findings

Time- and Space-Related Tensions and Their Neutralization

Achieving an often desired managerial position[5] is a very important stage in the career of an actor who decided to pursue his/her ambitions in the business world. The time devoted to work so far is extended based on the assumption that the number of hours allocated to work (primary activity) depends on organizational pragmatics (i.e., it is worth spending time and effort on that which brings the desired outcome). Interviewees often mention that departing from everyday routine and undertaking *ad hoc* activities is an "objective necessity":

> Typical workday? It's different…No two days are identical, because each customer is different and the duration of these meetings is different.

> I'm result-oriented. There's no rigid day schedule. It must be done, that's all. It doesn't matter whether I work seven or twelve hours.

> My company is "pure" capitalism. It doesn't matter if I'm at work eight hours or more…I can't ignore what is going on.

A task-oriented approach to work, as illustrated above, has to result in tensions between the world

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[4] "'Serendipity' means an unexpected discovery or the ability to make fortunate and unexpected discoveries. The term in English was coined by English writer Horace Walpole (1754). He constructed this neologism based on an old Persian fairy tale 'The Three Princes of Serendip.' The princes made permanent discoveries of things they were not in quest of. Serendip is an old name for the island of Ceylon (currently Sri Lanka). The name is derived from the Sanskrit 'Simhaladvipah' or the Island of Lions" (Konecki 2005:27).

[5] "Temporal" neutralizations were reconstructed only on the basis of interviews with managers. Entrepreneurs were invited only to the next project regarding the spatial dimension of careers.

of work and other worlds in which the social actor participates. Long hours at work, at the expense of family and friends, must be **explained** and **justified** so that a manager or entrepreneur can focus on their primary activity. Therefore, narrators often feel compelled to use different types of strategies and justifications—rationalizations, that is, **neutralizations**, to mitigate (or avoid) temporal tensions, especially when the feeling of guilt and shame could prevent or hinder efforts for the benefit of an organization (and their career).

Please find the list of identified neutralizations below.[6]

Neutralization No. 1. Time Does Not Equal Time, That Is, the Scarce Quantity of Time Devoted to One's Family Is Compensated for by the Quality of That Time

> For example, my temperament and the way I spend my spare time makes me a companion for my daughters. They can always go swimming with me, play volleyball, badminton, ride a horse, play tennis, roller-skate, ride a bike, right?…What is more, well, I think that the quality of contact is decisive… Of course, we have them, but I see the same problems, or problems of similar intensity, in families in which husbands come back home at four o'clock sharp. **And this is, as I say, a certain quality of time and, and this is what matters**.

This neutralization seems to be an exemplification of the rationalization described by Sykes and Matza as the "denial of injury." According to the interviewees, nothing is wrong. One can compen-

sate for lost time with the intensity and special quality of contact with loved ones.

Neutralization No. 2. Nature and/or Traditional Rules, That Is, Reference to (Traditionally Understood) Complementary Male and Female Roles

> My wife was taking care of all household chores. She was raising our son. I was working. It's funny, it's sad that I don't remember birthdays, wedding anniversaries, something else, but I remember the phone number of a business partner in Germany…Well, but that's life.

In the case of such statements, it is difficult to find a clear reference to the previously mentioned neutralizations. The most similar rationalizations seem to be the "claim to normality of the behavior" and the rule of "everybody else is doing it."

Neutralization No. 3. Everyone Is Going to Be Fine, That Is, the Belief in Exceptional Maturity and Self-Sufficiency of Family Members (Children) as a Justification for a Limited Amount of Time Contributed to Family Life

> [An interviewee's spontaneous response to the question about the age of her children which was quoted earlier]:
> No, my children are already grown-ups, **I've got no problems with them, anyway, I've never had**!

The "denial of injury" seems to be the most comparable neutralization. There are no obstacles to fulfill one's tasks. Everyone is mature enough and focused on self-fulfillment independently of the actions taken by others.

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[6] Neutralizations reconstructed during the first "temporal" research project.

Neutralization No. 4. I Am Better, That Is, Downplaying the Role of a Spouse, Presenting Him/Her as a Person Who Cannot Provide for a Family. Therefore, an Interviewee Is a Guarantee of the Family's Financial Security

I married a man who is rather poorly organized and rather poorly, poorly org… organized and unresourceful. I don't know, **that's what I chose** [put in bold by the author]…Well, there simply were situations when I simply wanted to quit my job and, I don't know, go into the unknown. No matter what. It would have been very difficult since my husband is unresourceful. He runs his small private business. But, it's… He earns peanuts. It's me who is the pillar.

The "claim of entitlement" seems to be the neutralization corresponding with the above statements. Depreciation of partners does not necessarily result from the interviewees' ill will. Well, "the breadwinner has her rights."

Neutralization No. 5. Everyone Does Their Own Bit, That Is, the Lack of Temporal Tensions Is Justified by the Fact that Both Partners Are Equally Involved in Their Work

Hmm, as far as family matters are concerned, I've got no idea whether…Oh, you see. Well, if you think about it now, hmm… Perhaps it [the conflict—author's note] does not appear that often because **my wife had that great job** [she is also a manager—author's note], so she moved to Warsaw and there was no problem with that at all…She works a lot as well.

In this case, references can be made to such techniques as the "denial of injury" or the "denial of responsibility," as well as an original mode of argu-

mentation developed based on cultural changes in understanding the role of partners.

Neutralization No. 6. A "Purchased" Exteriorization of Responsibility, That Is, Mitigating Temporal Tensions with the Help of a Third Party

We have this lady, a girl, who collects our child from kindergarten, let's say about 3 p.m., and then stays with him till 5 p.m., until my wife comes back from work. Because my wife works on site. So, this girl stays with my child for two hours. Then my wife comes back from work and everything is just fine… During a holiday season, like now, our child is at his grandma's, so there is no problem either.

According to interviewees, financial and social resources allow them to sort out problems related to the lack of time which could, and should, have been spent with family members otherwise. This rationalization, probably used at all times, has not been explored yet. At the same time, there are indirect references to the techniques of the "denial of injury" and "denial of responsibility." Everything seems to be fine since caregivers are competent and potential problems are minimal.

Neutralization No. 7. Technology Helps, or the Ability to Remotely Control Important Family and Personal Issues

We spend a lot of money on phone calls. We text because we stay in touch every single day, even for a quick while…This is what keeps us together.

Internet and mobile phone services have become widespread and remote contact has become the staff of life. Undoubtedly, it enables us to maintain rela-

tions with relatives, but it is often treated as a user-friendly "artificial limb" which only imitates real, face-to-face encounters with people we care about. Similarly to the previous neutralization, this technique seems to represent the "denial of injury."

Neutralization No. 8. An "Appeal to Higher Loyalties," That Is, One Should Provide for a Better Life for the Loved Ones (Children)

> My private life starts, let's say, at 8 p.m., when I can fully devote my time to my daughter. I haven't got much time, and during the school year, I see her only in the mornings when she's getting ready for school… It's all a matter of getting used to things. If it weren't for some sacrifices of mine, I wouldn't be able to provide her with everything she has today and will have later on in the future.

This neutralization appeared in two narratives. It is probably not by chance that these accounts were presented by people who managed relatively small businesses extremely sensitive to changes in the economic situation. At the same time, these were "promoted" people whose position depended not so much on exceptional skills or qualifications, but rather on devotion to work. Therefore, it is not surprising that, as parents, they want to secure their children's "starting position" so that they do not have to make sacrifices and experience concerns their parents have to face.[7]

My research into the spatial dimension of careers[8] (some of the data collected during the previous project were used) also highlights the issue of neutral-

ization. It is noteworthy that most "temporal" rationalization techniques directly refer to situations in which the spatial (physical and/or psychological) distance creates tensions which at the same become a pretext for explanations to mitigate them.

The most recent research has resulted in further examples of explanations aimed at mitigating tensions between the normative system and everyday practices.

Neutralization No. 9. Special Role of Leisure Destinations or the Ability to Ensure/Rebuild Close Relations with Family Members Thanks to Spending Time with Them in a Favorable Environment

> I do my best to make sure that vacations or even a couple of days off are inspiring. I mean, so that my wife and kids enjoy this time. It's therefore usually an option of going somewhere to a distant place and staying there in a comfortable place. For example, some islands or South America. Diving, swimming, some rafting, or something like that. Long story short, I devote myself to the company too much not to compensate for that later on…That helps us to build relations, enjoy life. It gives a new impetus. We get our batteries of family emotions recharged. Also, the kids can spend time with their father and see that he isn't that useless [laughter].

This neutralization, as well as its twin neutralization mentioned above (neutralization No. 1 "Time Does Not Equal Time"), is an exemplification of rationalization called the "denial of injury." The narrator claims that lost time can be compensated for by the time spent in a unique place. The interviewee also applies Coleman's neutralization described as the "claim of entitlement" ("I devote myself to the

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[7] Reconstructed "temporal" neutralization practices, see also: Dymarczyk 2008; 2011.
[8] 2010-2016—a project called "Spatial dimension of managerial and entrepreneurial careers" (Dymarczyk 2015; 2018).

company too much not to compensate for that later on").

Neutralization No. 10. My Home Is My Castle; Meaning, I Am Absent from Home, but My Home Is My Family's Safe Haven

I spend a lot of time away from home, sometimes really a lot. However, I made sure that home was always there…It's important that when we meet, everything that allows us to live normally is available. Good mood and relations are important, but they also depend on the fact that the house is cozy, that it isn't an adapted house, but a house in which it is easier to build such relations. Because me, us… my loved ones **deserve that** [put in bold by the author], they deserve to feel comfortable at home, so that some crap doesn't spoil our comfort. I work hard to make everything work.

The above neutralization is also based on the belief that damage caused by long-term family separation could be compensated for by special conditions in which family members meet. Both interviewees seem to be convinced that "they deserve that" because of a special role they play.

Neutralization No. 11. The Quality of Contact Does Not Depend on Location, That Is, When You Have Resources, Good Relations Can Be Built/ Maintained Regardless of a Specific Location/ Space [see neutralization No. 1. "Time Does Not Equal Time" and neutralization No. 5. "Everyone Does Their Own Bit"]

Actually, it doesn't matter where we are. The world is small, isn't it? And this is a fact [with emphasis—author's note]. We can organize holidays, birthdays, name days anywhere, yeah. It is even very interest-

ing. Besides, **this is not unusual nowadays**…Well, of course, we do have some sentiments such as Christmas eve and so on… All of that can be arranged when you have the will and resources…**We even persuaded my parents once** [put in bold by the author] and it was OK. So, there are different options in the world, all you need is the right attitude.

This neutralization technique is the opposite of the previous rationalization (No. 9). The author of these statements rejects the concept of the importance of the home as a safe haven understood as a specific meeting place and instead opts for the unspecified "everywhere." Besides, his conviction about the normality of this type of practice is supported by the belief that "everybody else is doing it."

Discussion

If we take a critical look at what has been written earlier, it is worthwhile to reflect on two (interrelated) issues that may raise questions or doubts.

To begin with, an attentive reader may ask whether neutralizations used by managers and entrepreneurs are not just useful rhetorical tricks. In other words, are organizational leaders not only using their linguistic, interactive, and cultural competencies trying to make a positive impression on their interlocutors and present themselves as reasonable people in control of their careers and issues of concern to them? To put it bluntly, are these neutralizations merely tools of the presentation of self? In some cases they certainly are. All the more so since self-presentation scripts used by organizational actors are usually prepared in advance, socialized, and honed earlier. Does it not remind us of the case of a criminal who credibly plays the role of a wrongly accused person in court, having been instructed

by other villains to do so? Similarly, has a financier living beyond his/her means at the expense of his/her clients not been instructed by older and more experienced financial tycoons how to deal with this problem? Thus, an appropriate and "professional" use of a neutralization technique is certainly a suitable way to maintain one's face and defend one's interests. However, not infrequent, spontaneous, and surprisingly emotional utterances indicate the authenticity of experiencing certain problems or moral dilemmas, the feeling of shame, and the need to neutralize it. This is evidenced by a spectacular example of the response of the interviewee who has already been quoted twice (neutralization No. 3) or the slightly less dramatic account of another interlocutor about her feckless husband (neutralization No. 4). These are extremely revealing utterances. According to Scott Grills and Robert Prus (2019:208), "interactive emotional episodes" are of paramount importance when it comes to understanding the process involving an actor, an organizational actor in particular. It is also noteworthy that a conscious choice of a ready-made script and authentic expression of emotions do not have to be in contradiction with each other.

Secondly, it is important to remember that, as interviewees have repeatedly stressed, becoming an organizational leader is usually a lengthy and costly process in terms of time, as well as a moral and emotional experience. The awareness that "the capital" has been poorly invested could be unbearable. Hence, one should not be surprised to hear often emphatic assurances of the relatively smooth coexistence of the worlds in which the social actor participates. Incidentally, the process of becoming an important organizational actor might resemble the process of becoming an inmate of the total institution described by Goffman (1961). Speaking of

the early career, interviewees mainly mention costs, for example, cumbersome and long business trips, low salaries, time-consuming training sessions and meetings, and even mortifying experiences. In Goffmanian terms, this is a highly costly period of primary adjustment which mostly consists of transforming the self and moral degradation. It also serves as a precondition to forming a new concept of the self in line with the organization's norms and values. Subsequently, the process of secondary adjustment begins. Not only is the actor aware of the rules of organizational life, but s/he has also learned how to make use of knowledge and skills. At this stage, the rhetoric of "costs" is complemented or replaced by the rhetoric of "benefits." Let us not forget that, as a rule, the most passionate responses are elicited not so much by the awareness of the costs incurred, but by the fear of losing the benefits gained or recognition that sacrifices made so far "have not been worth the effort." Neutralizing negative feelings or avoiding them can be key to protecting the "I" of an organizational actor.

Conclusions

It is not easy to discover neutralization techniques. Interlocutors/interviewees usually strive to present a coherent and consistent story and present themselves as individuals who "know what they are doing" and control the course of events. It is especially true of key organizational actors who are well-socialized. They are mostly inner-directed individuals who are pursuing a career pattern typical of "self-made men"/"self-made women" (see: Dymarczyk 2011:242-248). They make sure that they "do not break character." A honed and frequently practiced narrative is a challenge for the researcher. Paradoxically, it also creates opportunities. The researcher needs to spot and interpret the "crack" in

the narrative and an instance of "getting out of the role." However, as has already been mentioned, this is often difficult because organizational leaders are usually professionals in managing their image. It is also difficult to define the norms of conduct for the researcher and interlocutor. Entrepreneurs and professional company managers represent a relatively new class in Poland. Thus, it is not always clear which catalog of rules and norms of conduct should be applied in the case of this group.

Secondly, and this is related to the previous issue, social expectations, and assessment of behavior and actions of company leaders change rapidly. For example, during the period of Poland's transformation (the 1990s), there was a general agreement that all the available time and energy could be devoted to entrepreneurial and/or managerial tasks. In the subsequent decade, this belief was maintained, although there were critical opinions about the managers' unidimensional version of life and professional career. However, since the year 2000, in the era of late modernity, post-materialistic values and "lifestyles" have been cherished and they indicate reasonable life and career management (see: Jacyno 2007). This is by no means unique in the context of global changes. On the other hand, the pace of these changes is extraordinary. In Poland, they affect not only subsequent cohorts but also each of the cohorts individually. Therefore, when reconstructing neutralizations, one should be careful about the assessment of an utterance when deciding whether it is indeed an indication of a dilemma and what is the meaning of this dilemma. Dynamic changes within entire communities often result in anomy and it is not clear what is the norm (Durkheim 1951; Merton 1968). On the other hand, it can be assumed that certain temporal and spatial dilemmas are common in a globalized business world. As a result, the re-

constructed neutralizations can be universalistic in their nature, but the local context should be kept in mind.

Assurances about the unproblematic or at most slightly problematic temporal-spatial coexistence of the "business world" and "family life" were quite common both in the first ("temporal") and most recent (spatially-oriented) studies. These utterances were emotional and spontaneous (not solicited by the researcher's questions). This may indicate that a dispute between two spheres of life is more widespread than the narrators would like to notice (or admit). It could perhaps be explained by the (conscious or unconscious) desire to maintain one's face. This is the face of a person capable of maintaining control over various spheres of life. It is precisely due to the abovementioned spontaneity and emotionality that getting out of the role is observed. On the other hand, such responses make the actor look credible in the eyes of the interlocutor. They present him/her as a reflective social life participant who is trying to reconcile the requirements of his/her social worlds.

The list of presented neutralizations is quite extensive, which is understandable since managers of businesses affected by market competition are subject to constant stress and (very often) temporal tensions. The need to reconcile different roles, each of which can fill the whole day, is conducive to launching various types of protective strategies, that is, neutralization techniques.

Most of the identified rationalizations exemplify the techniques described by Sykes and Matza, as well as their followers. However, some of them, for example, the fifth and the seventh neutralization techniques, are unique. Both neutralizations derive

from social and technological advancements typical of late capitalism or postmodernism, as some would say. Neutralizations help to deal with the **existing** and **fluctuating** challenges faced by an individual immersed in everyday life. It is noteworthy that from an interactionist perspective neutralizations are of great importance for maintaining a sense of continuity of the biography of a social actor (Strauss 1977:139-149). Neutralizations seem to be very useful nowadays. On the one hand, there still exist fixed social expectations of certain social roles and asso-

ciated behavior patterns (in this case, typical of an organizational leader/decision-maker). On the other hand, there exist challenges posed by "new" rules of reconciling professional and family life, as well as purposeful and balanced management of one's career. Neutralization techniques serve as "tools" that make "changes" possible, although it must be admitted that, in principle, this "tool" is more of petrification of the definition of the role of a manager and/or entrepreneur. At least this is true of Polish reality.

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Mobbing from the Standpoint of Symbolic Interactionism

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Abstract: Mobbing at the workplace assumes strong, intensive, and significant interactions between an offender and a target, or a group of targets, causing serious damage to work efficiency, atmosphere, motivation, and employee fluctuation. It also highly affects the victims' mental health, which often results in excluding them from work for a long time.

The objective of this paper is to examine the issue of mobbing from the perspective of symbolic interactionism (SI) that is useful in explaining social phenomena on a micro and mezzo level. Through inductive reasoning with the use of grounded theory (GT), I focus on the narratives of mobbing targets and their stories concerning maltreatment at the workplace. The study based on a qualitative approach included 72 narrative interviews carried out among harassment victims, as well as 12 in-depth interviews with professionals dealing with the matter of mobbing. Moreover, to directly follow work-related processes linked to organizational behavior, I utilized participant observation.

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Several decades ago symbolic interactionism (SI) gave birth to a fresh new look at human relations and offered methods enabling to describe them on a micro-level. The Chicago School representatives, later theoreticians and scholars, developed SI to depict symbolic interaction(s) based on the significant gestures,

definitions of situations, and meanings that social actors produce during their daily activities. Herbert Blumer (1969:1) defines SI "as a label for a relatively distinctive approach for the study of human group and human conduct." At the center of analysis, there is symbolic communication, producing meanings through interactions, interpreting, and defining the situations by social actors. SI allows us to follow group processes and their dynamics that are based on social actors' interplay.

I find SI to be both a fruitful and useful perspective to examine human professional interchange at the workplace, where people communicate with each other on an ongoing basis using verbal and nonverbal gestures. The issue of mobbing gives a perfect opportunity to employ interactionist conceptualizations of power and control relations (Prus 1999) between two parties: a mobber and a target. As my analytical and theoretical frame, SI inclined me to raise some questions about the interactional context of mobbing. My findings deliver answers to the following questions: How a target becomes a victim? What role do joint action and collectivism play in the escalation of mobbing? What are the dynamics of mobbing as a social process?

This article is a continuation of my research on mobbing that took place between 2005-2008. Since that time I have carried out 6 interviews with targets and 2 interviews with mobbers. The last ones have been more focused on the interactional aspects of physical harassment at the workplace, contributing to the use of a symbolic frame to contextualize my analyses.

Symbolic Interactionism as the Theoretical Perspective

George Herbert Mead laid the foundations for future SI (Blumer 1966; 1969). He opted for an inter-

pretative perspective as opposed to normative and positivistic paradigms (Wilson 1970; Konecki 2017; Woroniecka 2017). It was based on the Chicago School heritage (Konecki and Chomczyński 2012) and the conception of not-determined human beings who give meanings due to the interpretation of gestures (Mead 1934:80). Mead was not alone in advocating for an indeterministic conception of human beings as reflexive entities equipped with consciousness, mind, and selves. Charles Horton Cooley (1922), William James (1950), and many others also shared the vision of human beings as the ones of "free will." In opposition to traditional assumptions, Mead stated that "human beings possess minds and consciousness as original 'givens,' that they live in worlds of pre-existing and self-constituted objects, that their behavior consists of responses to such objects, and that group life consists of the association of such reacting human organisms" (Blumer 1966:535; see also: Gusfield 2003:121). It should be stressed that behind social actors' actions towards things there are meanings that they give and produce through social interactions (Blumer 1969:77-78). As human beings do not possess a predefined set of meanings, they construct them instead in the course of dynamic interpretation processes whereby they produce specific definitions of what they encounter. Bryant, Buttigieg, and Hanley (no date) advocate that SI perspective is useful in workplace violence research as it locates the definition of the situation at the center of attention, "Individuals derive their own meanings from situations like workplace bullying, which are likely to differ substantially from meanings developed by others." SI is a coherent theoretical (Hałas 1994; Czekaj 2007; Chomczyński 2017) and methodological (Hałas 1990; Woroniecka 2017) approach enabling the understanding of everyday life and the realities that people create therein. For that reason, SI seems to be an adequate perspective when studying

unethical symbolic communication aimed at discrediting people in the workplace environment in an unobtrusive way. Mobbing is the process of dynamic interaction between offender(s) and victim(s) that "involves acts of interpersonal aggression—any form of behavior directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment" (Neuman and Baron 2003:185). Physical harassment is based on hostile actions, very often taking the form of nuances that a target *defines* as unwanted and hostile (Bryant and Cox 2003). Looking at mobbing through the SI prism gives a researcher a strong analytical tool needed for deepening one's micro perspective insight (Piotrowski 1985:29; Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:33-34). SI is useful to understand the biographical experiences of people involved in in-group processes (Blumer 1969:6; Denzin 1978), giving them meanings (Mead 1934:80; Prus and Grills 2003:19), and producing definitions of situations they are immersed in (Konecki 2005a; 2005b).

Gaps in the Literature

Soon after a Swedish psychologist, Heinz Leymann, published his first findings in the area at hand, mobbing has been defined in the 1970s in the field of management in terms of "pathology." Social scientists adapted his operational definition of mobbing and made use of it, as the practitioners did, to diagnose the first "victims":

> Psychological terror or mobbing in working life involves hostile and unethical communication, which is directed in a systematic way by one or a few individuals mainly towards one individual who, due to mobbing, is pushed into a helpless and defenseless position, being held there by means of continuing mobbing activities. [Leymann 1996:168]

According to the Sixth European Working Conditions Survey (2015) published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 17% of women and 15% of men report having been exposed to bullying or harassment in the last 12 months.[1] Previously, European social partners signed a Framework Agreement on harassment and violence at work. In addition, mental health at the workplace is promoted in the European Strategy on Health and Safety (2007-2013).[2]

Since the first research in the late 1970s and 1980s, the issue of mobbing gained popularity and social scientists started doing cross-country surveys to compare and diagnose the working conditions (Jacobson, Hood, and Van Buren 2014; Salin et al. 2018). The literature on mobbing emphasizes mental health considerations (Leymann 1996; Anderson 2002; Hallberg and Strandmark 2006), as well as management (Zapf, Knorz, and Kulla 1996; Hoel, Faragher, and Cooper 2004; Godlewska-Werner 2006) and business (Niedl 1996; Hoel 2004) perspectives. It is based on the so-called "objective indicators" that illustrate the consequences of mobbing at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. The majority of such research uses questionnaires and psychological tests. It also provides comparable statistics showing the scale and range of violence in the workplace. However, very few researchers adapted a qualitative approach to reflect the targets' definitions of the situation. Edvin Lemert (1962) employed SI to show how communication issues at the workplace are socially constructed. Sarah J. Tracy, Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik, and Jess Alberts (2006:148) used a victim's "metaphor analysis to articulate and explore the emotional pain of workplace bullying."

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[1] See: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys/sixth-european-working-conditions-survey-2015. Retrieved September 17, 2020.

[2] See: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu. Retrieved March 21, 2019.

Also, very few researchers opted for the qualitative perspective of mobbing. Robert Thornberg and Hanna Delby (2019) used the SI frame for in-depth research on the students' perception of school bullying. Auguste, Briggs, and Vreeland (2014) also used SI for micro-level studies of bullying in educational settings. In his studies on status, conflict, and asymmetric relations, Lonnie Athens (2017) applied radical interactionism that places the utmost importance on dominance and power. Still, from my standpoint, there is a scarcity of qualitative, interviewee-oriented research on work-related violence. For that reason, to explore the participants' personal experiences of work-related harassment, I shifted my interest from *what happened* to *what meaning* employees attach to their experiences (Czarniawska 2007). The process of becoming a target, variations of the definitions of the situation, target-offender mutual interplay, and symbolic interactions are rarely at the center of scientific investigations. Thus, in this paper, I employ grounded theory (GT) (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990) and SI (Blumer 1969) to shed light on the nuances of workplace harassment.

Methodology and Research Settings

SI provides both theoretical frames and methodological premises placing the empirical world, people under study, and their experiences at the center of a researcher's concern. "Nothing is known of human beings except in the form of something that they indicate or refer to. To indicate anything, human beings must see it from their perspective; they must depict it as it appears to them" (Blumer 1969:22). SI emphasizes the primacy of reality under study over the methodology applied. Blumer argued that theory should follow the research and not the other way around (Hałas 1994:49; Woroniecka 2017:56-57), and the methodological stance of SI

is that of immediate examination of the empirical social world (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:34).

GT as the theoretical and methodological perspective, especially its version by Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (2008) displays significant similarities to SI, having strong roots in pragmatism. Chamberlain-Salaun, Mills, and Usher (2013:2) directly point out its SI underpinning in terms of assumptions:

> Corbin and Strauss' (2008) "lost chapter" and the 16 assumptions introduce the reader to essential grounded theory methods, and provide a background to the development of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism as the epistemological and ontological foundations of evolved grounded theory…as the interpretation of works by John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and Anselm Strauss himself.

For that reason it was a good fit to employ GT for data gathering, analyzing, and generating categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Konecki 2000:32-47; 2015:25-28). The reasoning based on the inductive approach gave me a chance to progressively depict the complex picture of interactions underlying mobbing practices at the workplace. Kathy Charmaz (2014:65) advocates the benefits of GT-based research framed by SI background as providing theoretical sensitivity for data analyses. "The codes that arose from symbolic interactionist sensibilities give a theoretical foundation or conceptual infrastructure that integrates the narrative" (Charmaz 2014:154).

Mobbing belongs to the sphere of pathologies in organizational management (Chomczyński 2008), and as a researched phenomenon requires a methodological approach that would locate the perspectives of people involved at the center of scientific inquiry. Their narrations and definitions of situations

allow us to understand what meanings they give to workplace harassment, actions of the offender(s), and the contexts' dynamism. Insight into the social actors' biographies was crucial enough to employ narrative interviews as the key research technique. This technique allowed interviewees to construct their stories openly (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000). It facilitated a spontaneous discussion of their trauma experiences and the conditions under which it occurred (Loch 2008). People under study were informed that they can withdraw from the research at any time; they were familiar with the methodology, goals, and research objectives of the study.

The study draws on 72 narrative interviews carried out with the targets of workplace mobbing. Both men and women were recruited via snowball sampling—a method typical for ethnographic and exploratory research (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Çelik and Lüküslü 2012; Gobo and Molle 2017; Wojciechowska 2018), and with the help of the anti-mobbing foundation in Poland ("Dignity"). Interviews with specialists (12) were more structured and aimed at seeking concrete information from their professional point of view. Additionally, in 2006, I got hired for 1,5 months in a company accused of mobbing, where I carried out participant observations (Chomczyński 2006). This experience enabled me to gain first-hand knowledge from the standpoint of a low-level physical worker. Both the qualitative interviews and the participant observations meet the requirements of methods and data triangulation (Denzin 1978; 2012:82) and provided complex empirical material to understand mobbing group processes.

Findings

The findings presented in the paper are based on qualitative data analyzed with the use of ATLAS.ti 8.4.2 software. The key categories were generated inductively due to open and selective coding of 72 targets' narratives and 12 in-depth interviews with the specialists (Konopásek 2008; see also Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Mobbing as a Social Process

Mobbing never happens suddenly (Niedl 1996; European Working Conditions Survey 2015). It usually involves the offender(s) and target(s) over time long enough to change or alter their definitions of the situation (Leymann 1996). Typically, the situation is worsening gradually, day-by-day, and because of that a target may not perceive specific attacks as an interconnected whole.

> It took me some time to realize that I have been mobbed. [teacher, female]

> I was not aware of the fact that the problem was escalating. [financial expert, male]

The victims used to be "consistent" in terms of constantly defining the situation as an incidental conflict, periodically worse organizational climate, or long-lasting bad mood of the mobber. They tend to be "immobilized" when it comes to defining the worsening relationship between them and their offenders. Still, they try to keep in mind the picture of the situation, and thus—sometime later—discover their "new" positioning—that of the victim. I term the instances in which targets redefine their situation "turning points" (Strauss 1969). Redefining their situation and negotiating its definitions—that do not fit anymore to a more optimistic scenario they thought was likely to happen—is a crucial moment for them. Such "turning points" incline the targets to see themselves in victims' terms, with the "assistance" of of-

fenders and more active bystanders. For mobbing at the workplace involves not only the perpetrator and their target, but also the audience who makes the process collectivistic and, at times, public.

The Collectivism of Mobbing

Mobbing often requires a denouncer, a target, and the audience, who are at times passive bystanders, happy that they are not in the target's shoes. In other cases, the target(s)' colleagues may take a more active part in their degradation process. These processes are based on collectively produced definitions of the situation and are a way of acting, that is, what Blumer (1969:71) called "joint action." The offenders, and sometimes bystanders, use degradation rituals (Garfinkel 1956) to ridicule, stigmatize, isolate, or otherwise humiliate the target (Klapp 1949). In the most extreme cases, their actions are focused on mortifying their targets in institutional settings (Goffman 1961:24-51; Scott 2010:219) and preventing them from an active defense. One of the mobbed police officers confirms the existence of a public ritual of degradation, where his supervisor played the role of the offender:

> He did all of that intentionally to humiliate me in front of my colleagues. He was always satisfied afterward. [police officer, male]

A mobber is a person who both initiates the degradation ceremony and invites others to take an active part in it, or at least take the role of passive eyewitnesses. The witnesses' presence may serve to validate the offenders' attacks via a lack of support for the target, whom the offender may frame as a scapegoat. A factory worker confirms the role of a collectively constructed definition of the situation where fear of possible consequences prevented bystanders from offering a victim any support.

> They just observed what was happening to me with no intention to react. They were afraid of their position, some of them were even laughing. [factory worker, male]

Public mobbing also involves emotional issues. A victim humiliated in front of their colleagues is "frozen," feeling ashamed enough not to react and fight back. Such a public scenario of mobbing practices is performed by an offender to scare away potential defenders. The message a mobber sends out is clear: "anybody can replace a victim, so take part and do not react." Thanks to that an offender symbolically multiplies their allies, and the dominance over a victim grows, which locates them in a position defined as irretrievable and defenseless (Leymann 1996:168). One of the teachers claimed being constantly at the center of such a degradation ceremony, headed by a school headmaster:

> The other day, during the pedagogical council, she [the school headmaster] laughed at me and my work, publicly quoting my official notes from the school documents. It was awful. She publicly suggested that I should visit some psychologist or psychiatrist to verify my professional competences. [teacher, female]

The Turning Point

The turning point is a significant moment of identity transformation, when—under new circumstances—a person redefines the situation that they experience and change the conception of oneself (Strauss 1969:91). The victims interpret the turning point in terms of "awakening" from a long-lasting dream about work-related circumstances that are long outdated. Since that moment an employee defines oneself as a victim and usually initiates some form of action (e.g., seeking help, preparing a defense, collecting evidence). The turning point begins with the

victim's mental preparation for taking an active part in changing the experienced situation, intending to seize the initiative.

> At some point, I noticed that the manager started treating me worse than the others. I think the school I attended caused it. I asked the manager for some days off and once again she refused to give me them. [shopping mall employee, female]

> Everything began when I was offered some better assignments—similar work, but better conditions. I took it with the hope that it will be my life accomplishment. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a horror. [private company accountant, female]

In some cases, the turning point also means the turning of a passive victim into an active opponent ready to change not only their position within the work settings but also the relationship with an offender. This process also assumes undertaking a long-lasting work on identity (Strauss 1969). Very often the target's significant others (family members, colleagues, friends) take on the role of those who initiate changes along the lines of interpreting the situation of a maltreated employee. Because of strong emotional bonds associated with significant others, they are often in a position of influencers and can help a victim to pass through the "turning point" and undertake the accompanying identity work.

> It was my husband, with whom I talked a lot, who changed my point of view on my professional situation. [teacher, female]

Nevertheless, not all of the mobbing victims change their strategy after experiencing the "wake-up call." Some of them follow the trajectory of becoming a victim.

The Trajectory of Becoming a Victim

Mobbing targets who experienced the turning point and did not take any action-oriented steps focused on improving their situation very often experience the trajectory of becoming a victim. I adapted the concept of trajectory from Fagerhaugh and Strauss (1977) to depict the inert path of victims towards a passive position of a person who is not able to react (Leymann 1996; Zapf, Knorz, and Kulla 1996; Hoel, Faragher, and Cooper 2004). The trajectory of becoming a victim is linked with the process of social self-transformation, based on the interpretations that also include the others' definitions of the situation (James 1950:293; see: Cooley 1922:179; Mead; 1934:192). One of the victims underlined the crucial role of the looking-glass self (Cooley 1922:184) in self-definition mechanisms.

> I felt like a victim and I was also the victim in the eyes of all of my colleagues. [office worker, female]

Victims used to be "frozen" in their self-definitions as passive members of a predefined situation where they were out of power to influence their relations in the professional settings (Prus 1999).

> For a long time, I was the person who was not reacting. I couldn't even imagine that I could fight against it. [sales representative, male]

The trajectory of becoming a victim is a highly interactive phenomenon, greatly influenced by the looking-glass self (Cooley 1922:184). In their self-interpretation processes, the mobbing victims take into account the perspectives of others involved in the degradation ceremony (Garfinkel 1956), who are forcing them to accept the new status given by the group (Strauss 1969:77; Fagerhaugh and Strauss 1977:120).

The trajectory path requires joint action where social actors adjust to each other (Blumer 1969:71) to create a coherent scenario (degradation ceremony) of the social exclusion of the target and to prepare them for living on the margins of the social world of the setting at hand. A victim, similarly to a deviant, does not have full rights and lives peripherally, negatively labeled by some audiences (Goffman 1963; Prus and Grills 2003).

A person under attacks may interpret their situation as both difficult and complicated enough to not seek help or change.

> I didn't know what to do. It was like an ongoing nightmare with no place to hide and no way to escape. [sales representative, male]

Mobbing victims experiencing such a trajectory construct a specific mental representation of the professional environment, where all of the options are closed. They adopt a passive role in the organization and locate the control over the situation outside of themselves, and adopt a socio-psychological mechanism of closure to "resolve the tension initiated by the situation" (Lemert 1953:304). The victims use a long-lasting *modus operandi* based on resignation from any reaction against the offender to "close" the tension and redefine the situation. They also choose "not to act" through a social act of omission that leads to canceling, losing, and withdrawing from active participation in their professional environment (Scott 2019).

Conclusions

Mobbing is a joint action, rich in symbolic phenomena, that linguistically enables the involvement of people from one's professional environment. Of course, not everybody takes the role of the offender, but, in most cases, even bystanders involved in joint action have a great influence on the victim's interpretation of the situation. Usually, employees who suffer from mobbing at the workplace change their definition of themselves (identity) and their work-related surroundings. Those harassed at work are at the center of degradation ceremonies that very often involve both offender(s) and eyewitnesses to take part in such a scenario that imposes a new status (that of the victim) on the person under attacks. Offenders (and occasionally bystanders) engage in designating deviance via labeling that has the power to marginalize others due to assigning them the roles such as scapegoats (Goffman 1963). That language is rich in restricted codes that "reduce the need to verbalize intent so that it becomes explicit" (Bernstein 1971:100) and may become part of common knowledge shared by those within the target's professional environment.

The crucial moment in the victims' biographies is the turning point that divides mistreated employees into two groups: those who take the active role in breaking the mobbing cycle and those who apply a passive strategy and are not willing to fight. The victims ready to change their situation usually benefit from the support of significant others who are "waking them up." Thanks to family members, friends, and colleagues, the harassed employees may come to redefine the situation and adapt strategies to resist the domination approach of the mobber. Those who apply a passive strategy usually experience a trajectory of interactional sequences, which results in a rather encompassing victim identity.

Acknowledgments

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Citation

The Work of Sales Representatives in the Context of Interactions and Work with Emotions

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Abstract: The article aims to present the interactional encounters undertaken within their professional context by the studied group of Polish sales representatives concerning their emotions and emotional work. It is an internally diverse group made of individuals skillful in managing their emotions, as well as the ones of others. Additionally, the professional group at hand is purposefully trained to acquire skills in the area of managing emotions. The concepts of Everett Hughes (1958) concerning work, Arlie Hochschild (1983) in the context of emotional labor, Anselm Strauss (1993) pointing to the coexistence of emotions and action, and Robert Prus (1997) on the contextual nature of social life are the theoretical underpinning of the article. They all derive from the interpretative paradigm and fit into the theoretical premises of symbolic interactionism, assuming the constant construction of social reality as a result of interactions undertaken by social actors (see: Blumer 2007). It is the nature of their interactions with customers, colleagues, and direct and indirect superiors that determines the specificity of a sales representative's work situation. The analyses presented in the article are based on qualitative research using unstructured interviews, conversational interviews, and observations.

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The work of a sales representative consists of working with people, who are the main factor influencing the way they take actions related to working with emotions. Interactions with clients, co-workers, and direct and indirect superiors are a source of motivation to work, job satisfaction, and, most importantly in the context of this article, working with emotions, defined by Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983; 2009) as emotional labor, emotional work, or work on emotions.

The theoretical basis of the article are the concepts of Everett Hughes (1958) concerning work, Arlie Hochschild (1983) in the context of emotional labor, Anselm Strauss (1993) pointing to the coexistence of emotions and actions, and Robert Prus (1997) on the contextual nature of social life. They all derive from the interpretative paradigm and fit in with the theoretical assumptions of symbolic interactionism, assuming the constant construction of social reality as a result of interactions undertaken by social actors (see: Blumer 2007). All the considerations presented here refer to the situation of Polish sales representatives and are thus set in the Polish social, cultural, economic, and legal contexts.

The specificity of a sales representative's work is determined by several main factors. Firstly, these are the above-mentioned interactions with colleagues, superiors, and clients. Secondly, it is their identification with a company, in the case of which, analogically to the emotional work they undertake, two levels can be distinguished, that is, surface and deep identification. Thirdly, it is the scope of duties, which includes customer service, collecting orders and sales control, keeping contracts on time, promoting and presenting goods, upholding the company's

image, and monitoring competition. Additionally, the specificity of a sales representative's work is determined by training and the company's motivation policy. Sales representatives are a group of employees most often participating in various types of training (cf. Mayo 2002). Since their activities directly translate into the profit of a given company and are easily measurable, the employer needs to create optimal conditions for the most effective sale of the company's products (cf. Prus 1994; Schweingruber and Berns 2003). By participating in training, sales representatives not only gain knowledge about the products offered, but also improve sales techniques, learn negotiations, manipulation techniques, the ability to establish and maintain relationships with the client, and manage their own and client's emotions (see: Pawłowska 2013). They develop soft skills (e.g., communication skills), as well as linguistic and technical skills (e.g., using computer programs, driving a car in difficult conditions). Sales representatives are also a group of employees to which separate incentive systems are applied, including salary scales. The sales representative's salary consists of a fixed salary, as well as a commission and a bonus. The salary of a sales department employee *de facto* depends on the amount of work and the number of products sold. Apart from financial incentives, such as, inter alia, remuneration in a mixed system based on commissions, bonuses, vouchers, passes, trips, and non-financial ones, such as diplomas, cups, company gadgets, non-material motivators, such as verbal praise and competition, are also important (see: Pawłowska 2013).

The aim of the article is to present the professional interactions undertaken by sales representatives in relation to the emotions they experience and how they work with them. It should be noted that the presented perspective does not apply to sales tech-

niques and practices of buyers (see: Prus 1989). The specificity of the work of a sales representative concerning its selected aspects has been shown from the perspective of the employee.

Research Methodology

The issues touched upon in the article are the results of research conducted in the environment of sales representatives. It is an internally diverse group that is an interesting example of managing one's emotions and the emotions of other people, to which they are trained. Also, this group is highly diversified in terms of demographic characteristics. This occupational category includes both men and women, very young people and those in the pre-retirement age (although the majority are people under 40), people with general or technical secondary education (e.g., sale of tools, central heating stoves), as well as those with higher education (e.g., doctors, pharmacists, engineers, humanists), including people who completed postgraduate studies, for example, in the field of MBA. They are representatives of various professional fields working for both large international concerns and small local companies and organizations. They occupy various levels in the corporate hierarchy (from rank-and-file sales representatives, merchandisers, to commercial directors who are members of the board). Therefore, the category of sales representatives includes all people employed in organizations and institutions as a sales, pharmaceutical, or medical representative, who perform work consisting of daily contact with an individual, wholesale, or institutional customer (see: Pawłowska 2013; cf. Kempny 2008).

It was a qualitative research using unstructured interviews (see: Lutyński 1968; 1994; Przybyłowska 1978; Konecki 2000; Kvale 2004; Silverman 2007;

Pawłowska 2013), conversational interviews (see: Konecki 2000), and observations (see: Schwartz and Schwartz 1955; Hammersley and Atkinson 2000; Konecki 2000; Prus and Grills 2003). Additionally, I conducted a series of informal conversations with representatives of the described professional group. I also analyzed existing materials, such as questionnaires for the evaluation of sales representatives' work, work regulations, job descriptions, scopes of duties, responsibilities and powers, training agendas, training reports, law regulations, and others.

The studies were inductive using triangulation, which allows the researcher to distance themselves from the analyzed data (Hammersley and Atkinson 2000). The study used data triangulation, methodological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation (see: Denzin 1978; Konecki 2000:86). Qualitative research allowed for the collection of empirical data in the natural environment, everyday and basic context in which the analyzed phenomena and processes took place (see: Prus 1997:192; Deegan 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Kostera 2003:12; 2011:9; 2012:73).

The main research technique was in-depth unstructured interviews (63 interviews). The interviews concerned the nature of the work of the sales representatives and the description of various situations related to their contacts (interactions) with customers, colleagues, and superiors. The representatives talked about their working day, emotions accompanying the work, and activities undertaken as part of their official duties. In the interviews, I tried to draw attention to the essential elements of the work of a sales representative, with particular emphasis on "easy" and "difficult," pleasant and unpleasant, positive and negative situations, as seen by them.

The average duration of an interview was 52 minutes, but some interviews lasted much longer (over 2 hours). During the research, some of the interlocutors were returned to and interviewed again. Usually, such situations took place after the researcher got to know the informant more closely, and it happened that the subsequent interview took place at the request of the latter. It allowed, inter alia, the contextualization of the data obtained in the first interview and to confront the observed data with the information provided by the respondents (see: Silverman 2007; Becker and Greer 1960). During the interviews, the informants were open-minded and rather willing to talk about their work and the emotions that accompanied it. The interviews were conducted in places and situations convenient for the informants. Most often it was the interviewee's home, researcher's house, café, a room at the respondent's workplace, or the respondent's company car. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed based on the principles of grounded theory methodology. The following grounded theory methodology procedures were used: substantive coding, including open and selective coding, theoretical coding, memo-writing, diagramming. Based on the constant comparative method, categories, their proprieties, and dimensions have been reconstructed, including experiencing the emotion of pride and work with emotions.

As mentioned before, the data from the interviews were supplemented with the information collected in the course of the observations and the existing materials made available. I conducted 1) 4 full-day participant observations during one-day training courses for sales representatives (introductory training and training in selling, called by the informants "knowledge" training [*in vivo* code]); 2) 2 full-day participant observations during 2 two-day training

of sales representatives (integration training and sales summarizing training); 3) 4 full-day quasi-participant observations during one-day and two-day training of sales representatives conducted, among others, by me (training in the so-called soft skills and sales techniques); 4) 4 overt observations during full-day training courses for sales representatives (various types of training in which I was a passive observer); 5) 12 overt observations during organizational meetings of sales representatives; 6) 5 overt observations of a sales representative working day (I travelled with a sales representative, observing the activities undertaken by them during the entire working day). Two such observations were carried out during the so-called "coaching."[1] In the car, apart from the sales representative and myself, there was their direct supervisor, responsible for observing the activities of the employee, providing tips for better and more effective work.

To conduct some of the above observations, I took on the role of a sales representative. With the approval of the company's management, I participated in initial training and later in training as a sales representative. My researcher's identity was not known to other trainees, including regional sales representatives from other regions. Such a type of observation can be described as a semi-overt observation because the identity of the researcher was known only to some training participants (cf. Pawłowska 2013). The observation of training in which I acted as a lecturer (trainer) was possible since I was not the only trainer. Both during breaks

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[1] I used the phrase "the so-called coaching" since this activity was thusly called by those under study (both the employee and his supervisor, who also acted as a coach). In my opinion, it was not a coaching session, but an observation of the sales representative's work by their supervisor combined with an assessment of the work and an indication of "right" and "wrong" actions taken by the employee.

in my training and during training in which I participated as a participant or observer, as well as during the observation of the sales representative's working day, I conducted informal conversations with the respondents.

By conducting my observations, I wanted to participate in all major events taking place in the work of a sales representative, wishing to understand their perspective and to study phenomena that are little known or atypical areas of better-known phenomena (Deegan 2001; Kostera 2012:73; also: Kostera 2003:12; 2011:9). One of the advantages of observation is the ability of the researcher to grasp the context of certain phenomena or interactional episodes, and thus—to reconstruct the elements of the analyzed processes, which would not be possible if the study were conducted using other research techniques and tools (see: Adler and Adler 1987; Konecki 2000; Wojciechowska 2018). For this purpose, an observation diary was kept, which, like David Silverman (2007) observes, provides space to distinguish *emic* from the *etic* analysis. After each day of observation, I wrote an observation report and, if possible, took notes during the observation.

Work in the Lens of Symbolic Interactionism

The purpose of the following is not a definitional overview, but to indicate the understanding of the concept of work from a sociological perspective, with particular emphasis on the interpretative paradigm. Work, in the sociological sense, is a source of wealth. But, at the same time, it has a much more vital meaning because it "builds" one (Dzięcielska-Machnikowska 1990:226). Work is "a kind of human activity, carried out mainly in the institutionalized frames because of the division of labor

and its specialization" (Kulpińska 1986:9). As Jan Szczepański (1961:171) wrote, work is "any deliberate activity leading to the satisfaction of any human needs, having social significance, providing individuals or groups that perform it with a specific position in society." This definition highlights several aspects of the job.

First, work is a conscious and purposeful human activity. It may be dictated by the free choice of the individual or by compulsion (see: Lis 1982:9). However, what appears to be one's freedom can sometimes be seen in terms of a constraint; and vice versa—a constraint can become one's free choice. This phenomenon is referred to as "work fanaticism" (see: Dzięcielska-Machnikowska 1990:228). It seems that work itself is a compulsion. One's urge to meet the needs requires work, which is related to earning money. Money enables the fulfillment of the individual's needs. Thus, freedom of choice is not about whether to do work or not, but what work to do. But, here, too, the choice may be significantly limited. What we do is influenced not only by our education, our abilities, and predispositions but also by the economic situation of the state, including access to work.

Secondly, work is a social activity, which means that the way it is carried out affects the aspirations, attitudes, behaviors, and interests of other people or groups. Working in this sense is one of the most important elements of social bonds. It shapes coexistence with other people. The social nature of work is manifested in the fact that the work performed by an individual is always related to the work of others. At work, a person confronts their views with the perceptions and attitudes of other people, which leads to the development of attitudes that are socially expected and desirable.

Third, work determines the social position of an individual. It is an indicator of their status and social role. Thus, it will affect the way emotions arise and how we manage them.

Fourth, work is done to meet needs, but such needs are determined by the structure and culture of the group to which the individual belongs. The culture of a given community and the group of employees shape not only the attitude of employees towards work but also the way it is performed. Thus, work has a cultural dimension (cf. Fukuyama 1997).

Finally, in the approach to work that is of my utmost interest, the fact that work influences the self-esteem of an individual is of great importance. Self-evaluation is associated with the emergence of different emotions, but it can also be the result of the arousal of different emotions. In the course of work, each individual strives to achieve success, which conditions the emergence of the emotions of pride and avoiding failure, which, in turn, contributes to avoiding the emotions of shame. "Man's work is one of the things by which he is judged, and certainly one of the most significant things by which he is judged" (Hughes 1958:42). It can be stated that professional activities, the course of a professional career, interactions with colleagues, and superiors will have a huge impact on the development of one's self. Through work, and thus the profession, a person evaluates oneself, develops their opinions about oneself, assigns value to oneself, and builds their groups of reference and identification (see: Hughes 1958; Konecki 1988). Such an understanding of work is dynamic, and the subjective feelings of individuals are central here. The aspects that contribute to the emergence of various dependencies between individuals are important. The existence of work is not possible without the social environment and the interactions that an individual undertakes. In the course of work, people constantly communicate, be it ordering to do something, informing, persuading, or negotiating. "It is impossible to work without the coordination of activities on the part of those who define it, perform it, provide the necessary work equipment, and control, and repair this equipment. Work is impossible without the audience, who can actively cooperate, and even their presence alone can influence the work process" (Konecki 1988:234).

In general, I will understand work as an organized activity of many entities, that is, individuals that adapt and interact with each other. Actions and maintenance of all social relations are possible due to the process of mutual interactions. This process of mutual communication clearly influences the emergence of specific emotions. Emotions always arise from the interaction. According to Strauss, they are part of the action and are never separate from it. Separating emotions from action causes their reification (Strauss 1993:31-32). These interactions can take place on many levels. We can communicate with other individuals, groups (of different sizes), but also with ourselves. In the empirical section, the analysis of the work situation will come down to a description of interactions in a group of sales representatives and to capturing how the group and individuals influence the formation and management of an employee's emotions.

Work in the sense proposed here is not only an interactional process, the production of external goods, but also a process taking place within the employee. A process that allows one to manage their own emotions, but also other people's emotions. This process of work taking place within an individual has been called working with emotions.

Working with Emotions

In my opinion, terms working with emotions, work on emotions, or emotional labor can be used interchangeably. In doing emotional work, the individual is doing work with emotions. Consciously or not, it transforms emerging emotions. It evokes specific and desired emotions in a given situation, but can also manipulate the recipient's emotions. Having a whole range of available emotions, one chooses the specific ones that, in their opinion, will allow one to achieve the intended goal. So emotional work is working with emotions. It is especially visible during actions taken by sales representatives. From the emotions available to them, they choose those that allow for effective sales and the continuity of positive interactions with customers.

In the literature on the subject, there are two general approaches to investigate the topic at hand (Meanwell, Wolfe, and Hallet 2008; Wharton 2009; Rogalin and Hirshfield 2013). The first approach explored emotional labor from the angle of emotional management and expressed emotions (Kanter 1977; Hochschild 1983; 2009; Smith and Kleinman 1989; Sutton 1991; Pierce 1999; Raz 2003). These authors focused on the understanding of emotional labor in terms of individual management of emotions (or how a person controls their emotions in the workplace). The second approach highlighted interactions that occur in the service occupations in which emotional labor is most common (Hochschild 1983; 2009; Rafaeli and Sutton 1990; Williams 2006). In other words, this literature tends to emphasize interpersonal emotion management or how a person attempts to control other people's emotions (Rogalin and Hirshfield 2013).

When writing about working with emotions, emotional labor, emotional work, or working on emotions in the context of the profession of a sales representative, one should, first of all, refer to the concept of Arlie Hochschild. In her understanding, emotion is a biologically defined sense. "It is how we know our relationship with the world and thus it plays a key role in the survival of human beings in group life" (Hochschild 2009:238). Expressing the right emotion serves not only to adjust to social circumstances but also to change our emotional state. Emotions, in Hochschild's opinion, play a signaling function, they show us our position in the world and define relationships towards others and towards our goals, motives, and interests. "Emotional experience is an amalgamation of how we feel, how we would like to feel, how we classify feelings, and how we express them" (Kemper 2008:380). The way we feel is determined by our assessment of the situation. In turn, assessment of the situation is influenced by structural elements such as social class, occupation, gender, age, and cultural aspects such as "rules of feeling" and "rules of expression." It is all done to comply with specific standards of a given community, including the organization. Sales representatives, just like the professional groups surveyed by Hochschild (flight attendants and debt collectors), actively manage their feelings to adapt their identities to the requirements of the professions in the area of contact with customers. They do emotional labor managing their emotions to be good workers. Emotional work is defined here as the ability to modify or change emotions as required by the employer. Thanks to emotional work, an individual reveals the appropriate (desired in a given situation) emotions. When working with emotions, we use a number of techniques to facilitate feeling and expressing appropriate behaviors. And so we

do: 1) work on the body, changing our physiological reactions to a given situation; 2) superficial actions, that is, we use external gestures leading to the feeling of emotions signaled in the expressed gestures; 3) deep actions to evoke specific feelings that, in the perception of an individual, should be shown in a given situation; 4) cognitive work through which a person evokes thoughts and ideas associated with a certain emotion to emerge (see: Hochschild 1983; 2009).

Moreover, emotional work can take two forms: *surface acting* and *deep acting*. Surface emotional labor involves changing emotional expression (external action) without changing the emotion felt (e.g., an employee smiles at a client, co-worker, or boss, although they experience emotions other than content or joy). Although the emotions of the employee do not change, their expression is consistent with the accepted standards of the work. The employee "puts on a mask" when interacting with their clients (Springer and Oleksa 2017:607). Deep action, on the other hand, occurs when an individual tries to change a feeling by changing its determinants, such as the mental construct or evaluation that gave rise to the feeling, and basic physiological factors such as muscle tone and heart rate (Kemper 2005:380; cf. Hochschild 1983; 2009). Deep emotional labor is about changing the emotions you feel by adopting a specific way of thinking about a situation. It is an internal work, where the individual eventually feels the desired emotions and expresses them. The expression is natural. It is not a mask put on for the needs of a given interaction, but an internally felt emotional state. The employee modifies their internal experiences adequately to the desired situation. By performing deep work, they evoke emotions that are beneficial for the goals of the organization in which they work (Springer and Oleksa 2017:607).

Those two forms of emotional work differ from each other in terms of the activation of different emotional regulation strategies (see: Gross 1998; Grandey 2000). In the case of deep work, the employee takes regulatory actions that anticipate the emergence of emotions, while in the case of surface work, we deal with correcting emotions that have already arisen. It is a kind of pretending emotions and hiding real feelings (cf. Lee and Brotheridge 2011). Sales representatives who enter into short-term relationships with the client will more often use surface emotional work (see: Springer and Oleksa 2017), expressing appropriate (desired in a sales situation) emotions and suppressing their actual ones (Szczygieł et al, 2009).

Summing up, it can be stated that, according to Hochschild, in various organizations or other workplaces, we deal with certain rules of the system, which is a component of people's emotional labor (Hochschild 2009:2). And the employee's emotional labor consists of arousing or suppressing certain emotions they feel in accordance with the mission and goal of the organization (Hochschild 2009:5-89). Managing emotions means actively attempting to change a pre-existing emotional state (Hochschild 2009:238). Performing emotional labor, although desirable by the employer, can cause negative outcomes for employees (see: Hochschild 1983; 2009; Grandey 2000; Brotheridge and Grandey 2002; Johnson and Spector 2007; Szczygieł et al. 2009).

The Elements of Sales Representatives' Work in the Context of Working with Emotions

Looking at the work of a sales representative, it is easy to notice that it is a job in which interactions with other people are of importance. It is the nature

of the interactions with customers, co-workers, and direct and indirect superiors that determines the specificity of the sales representative's work situation. In their statements, the participants emphasize all activities that build and maintain the relationships with the clients. Contact with other people is also an important factor in choosing this profession and affects the dynamics of work. By interacting with the client, the sales representative takes the appropriate role and controls their emotions. The emotional work that takes place when interacting with the client is conscious and controlled. Sales representatives learn the emotional manipulation strategy during a series of training, which is one of the distinguishing features of their work. Below, I will refer to selected elements determining the specificity of a sales representative's work. In the opinion of the interviewees, working with emotions is mainly influenced by working conditions and interactions they undertake. Work is a process. It is considered in relation to social life as a constantly ongoing process of "becoming" in the sense of the successive shaping and transforming of the subjective definition of oneself and society (Konecki 1988:226). The work of a sales representative requires cooperation. This means that in the work process it is important to coordinate, manage, and cooperate even with individuals dispersed in time and space in order to meet the group and individual goals. Rules of operation and work contexts are established. Actions are taken, including sequences of actions (cf. articulation work), that require adjustment to the organizational reality to achieve the desired result (see: Strauss 1988).

Working Conditions

One of the main reasons behind undertaking the job at hand is salary.

Well, of course, money is important and necessary. After all, we all work for money. I'm on commission, I get a kind of bonus from the activity and quarterly sales growth. If the company exceeds the assumed profit in the financial year, both I and all marketing receive a bonus. Anyway, it is one of the terms of the contract, a great privilege in these times. [man, 38-year-old, sales representative, electronics industry]

Salary is a classic motivator that encourages people to work more effectively and efficiently and to climb the ladder of career advancement. The research of Kopertyńska confirms the results of my research. In the group of 60 salespeople surveyed by Kopertyńska, 74% of respondents considered wages to be the most motivating factor. The respondents equally recognized wage components such as base salary, team bonus, and commission bonus as the most important motivators (Kopertyńska 2009:75-76). It should be noted here that the possibility of obtaining high remuneration in Polish reality is one of the main reasons for taking up employment as a pharmaceutical or medical representative by people graduating from medical studies, including doctors and pharmacists. The salaries of doctors in Poland are often much lower than the salaries of medical sales representatives.

I know the sales representatives earn quite a lot, especially pharmaceuticals like myself [laughs], but we work hard. I have to work to keep the level. I got used to and probably my wife also got used to living on a certain level. It would be hard to give it up now and return to the learned profession. [man, 44-year-old, sales representative]

Finances and other material resources (e.g., a company car, laptops, health and pension insurance, material awards, business trips, holidays) offered

by organizations employing sales representatives are factors not only encouraging to work, but also maintaining or breaking the bond with the organization.

> This type of job allows me to earn more money, and it gives me satisfaction and willingness to work here. [woman, 37-year-old, sales representative, medical industry]

The informants linked the amount of remuneration with the prestige resulting from work in a specific industry or organization:

> very nice working conditions, because those were the times, it was the 2000s...you can say that uhm if someone worked in the alcohol industry in those times, you can say the first league, the best, the best money. You drove, you drove, so to speak, the best company cars and, in general, the working conditions were really uhm definitely the best. [man, 42-year-old, sales representative, spirits industry]

Identification with the workplace, the organization for which the sales representative works, is visible on two levels. The first is external (surface) identification, which is expressed primarily through the external appearance of the employee and is often an element imposed by the employer. Sales representatives usually receive guidelines on how to look. The standards of external appearance often apply to clothing, makeup, hairstyles, and jewelry. An item of clothing is a type of mask worn to perform a given job. By putting on the "business" attire, the employee takes a professional role that determines the ways of managing emotions and influences the emotions arising in interactions. The uniform even determines the necessity to perform surface emotional work. Acting as a sales representative, the employee puts on the official outfit along with patterns of desired gestures and behaviors.

The second level is internal (deep) identification, which requires work on oneself. It is expressed, among other things, in identifying with the company for which the sales representative works. When an employee becomes a part of the company, when they internalize its values, norms, adopt an organizational culture, then we have to do with a strong identification. Deep identification of sales representatives with the company is reflected, among others, in recommending the company's products to friends and acquaintances, as well as in using those products on their own. The sales representative considers the products of the company for which they work to be good and recommendable. This happens even if they did not have a positive opinion about the products sold before and their attitude towards them was negative. According to the thesis that you can only sell what you believe in (cf. Schweingruber and Berns 2003), sales representatives work on changing their attitudes. The bigger the change, the stronger the identification with the company. Identification also manifests itself in the difficulties with separating work from private life. It is particularly visible in the group of sales representatives dealing with the sale of financial products such as insurance and policies. The interlocutors indicate the emergence of certain habits that, acquired at work, affect the nature of social contacts outside work. It happens unconsciously, which indicates a strong internalization of organizational values and norms and deep emotional work. The work of a sales representative for financial reasons, but also certain freedom as to working time, implementation of tasks and the possibility of self-determination of individual, priority goals, becomes a highly addictive activity, "Today, I cannot imagine myself in a different sys-

tem, this job is becoming a habit" (male, 33-year-old, sales representative).

A change of attitudes also takes place concerning emotions felt and desired by the employer. The rationalizations made by the informants prove the strong identification and the emotional work performed. An example is offered by an interviewee working in a company perceived negatively on the labor market. It is a kind of justification for working for an organization that does not have a good reputation on the market.

> Yes. I'm not ashamed of the place, I'm not ashamed of the company where I work. Uh... I don't know. Uhm... It's not a problem for me whether to tell someone where I work or to think badly about this company. If I hear some bad opinions among, I don't know, the market about this company, I can say I'm also struggling. Because, I don't know, I think it should be done. Besides, this is my employer. [woman, 28-year-old, sales representative]

The informant makes a rationalization, which can be described after Adie Nelson and Ronald Lambert (2001) as an emotional change.[2] She proudly emphasizes her identification with the company. Loyalty is a socially perceived positive trait. Therefore, although the company has a bad image, its employee does not show the emotions of shame. Not showing shame does not mean that the emotion of shame has not arisen (see: Scheff 1988; 1990; 2000; 2003). Due to

the poor social reception of the workplace, the interlocutor has developed a rationalization that protects against negative feelings. This is one way to deal with the emotion of shame. It is a defense against social withdrawal and breaking social ties. Another example of rationalization is provided in the quote below which simultaneously shows the feeling of an emotional bond with the company.

> And I felt connected with that company, and I felt connected with the uhm brand, uhm, and I wasn't ashamed of any of those… I mean, I felt emotionally connected. I believed in what I was doing, I believed in those products, I believed in those people, and so on. [woman, 32-year-old, sales representative]

The bond with the organization is also maintained as a result of the emergence of the emotions of pride (see: Shott 1979; Goleman 1997; Williams and DeSteno 2008; Pawłowska 2020). In this case, of pride resulting from belonging to an organization and professional group:

> I believe we are number one. And, and our facilities also prove it, that is, I feel good being a representative of company X...in general, I just feel good in my skin being in this company. [woman, 26-year-old, sales representative, office supplies]

Strong identification is visible in statements such as:

> we are one big family. [woman, 30-year-old, sales representative]

> we are here to be successful as a company. [man, 34-year-old, sales representative]

> I like my job as it is. Even while on vacation, I think about my clients. [man, 29-year-old, sales representative]

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[2] Adie Nelson and Ronald Lambert distinguished three neutralization techniques: emotional obfuscation, changing places, and defining truth. Emotional obfuscation is a technique that consists of seeking justification by referring to the emotional reaction of the environment. The authors argue that neutralization techniques can help "save face" not only in the immediate context of a specific act (see: Sykes and Matza 1979:498) but also when no guilt or shame is felt. They allow us to avoid internal contradictions (see: Nelson and Lambert 2001:84-87).

Deep identification with the organization results from working with emotions, including the conversion of negative emotions into positive ones. The longer the work experience in the organization, the deeper the identification. The salary of a sales representative largely depends on the sales volume. Organizations often determine the level of sales, the performance of which determines employment. Unfortunately, such activities do not allow for building ties with the organization, as well as for deep emotional work. Sales representatives in such companies rely on the surface emotional work that they learn during the training offered to them. This arouses negative emotions among the informants, causing not only a lack of identification with the workplace, but also uncertainty, stress, and frustration.

> I can never be sure of tomorrow. I don't know when I will be fired. [man, 31-year-old, sales representative, mobile telephone industry]

> We are just bars. At the weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings, the boss shows only the bars [charts with sales results], uhm, I am purple. As soon as the sale gets worse, you get a hard time. If it is good, you will not hear praise. So if it's bad, they'll throw you out. You work until your bar falls below the magic line. [woman, 27-year-old, sales representative, cosmetics company]

When sales representatives start working for the organization, they enter a new pattern of social relations. They conform to the rules and standards of a given company (surface identification). They internalize the values proclaimed by the employer. This process takes place in the sphere of the employee's unconscious actions. The sequential nature of the rituals, which are most often visible during training, causes the employee to become a person acting according to a specific pattern. This allows the company to manage not only the actions taken by the employee but also the emotions that arise during the interactions. Consequently, this leads to the creation of a feeling of strong identification of the employee with the organization, which, in turn, leads to the development of behaviors based on positive emotions, such as, for example, pride, complacency, satisfaction, or joy. The "learning" and application of a specific repertoire of emotional behaviors are sequential, unconscious, and relatively permanent.

Interactions with Customers

One of the main reasons for working as a sales representative, apart from the financial one, is the willingness to work with people and have contact with the client.

> My motives were very simple—I just love working with and among people. In this job, I feel like the proverbial fish in the water. [woman, 42-year-old, sales representative]

> Well, I mean, very nice, very nice job. Contact with people, first of all. [man, 32-year-old, sales representative, spirit industry]

The main responsibilities of sales representatives include customer service—collecting orders, field trips, contact with customers, researching customer needs, reporting customer visits, sales control, keeping contracts on time, presentation of new goods, and promotion. An important element of working with the client is solving the client's problems related to, inter alia, complaints, dissatisfaction with products, lack of skills in handling products.

> You know. Sometimes someone comes and your complaint is refused. In principle, it can be accepted, but the fewer complaints, the company has fewer problems...I always try to be loyal and reliably perform my duties. [woman, 36-year-old, sales representative]

You can notice that sales representatives use different ways of contacting customers. Some people prefer to be contacted by phone, which is usually sporadic. Direct contact is maintained with clients with whom the representative cooperates intensively. Most representatives find this type of contact better because it allows them to get closer to the client and get to know them better.

> As I mentioned, what matters is the long-term nature of trade agreements. The most satisfied ones never leave me and I am still learning. In this job, you can still learn a lot about people, specific tastes, and expectations. [man, 42-year-old, sales representative]

Interestingly, there are also different ways of approaching customers depending on whether they are regular, new, or strategic clients. Strategic clients are often invited to participate in various corporate events, team-building trips, and training. An important task of a sales representative is to represent the company outside, for example, during fairs and other promotional events. The representative must also keep a close eye on the competition. The duties of the sales representative manager (e.g., regional sales manager) include coordination, supervision, and evaluation of employees' activities. The manager has to make sure that the representatives keep reports on activities and they have to carry out administrative and office work themselves. Managers say they are responsible for almost all sales in the company. The common task of managers and their representatives is to take care of the company's image and monitor competition. Another task of the manager is "coaching" and the control of suppliers' activities, including verification of promises made by contractors to sales representatives. Some regional sales managers, and even some representatives, are admitted to the recruitment processes. The studied professional group also has additional duties, such as participation in training, which may result from an employment contract.

The sales representative-customer relationship is an important factor influencing the emergence and management of emotions. Sales representatives declare having respect and sympathy towards their clients, and such interactions bring satisfaction. The informants talk about positive relations with customers, which may be the result of positively remembered transactions between the sales representative and "one's good customers," mutual satisfaction with the transaction between the interlocutor and the client, multiple contacts with certain clients, which increased the sales representative's turnover, an increase in the level of trust based on the economic exchange between clients and respondents. The respect mentioned in the narratives may result from the fact that sales representatives are obliged to declare an attitude of respect, and even esteem, towards their clients.

By internalizing the norms and values imposed by the employer, the informants manage their emotions in such a way as to feel the emotions desired in the customer-sales representative encounter. However, working longer for a given company or in the profession of a sales representative in general, they build lasting relationships with the client, turning superficial actions into deep ones. They start to like their customers, becoming patient and cheerful with them. The deep emotional work done is the source

of friendship and even marriage. Some respondents pointed to the fact that their clients were treated as their mothers or grandmothers:

> I really like Mrs. Jadzia. She is like my grandmother. Although she sometimes complains and does not always take what she ordered, changes orders, I know that I would let her do more. It doesn't make me angry, but it rather moves me. When she looks at me like that and says, "Sorry, I messed something up again," I only have warm feelings for her. [male, age 26, sales representative, food industry]

A true feeling of positive emotions is not an interactional game and is the evidence of deep work with emotions. Such actions, by the way, allow the sales representative to achieve their own professional goals, including achieving a certain profit.

Moreover, the interviewees indicate the types of clients and the strategies applied towards them. In the quote below, the interlocutor dichotomically divides clients into reticent versus talkative and nice versus unpleasant. At the same time, there is a kind of emotional self-defense that consists of preventing a negative emotion from occurring. The emotional veil makes the informant add that she has rather nice clients because she would not talk to others.

> Customers are different, reticent, talkative, nice, unpleasant. Of course, we have to talk to everyone, but there are exceptions. After all, we do not have to endure rudeness and aggression, and such cases have happened. I have never encountered this personally. I tend to have nice clients. [woman, 26-year-old, sales representative]

A similar mechanism is seen in the next quote. Moreover, we can easily notice the emerging emo-

tions of pride and satisfaction. The interlocutor emphasizes the fact that he has communication skills and knowledge of negotiation techniques.

> Well, it is different. There are different buyers in Poland. Some can talk to a person, they are very positive. There are those from whom you have to draw every piece of information…Such an attitude that everything is always wrong. It takes so long to talk and convince. Fortunately, I have no problem with that. I can talk as needed. [man, 23-year-old, sales representative]

Sales representatives emphasize the positive attitude of customers and a pleasant atmosphere when making transactions and signing contracts. They indicate the direct and unofficial nature of the interaction.

> In those stores where they know me, that's great. It's like, " Hello, Mr. [name], welcome" and we have a great chat. It's generally nice. [man, 25-year-old, sales representative]

> I was called there Sunshine, Darling, Treasure, Love, everything that you can think of. I've even been called Pumpkin. In the beginning, it was a shock for me when I started cooperating with those stores. Now I'm used to it and I know it's what it is. I stopped being formal and instead of "Mrs." [the interlocutor shows the quotation marks], I just say "Hi Ladies." You can see that they want to talk this way, you have to adapt to make it nice and pleasant. [man, 23-year-old, sales representative]

The statement shows the need to work with emotions and to tune in to clients. The commercial exchange situation forces the sales representative to change the behavior so that they can adapt to a spe-

cific customer. Changing behavior involves adapting a specific repertoire of gestures and emotions. It happens that during the whole working day, dealing with different clients, a sales representative uses different patterns of behavior and arouses different, specific emotions. Working with emotions is therefore continuous and guided by interactions with a given client.

When talking about customer relations, sales representatives refer to relationships with female customers. This is especially true in the food and cosmetics industries. It is more often noticeable among sales representatives selling directly to smaller stores, called by them "retail stores" (*in vivo* code). The interlocutors serving large-format stores or wholesalers do not indicate this type of dependence and do not divide customers by gender. This may be because more women work in retail, so those sales representatives have more contact with female customers. Managers of hypermarkets and wholesalers are more often men, perhaps hence the lack of a distinction between customers in terms of gender:

> you have to talk to the employees of those stores. Most are women. I think the sales representative is a guy after all. It makes it a lot easier. Contact with a woman is always something like that, that's my impression. Most of the representatives, however, are men. And there is something about it, it's easier to be there. Mrs. Jadzia, Mrs. Asia, a tittle-tattle, and somehow it goes on. We'll have a good laugh together and it's fun. [man, 28-year-old, sales representative]

> It's nice with women, but women are so much more focused on such things, such crap. And they are less able to generally say what there is in that store and what is missing...Our company cooperates with

S. Stores. There were already S. Stores during the Polish People's Republic. Well, this is a specific type of store. And this is my observation. Other staff works there. Women, because only women work there, I have not met any man working there, they are very specific. In all private stores, when I arrive, it's always "Mr." and there it's by your name. And I come, you know, I'm a young man, and it's different, too. For those women, it may be a sensation that a young boy is visiting. [man, 23-year-old, sales representative]

In dealing with the customer, especially in the case of sales representatives with a shorter experience, there is a surface emotional labor. Negative emotions do not appear in emotional expression. The informants emphasize that in contact with the client they cannot show anger, irritation, or impatience. They have to do emotional labor to maintain a good and lasting relationship with the client. Their remuneration and position in the organization depend on it. An emotional mask is put on that allows them to make a transaction.

> I have already told him six times. I told him what it was about and he asks again. I cannot show irritation. I have to patiently answer this question again. [man, 36-year-old, sales representative]

The informants talk about "politically correct behavior" (*in vivo* code), which means that social bonds are durable. At the same time, it indicates taking actions related to surface emotional work.

> Oh, a few have already upset me. This is life, it's hard to expect an ideal. I am learning to control my emotions. You have to control your emotions, it is useful in life—in fact, in any situation. This job taught me to be politically correct. [man, 42-year-old, sales representative]

Sales representatives learn how to work with emotions that arouse during interaction with the client at training.

> Yes, we have a lot of training...They mainly teach communication and negotiation, how to deal with a difficult client. After all, if the client is picky and whining, I won't tell him, "Get lost." Sometimes I want to shout or say something unpleasant, but I can't offend the client. The goal is long-term cooperation, and I know that. Therefore, in such situations, I learned to be silent, sometimes nodding, and then I calmly make the offer again. Yes, that's how it's done. [man, 32-year-old, sales representative]

And also during their work.

> I used to worry when a client came and he immediately shouted and was dissatisfied. I was taking it personally. I was worried. Today it's different. Customers often come and say that they have been deceived because the price is different. Sometimes they challenge the company. I try not to listen to it. I explain the difference in the bill and that's it. It used to be that I felt like crying. I would go home and yell at my daughter. Today I'm calmer. I got used to it. The manager often says, "Don't worry. Do your thing." And so I do. [woman, 41-year-old, working in the customer service department of one of the hypermarkets]

The techniques of operation learned during the training are checked in direct interactional situations. This is when the actual work with emotions takes place.

> I always try to focus on the feelings and needs of a specific person. I take into account the preferences of my clients—in fact, they should be satisfied!...I am learning to control my own emotions!…I ignore someone's ignorance and rudeness that overwhelm us. This is my emotional safety valve. [man, field sales representative]

Surface emotional labor, as a result of permanent and long-term interactions with the client, is transformed into deep emotional labor. The condition for such a change to occur is positive interactions with customers. Sales representatives gradually learn to control their emotions by actually feeling them.

Interactions with Supervisors

Another factor distinguishing the work of a sales representative in the context of their professional interactions is that the employer creates conditions of relative independence and freedom. It is also another factor influencing the employment of a sales representative.

The work of a sales representative is mainly fieldwork. Usually, the employee is not present in the office, but on their way, and during the working day they change their location several times; although there are also such working days when a sales representative performs some of their duties at the headquarters of the organization for which they work. Among the representatives with whom I have spoken, there were two types of work organization methods: 1) "own workshop"—the representative organizes their working time, arranges the day plan, sets the number of visits, et cetera, and 2) a top-down work plan. Some sales representatives indicate that their workplace is a car. There is a belief about the lack of one's desk and performing the work in a car or one's home. However, in my opinion, the car is not as much a workplace as it is a tool of work. It allows one to travel long distances, and thus allows one to work. Among the group of sales representa-

tives performing their duties only outside the workplace and contacting the employer and colleagues only by phone or e-mail, the phenomenon of social alienation may occur. Such an employee is outside the "organizational life" of the workplace. In this group, as with remote workers from home, problems of alienation may arise. This may lead to a lower identification of the employee with the company or to psychological issues. Moreover, it is difficult for such an employee to estimate the real working time. Such a sales representative had to reevaluate their social role. Until now, a person has acted as an employee when they were at the workplace. Being an employee was thus referred to, among others, as the time spent in a given workplace. An individual in the role of a sales representative must function outside the workplace. The flexibility of the forms of employment, working in extra-dimensional working hours have caused the individual to perceive oneself as the self-employee. Such relocating of the role, overlapping of the role with other roles, such as the one of husband/wife, father/mother, may result in frustration and changes in the personality sphere.

The creation of conditions of relative freedom, independence, and decision-making also applies to the sales representative-superior relationship. Contacts with immediate superiors are limited due to the work system. The lack of frequent interactions and meetings with managers is perceived positively by the sales representatives. The communication of sales representatives and their immediate superiors is usually indirect. The interlocutors indicated that there was no possibility of direct, frequent communication with the main superiors due to, for example, the location of the company's headquarters outside Poland. In the branches located in Poland, the management policy of the main shareholder is implemented and thus the organizational culture

is incorporated, including the ways of working and its organization. The informants emphasized that sometimes it happens in an inconsiderate way, without taking into account the specificity of Polish work and culture, which becomes a source of negative emotions.

> Nobody is interested in the fact that sales are fewer in November. The plan is only slightly lower than in December. It's paranoia. They have Thanksgiving in November in the States, we have All Saints' Day here. People don't buy cosmetics from us then [laughs]. It has been raised many times, and the Americans are doing their job anyway. Do you believe that the plans [sales plans] arrive from the States! [man, 32-year-old, sales representative]

Interactions with superiors, as indicated by the informants, are a source of many emotions, including fellow feeling, trust, satisfaction, and admiration:

> I hardly see the boss. He trusts me. I am in the field rather than on the ground here...If necessary, I'm mainly contacted by phone or e-mail. But, as I say, I trust him and he trusts me. This freedom suits me. [man, 31-year-old, sales representative]

and fear, stress, anger, and even mutual hostility:

> We don't like each other; it's normal, very correct. She doesn't like me and I don't like her. Nobody likes her anyway. [man, 41-year-old, sales representative]

Sales representatives are often given free rein as to how they work. It is visible in the case of sales representatives working in small enterprises with Polish capital and employing one to three salespeople. The informants point to the pros and cons of such a situation. They praise situations when the boss

does not interfere with what they do and how they work, but, at the same time, emphasize that they are often on their own. In the absence of a back office, they feel the burden of the decisions they make. According to sales representatives, personality traits play the greatest role in relations with the manager. Some managers are involved in their work to build a good atmosphere in the company. Such managers are open to the needs of their subordinates. Some managers prefer a system of reprimands, impose their management method, which makes it difficult to create informal relations between employees and to work in the company.

> The boss is in Busko and I am here in Lodz with two colleagues. We settle accounts once a month. Then we go to the company's headquarters. And if in the meantime, there is a phone call that you have to arrive, you start to think about what happened, what is going on, what did you screw up. Then it may not be nice. But, such situations are rare. [man, 37-year-old, sales representative]

It should be noted that the interviewees, when talking about their relations with superiors, often did not mention their immediate superiors. There were narratives in which the interlocutors claimed that there was no boss, and when asked, they indicated that the boss was somewhere, but far away, and they rarely see him. When talking about their work, sales representatives most often pointed to interactions with the company they work for, and as such the company can be seen as a supervising unit. Thus, it can be concluded that interactions with superiors are not frequent and that they are horizontal in nature. The story about the superiors appeared in the context of the sales representatives' job evaluation. The fact that a manager was traveling with a sales representative all day following a certain

"track" (*in vivo* code) and observing their actions while interacting with customers or driving a company car was indicated most frequently.

> When you got in with this sales representative, the point was that he wouldn't make some nasty pranks while driving a car covered with company signs. Like forcing the right of way, behaving vulgarly, inelegantly, et cetera. He also had to present the company's culture, which was very important. [man, 52-year-old, former sales representative, manager]

In their statements, the interlocutors emphasized the freedom of action and "freedom" (*in vivo* code). Freedom is a symbol. It is a keyword that awakes the imagination, stimulates emotions, and, consequently, directs the intellect to actions following the expectations of the organization. Even if freedom is only apparent, the aspirations defined by this word were strongly internalized by the sales representatives.

> What matters to me now is that I can make my own decisions…I have freedom. [man, 34-year-old, sales representative]

> I feel so free in this job, at least I'm always somewhere else. [man, 26-year-old, sales representative]

> It's cool about this job that I know how much I have to work to earn. If I don't feel like it, I can let it go. One day more, the next less. And contact with people. [man, 37-year-old, sales representative]

Freedom is also a motivator for effective work, including working with emotions. It is an important factor in the modern labor market.

> If someone offered me a job for more money, but I would have to give up the freedom I have here,

for example, if I could not plan for myself every next working day, I probably wouldn't take it. [man, 43-year-old, sales representative]

Today, traditional incentives such as high wages, bonuses, and promotion opportunities are no longer sufficient. Employees expect a flexible working day, the ability to manage their working time, tasks that are challenging, but, at the same time, that do not require maximum dedication. There are a lot of discussions about work-life balance. For the informants, as well as the entire Y and Z generations (see: Giddens 2006; Rogozińska-Pawełczyk 2014; Wiktorowicz and Warwas 2016), it is important to feel freedom understood as freedom of working time, freedom of speech, tolerance, and an orientation towards diversity and individualism. In a given organization, generation Y expects an atmosphere of uniqueness and importance of the goals pursued. They value partnership relations between the employee and the supervisor. All this enables them to work as a sales representative

We all call each other by name. We often go to various training courses and that's probably why. My boss? I've called him Jack for a long time. Anyway, we've known each other for so many years. [man, 34-year-old, sales representative]

Interactions with Colleagues

The last group of factors described in this article and influencing working with emotions in the case of sales representatives concerns the relationship between a sales representative and their colleagues. In most cases, those are positive relationships that evoke fellow feelings and even friendship. They are based on the emotions of trust, mutual respect, satisfaction, as well as on help and support, although,

as the interviewees emphasize, in some organizations, contacts with other sales representatives are limited to accidental meetings in hotels during overnight work, the so-called "business and social contacts during the tour" (*in vivo* code) and meetings during various types of organizational rituals, including training. What seems to be most frequent in interactions between colleagues was loyalty.

In my company there work young people aged 20 to 40. They are very cool and we meet a lot after work. There is no envy among us. We try to help and support each other. [woman, 26-years-old, sales representative]

I keep in touch with many people. They are my friends. Those are the people I can meet for a BBQ with a glass of beer and chat. [man, 37-years-old, sales representative]

Contacts at work, although limited, are extended to the non-professional sphere, resulting in many years of friendships:

such a friendly trip, because it was not organized at all. Three friends from the company. We left, took a boat, borrowed a sailboat, swam on the lakes, fished, drank beer, talked about everything...But, with such complete ease...Usually, after our trip, which was no secret in the company, it was known that we were leaving, and Marysia came to us and said, "Well, I heard that you are going, when you are going, remember to take a camera and write me 10 sentences" [photos and information about the trip were published in the company's newsletter]. [man, 52-year-old, former sales representative, manager]

Although sales representatives help each other and support each other on the road, while staying in

different hotels, they rarely talk about situations directly related to their business activities.

> But, no one revealed their secrets. No one is to sell some cool information. [man, 34-year-old, sales representative]

Competition is the factor that differentiates sales representatives due to the nature of interactions. Some respondents point to its destructive nature. In particular, older sales representatives emphasized the lack of mutual understanding and trust.

> Very good, I like everyone very much and everyone likes me uhm and it all looks very nice. It's nice, nice, but there is always a hidden agenda. It turns out that sales representatives are like wolves. One looks at the other as a victim, as if he were just to steal X's company, trick him, use him, and leave him. Well, that's what sales representatives are. [man, 44-year-old, sales representative]

Competition is also an incentive to work more intensively. Many interviewees indicated competition as a factor that directly or indirectly influenced the level of sales and the achievement of the assumed goals:

> this work always gives some satisfaction. There is always some rivalry between us here in the region, always if we meet, we know who sold the most, who was the best in this and that, if I am the best in a certain period, there is always such a moment of satisfaction and further motivation for this work and, and actions. [man, 27-year-old, sales representative]

> The rivalry is very big, the rivalry exists, of course, nobody wants to be the worst. First of all, it's the basic thing, but it has such a positive dimension. It

motivates to action. [man, 30-year-old, sales representative]

Competition is an important motivational factor and contributes to deep emotional work. For managing employees' emotions, it is an important method of action, leading to satisfaction, pride, as well as increasing employees' identification with the organization to which they belong. Many interviewees emphasized pride in their individual or team achievements, referring to the implementation of the sales plan assumed by the organization and obtaining material benefits as a result.

> There is a ranking of the best results and...the top 15 people who achieved the best results go on a trip. This year they were on the Caribbean islands. I can proudly say that I was one of them. Next year it will be a trip to Colorado in the United States. It's a lot of fun. You have to try it. [woman, 26-year-old, sales representative, office supplies]

> The competitions were amazing. It was amazing. And it motivated people a lot. Every month, those results were presented in the newsletter and were announced, the heads of the regions were emailed... and each boss...was obliged to provide that data to employees. Hear up, your region...is second. We have to try...Such turning on, charging of the batteries. [man, 52-year-old, former sales representative, manager]

The competition allows for activities in which social actors can reflect on themselves (see: Strauss 1959). The activities of sales representatives taking place within a group context are relational in nature and are produced in the process of mutual communication and negotiation of meanings (see: Strauss 1959; 1993). It is this level of activity that directly influenc-

es both the interactions with other colleagues and the emotions aroused in the process. It controls the emotional work, directing it to deep activities desired by a given organization.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to show four factors influencing and shaping interactions undertaken by sales representatives in the context of their work with emotions. Adapting the perspective of symbolic interactionism, I indicated the mutual nature of interactions and, as a result, the formation and management of emotions. I emphasized the two-way nature of the interaction by referring to the negotiation of meanings and the interpretation of gestures. Contrary to other sociological concepts, symbolic interactionism emphasizes the communication processes in an organization, relations between organizational positions, including relations between the identities of organizational actors, and organizational and organizing activities (see: Konecki 2007:8-9). Social reality, as emerging in the course of interactions, is fluid. All social structures arise in the process, in action (see: Strauss 1993).

The sales representatives in this study are mainly young people for whom satisfying the needs such as owning an apartment, a car, wearing high-end clothes is vital. In the interviews, they emphasized that the work of a sales representative is associated with frequent trips and staying away from home for a long time, therefore, it is more suitable for younger people, who did not yet start a family. Singles find it much easier to work in rapidly changing conditions, requiring constant availability and mobility. Sales representatives remaining in relationships must count on the understanding of partners and their trust.

As a result of much training and organizational indoctrination, sales representatives quickly learn how to build a relationship with the customer, including surface emotional work. They know which emotions are desired by the organization and it is a condition of obtaining maximum benefits and profits. By building lasting relationships with the client, they replace surface actions with deep ones. Activities based on deep emotional work not only allow them to pursue their professional goals, including achieving a specific profit, but also shape the direction and nature of the interactions undertaken by negotiating, defining, and giving meanings to objects in their social reality. Interactions are a platform for sales representatives' activities. They have a different direction and character. They are a source of emotions, but also a platform for negotiating meanings, including emotions. The sales representatives' goal is to build trust between them and the customer. This can be done either due to surface action—giving the impression of a patient and serious person, or in the course of deep action, as a result of which a person becomes more patient and serious, and thus no longer has to "make an impression" (Hochschild 2009:159).

It should be noted that the ways of dealing with emotions among sales representatives are a derivative of the perspective they adopt regarding the nature of their work. They are the result of the work performed by the sales representatives during the training. They are intended and learned activities. Due to participation in initial training, even novice sales representatives quickly develop strategies to deal with positive and negative emotions, which they effectively manage.

The main research technique was unstructured and in-depth interviews in the case of which we are

dealing with someone's experiences. This time the data were primarily made of the stories about the work of sales representatives. In their narratives, they shared information regarding emotions both desired and felt in their profession. More than once, the interviewees revealed the process of working with emotions, unconsciously pointing to surface or deep emotional work. They talked about "saving face," which allows them to control their emotions, but also their clients, as well as pointed to the moment when surface actions turned into deep ones—when, for example, due to constant interactions, they started to genuinely like the client and could no longer be cross with them. They talked about becoming more patient and understanding. Of course, as researchers, we can never be certain to what extent the story told by the interlocutors indeed re-flects their experiences. The same goes for examining emotions. Therefore, in this study, I also relied on observations—to contextualize the data collected due to conducting interviews.

The activities of sales representatives presented in the article referred to working conditions, interactions with their superiors and colleagues, and, importantly, interactions with customers. In the context of working with emotions, the situation of sales representatives may not be significantly different from other professions, especially in terms of relations with superiors. Thus, I hope that this article will contribute to a wider interest in working with emotions and encourage other researchers to do studies in this area among representatives of other professions.

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Freelance Workers—Experiencing a Career Outside an Organization

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Abstract: This article focuses on the issues of everyday work as a self-employed, professional freelancer in Poland. The appearance of this specific category of workers on the labor market is connected with certain major changes on the economic, technological, and socio-cultural levels. The career of a freelancer is sometimes considered to be an antithesis of a corporate career. The key points are: working on one's own, functioning outside the traditional organizational structures, HR management and supervision, promotion procedures, corporate career paths, et cetera. For a freelancer, the organization is not "an employer," but rather "a client" or "a business partner." The manager of the organization is not "his boss" and the employees are not his "colleagues." As we can observe, most of the typical boundaries of a career are blurred here and that is one of the reasons why it arouses curiosity as an unusual phenomenon. The article aims to present a sociological perspective regarding the career of a freelancer in Poland. A framework of symbolic interactionism and grounded theory were applied to the author's research (conducted in 2009-14) on which the article is based. Its first part focuses on the theoretical background and the methods that were used to collect and analyze data. The second part includes some of the author's findings and conclusions on a freelance career from the interactionist perspective, as well as a discussion about the possible agreement and discrepancies between the author's understanding of freelance against the widely discussed concept of precarity.

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Do we need an organizational framework to analyze a professional career? Traditional sociology conventionally used to look at work—and career-related—issues in a vertical way (see: Becker 1952:470), that is, from the perspective of a specific profession, embedded in a specific bureaucratic structure, in the search of some "objective indicators" of social and professional advancement such as: occupational status, salary, or the position in the organization, connected with a certain scope of power (see also: Konecki 1988:226). But, as interactionists, we are entitled to observe it in a slightly wider context, knowing that, in fact, "every biography is a case-study of a career," as Hughes observed (1997:390). Nowadays, we have many opportunities to observe the emergence of new models of careers due to: (1) the market tendency to reduce labor costs and to externalize some organizational functions (Konecki 1998); (2) the rapid development of the Internet, which has simplified the opportunities of using various flexible forms of employment; and (3) the socio-cultural characteristics of the Western, postmodern society connected with the promotion of individualism and people's right to shape their life course (and their careers) in their way. A freelancer's perspective of a career and their idea of individual success significantly differ from the typical vision of climbing up the organizational structure while strictly subordinated to the rules enforced in bureaucratic organizations. It has greater similarity or closeness to the long-standing concept of a career model of "professional private practice for a fee" (see: Becker 1970:101-102). But, is not "freelance" just a new name for an old phenomenon? Barley and Kunda (2006:50-54) claim that "independent contracting" should be considered as a fourth, historical form of a professional practice, which appeared after the phases of: (1) free professionals, (2) professional firms, and (3) corporate professionals. The major difference between a "traditional free professional" (e.g., a lawyer, an architect, or a doctor) and a "today's freelancer" seems to lie in the far-reaching "democratization" of the access to independent work: there is no need to graduate from a specific school or to get a license (from a bureaucratic, professional organization) that would give one the "right to practice" as a freelancer. There are no legal regulations or standards for freelance work. The author's study showed that freelancers consider themselves as a rather egalitarian social category (unlike "traditional free professionals"), in which the form of work (i.e., working independently) seems to be often more important than the job content. During his study, the author observed some kind of a professional, group identity and solidarity among freelancers that is connected with the form of their work, not only with the profession. Unlike traditional "free professionals," in some cases, the profession of a freelancer could be blurred—we can recognize a set of their professional skills, but it is difficult to name their occupation. Moreover, some of the freelancers prefer to construct their self-definitions and self-presentations on their career model, not only based on the specified occupation they are involved in ("I work as a freelancer" or: "I am a freelance journalist").

Every research project should be embedded in a specific paradigmatic tradition, related to the theoretical and methodological orientation used by the researcher. It constitutes the basic "landmarks" for a researcher, which were described as the "basic ideas" or: the "root images" by Blumer (1969:6). All of the observations mentioned in the article are based on the results of a 2009-14 study, conducted based on symbolic interactionism as a theoretical background and grounded theory as a research and

analytical strategy. From the author's point of view, these two frameworks were the most suitable for conducting research whose goal was to reconstruct the ways that individuals perceive, interpret, and experience their everyday working life. To achieve this, there was a strong need to use an approach that allowed the author to "look in the right direction," but not necessarily "say what one should see" (Woroniecka 2007:25), and that was consistent with his ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions.

The article aims to present some of the main conclusions of the study, regarding several aspects of having a professional career outside a formal organization from the perspective of an actor involved in running this kind of "smallest of small businesses" as Clinton, Totterdell, and Wood (2006) called freelance.

Literature Review and Theoretical Considerations

The author maintains Blumer's (1969:6-7, 70) dynamic vision of perceiving human society, which means that society will be understood here as "people [actors] involved in various forms of [joint] action" and social reality is perceived as an emergent and processual phenomenon (Hałas 2006:59). Secondly, I pay great attention to the central role of interaction in constructing society. Various forms of social organization are possible only by virtue of people acting and engaging in social interactions. Human life is perceived as "intersubjective in its essence" (Prus 1996:10-11) and the acting people are constantly involved in the processes of negotiating the meanings, the sense of all the norms and rules, as well as each other's identities (Piotrowski 1998:15-24). Therefore, empirically-oriented social science should be main-

ly focused on studying the wealth and the variety of human activities, interactions, while reconstructing the meanings that are assigned by them to the events from everyday life. This also applies to professional work as a social phenomenon. The definition used by the author is close to what Furmanek (2006) described as a "humanist" (or a "personalist") approach to the issue of work.

Work is one of the most important areas of our everyday activities (Hughes 1958:63). Over the centuries, the ways we work, as well as its contents and forms have undergone tremendous changes. It was understood differently in the pre-industrial era and we can find other, specific meanings of work in the industrial society, whereas, presently, we distinctly look at work. Some of the major changes were connected with the nature and the character of the dependence between the employer and the employee. Nowadays, we can observe that, in many cases, "being involved in professional work" or "having a career" does not necessarily mean "being employed." Of course, this could be perceived as both an advantage and a drawback of the contemporary labor market, as was observed by Standing (2011) in his considerations about "the precariat." It is worth mentioning that a few years ago it was one of the possible scenarios for the future of work, outlined by Beck (2000:36), who called it "the freedom of insecurity of a self-employed professional." One of the consequences of the split between "a career" and "an occupation" is the increasing importance of a so-called "boundaryless career" model (Defillippi and Arthur 1994; Mirvis and Hall 1994). A freelance career could be considered as an empirical sample of that model. The main differences between a traditional career and a boundaryless career are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. The comparison of a traditional career and a boundaryless career model.

Feature	Traditional career model	Boundaryless career model
Employer-employee relation:	job security for loyalty	employability for professional skills, performance, and flexibility
Boundaries:	one or two organizations	multiple organizations
Employee skills:	connected with the specifics of the organization	transferable
Success measures:	salary, promotion, and status	a "psychologically meaningful" job
Responsibility for career management:	organization	individual
Professional training:	formal education	based on professional experience
Career milestones:	age-related	learning- (experience-) related

Source: based on Sullivan 1999:458.

The boundaryless career model not only suits the needs of many organizations that now want to outsource or subcontract some of their operations but also responds to the needs of a growing number of participants on the labor market, who prefer to have what could be called: "a psychologically meaningful career" instead of having a so-called "regular job" with a fixed payment and a strictly defined workplace. What is also interesting about the currently observed split or separation between "employment" and "career" is that many labor market participants may even have some trouble with self-defining in the traditional terms of occupation (as mentioned above), because a definition of their work could be in some cases blurred or inadequate to the specifics of many new professions or quasi-professions. It is easy to define oneself as a bus driver or a lawyer. But, could, for example, a professional video blogger (or a YouTube content creator), who thinks of oneself as a "coolhunter," or an "influencer" in the healthy lifestyle, diet-coaching, and well-being industry call the work s/he does an "occupation"?

The author's study could be embedded in a wider context of interests, connected with the issue of having a career outside the organization. There are at least several theoretical concepts (other than the boundaryless career model) that are related to these issues which seem to look at the problem similarly. These were widely listed by Clinton and colleagues (2006:180-182) in their article about the so-called "portfolio working" in the grounded theory perspective. For example, Hall (1976) used the term "protean career," Handy (1991) preferred to call it "portfolio career," Herriot and Pemberton (1996) wrote about a "contracting career," whereas Peiperl and Baruch

(1997) used the name "post corporate career," and we can also find the name "entreployee," used by Pongratz and Voß (2001). In recent years, thanks to Standing (2011), this topic has also become one of the areas of discussion about "precarity." All of the concepts could be considered as theoretical attempts to capture and define the increase in the importance of various, self-driven career models and the so-called "flexible forms of employment." The author treats all of them as concepts at a higher level of generality which may be useful to understand the changing nature of modern careers and professional life. Nevertheless, if we want to find and explore empirical examples of having a career outside the organization, we need to "get our hands dirty in field research," as Park suggested (see: Burgess 1982:10; Prus 1996:119), and try to get insight into some everyday practices of freelance.

Data and Methods

The article is based on empirical research conducted by the author with the use of the grounded theory (GT) strategy (Glaser and Strauss 1967) for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Despite a major difference of opinions about the origins and the contemporary varieties of GT (see: Glaser 2002; Glaser and Holton 2004), the author believes that it is strongly rooted in symbolic interactionism and the Chicago tradition of conducting fieldwork. The main goal of using GT was to conduct a study that would allow the author to be close to the analyzed phenomenon, which is consistent with the main assumptions of the qualitative paradigm and a vision of doing research in the direction indicated by symbolic interactionism. The second goal of using the GT approach was to conduct the study in a way that would allow the author to keep the balance between systematically leading the research project (with the implementation of some specific data collecting techniques and coding procedures that followed the direction of the study) and maximizing the possibility of capturing the dynamics of the analyzed phenomena. The third goal was to rather generate a "fresh concept" of experiencing a career outside the organization than to verify any existing theories or models describing modern careers. The data used in the project were collected with the use of several techniques, which were highly useful in the application of the triangulation procedures (Denzin 1978:291, 302) and enabled one to look at the phenomenon from different perspectives.

The research project lasted for almost 5 years (2009-2014) and included 3 years of observations, using the "participant-experiencer" approach (based on some guidelines described by Wyka 1993); 46 in-depth, unstructured interviews with freelance workers from Lodz and Warsaw (two of the biggest cities in central Poland), representing various professions and specializations (the author interviewed, among others: IT professionals, journalists, HR professionals and headhunters, business coaches and consultants, professional language translators, photographers, operators, editors, etc.); followed by Internet data analyses (including Internet forums and groups for freelancers and business-oriented social networks such as LinkedIn, GoldenLine, etc.). The starting point of the study was the author's personal involvement in "full-time" (2008-2011) and then (from 2011) "part-time" freelance work in the training and consulting industry. However, his intention was not to write an autoethnography or to reconstruct his own life and career story, but rather to use some of the reflections he has as findings for a specific form of participant observation (the "participant-experiencer" approach mentioned above). As a freelancer, the author was able to experience certain situations

and collect data that would be unobtainable in any other way. Secondly, it was a great opportunity to compare it with the data obtained due to the interview technique. For instance, in the initial phase of the project (which was also the initial phase of his work as a freelancer), one of the author's dilemmas was how to secure new contracts effectively. The first months of his freelance work were similar to a regular job search—based mainly on responding to ads, sending applications, et cetera. However, as a result of conducting interviews with other freelancers at the same time, the author realized that it is: (1) a common experience of many aspiring freelancers ("newbies"), (2) a strategy that is considered wrong, or at least: ineffective by more experienced freelancers. One of the solutions these experienced freelancers recommended was to search for new contracts within personal contact networks, which turned out to be far more efficient.

If we try to give a (*post hoc*) structure to the in-depth interviews conducted by the author during the study, we would be able to find some common elements concerning the way of choosing and selecting the responders (interlocutors). All of them were professionals who: (1) worked for themselves in the services sector, (2) performed intellectual ("white collar") rather than physical work, (3) treated their freelance work as a vital source of income, (4) worked without having any specified "physical" workplace (an office), (5) performed project-based work for several different paymasters. However, during the project, the selection was primarily based on the rules of theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method (Glaser 1978:36-54; Strauss and Corbin 1990:176-193). For instance, at the beginning of the project, the author conducted interviews with some business coaches and consultants whose everyday work consisted of face-to-face, close

contact with their clients. To achieve some comparisons, the second category he has chosen were software developers—professionals with significantly different specifics of their daily tasks. Their ways of experiencing freelance contrasted greatly with what the author learned from the consultants (for example, some of them complained about a lack of everyday social contacts or even experienced a kind of "loneliness" while working). The main aim of using the interviews during the project was to understand the phenomena rather than to gain some "certain knowledge" (Fontana and Frey 2009:97). The assumption of the project was to conduct interviews that would have been close to the original meaning of an interview, which is "a meeting of two people," not "a survey" (see: Konecki 2000:177-178). As mentioned above, all the data collected due to the interviews were treated as a significant source of comparative material that allowed the author to compare his insights with the experiences of his interlocutors.

The third source of data was the Internet, which can be considered as one of the "natural spaces" of freelancers' everyday activities. One of the author's interlocutors said: "Basically, my workplace could be anywhere. I just need to have access to the Internet." For freelancers, it is a good "place" to acquire new customers, to maintain relationships, to self-present, and to build a strong reputation. What was relevant from the perspective of the study is also a place to post information about their everyday work, with all its advantages and disadvantages. The Internet (especially the freelancers' forums and groups on LinkedIn and GoldenLine) was used as a supplemental, but, at the same time, very convenient, economic, and confident (El Kamel and Rigaux-Bricmont 2009) source to analyze existing data. The author did not participate in the observed discussions,

nor generate any new content, playing instead the role of an uninvolved observer. Obviously, there were several limitations to the technique used. These were connected with treating the Internet-based data like a "photograph" that was taken at a certain moment in time, which limits the possibilities of the technique (but, on the other hand, doing a virtual ethnography was never a goal of the author), and, secondly, there were ethical doubts concerning the acquisition of the Internet data (Jones 1994) in such a way. Although there are preexisting, widely-recognized guidelines when conducting Internet research, for example, the recommendations of The Association of Internet Researchers (Markham and Buchanan 2012), it is still quite difficult to resolve certain doubts regarding: the confidentiality of the data collected in places that could be considered by the users as both "public" or "private," a discrepancy between the research goals and the "netiquette," or even the act of uninvolved observing that could be interpreted as inappropriate "lurking" by some users.

All the data collected during the study (i.e., from the observations, interviews, and the Internet) were coded with the use of GT procedures that were close (but not identical) to the version of coding procedure presented by Strauss and Corbin (1990, see also: Strauss 1987). In the author's opinion, it was best suited to answer the aim of his study. The main difference between the approach by Strauss and Corbin and the approach used by the author was the decision to not use the "coding paradigm" as a tool that could have unnecessarily structured the data with the use of some external, theoretical assumptions. The first part of the coding process was supported by OpenCode 4.01, the second part was carried out without any CAQDA software. The purpose of this article is not to discuss the study in de-

tail, but to reflect on some of the overall findings. A thorough description of the analytical process, as well as the quotes from the interviews, have been widely presented in: Miller (2016).

Findings

The core category generated during the analysis of the empirical material was "experiencing a career outside an organization." It turned out that despite the many differences among the participants of the study (e.g., their various professions and industries, different socio-demographic characteristics, different stages of life, different biographies and life stories, etc.), some directions of their lived experience, as well as the ways of perceiving and interpreting their professional life were surprisingly convergent on many levels (see also: Strauss 1995:4-12; Domecka 2005:237). Reconstructing the participants' reflection on their lived experience enabled the author to observe repetitive patterns of experiencing specific professional situations with several observable similarities in the ways these are perceived and evaluated. In this section of the article, the author's intentions are: (1) to reconstruct a definition of "being a freelancer" (based on the ways of self-defining and building the identity of a freelancer), (2) to share information about the types (or: categories) of freelancers that were observed during the study and to show how "the freelance career path" could be followed by (3) highlighting some of the main, everyday dilemmas and challenges that freelancers have to face due to the nature of their work, with an assessment of the role "freelance ideology" plays in facing them.

Who could be defined as a "true" freelancer from the perspective of the participants of the author's study? The first common, essential feature that

appeared from the study is the requirement to work for oneself and at one's own risk. This can be understood in several ways. For those who treat freelancing as a long-term career option, "working for myself" usually means: "running a one-person company." For those who see freelancing only as a temporary solution or a substitute, an alternate form of employment, it often means "work that is based on civil law contracts." For others, freelancing could also be a way to gain greater professional experience or to earn additional income from additional work. Nevertheless, especially for those who treat freelancing as a vital source of income, the belief that "working for myself" and "not having a boss" seems to be a particularly important piece of their professional identity and their definition of a freelancer. "Working under one's own name" could be considered as another significant dimension of "working for oneself." The freelancer's name is often treated as a "personal brand"—part of one's reputation that is linked to the specific category of services provided and the quality guaranteed. Although in some cases, a failure in a project could be perceived by the customers as a blemish on the freelancer's image, it seems that, beyond financial aspects, a strong reputation is one of the important measures of a freelancer's professional success. Simplifying this, we can say that it is a situation in which finding potential customers is no longer necessary because "the strength of the reputation" allows the selection of partners on the freelancer's terms.

The second common essential feature of being a freelancer concerns the character of professions that can be performed. As mentioned above, from their point of view, freelancers consider themselves as an egalitarian and inclusive social category that would happily accept someone calling themselves a freelancer, even if it seems difficult at first glance to imagine a combination of a particular occupation or profession and being a freelancer. Although freelancers are most often stereotypically considered people who are engaged in some intellectual, creative, "white-collar" work, when, in 2012, a first "coworking office" for freelance hairdressers was opened in Poland, virtually none of the author's interlocutors had anything against it. Some even stressed that nowadays the boundaries between "physical" and "intellectual" work are blurred, so it is pointless to say that a hairdresser who works for themselves, without opening a salon could not be called "a freelancer." Moreover, in most cases, freelancers emphasize that formal qualifications are less important than being equipped with some "transferable skills" that could be valuable and sought after by different clients.

The third common feature of being a "true freelancer" is connected with project-based work. The cooperation between the freelancer and one's client could be short- or long-term, one-off or repeated—it all depends on the specifics of a project. In many cases, being a freelancer means being involved in several different projects at the same time. Although most freelancers present their work as an antithesis of a safe, corporate-like, 9-to-5 job, at the same time, they attempt to find long-term clients who offer participation in future projects. A second important measure of individual career success is having a "rich portfolio" of loyal and valuable clients. It is a kind of a paradox—or at least an interesting contrast of professional values—that, on the one hand, freelancers are happy to emphasize their strong need for autonomy and professional freedom, while, on the other hand, they also want to achieve a certain degree of stability (from their perspective, it is "stability on their own terms").

The fourth definitional feature is the high variability and irregularity of working time and space. To work as a freelancer is to accept the flexible character of that kind of work with all the pros and cons. There is no such thing as predefined work hours, regular paydays, or any guaranteed annual vacation leave. A workspace could be just as well the client's office, a coworking space, a café with Internet access, or the freelancer's home. A commonly used concept of "being at work" (or: "being in the office") is also a bit problematic here. Of course, it will vary, depending on the freelancer's profession or specialization, the stage of one's career, et cetera, but what is important is one's responsibility for defining what is "working time" and "workspace," and organizing them.

The fifth, and final, essential feature of "being a freelancer" discovered by the author during the study consists of certain individual attributes that may be useful in the career of a freelancer. It may be considered more difficult to grasp its "soft" dimension, but it is definitely no less important. The data analyzed during the project pointed to some characteristics without which it is difficult to function in the "freelance business" for long. Sometimes, they are considered even more important than the conditions mentioned above. Most freelancers would agree that one's "character," "personality" (in the common, not psychological, sense), and other individual traits could be the foundation of a long-term freelance career. One can say that "becoming a true freelancer starts in the head" with such features as: being inner-driven, proactive, enterprising, and most of all: autonomy-oriented and self-determined (which means a readiness to decide independently about the shape of our working life). "Autonomy" or "freedom" (often used interchangeably) are keywords to understanding freelancers' self-perspec-

tive. If we ask a person who considers themselves to be a "true freelancer" about their main motivations, we often hear about the strong desire for professional autonomy. If we ask what the main advantage of being a freelancer is, we often hear "being my own boss."

Why did we pay so much attention to reconstructing the main aspects of the common definition of a freelancer? It is because, as interactionists, we want to be as close as possible to the meanings given to the phenomena by the people who are personally involved. That kind of definition is far more useful for a researcher to understand "what freelancing is about." Most freelancers would probably agree that we can empirically observe both a "core" and other "marginal forms" of "being a freelancer." It means that a person who meets five of the essential features mentioned above would probably be identified as a "freelancer in the full sense of the word" by other freelancers.

The second area we will focus on in this section of the article is a comprehensive typology of freelancers, which is grounded in the data collected and analyzed during the study. Studying Polish freelancers, we would probably meet: 1) "born freelancers"—who could not imagine any other model of employment that fits better to their "character" and their professional expectations; 2) "escaping freelancers" who quit their previous regular, stable, organizational job (which is often connected with a need for a greater autonomy or unsatisfactory working conditions) and, thanks to the acknowledged qualifications, professional experience, and social network that they have built over the years, are able to succeed; 3) "non-ideological freelancers" who are driven by pragmatic reasons rather than their own features, values, and predis-

positions—they choose freelance as it is somehow profitable for them (mostly in financial terms) or due to the fact that it is one of the typical forms of work in their profession; and 4) "forced freelancers," who become self-employed due to economic reasons or an unfavorable labor market situation (they either lost a "regular job" or could not find an appropriate one), they often consider freelancing only as a temporary and transitory way to survive before finding a full-time job. As we may notice, for the representatives of the third and fourth types of freelance, the need for the professional autonomy mentioned above is usually not perceived as the main advantage of that career model.

How can a freelance career path look like? Obviously, it will vary, depending on the situation of a person, their motivation for becoming a freelancer, and their chances of success. We may consider a freelancer's career path in terms of "status passages" (Glaser and Strauss 1971). For the purposes of the article, we will focus on the most "optimistic" career path option which, according to the author's study, consists of four stages. The first (initiatory) phase is the stage of the "growing freelancer." Under the influence of various external (e.g., labor market situations, some unacceptable aspects of the previous career model, some disruptive changes within the organization, etc.) and/or internal factors (e.g., a sense of vocation, a need for self-realization, a lack of autonomy in the previous working life, etc.), a person begins to consider different career possibilities and decides that freelance could be a good solution. Of course, the time frame of the decision-making process may vary and it is strongly individualized, but eventually, it leads to thinking of oneself as a "full-time" or "part-time" freelance professional. The second is the "newcomer" stage, which is often the phase when various ways of organizing one's everyday working life are tested, as well as experiencing (for the first time) the advantages and disadvantages of being a freelancer takes place. Although not every "newcomer" feels out of their depth here. Becoming a freelancer could be connected with several "first attempts" in freelance-based work or combining it with their "regular" professional activity. That stage seems to be crucial for the further career of a freelancer. Usually, it abounds in some crisis situations. One of the most difficult are those referred to as "undersupply" or "oversupply crises" by one of the author's interlocutors (*in vivo* codes). These are usually highly stressful situations, connected with a deficiency or excess of orders (projects) that may strongly affect the motivation for further development as a freelancer (see also: "bulimic career patterns" in: Fersch 2009:9, 115-116). The stage usually finishes when "the newcomer's" market position is strengthened enough and they have developed effective strategies to deal with the undersupplies (lack of work and money) and oversupplies (lack of time) in the future. It may also be associated with the significant role of a portfolio for freelance work (each project builds up the freelancer's portfolio and makes it easier to find new contracts). A portfolio is one of the main elements of the freelancer's career capital, understood as an individual set of resources that increase the employability and gives the freelancer a sense of continuity in their working life. The third stage is the phase of a "freelancer with an established position" (or "a regular subcontractor" phase). Usually, it occurs more rapidly when the career capital resources are greater (valuable specialist skills, extensive professional experience, a rich portfolio, a wide network of contacts, etc.). At this stage, the opportunities to become involved in further projects increase, as well as the possibilities to "cherry-pick" offers. Rejection of a specific project no longer means an "undersupply crisis."

We can also observe the increasing importance of consolidating relationships with previous clients, which makes it a little easier for the freelancer to sign future contracts. In some cases, a freelancer may become "a regular subcontractor," which gives them a sense of stability ("the paradox of freelancers' professional values"). It could lead to the fourth, "well-regarded expert," stage of a freelancer's career. Based on well-developed career capital and having a good reputation (including a strong and recognizable personal brand), some freelancers can eschew the acquisition processes. At this stage, it is the client who becomes the more active side in the negotiations. The client may want an "expert-freelancer" to carry out his project, but it is the freelancer who decides if s/he is available or not (to a much greater extent than at earlier stages). This fourth stage is also considered as potentially the most profitable. It is perceived as the "ideal vision" of "having reached the top," but, of course, the career of a freelancer can easily come to an abrupt end or be interrupted, at any single moment. The move to a career as an entrepreneur, an employee, or even: unemployment are all possible, which is the essence of Beck's "freedom of insecurity" mentioned above.

What are the other significant, everyday dilemmas that freelancers have to face, and their methods of solving them? We will focus on three important, problematic aspects of experiencing a career outside an organization, which are: dealing with the time and space of work, creating rationalizations with the use of "freelance ideology," and approaches to the issue of dealing with a permanent insecurity. As we know, every job is inextricably linked to its temporal order (see: Konecki 1998:190-193). Newman (2006) wrote that most of us think of time as uniform and unchangeable, but, in fact: time is a social construction and our conceptions of time are tied to the

occupation. Over the years, for most of us, a precisely defined working time has become an important interpretative frame and a symbolic border between "being at work" and "being at home." Oldenburg (1989) opined that, usually, we divide our time between being in three categories of spaces: "the first place" (our home), "the second place" (our job), and "the third place" (other public spaces). But, usually, there are no such clear borders within the working time of a freelancer, as work commitments are constantly interwoven with personal time. As mentioned above, the work of a freelancer is also not attached to a specific office or any other kind of an imposed working space. It all depends on the profession and the specificity of the particular tasks that are undertaken during a particular project. Each workplace of a freelancer is usually transitional, though, of course, some are used more often than others. The "home office" is one of the most common, but, at the same time, the most troublesome solution among freelancers, especially for those who have not discovered any useful time and space management techniques that could help them avoid various distractors. So, in many cases, the freelancer's individual line of action needs to be fit together with the actions of his colleagues, but often also with his family members, who need to be taught that "staying at home" does not necessarily mean "having personal time" (some other dilemmas of "working at home" were widely described in: Gądecki, Jewdokimow, and Żadkowska 2017:73-105).

Analyzing the data from the interviews, or some Internet groups and forums for freelancers, we will probably quickly find some frequently repeated formulas that seem to be highly popular among their community (according to the analyzed data, they seem to be more common among the statements of "born" and "escaping" freelancers). The author uses the term "freelance ideology" (in a meaning close to

"professional ideology" in: Mills 1943:165-180) to describe a specific set of values, ideas, and concepts that can be noticed in some of the freelancers' narrative schemas. They are used to explain, interpret, and present their work to others and to identify what can be considered as a part of "our world" ("the world of freelance") and what may not. They also express who freelancers are and distinguish them from other types of workers in the labor market. Some elements of the ideology may also be used as parts of "self-deceiving strategies" (Scheff 1990:50) that could be useful tools to convince oneself that becoming a freelancer is a good choice. They often become "handy explanations" or rationalizations that help to cope with some crisis situations connected with the insecurity of their work. Some of the main components of the "ideology" are: professional freedom (or: autonomy) and professional self-determination as core values; the important role of self-fulfillment, emphasizing an attachment to the work-life balance concept; striving for financial independence; a job that is one's passion and allows one to be one's boss. The ideology's roots seem to be grounded in common philosophies based on "the search for authenticity" (Spicer 2011). Some of the often repeated, ideological statements seem to be only declarations that are difficult (or even impossible) to implement. Let us take, for instance, the "I am my own boss" or "I do not have to work 9-to-5" formulas that are often used by freelancers to explain the character of their work. The first one suggests that there is no one who can tell a freelancer what to do—clients are more the freelancer's business partners than one's "superiors." In fact, in many cases, a freelancer is often working on several projects at the same time, having several "bosses" instead of one. The second statement suggests that full-time work is perceived as just a "relic of the past" and staying in the office for 8 hours each day is a waste of time. In fact, there are many situations

in which a freelancer has to work for much longer than 8 hours—often without an evening or a weekend break. But, even with an awareness of the highly declarative character of the ideology, it is an important way for freelancers to express what a "career outside an organization" is all about and to neutralize some psychological pressure connected with the permanent insecurity of their everyday work.

During his study, the author found out that there are at least three approaches (grounded in collected and analyzed data) to the issue of dealing with insecurity among freelancers. They seem to be connected with their objective, individual professional situation, as well as their subjective way of perceiving it. The first approach, defined by the author as "fatalistic (or: reactive) orientation" is characterized by the belief that one's impact on today's and future professional life is rather limited. A lack of security is considered to be the main risk factor that could adversely affect the direction of their further career development. Their attitude towards freelance treated as a long term solution may be negative. They often see it only as a transitional stage towards finding a regular (full-time) job. It tends to be more common among "forced" freelancers that were mentioned above. The second perspective (referred to by the author as a "short-term orientation") is strongly focused on the present. This approach is particularly popular with some of the youngest freelancers claiming that long-term career planning is pointless. From their point of view, the labor market is highly unpredictable and retirement is just an unlikely, distant, future scenario. They are usually more optimistic about their current professional lives than the "fatalists," but also: firmly embedded in a "here and now" perspective. They emphasize that they want to stay open-minded to various career opportunities. In some cases, they do not know

yet whether freelance is a permanent or just a temporal solution. The third approach is "an orientation focused on securing the future." This is mainly the case for the freelancers with an established position and greater career capital resources whose financial situation allows them to save some money. They accept the insecurity of freelance, but, at the same time, they try to minimize the risks associated with it. They often think of themselves as a long-term, single-person business.

Discussion

As we may see, the possibilities of precisely planning the career of a freelancer are quite limited. It cannot be easily predicted in which direction it could develop or how long it could last. There are too many external factors that can transform it unpredictably. No wonder, then, that freelance is often lumped together with other forms of the so-called "precarious work" and is thought of as a form of employment that people are forced into due to their unfavorable labor market situation. Each day they have to deal with a lack of all of the most important work-related security dimensions mentioned by G. Standing (2011:10), that is, labor market security, employment security, job security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security, and representation security.

But, does freelancing always equal precarity? It cannot be denied that Standing's concept is based on relevant observations and could be a useful tool to describe and explain the reality of the contemporary labor market. However, in the case of freelancers, their precarity is not as common as we may think and, in the author's point of view, is definitely gradable. If we look at all sides of the freelance career continuum, we may say that the situation of

a "newcomer" has little in common with the situation of a "well-regarded expert" (or even a "regular subcontractor"). If the former may be considered as a part of the "precarious workers" category, the second one is much closer to those Standing described as "proficians." It is the career capital that should matter during the study of the freelancers' market situation. The second dividing line runs between "the grinners" and "the groaners" characterized by Standing (2011:59-84). Of course, we will find many individuals whose decision to become a freelancer was far from their own free choice (as I mentioned above, here freelancing is thought of as a temporary solution), but there are many people who made their own, autonomous decision about becoming freelancers. Furthermore, some of the author's interlocutors seemed to be extremely satisfied with the working conditions that are offered by being a freelancer. One may say they were deceived by a promise or a vision of a "self-made person" or "the delusion of having a psychologically-meaningful" career and reaching self-fulfillment. Nevertheless, nowadays, could "job security" not be considered as a kind of deceptive concept? Observing the major changes on the labor market that are connected with the so-called "4th Industrial Revolution" (Schwab 2016), we may say that it is freelancers, with their transferable skills and their career capital, but not necessarily a "concrete profession," who are best prepared for the future labor market. What is essential is that being a member of the precariat should rather be considered as a matter of a subjective, self-perception than a "structurally imposed imperative." In many cases, classifying all the freelancers (*ad hoc*) as dissatisfied, precarious workers (or maybe: non-workers?) who are constantly exploited seems to be an inadequate simplification. As interactionists, we may offer some tools that enable us to consider all perspectives efficiently.

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Citation

The Social Organization of Merchants' Activities. An Interactionist Study of Urban Marketplaces

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Abstract: The article briefly presents the empirical results of a large research project focused on Polish urban marketplaces, commonly known as bazaars, and their interactional order. Due to the spatial separation and legal regulations concerning bazaar trade, a relatively constant community of market vendors is created in the area of the particular marketplace. The primary activity of each merchant is to offer and sell goods; however, the specificity of marketplace trade results in the necessity to maintain relationships with other vendors to keep this primary activity going. Thus, the activities of merchants are carried out in the same direction for both economic results and performance (sales and profit) and social action, that is, building and managing relations with vendors operating in the same marketplace. A wide range of activities and interaction strategies is developed that create an order of interactions between vendors, both in terms of perceiving and assigning meanings, interpreting, and taking actions. The consequences of such an interactional foundation affect the economic layer of the market, embedding, on the one hand, economic phenomena in social phenomena, and, on the other hand, generating paradoxes of prices and competition—the two economic concepts that cannot be analyzed without their social contexts.

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Street vending is a world-renowned phenomenon that takes many different forms and types. In Poland, street vending is legally organized and localized, and large clusters of various vendors (merchants in Polish legal terminology) create the phenomenon of an urban bazaar—a place where cultures, values, symbols, and meanings intertwine; a place where dozens of interactions, interpretations, and activities occur at any moment. Each of the dimensions of the marketplace, from its spatial organization to economic aspects such as competition or price formation, is an interactional construct whose symbolism and meaning play a key role.

The primary action taken by each merchant is to sell the goods they offer, but the specificity of a bazaar trade means that this primary action cannot be carried out without maintaining relationships with other bazaar vendors. Thus, the activities of merchants are as much focused on the economic result and performance (sales and profit) as on social action, that is, building and managing relations with other merchants in the same marketplace.

The aim of the research on which this article is based was to reconstruct and describe the processes shaping the relations between buyers at marketplaces and the contextual conditions in which they take place. Further, such reconstruction and explanation were to enable understanding of the complexity of the social organization of merchant activity and the importance that this organization may have for economic aspects of the functioning of the marketplace.

Theoretical Background

The issue of interactions between marketplace vendors has not been widely explored in sociological studies, neither in the cultural dimension of this phenomenon nor in its model approach, as an interactional representation of economic relations at the macro-level. The research conducted so far in the field of marketplaces, both Polish (Misztal 1971; Kurczewski 2010) and international (Geertz 1978; Chiu 2013; Rosales 2013; Papadantonakis 2020), has primarily an anthropological profile, focusing on the local "folklore" of the street vending.

The issues focused on the social context of economic phenomena locate the work at hand among the achievements of economic sociology and market sociology, especially the approach known as the New Economic Sociology (Granovetter 1974; Wasserman and Faust 1994; Carruthers and Babb 2000), which aims to go beyond the model of the economic equilibrium, showing the dynamics, complexity, and multidimensionality of all activities, processes, and economic phenomena that are socially embedded (Granovetter 1985; 1992; DiMaggio 1990). In this dimension, however, it is not about applying or collating economic and social theory as in the case of economic sociology, but it is rather about developing sociology of economic action (Konecki 2007; 2008), the analysis of interactions, building relationships, distancing, and cooperating towards goals of an economic nature (trading goods and generating a profit), and in an economically defined context of the market.

The interest in interactions, interpretations, and actions that construct the order of economic phenomena (from general issues like the market itself to the concept of prices, from the construction of the demand to the origins of economic crisis) is not new in sociological research. From such a paradigmatic perspective, there are classic studies on closing fairs and, more broadly, creating marketing (Prus 1989a;

1989b; Moeran 2006), the social construction of the value of works of art and wines (Velthuis 2003; Chiffoleau and Laporte 2006), the advertising market (Moeran 2006), the social order of auctions and the way the value on the market is socially constructed (Smith 1990), constructing the financial market (Ho 2009), or economic crimes (Baker and Faulkner 2004). The premises of symbolic interactionism were successfully used in relation to the socio-economic phenomena by Herbert Blumer (1990) himself, taking up the issue of industrialization as a social process and the resulting social changes. On the other hand, studies on work, labor, and market, especially in the urban contexts, have a long tradition in the interactionist legacy, and those classic symbolic interactionist works of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (1925), Roderick McKenzie (1921), or Everett Hughes (1958) are also a point of reference for this study. The article, and, most of all, the research on which it is based, is a continuation of this interactionist tradition in research on socio-economic phenomena, treating these phenomena as one of the aspects of everyday life, which, in their structure, do not differ from the rules that constitute this everyday life in human experiences (Karp, Yoels, and Vann 2003; Jacobsen 2009).

Methodology

The study was based on two methodological approaches. The first is analytical ethnography as a special type of fieldwork for collecting empirical data (cf. Lofland 1970; 1995; Snow, Morrill, and Anderson 2003; Anderson 2006). The second is the grounded theory methodology, which is a strategy for working with data and organizing the entire research process (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Konecki 2000; 2005; 2012; 2019; Gorzko 2008; Charmaz 2009). Such a juxtaposition is not accidental because both

approaches are based on the same assumptions as to the criteria of effective research, while simultaneously striving to develop theoretical effects based on systematic empirical work. The first approach shows the researcher how to work in the field, the second one—how to work with the data from the field, which makes both approaches complementary. The consequence of the adopted research strategy was the limitation of preconceptualization and the generation of subsequent hypotheses as an effect of the conducted analyses, and not a starting point for them, as is the case in the classical research scheme.

The research was conducted in five locations—large urban marketplaces in four cities in Poland.

At this point, it is worth adding that each of the examined places had the character and formally regulated status of a marketplace—a permanent, continuously operating, or at regular intervals—a commercial space where various products are offered—food, clothing, household goods, and others, mostly new goods, provided by vendors with a specific and legally regulated professional status—marketplace and mobile merchant. In this sense, the researched bazaars differed both legally and culturally from fairs (*jarmarki* in Polish) also present in Poland (operating occasionally) or flea markets (*pchle targi*) where second-hand, cheap goods are sold, offered by people who do not necessarily deal with trade daily.

The choice of particular locations was related to the course of the analytical process and the emerging needs to make comparisons and differentiate contextual elements to capture the processes and properties of processes associated with the studied phenomena, regardless of the situational conditions of their occurrence. The data were collected in stages,

in 2007-2012, and comparatively in 2016-2019, with a schedule developing gradually along with the progress of analytical work and the emergence of new premises for theoretical sampling.

For a community as diverse as a merchant community of the urban bazaar, and with research conducted in five different locations, it was necessary to implement several data collection strategies. Due to their importance and place in the research process, they can be divided into basic and auxiliary. The methods used include:

- Non-participant ethnographic observations
- Participant ethnographic observations
- In-depth interviews with vendors
- Semi-structured interviews with buyers
- Observations while accompanying the buyers (shadowing)
- Observations with a standardized list of information

It is also worth adding that the collected data were a combination of analytical and evocative data (see: Ellis and Bochner 2016; Kacperczyk 2017), constituting a collection of observations and information obtained through various techniques of data gathering, as well as recorded experiences and feelings of a researcher involved in the activities of local merchant communities as part of ethnography. The author spent three months at one of the marketplaces, actively selling as a merchant's assistant, while overtly taking notes on the observations. At the next marketplace, for a total of three years, he conducted regular observations and interviews, remaining fully in the role of a researcher, but at the same time getting to know the merchant community from the inside, gaining their trust and acceptance. The next three marketplaces were visited by the researcher

occasionally, and the collected data were used to supplement or guide theoretical sampling and analytical constant comparisons.

Empirical Findings

Understanding the activities and interactive strategies of merchants that make the overall social organization of urban marketplaces requires comprehension and insight into the context in which these phenomena occur. An urban marketplace is a specific place, on the one hand being a space of mixing local and supra-local cultures, and on the other hand, the subject to legal and formal regulations. The same goes for the work of marketplace vendors, which in its multifaceted nature is both focused on earning (sales is the only or the main source of income) and on creating a local community of merchants of the same marketplace.

For this article, key analytical concepts and threads were selected from the research results. A short presentation of contextual aspects introduces the description of the most important analytical categories of the social organization of activities to the presentation of two primary interactional ventures creating a spatial, relational, and interactional order in the social dimension of the marketplace, and the presentation of the key consequences of such an order at the economic level of the market.

The Contextual Aspects of the Studied Phenomena

During the research, four key aspects of the context of marketplaces activities were identified, which at every level of analysis, from micro to macro, shape the external conditions of the social organization of trade activities.

The first of the contextual aspects is the **trade culture** prevailing in Poland, the most important element of which—bargaining for sale prices—is limited, and sometimes even non-existent, in the context of the conducted analyses. While price negotiation is permissible for specific transactions (such as the purchase of a car or wholesale purchase of goods, etc.), it rarely occurs in the case of everyday purchases of common goods, and these are offered at urban bazaars in Poland.

Another, apart from the trade culture, contextual aspect of the studied phenomena turned out to be the **collective and spatial organization** of the marketplace activity. Bazaar trades are carried out in specially designated places. Each merchant deciding to trade within the marketplace must accept the fact that they will be operating in the vicinity of other merchants, and more broadly—as a group. This also shows the constitutive feature of the marketplace the necessary condition for which existence and operation is the commercial activity of many merchants. This obvious interdependence of bazaar vendors has a crucial meaning for merchants, as well as for the exploitation of the entire market. Collective action at the marketplace guarantees a relatively continuous flow of buyers. Contrarily, independent street vending would deprive buyers of free and wide choices commonly associated with the marketplace, forcing vendors to develop more advanced tactics of striving for customers.

The third contextual aspect is the **identity of a merchant profession**. The connection with the trade in the marketplace as an everyday, primary workplace brings further consequences; working in the marketplace becomes a source of identity references for vendors, which will ultimately result in the crystallization of the professional identity of the merchants, both in the individual and collective dimension, in creating a professional group. It is significant, however, that the professional group of merchants is so extensive and diverse that it does not shape a coherent pattern of collective identity, transmitted through secondary socialization or the symbolism (see: Strauss 1962; 1969), and the culture of the profession. Therefore, in their case, it can be stated that professional identity is neither a component nor a subject of reflection for subjective identity (self-identity; cf. Goffman 1963), but the identification of the self and others as merchants plays a key role in the further organization of the social relationships on the bazaar (for more detailed analysis of the identity work among merchants, see: Marciniak 2016).

The fourth of the contextual aspects identified in the study are the **formal and legal frameworks** for merchant activity. The validity of formal norms shapes the methods (barriers and possibilities) of starting merchant activity within the marketplace, the features of marketplace work, and the scope of legality and illegality of activities undertaken at the marketplace.

The last contextual aspect is the **locally produced cultural and ethnic order**, the heterogeneity of the merchant community, as well as the group of customers and visitors to the marketplace. At marketplaces, you can meet people of various origins and biographies, whose individuality sometimes disappears in the "melting pot" of the marketplace, and sometimes it clearly shows up on the surface. Of course, you can try to illustrate the social structure of individual marketplaces by looking for something similar to a scaffold, but a long-term comparative study shows how fragile, fluid, and unstable this structure is. This community is constantly chang-

ing. In annual, weekly, and sometimes daily cycles, traders repeatedly go from high profit to the limit of loss, from stocking to a shortage. They change their strategies, product range, and specializations. Sometimes they work constantly and sometimes seasonally. Sometimes they work together, and sometimes they work separately.

The Social Organization of Merchants' Activities

The conducted research has shown that the everyday understanding of the marketplace as a place of unlimited competition and activities aimed at concluding mutually beneficial fairs differs significantly from reality. There are several identified, analyzed, and described interactional phenomena organizing the activities of merchants.

Focus on Profit and Sales

Profit is the primary goal of any marketplace merchant. Regardless of the type of goods offered, trade experience, or place in the market community, each vendor strives to obtain a satisfactory profit. Merchants' understanding of profit varies, although the most common and shared implicitly is one in which profit is the money merchants have from net trading after subtraction of monthly marketplace fees and taxes. Therefore, when it comes to possible profit, buyers mainly talk about how much can be earned, while a satisfactory profit is, in their understanding, the amount they would like to have after covering the costs. The level of satisfactory profit in the declarations of buyers is very varied and fully individualized. Based on the data obtained in the study, it can only be concluded that factors such as the type of assortment, the position of the trade, or the market where the merchant works change the range of satisfactory profits; however, individual amounts

indicated by buyers may differ significantly within one assortment category.

The **satisfactory profit** is variable because it is directly related to the profit that can be obtained in a given situation (with resources, at a given time of the year, etc.). In light of the data, it can be concluded that for vendors, the goal, much more important than increasing profit, is to keep it at an even level and minimize the decline in profit resulting from seasonality.

A full understanding of the earning goals set by market merchants may help us learn, apart from the level of satisfactory profit, also the profit necessary to obtain weekly, that is, the minimum that merchants must earn to have enough to cover the fees and, in their opinion, to have enough to live on.

The **satisfactory profit** and **necessary profit** are the two boundaries within which vendors undertake their sales activities while shaping specific goals. First of all, each merchant strives to work out a minimum as a subjective break-even point for their activities. Secondly, after exceeding this threshold, merchants try to increase revenues and move away from the minimum threshold. However, increasing profit has its limit at the level of satisfactory profit, which is the limit in the sense that after reaching it, the determination to increase revenues significantly weakens.

Operating in the range of two profit boundaries, necessary and satisfactory, and in the annual cycle of changes of seasons, merchants develop a rich repertoire of strategies to intensify and weaken sales activities. Following the situational needs of customers and enriching, expanding, or replacing the offered assortment, striving for regular customers are among the most important.

Profit and sales are shaped in the annual cycle of decreases and increases, at the same time shaping the scope and intensity of merchants' activity. Seasonality, it might seem, should primarily affect buyers offering fruits and vegetables, that is, products strongly related to periodic supply and demand. However, the collective nature of marketplace trade means that the decline in demand for agri-food products also affects merchants offering other products. When customers stop coming to the marketplace for fruits and vegetables, the chances of selling clothes or industrial products also decrease. On the other hand, customers interested in buying clothes at the market can also do grocery shopping. Thus, the essence of the mercantile activity in the marketplace appears, namely, that it is a **related activity**.

Basic Interactional Categorizations: Type of Goods and Type of Work

The goods offered by the merchant are the primary trading resources and, at the same time, the main factor that categorizes the merchants in the marketplace. However, it is not about a purely theoretical categorization (external to the reality of the marketplace) regarding the type of assortment, but a practical categorization that merchants make in their daily interactions. During the field research, it was possible to identify eight dimensions of the characteristics that merchants use to categorize the offered goods. Marketplace assortment can be identified as:

1. Sourced vs. Manufactured (handmade or cultivated)
2. Legal vs. Illegal
3. Year-round vs. Seasonal
4. New vs. Used
5. Good vs. Defective (in terms of its quality)
6. Reliable vs. Doubtful (in terms of its origins)
7. Universal vs. Unique (in terms of the availability on the particular marketplace)
8. Polish vs. Chinese[1] (in terms of its symbolic combination of origin and quality)

Depending on the categorization of the offered goods, work may be identified and interpreted in various ways by buyers. The study managed to reconstruct four varieties of trading work at the marketplace distinguished by merchants:

a. **Selling** is an activity undertaken by merchants offering legal, good, and reliable goods. Often the condition is also that the product is not "Chinese." Selling is displaying goods of satisfactory quality and proven features, consistent with what the customer is informed about.

b. **Crookering** is the activity of offering a good that differs to some extent from its properties presented during an interaction with a customer. It will still be goods with generally good quality characteristics, in the sense that it will not be defective or non-functional, and of a relatively certain origin. Crookery will consist of increasing the presented values above the actual ones of a given product.

c. **Cheating** is an activity related to the trade of a defective product of questionable origin, as well as a "Chinese" product if it is offered as a domestic product, or a second-hand product if it is displayed by the merchants as new.

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[1] The term "Chinese" is an *in vivo* code in the analysis, taken directly from the language of street vendors. At the same time, it refers to the broader context of Polish culture in which the adjective "Chinese" is used to describe a specificity of goods massively imported from South-Eastern Asia and customary associated with low quality and low price.

Cheating occurs whenever a customer purchases a product completely unaware of the actual characteristics of the goods, assuming that knowing them would discourage them from buying.

d. Crime fiction (criminal trafficking). The term "crime fiction" was an *in vivo* code in the analysis, taken directly from the language of marketplace merchants who use it to describe activities related to the trading of illegal goods. Crime fiction may therefore refer to offering weapons, drugs, counterfeit documents, pirated software, stolen items, but also medicines, alcohol, cigarettes, pyrotechnic materials, and fuels in the marketplace.

Creating a Horizontal Distance

Based on the categorizations, merchants make mutual evaluations of their actions, assortments, and motives. Thus, in this way, groups of the same and different types of the assortment and the types of work appear: groups that are accepting others belonging to their category and relatively not accepting those who do not belong to it among the marketplace community. However, the lack of acceptance for merchants assigned to other categories is expressed very subtly in the realities of the marketplace, as it cannot contribute to the elimination of the category. The overriding feature of the market, which is responsible for its attractiveness to customers, is the multiple-choice and diversity, and each category of merchants contributes equally to this achievement.

An action that allows them to achieve the effect of differentiation without fighting dissimilarity is distancing, the purpose of which is to distance themselves from other categories of merchants. A significant fea-ture of **horizontal distancing** is the significant importance of possible ethnic diversity. In the everyday experience of bazaar vendors, more important than the ethnic origin is belonging to the category of the work, except situations when belonging to an ethnic group is associated with the category of the offered goods or the category of trading work.

The key basis for the distancing that takes place at marketplaces is the way merchants evaluate the moral activity of other merchants operating within the marketplace. This assessment is always comparative, based on ones' commercial practice. Distancing as an activity undertaken to construct a moral distance has two basic forms:

- **Avoiding**—related to the lack of acceptance for activities considered inconsistent with the merchant's moral standards and minimizing the possible exchange, cooperation, and communication with vendors belonging to the negatively assessed category of trading work.

- **Engaging**—associated with expressing support for actions in line with individual moral criteria and striving to strengthen relationships, intensify contact, and cooperation with vendors belonging to the positively assessed category of trading work.

Although in colloquial language, creating distance is associated only with avoidance (as a form of enlarging a distance), in the interactional dimension, constructing distance is based on these two activities, avoiding one and, at the same time, getting closer to the other. Distancing is a process of negotiating space in between (in a spatial and interactional sense), which may be closer or more distant, setting a dynamic order of interactions.

Table 1. Distancing of particular categories of merchants from other categories.

Categories of merchants	Other selling merchants	Other crooking merchants	Other cheating merchants	Other criminal merchants	Approach to distancing
Merchants selling towards…	Engaging	Avoiding	Avoiding	Avoiding	Strongly distancing
Merchants crooking towards…	Neutrality	Engaging	Avoiding	Avoiding	Moderately distancing
Merchants cheating towards…	Neutrality / Avoiding	Neutrality	Engaging	Neutrality	No distancing
Criminal merchants towards…	Neutrality / Avoiding	Neutrality	Neutrality	Engaging	No distancing

Source: Self-elaboration.

Table 2. Moral distancing—actions and interactional strategies.

Form of distancing	
Avoiding	**Engaging**
Limited neighborhood cooperation	Extensive neighborhood cooperation
Not engaging in joint social activities	Engaging in joint social activities
Limited information transfer	Extensive information transfer
Do not recommend/advise customers	Recommending regular customers
Formal communication	Informal communication
Applying the "us-them" dichotomy	Applying the "we" association

Source: Self-elaboration.

Moral distancing, in both its forms of avoidance and engagement, can result in many different activities and interaction strategies.

The lack of acceptance for activities considered inconsistent with one's moral standards results in the avoidance and minimization of exchange, cooperation, and communication with vendors belonging to the negatively assessed category. Avoiding merchants limit interactions in the neighborhood, and their activities come down to a completely basic exchange of favors, to a limited extent and

frequency. A merchant who distances from their neighbor in a stall may, for example, in response to a request, look after the neighbor's stands in their absence, but they will not sell for them anymore; in an emergency (e.g., a storm), they may help to temporarily hide the goods, but they will not be constantly lending storage space. They will not engage in joint social activities, refusing invitations to join the entertainment others organize in their spare time at the marketplace, or conversations. Avoided merchants are only provided with key information in the possession of the distancing merchant that has an impact on the overall functioning of the bazaar. Information critical for further work will be provided (e.g., about the police raid, about the upcoming snowstorm), but not the information that could facilitate their work (about the client's interest during their absence, about changes in rates, new requirements, etc.). And that is also connected with the limited recommendations. Most often, avoiding merchants simply do not inform their regular customers about the availability of a given product from a distant merchant, but it may also happen that they advise against buying at a specific stand, warning their best customers against faulty or uncertain goods. The distancing strategies are also visible in direct communication, which in this case is highly formal, with the prevalence of indirect and polite phrases, the use of the form "Mr./Mrs." towards known merchants, and the formulation of the requests in an official manner (examples from the field notes):

> I kindly ask you to do your suspicious business somewhere else.

> Please take a step off.

> Would you be so kind, Mr. Jones, and lend me a lighter.

In the opposite case, there are engaging strategies, based on the extensive cooperation, communication, and everyday activities, and perceived by merchants as a value-based process.

> That is a matter of similar views, but also values. It is the best, the easiest way to talk to those who share such values. There is a group of us here, maybe a small group, but very well-known, we see the same situation in the marketplace, we have similar aspirations. We can easily communicate with each other, and often also work out a common position towards problems and towards other groups at the market here. [Merchant, Bałucki Bazaar, Lodz]

Merchants help each other in exceptional and everyday situations, lend trade resources, and try to facilitate work. Help can often go beyond the marketplace itself and be related, for example, to acquiring goods, joint trips to a warehouse, or dealing with official formalities. Such cooperation is also based on demonstrating trust and, for example, entrusting the stand (and sales and billing) in the absence of the vendor. In their spare time, when there are not many customers at the marketplace, merchants play cards, checkers, or other board games. It is also popular to tell various stories, jokes, show photos and videos on the phone. They read the press, exchange it, and discuss threads in it. They show each other photos of the family, talk about their private lives. They exchange news constantly, share their knowledge, provide tips and suggestions. They inform each other of key and side events, which is not necessary, but can be helpful in commercial activities, procurement, assortment changes, and customer approach. And they recommend intensively, inform their customers about the availability of a good and reliable product, or suggest that the

goods available from a particular vendor are worthy of attention as a whole. Recommendations are an element of building relationships with regular customers; therefore, only proven products and trusted vendors are recommended. Finally, they communicate directly, referring to each other by name or pseudonyms, formulating requests and suggestions in a confidential, free, and direct manner (examples from the field notes):

> Honey, give me your pen.

> Adam, take a look here for a moment because I'm going to the car.

> I will help you, baby.

Creating a moral distance is a step-by-step process, starting with identifying your category of belonging, engaging in contact with merchants of your category, and building a resource of shared interpretations regarding other trading practices, to undertaking activity towards vendors of other categories.

Moral distance creates a horizontal order of relations between merchants because it does not contain a uniform criterion for deciding what is better and what is worse, what is "more" and what "less."

Creating a Vertical Distance

Referring to the primary trade resources owned by everyone who undertakes business in a marketplace, merchants begin to distinguish between different states of ownership, which are of great importance for the position that a merchant can occupy in the community of a given marketplace, influencing the agency and autonomy of decisions.

Merchants are fully aware of the differences in ownership and, more importantly, the resulting distinctions. Experiencing the market reality, they easily identify those who have more and can do more and those who have less and therefore can also do less. Defining such differences is, in fact, defining the situation of not equaling others or surpassing others from the perspective of a specific merchant, which is directly related to the feeling of disadvantage (towards others) or distinction (among others) that develops in vendors. The perceived inequalities contribute to the second, apart from moral distancing, the process of dividing the merchant market, namely, hierarchization, which results in the appearance of a vertical distance between merchants, on a scale from those who have the least and are the most dependent, to those who have the most and can enjoy great independence (decisions, actions).

Hierarchization is based on three basic types of inequalities distinguished by merchants: inequality of profit, inequality of knowledge, inequality of influence. **Vertical distance**, constructed by identifying inequalities, relating to them, and explaining one's position in the community of marketplace merchants, is a phenomenon much more dynamic than the horizontal distance, and its dynamics resembles the so-called *basket of crabs* (according to Bischof-Kohler 1990; 1992). In such a system, each participant of the hierarchized reality may, depending on their motivations, strive to occupy higher positions, which is not met with resistance from others, but may only intensify the efforts of others to raise their ranks. As is the case in a basket filled with crabs, everyone climbs one after the other, but it does not arouse fights or disciplining, but only a general striving to take the highest possible position. Such an order is characterized by

high dynamics and relative impermanence, constant falling and climbing, losing and regaining position.

Constructing the Order of Relations

Distancing and hierarchization, as immanent processes taking place in the marketplace community, result in the creation of a relationship space experienced by vendors. Each merchant takes a specific position in this space, determined by a certain horizontal (moral) distance to other merchants and a vertical distance (hierarchy) to others. Other merchants may also be in the same or a similar position, together creating a specific group of a given marketplace remaining in the same position concerning other (groups of) merchants.

Although the categories of inequality and morality are the same for each marketplace, the occurrence of specific groups of relationships (close in terms of both distances) will be varied and dependent on the local situation in a given marketplace.

By tightening cooperation and contacts within their group, merchants begin to arrange relations with the closest groups due to the vertical and horizontal distance, thus creating a network of relations, defining the scope of possible contacts and cooperation, still based on the criterion of similarity. Although other groups do not have the same position due to the state of property and morality of the action, they are still in a relational neighborhood close enough to concentrate possible cooperation among the entire community of the marketplace.

Two trends can be observed in the space of marketplace relations:

- **Striving for belonging**. Each merchant is looking for groups with a similar state of ownership and similar morality in action to have others around them who share the perspective of perceiving the reality of the marketplace and share the axionormative standards manifested in the assumptions about possible ways of working (selling).

- **Striving for similarity**. Each merchant, while remaining in contact with their group of relations, strives to equalize the state of the property to the level of other members of a given group and to adopt moral standards shared in the group.

As a result of the occurrence of both of these tendencies, the initial assignment to a specific group of relations manifests in a deepening and tightening of contacts and intensification of cooperation. For the existence of any network of relationships formed from close groups, two aspects determining the specificity, scope, and durability of such relationships will be of key importance, namely, the sources of shared experiences and the dependence of cooperation.

In the space of marketplace merchants' accounts, one can see dependencies, which Mark Granovetter (1973; 1983) called "strength of weak ties." Relationships connecting vendors, both in relationship groups and in networks, are neither particularly affective nor intimate and not necessarily long-lasting.

Merchants selling clothing from kiosks (a type of market stall) remain in the network of relationships, among others, with merchants trading citrus fruits from open stalls. As support, vendors with better

equipment and access to electricity offer the possibility of using utilities and storage space, storing some products after the end of the trading day. Merchants from the open stalls take advantage of the opportunities offered by kiosk merchants, in return offering protection through contacts with local street hooligans. After such an exchange for a long time, mutual aid became established. Kiosk merchants resigned from paying security companies, and at the same time, decided to leave even valuable goods overnight at the kiosk (with the certainty of protection). On the other hand, the merchants from the open stalls decided to organize their work differently, storing products in kiosks on a daily basis and resigning from the daily delivery and collection of goods. That led to a mutual dependence of cooperation when merchants from kiosks without support would be in danger (theft, vandalism), and merchants from stalls would have serious logistical issues. This relationship became so solidly established that in the opinion of both groups of merchants, a sudden break of this relationship turned out to be impossible. [excerpt from the field notes, Jeżycki Bazaar, Poznan]

The Consequences of the Social Organization on Merchants' Activities

The organization of merchants' activities, constructed by connecting and dividing forces, dynamizing and stabilizing, resonates in the economic operation of the marketplace, reflecting the created order of relations on phenomena such as competition or prices, at the same time showing the extent to which economic processes are embedded (see: Granovetter 1973; 1983) in social processes.

Thus, in the socially organized activity of marketplace merchants, there may be two paradoxes in the economic context.

The **paradox of competition** of a marketplace that is diversified in terms of morality and the inequality of its subjects lies in the fact that the most competitive vendors are, at the same time, the closest in terms of similar experiences and their position in the community. In other words, in the realities of a marketplace, direct competition comes from similarity, and at the same time, similarity restricts competition.

The **price paradox** of the marketplace, which consists in the fact that with a large supply and variety of products, and even the existing variety of prices, in reality, there are no price alternatives for buyers because the difference in prices is not a sign of market competition, but the market agreement between merchants concerning the qualitative incompatibility of goods. In other words, a different price of the same products is information that they are different products (superficially the same, qualitatively different). The setting of prices by merchants is the setting of a specific applicable price, from which deviation may only be related to a change in the properties of the product (qualitative and functional changes). It can take the form of setting the starting price of a good, adjusting prices, and correcting prices to the level prevailing in the marketplace.

Summary

The conducted research allowed us to generate several coherent and conceptually saturated hypotheses concerning the context of market merchants' activities and the processes taking place inside the marketplace community and organizing these activities (for further reading see: Marciniak 2016).

The context of bazaar vendors' activities is not a set of determinants, but a framework or, as Herbert

Blumer (1986) would define them, sets of factors with which traders must cope and learn to use, thus shaping their activities.

The socially organized venture of marketplace merchants is a social activity in the meaning of George Mead or joint action, according to Herbert Blumer (1986; see also: Gillespie 2011; Azarian 2015). The specificity of such an activity is the matching of participants who establish a joint action in which they will engage and then mutually interpret and define their activities while shaping the collective action.

The network of dependencies created between buyers and groups of buyers (similar in the distance) shows the strength of weak ties (Granovetter 1973; 1983), not based on intimacy or emotional closeness, but influencing the actions of each individual and everyone as a market collective. There are also visible consequences of the social organization of merchants' activities, which are reflected not only in the social order of the marketplace, but also in the economic order.

However, a further generalization of conclusions, going beyond the context of marketplace trade, will require further comparative research.

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An Ethnographic Analysis of Escort Services in Poland: An Interactionist Approach

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Abstract: In the Polish literature on the subject, prostitution is analyzed from various theoretical perspectives, but, first of all, from the perspective of social pathology. This approach makes the researchers focus mainly on the social maladjustment of women providing sex services and the reasons for their violation of the normative order.

In my ethnographic research conducted in escort agencies in Poland, I was willing to go beyond this narrow outlook. I have adapted an interactionist perspective to analyze the escort agencies as organizations where intense interactions between employees, as well as employees and clients, take place, the sex work process is organized, and the meanings of prostitution are negotiated. I conducted the analysis according to the procedures of the grounded theory methodology. It allowed me to see and describe such processes as: (re)defining the situation of providing sex services from vice to work, sex work as a collective action, performing sex work, secondary socialization for sex work.

The adaption of an interactionist perspective opens some new directions for analysis, which could help to understand the phenomenon of women getting involved in and continuing to provide sex services for a long time.

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The provision of sex services has aroused controversy for a significant part of the history of this phenomenon (Roberts 1992). Since the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, that is, when new scientific disciplines emerged (including sociology, criminology, and psychology), scientists have become important participants in the discourse on prostitution. The fascination with positivism (Błońska 2010:280) and scientism led to the development of deterministic theories that explained why women engaged in this socially condemned act. One of the most popular concepts was that of a "born prostitute" by Lombroso and Ferrero (2004), presented in the book entitled *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*. Although this work was thoroughly criticized in later years, it was an inspiration for subsequent generations of researchers. The interest in the prostitution etiology, which is rooted in positivism (though no longer from the perspective of biological, but rather the social factors that increase the probability that a given woman will become involved in prostitution), exerted a great impact on the research carried out in the first half of the 20th century (and it perhaps does so nowadays as well).

This is well visible in the research carried out in Poland, which has been dominated by the normative perspective. Researchers usually asked the question "why," focusing on the reasons why women break social norms related to sex life. They also sought specific socio-demographic features of women who had decided to earn money in this way. The researchers wanted to know which variables, or combinations of variables, are "responsible" for someone getting involved in prostitution. The results of these studies were to serve preventive and rehabilitation purposes

(cf. Ślęzak 2019:23). This perspective dominated the research carried out in the Polish People's Republic in the second half of the 20th century (Jasińska 1967; Podgórecki 1969; Antoniszyn and Marek 1985). In the new reality, after the socio-political transformation,[1] the phenomenon of prostitution in Poland was still researched from the perspective of social pathology (Kowalczyk-Jamnicka 1998; Jędrzejko 2006; Gardian 2007; Pospiszyl 2008; Welskop 2013). The only change was the extension of the research field to questions related to the spread of AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Izdebski 2012). Exceptions include the research carried out from a different perspective, which includes the symbolic and interactional dimension of prostitution (Wojciechowska 2012; Surmiak 2015; Ślęzak 2019). However, they constitute a minority of the research conducted in Poland.

Meanwhile, the interpretative approach has a significant body of work in the field of research into non-normative sex behaviors. Many highly inspiring studies have been conducted by researchers from the Chicago School (e.g., Thomas 1923; Reckless 1933) and members of the later generation of Chicago sociologists (Leznoff and Westley 1956; Reiss 1961; Goffman 1963; Gagnon and Simon 1973). The tradition of the Chicago School of Sociology has exerted an influence on subsequent generations of researchers (Heap 2003; Sanders 2006:450; Kleinknecht 2007:222). From the perspective of my research interests, especially important is the book by Robert Prus and Styllianos Irini, entitled *Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks* (1988). This is a study of the social organization of the hotel com-

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[1] The process of transforming from a socialist into a democratic system started in Poland in 1989 in a peaceful manner. These changes were also accompanied by economic (the development of a free market based on private ownership), social, and moral transformations.

munity, which includes women looking for men interested in sexual services in a hotel bar. In their analysis, the authors try to provide a thorough, highly detailed account of people's lived experiences from the viewpoint of the participants and the ways that they entered into the group life as agents (Prus 2009). Prus and Irini analyze the activities of "hookers, strippers, and other entertainers, of bartenders, waiters, waitresses, desk clerks, and other hotel staff, and a variety of hustlers and thieves, as well as an extended assortment of patrons" (Prus 2009:238). They focus on how these people get entangled in role sets, interaction systems, and small social groups, analyzing their relationships, activities, and identities (Prus and Irini 1988; Kleinknecht 2007:231). It is an interesting approach because numerous studies of deviations describe the situation of people involved in only one deviant role or one sphere of activity (Kleinknecht 2007:230). Apart from this, most research on deviance focuses on a set of factors, variables, structures, or forces that are presumed somehow to cause certain effects (crime and deviance as dependent variables). Thus, Prus and Irini adopted a completely different perspective, perceiving deviation as a social process rather than the product of people's individual qualities or vague sociological notions of social structure (Prus 2009). At the same time, the authors did it in a manner free from sensationalism, moralism, and remedialism. The book is, therefore, an example of how an approach inspired by symbolic interactionism and an ethnographic approach can offer a new perspective on the phenomenon of prostitution.

The abovementioned approaches to the research of prostitution provided the context and reference point for my project (Ślęzak 2019). While analyzing the provision of sex services in escort agencies,

I adapted a perspective that was different from those that dominate in the Polish literature on the subject. I analyzed the escort agencies as organizations where interactions take place that influence the course, time, and level of involvement of the female workers in prostitution. This perspective emerged during the empirical research when I noticed that the interviewees define escort agencies as a place of work. I derived the theoretical inspiration to analyze the gathered data from the interactionist sociology of work (cf. Konecki 1988) and other concepts rooted in the interpretative paradigm. This allowed me to focus on the perspective of the researched individuals, the way they experience everyday life, and how they deal with various aspects of the way they earn. I believe that the focus on the social organization of sex work broadens the area of scientific inquiry. It also allows a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and its dynamics (Ślęzak 2019). In this article, I would like to present the most significant consequences of this choice for the research results.

Data and Research Methods

While choosing the appropriate research methods and techniques, I was inspired by the works of researchers from the Chicago School of Sociology, who, in the 1920s, started to use methods known from anthropology to study new problems related to the development of large cities (Angrosino 2010:26). Particularly suggestive was Park's call to researchers—he proposed "getting your hands dirty in real research" (Gobo 2008:35). It meant leaving their offices, going into the field, and observing real situations in the urban space. In subsequent years, students of Park and Burgess developed the tradition of ethnography, contributing to its popularization in sociology (Prus 1996:119). While

planning my research project, I wanted it to match this way of conducting research (Angrosino 2010). However, it proved difficult to achieve these aims. The main barrier was the distrust that the people running escort agencies had towards me, and this resulted in the lack of consent to stay on the premises and carry out observations for an extended period (cf. Ślęzak 2018a; 2018b). Eventually, after several months of attempts, I managed to begin the ethnographic research. It was possible thanks to a recommendation of a person trusted by the owner of one of the escort agencies. It was one of the longest operating and largest premises in the city (at various times, from a dozen to about 30 women worked there).[2] After obtaining permission to start the research, I conducted multi-stage negotiations on when, how, and what I will be able to observe. Initially, I carried out my (overt) observations to a limited extent (during the day and at times set by the boss of the agency), which was expanded as I gained their trust. Eventually, my research in this agency took 4.5 years. I visited it once a week on average, but at certain periods much more often, spending there several hours talking and observing. It allowed me to establish closer relations with the women who worked there. I have been meeting many of them regularly for several weeks or even months when they worked in the researched agency. I reestablished contacts with some of them who returned to work after a few years' break. This made it easier for me to get their consent for the interview, especially that it was quite typical for new employees to find out about my research from their coworkers and decide to take part in it before I even met them personally in the agency. In subsequent years, I gained the opportunity to carry out

my observations in three other places. These were medium-sized premises, with between a few and a dozen women working there at the time of the research. When compared to the first agency, my visits to the other three were shorter. Since I conducted my research in agencies that were operating regularly, I could not always be there for long, and when I wished to observe specific events, considering the theoretical sampling procedure. Therefore, my presence in the researched agencies often consisted of making the most of the opportunities I had. Eventually, the scope of my involvement depended on (and resulted from) negotiations with individuals who managed the premises, and with their employees.

I conducted the whole project between 2007 and 2013 in Lodz, in four escort agencies. All of the premises where I conducted the research had good opinions among clients and employees. One agency operated on two shifts (day and night), the others only during the night. I supplemented my observations with interviews carried out with all categories of agency employees (the women providing sex services, the security workers, and the bosses). The most important group of data is the interviews with the women who provide sexual services (56 interviews). The interviewees worked in agencies where I conducted observations, and they gave informed consent to participate in the study. Their experience in the escort agencies varied (from a week to 14 years), as did their ages (from 18 to 56 years old, most of them in the range between 20 and 35), earnings (from several hundred to several thousand PLN per month, even more in some periods), and the level of satisfaction with this way of earning money. The vast majority of the interviewees were very open during the interviews, so they were quite long and lasted from 35 to 290 minutes

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[2] A more detailed description of how escort agencies operate in Poland is provided in the next two sections.

(90 minutes on average). Some of the employees of the agencies where I conducted research did not agree to be interviewed,[3] but they talked to me during my visits to the premises. Their perspective (e.g., information on the workers' relations or interactions with clients) was also taken into consideration while drawing my conclusions.

In the ethnographic research project, I decided to apply the analytical procedures of grounded theory in the version proposed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) and later developed by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin in *Basics of Qualitative Research* (1990). I intended to introduce more systematic tools for planning and carrying out subsequent research steps through the application of the constant comparative method, theoretical sampling, coding, writing, and sorting theoretical notes (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Konecki 2000). I started the analysis in the first weeks of the research, with open coding of transcriptions from the interviews and notes from the observations. I analyzed the data in the ATLAS.ti (4.2) computer software, and I also used ATLAS.ti to carry out the selective coding. I created memos from the very beginning, from code notes to theoretical memos, which later underwent theoretical sorting. Theoretical diagrams, graphs, and fourfold tables were the auxiliary tools that supported the conceptualization, as they showed the links between particular categories. Furthermore, I carried out axial coding based on the coding paradigm; the conditional matrix was also an important inspiration for me.

The main categories generated during the analysis (Ślęzak 2019) were: the social construction of *the work situation* in escort agencies, work with the client in the lounge and the room, security and safety work, work on building a team of female employees, the process of becoming a member of a team of female employees, and the identity work of the sex workers. Each of them included many detailed subcategories (e.g., the work with the client in the lounge category included subcategories such as the selective and non-selective choice of clients, strategic seduction, incidents in the lounge, and groups of clients). Inspiration for the data interpretation came from concepts developed by leading representatives of symbolic interactionism in the scope of work, for example, interactional work or the social organization of work (Strauss et al. 1985). Thus, the final shape of my analysis was the result of adapting the symbolic interactionism perspective as the main theoretical framework. Evaluating my project from a distance, I think that this led to some interesting results. I believe it made it possible to deepen the existing knowledge on the provision of sex services in escort agencies by drawing attention to the processes omitted in research based on other paradigm assumptions. These issues will be developed below.

The Socio-Legal Context of the Indoor Sex Work in Poland

The difficulties in obtaining permission to research in the escort agencies, described above, resulted from the legal context in which such premises operate in Poland. Under Polish law, the provision of sex services is not illegal, but the activities of third parties, that is, those who intend to encourage, facilitate, benefit, or force prostitution (also human trafficking for prostitution) [Arts. 203, 204 of the

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[3] The reasons for refusals varied from their lack of time or unwillingness to be interviewed at the expense of resting between meetings with the clients to a reluctance to make a self-reflection and reveal private information to a stranger (cf. Ślęzak 2018b).

Criminal Code of the Republic of Poland 1997[4]) are criminalized. The only non-penalized form of providing sex services is individual sex work. However, in practice, there have been plenty of premises operating in Poland since the 1990s, which, although officially offering hotel services, massages, or the organization of events, actually act as intermediaries in the provision of sex services. These premises are quite well-rooted in the urban space and, apart from some cases when there are also other forms of breaking the law (human and/or arms trafficking, drug selling), they operate without major obstacles.[5]

A dominant form of premises where sexual services are offered are private flats, where one or several women accept clients acquired primarily through Internet advertisements. They are called apartments. These are individual initiatives undertaken by one or several women, who share the costs of maintaining the flat, and none of whom holds any managerial functions. There are also premises managed by a person who does not provide sex services but organizes the working conditions of women and charges a commission (usually about 50% of the rate for each client). In Poland, the premises organized this way are called escort agencies, even though they generally provide stationary services, within the premises, so they rather resemble a brothel (see: Ślęzak 2018b). In the course of my research, travel services (to hotels or clients' flats) were becoming rare due to the organizational dif-

ficulties related to their implementation (providing transportation and security for employees during the meeting). Since, in Poland, it is not possible to legally employ women to provide sex work, they do not have any employment contracts or are employed in fictitious—hostess, bartender, masseuse, dancer—positions that do not correspond with their actual job description. All of the rules of the work (from working time to salary) are established based on a verbal agreement and are not formally recorded. Such premises are organized in flats (similarly to the abovementioned private initiatives of women) or in premises that have been adapted to run such a type of activity (e.g., there are: a dance pole, a bar with alcohol, a lounge with sofas where workers spend time with their clients, plenty of rooms for individual meetings with the clients, facilities for female workers). A client who would like to use the services of the premise is entertained in the lounge, where all female workers gather. The client chooses the one with whom he will spend some private time in the room. Depending on the premises, the selection is made either very quickly, mainly based on the assessment of physical appearance, or it is preceded by extensive interactions, using the available infrastructure of a given premise. It is worth noting that while women who work with clients in the apartments usually do so during the day and evening (for safety reasons and to maintain proper relations with the neighbors), agencies mainly operate in the evenings and nights, and possibly also during the day if the number of female employees is sufficient to do so.

The researched escort agencies were diverse in many terms, among others, the organization of work, financial outlays for infrastructure, but, first of all, the management styles, which I will describe in the next section.

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[4] See: https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7354/file/Poland_CC_1997_en.pdf. Retrieved September 18, 2020.

[5] It is rarely the case in Poland that the agencies are being shut down due to police operations; however, there is such a risk, which results in mistrust and reluctance expressed by the premises' managers towards strangers (meaning, those who are neither workers nor clients) who show interest in their operation.

The Management Styles

Based on the collected data, I have distinguished four main management styles (Ślęzak 2019:62-74) carried out by the bosses of the researched escort agencies, and other premises where my interviewees previously worked. They were:

- an *oppressive style*[6] implemented by those for whom running an escort agency was a way to obtain extraordinary profits, regardless of the costs incurred by the employees. The premises run in such a way were subject to physical, sexual, financial, and psychological violence on the part of the boss (but also of other employees, e.g., bar or security staff and clients) against women who often felt powerless or financially dependent enough on the job at hand to be unable to change or leave it. In many cases, the bosses abused psychoactive substances, under which they made inconsistent and/or extreme decisions. These premises were characterized by a low level of security, care of sexual health, or mental well-being of the female workers.

- a style based on *excessive fraternization* that appeared when bosses could not find the balance between running a place and having fun. The bosses who adapted this style saw their escort agency as a place for entertainment not only for the clients, but also for themselves and, to some extent, their workers. As a result, they took various psychoactive substances and encouraged the female workers to take them too; they had affairs with their female workers, were active

parties in personal conflicts, and were unable to establish satisfactory rules of the work. On premises managed this way, there was, for the most part, no violence against female workers, but it was an unstable workplace.

- a style based on *distanced professionalism*—when bosses perceived and ran their premises as a business enterprise, formulating and enforcing rules "as in standard work" (e.g., punctuality, a notice of absence, leave, the prohibition of psychoactive substances, obligation to perform periodic medical examinations). They also introduced a (not always transparent) system of financial penalties for breaking the rules.

- a style based on *kind professionalism*, similar to the previous one, but with less distance between the workers and the boss. Usually, the bosses did not exercise any financial penalties, but they rather tried to build a system of personal involvement of the female workers—due to, for example, offering advantageous work conditions, the loss of which was not worth risking, and assigning some empowering tasks (e.g., allowing deciding about the improvements to be implemented on the premises, taking the workers' side in any dispute with the client).

The last two styles were characteristic of the most stable, predictable, and safe workplaces.

The described styles show the diversity of women's work situations in escort agencies. The place where a woman worked had an impact on her career, but also influenced the way she thought about herself and her job. The more oppressive the premises where the woman worked were, and the more time

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[6] I did not get permission to conduct observations on oppressive premises. I received information about them from my key informants. The remaining styles were developed on the basis of observations and interview data.

they spent there, the greater was the risk of experiencing the negative consequences of prostitution, also in the biographical context. The mere awareness that there are different styles of managing the premises (which is not obvious for the novices) is extremely important because it gives them the feeling that they are not condemned to work in unfavorable conditions. As the sex services market in Poland can be seen as the employee market, there have been very dynamic personnel changes on many premises. Usually, however, the employees left the premises without notice and without confronting their bosses. They thus avoided the need to justify their decision and the possible risk of the boss trying to make their departure difficult. However, some of the female workers decided to stay and work on the premises where the management style did not suit them entirely, but the work offered some significant advantages, for example, the agency was popular among the clients and ensured good profits. In such situations the female workers manifested an attitude of conformist adaptation, becoming a "perfect employee," or they tried to negotiate the working conditions to make them more acceptable.

Those workers who knew how to model their relations with the boss to adapt them to their needs, or who decided to change the premises, were capable of minimizing the disadvantageous aspects of work and using all advantages of cooperating with the agency when compared to providing sex services individually, without any organizational facilities.

The Provision of Sex Services from the Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism: The Main Categories

The categories I generated while coding and writing memos were strongly rooted in the collected data.

At the same time, the most important categories that formed the core of my analysis were influenced by the concepts of symbolic interactionism. To show this relationship, I will present the most important categories below.

(Re)Defining the Situation

One of the most important categories was the process of defining situations by the interviewees, which was related to redefining the phenomenon of providing sex services (and one's involvement) from vice to work.[7]

The literature on the subject (including studies based on the results of research carried out in Poland in recent years) is dominated by analyses of prostitution as a pathological phenomenon.[8] The same tone is used in media coverage and when shaping the figure of a prostitute in popular culture. The interviewees noticed the lack of social acceptance for the way they earned money, and some of them internalized this negative perspective. When they started providing sex services, they felt a dissonance between how they perceived themselves and how (in their opinion) society perceived them. For some of the interviewees, the mere fact of entering the agency was proof of their "fall," which, according to them, was—as an interpretation—clear and obvious for other people. One of the interviewees described how she tried to enter the premises unnoticed:

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[7] I use the term "work" following my interviewees, who described their actions in this way. However, this did not result from the knowledge of the postulates of the sex workers' rights movement, which the participants of the study did not know about.

[8] Not only in Poland, as it seems. A similar pattern can be observed in other countries with an abolitionist approach to prostitution (Dziuban and Ratecka 2018).

The first agency...I went there...And it was a separate mansion, and I was walking around the house for probably THREE HOURS and waited for the right moment when no one would be walking from any side of any street because there were two streets on the side of that agency. I was already tired of waiting to call there. And I just had enough. I was already discouraged BEFORE I even managed to use the intercom. Finally, I seized such a moment that one marriage was coming closer from a distance, I remember that, and I waited for that person to come down and open it for me [the door] because I felt that they were getting closer. [woman, 28 years old, 6 years of indoor sex work]

It is worth noting that in the above case it was about passers-by, strangers. Much more intense fear and shame were associated with the risk of being noticed near the agency, or even more so—inside, by a friend or a family member. Therefore, since starting to work in an escort agency was seen as a moment of transition, of breaching the social roles which the women should play according to the cultural message, the division into decent and fallen women became an important category for the interviewees.

At the very beginning, when I came to the agency, the girls wanted to make me coffee or some tea. I was disgusted and I was thinking: "God, what am I doing here? From a decent home, a decent mom, a decent father, a decent brother, me too, what am I even doing here?" I thought to myself: "God, I'm leaving, I'm leaving," and, believe me, I couldn't get up from the chair, because I was sitting in the chair and I couldn't get my ass up, like my ass got into that chair and I couldn't get up at all. And I had remorse for a very long time. I have a husband, a daughter, a six-year-old daughter, I lie to my husband. [woman, 34 years old, 6 years of indoor sex work]

Negative emotions connected with providing sex services were often reflected in difficult beginnings in the agency. The women who saw their decisions as a sign of social fall had difficulties establishing proper relations with their clients and coworkers. Some of them avoided any interactions whatsoever, others were incapable of setting inviolable boundaries in relations with others because they were convinced that whatever (bad) happened to them would be well-deserved and "normal" (cf. Ślęzak 2017):

I'm afraid that I will get an aggressive or unpleasant client, and what am I going to do then? I don't know. That's where I am, doing what I do, I came here myself, so I just have to put up with it. [woman, 43 years old, 3 months of indoor sex work]

The interviewees rather shared the vision of prostitution as a vice and of an agency as a potentially dangerous place that threatens their physical safety but also undermines their former social position.

Along with developing experience in the provision of sex services in escort agencies, the participants of the study redefined their involvement in prostitution. Instead of seeing it as a pathology, they began to perceive it as work, a job that brings money. This was the basic interpretative frame of the interviewees who had more experience of working in an escort agency:

I couldn't settle at the beginning at all. I mean, it's not about the girls, but generally about the whole situation. But, then you somehow think differently, that it's my job now, so I go to work to make some money, and that's it. A client is a client. And that's all. So I think differently now, and I feel much better. Lighter. [woman, 22 years old, 4 months of indoor sex work]

> You do what you do and treat it as your job. And that's it. And when I say it this way to myself, it's ok, but when I start to analyze it, to overthink it, it gets bad, very bad [sighs]. [woman, 34 years old, 6 years of indoor sex work]

To analyze the process of redefining what prostitution is, I adapted the work concepts developed in the field of symbolic interactionism by Hughes and Strauss. Strauss adopted a very broad definition of work and perceived it in any enterprise, even if the involved individuals did not think of it as work (Strauss et al. 1985:290). Thus, even though in traditional definitions (Konecki 1988:240; cf. Szczepański 1961:17) prostitution is rarely provided as an example of work, it may be analyzed as such from the perspective proposed by Strauss. This opened new paths to interpret the actions undertaken by women working in escort agencies, in the context of their professional role and attunement in the group of the employees of the premises. I will return to these issues later in this article.

Interestingly, in explaining the role of prostitution in social life, the perspective of the research participants was similar to the concept of dirty work proposed by Hughes and developed by his followers. Hughes (1958:91) noticed that the division of work in society is not only based on technical, but also on psychological and moral criteria. Therefore, the concept of dirty work can refer to those actions and professions which are considered by society to be repulsive or degrading in a physical (e.g., related to dirt, waste, bodily fluids, death, dangerous working conditions, etc.), moral (thought of as sinful, immoral), and/or social aspect (where it is necessary to serve others, have contact with stigmatized or excluded people) (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). Some occupations are burdened in only one of the listed dimensions, while other jobs, for example, prostitution, touches all of those aspects[9] (Drew, Mills, and Gassaway 2007a:4). As a consequence, dirty work has low social prestige and is allocated to individuals and groups who should act on behalf of society. They fulfill tasks that most of us would prefer to avoid, but that someone should do ("It's dirty work, but somebody's gotta do it!" [Drew, Mills, and Gassaway 2007a:5]). The concept developed by Hughes (and its further interpretations) allows us to see prostitution from a different perspective and perceive escort agencies as organizations that carry out dirty work (Ślęzak 2019). It is worth stressing that such an interpretation frame was not obvious for novice female workers. It was the other women who had been earning in the same way for longer who taught the novices about the significance of prostitution for society (e.g., that it has always existed, it helps to fulfill the sexual needs of men without damaging their marriages, that members of socially respected professions [doctors, lawyers, police officers, priests] use such services, etc.[10]). They also imposed a definition of the situation as work and working (namely, coming to the agency—a workplace with specific working hours and rules, employee roles, and networks of relationships with other workers):

> We also work like any other person; it's always been like that. Prostitution has always been there, and it always will be. [woman, 29 years old, 4 years of indoor sex work]

[9] But, it must be remembered that it is more a social construct than an objective feature of an occupation described in this way.

[10] The interviewees used techniques of neutralization (Sykes and Matza 1957): denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, but also denial of responsibility (external factors prompted them to engage in sexual services), and appeal to higher loyalties (thanks to prostitution, women can provide better living conditions for their children, help sick parents, etc.).

I always say to the girls that this is a job. You go as if it were a normal job; you start and end at a specific time. So it's like a normal job. [woman, 50 years old, 6 months of indoor sex work]

Thanks to the individual experience and knowledge acquired from their colleagues, the interviewees also redefined what work in the agency consists of. It is worth noting that while describing it during the interviews, they often focused on aspects other than sexual, for example, necessary acting skills, being a good listener, giving advice and comfort, negotiating, managing interactional crises. This shift in emphasis allowed them to bring prostitution closer to the socially respected professions (actress,[11] therapist, psychologist), and thus deal with the ambivalence of the initial period of work:

I mean, yes, I've set it up in my psyche that, yes, I come here and play very well, I'm an actress here and play very well, tra-la-la-la-la, the client chooses, et cetera. And then I leave and I'm a completely different person, I go to my husband and I miss him, I want to hug him, and so on. You have to separate it somehow because you'd go nuts! You would go nuts. [woman, 30 years old, no information on seniority in indoor sex work]

Some people come here to complain about their family, about the trouble at work, and you listen, and you listen like a psychologist. [woman, 34 years old, 6 years of indoor sex work]

This perspective made it easier for the novices to redefine their involvement in the provision of sex services. It turned for them from being a vice into a pro-

[11] The interviewees very often used theatrical metaphors to describe their experiences of working in the agency. I will come back to this issue later in the text.

fessional choice and a strategy of being in the labor market, which they perceived as being unfriendly for women and offering them the worst possibilities of earning (temporary work, undeclared work, low-paid work in services). An example may be provided by the situation of one of the interviewees who, due to her incomplete education and the resulting difficulties in the labor market, worked in precarious jobs. To increase her income, she tried to combine several full-time jobs allowing her to fulfill her life needs. She saw the provision of sex services as a more effective job, thanks to which she could resign from "normal" but poorly paid and physically strenuous jobs:

You can't always live off a normal job, and I worked two jobs for a few months. I had a normal job, and I still worked there when I came here. I worked in [name of the company] and also in [name of the company]. I woke up every day at half-past three in the morning, and I came back home at eleven in the evening, and I concluded that this was [pause] that I was not at home at all, and I actually make no money too. And I need to earn some more somehow. [woman, 41 years old, 2 years of indoor sex work]

However, a society that is protected from dirty work stigmatizes the people who carry it out (Hughes 1964:52). It is often the case that members of the marginalized groups carry out marginalized work, or their work is trivialized (as with, for example, the work of women or immigrants [Drew, Mills, and Gassaway 2007b:237]). The participants of the study also experienced stigmatization, which was expressed multiple times during the interviews:

Society perceives it as something bad [sadly]. Sure, something bad. That we are the worst scum, whores, uh, and I don't know, we do it without a condom, and

we are here for pleasure. Some clients think that we're here for pleasure because they ask what I am doing here [jokingly]. And I'm earning money! In a sense, it's a different job, but it gives you money, and that is the basis of all this work here. [woman, 30 years old, 9 years of indoor sex work]

Fear of social reactions meant that despite the process of redefining the situation, the interviewees did not interpret their involvement in sex work in the same way as other jobs they had done before. Many of them were afraid of the consequences of revealing information to their close relatives about the provision of sexual services. They were sure that their relatives would not share their perspective and would interpret their actions as a deviation or a vice:

NOT EVERY person will understand me; one will condemn me, DAMN, and kick me; "ordinary whore, scum," he will say to me because THAT'S WHAT people are like. Another man will be like, "I feel sorry for her." And yet another one will say, "It might not be the best solution for this person, but it might be the ONLY ONE." [woman, 34 years old, 6 years of indoor sex work]

As a consequence, for many of the interviewees, defining prostitution as a job was related to ambivalent feelings, in particular, if (e.g., during an interview) they adopted the perspective of an external observer who is assessing their lives from the point of view of socially acceptable standards.

Defining prostitution as work can be interpreted as a symptom of moving to the next phase of their career[12] in sex work. This change was related to a shift

in identity that was taking place through a number of sub-processes of both the individual (I refer here to the concept of identity self-work proposed by Konecki [2007]) and collective (when dealing with other actors of the world of prostitution) identity work (Ślęzak 2010; 2014). In my analyses, I focused particularly on the collective dimension of these changes, adapting the perspective of sex work as a collective action.

Sex Work as a Collective Action

Analyzing how the women reported the change in their perspective of perceiving sex services drew my attention to the collective dimension of work and social organization of sex work in escort agencies (Ślęzak 2019). A new employee of an escort agency learns the meanings related to prostitution from the other social actors.[13] They provide a set of collective beliefs, norms, cognitive scripts, and, ultimately, the strategies and tactics of sex work. Thanks to them, a novice female worker can cope with the negative emotions related to the first period of work faster and build stable motives to stay in prostitution. Other women working in an agency play a special role in this process. It is worth stressing that my interviewees, when shifting the definition of prostitution from vice to work, also shifted their perception of other women who earned this way. Based on stereotypes, they expected to meet women addicted to psychoactive substances, aggressive, and vulgar. However, upon closer acquaintance, it turned out that most of the coworkers were ordinary women, with similar life paths to those of the interviewees, having the same life challenges and problems:

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[12] Cf. Becker et al. 1961; Goffman 1961; Becker 1963; Hughes 1964; 1997; Konecki 1988; Prus and Irini 1988; Prus and Grills 2003.

[13] Becker (1953) drew attention to similar issues in his study on cannabis smokers, emphasizing the role of more involved participants in the learning process of a new, unknown social role which is perceived as deviant.

I wasn't expecting it either, I imagined it all differently. I imagined this world differently. That it would be more predatory, more outrageous, I thought I'd meet some girls who are already, you know what. And these are NORMAL girls. There are a lot of normal girls. Wives to husbands, mothers to children. [woman, 28 years old, 3 years of indoor sex work]

Defining the coworkers as similar to themselves opens a path to intensive interactions which are of crucial importance in the process of secondary socialization (I will return to this thread in a further part of the paper). Coworkers can also provide mental support and show how to deal with difficulties at work, referring to their example. Examples of such actions are provided in an interview with a woman who describes how she helps a newcomer to go through the initial period of work:

A while ago a nice girl started working here. She comes from far away, has large debts, and she comes here for weekends. And she's VERY shy...she sometimes asks me if it was so tough in the room for me, so I tell her, "It will PASS." She's sitting here in the corner, and, on the one hand, she wants to be picked, so that she'll have money and so on, but on the other, she has some reluctance, so she sits; we push her so she sits closer to the client, not in the corner because no one can see her there. She's very reluctant. [woman, 39 years old, 3 years of indoor sex work]

At this point, it should be mentioned that the relationship between the workers is extremely dynamic. Such relations include not only socializing actions or support at work but also rivalry and sometimes even aggression towards each other. These processes can be very intensive, especially at the time of lower customer traffic or regrouping of the group hierarchy after hiring a new employee.

These can take the form of hostile actions—from ignoring and teasing to foul competition, which can take the form of pranks, *intimidation*, *provocations*, and even physical violence (fights) (Ślęzak 2019:100-104):

I once heard that they poured some glue in that girl's shoes. And in that previous place, they put some bleach in the girl's lipstick. She already has big and red lips, but when she put the lipstick on, I think she realized quite quickly, but they were very red! She went home immediately. [woman, 23 years old, 4 years of indoor sex work]

When one girl earns more or something like that, they want to DESTROY her. Because the girls come from different backgrounds, and you can expect ANYTHING. That they'll cut her clothes, destroy her shoes, take clothes from each other, it's normal. Maybe it's not normal, but it can be expected. [woman, 31 years old, 5 months of indoor sex work]

In the case of the *oppressive* management style and a style based on *excessive fraternization*, coworkers try to discipline those colleagues who break unwritten work rules (e.g., customer rates, the scope of services, use of condoms, etc.). In extreme cases, this is a way to force an unacceptable colleague to leave the agency. The effectiveness of these actions depends primarily on how the boss of the premise will react to them (Ślęzak 2019:105):

[A female worker describes the adapted *provocations*—IŚ] Eventually, either she leaves herself or you approach the boss in such a manner that HE is the one who dismisses her, but it doesn't mean he will do that, because if a girl earns money, it's obvious she also earns for him. So, it depends on the boss, whether he thinks logically. Because if he's intelligent, he

won't get caught up in such manipulations. [woman, 31 years old, 5 months of indoor sex work]

Although relations between coworkers may take some destructive forms, in the long run, the work in the agency forces women to cooperate. Like in other types of work (e.g., Becker 1982; Strauss et al. 1985), the sex work in an escort agency is possible thanks to the cooperation of numerous people (cf. Prus and Irini 1988). Strauss and colleagues noticed that it is impossible to do the work without the permanent interactions of many people who negotiate, renegotiate, persuade, inform, and order them to do the work (Strauss et al. 1985; Konecki 1988). The analysis of the interactions among all participants of the world of escort agencies leads to analogical conclusions. The provision of sex services in an escort agency means playing a set of roles. Some of them are played for the other women working in the agency (the potential roles include the role of a colleague that you cooperate or compete with, a friend, a mentor, etc.). Different roles are played for the male coworkers (bosses, security workers, bartenders, taxi drivers), for whom you can be a trusted colleague and partner in small agency scams, "the right hand," a subordinate, a victim of bullying, harassment, or physical violence, an "ordinary" employee, et cetera. A separate category of interactional partners are clients in front of whom a whole series of roles are played, not only those that refer to sexual, but also to emotional expectations (for example, a professional who satisfies non-standard sexual needs, a lover, or a girlfriend).

Therefore, work in an escort agency is a joint action of numerous people who fit together and adjust their actions (cf. Blumer 1969:70). Despite the common belief that the provision of sex services covers only the interaction between a woman and a client,

it involves teamwork in the case of escort agencies. The workers present themselves to the clients in the lounge as a group, which forms a coherent performance intended to make a specific impression on the clients (cf. Goffman 1959). Although each worker individually attempts to *seduce* the client, they together try to build an atmosphere of erotic fun, which will encourage the man to visit this particular agency:

I think that we all come here to earn some money, and we should stick together, cooperate to shake some money out of this guy, and not to sit sullenly in the lounge. Because when the guys come in a group, they also feel it, and this one guy once said to us, "There's this unhealthy atmosphere here. These girls are sitting, one in this corner, another one over there." Because when the girls like each other, they are cheerful, they sit together and have fun, they create a nice atmosphere, so the guy gets involved, he also has fun and is more willing to spend his money. But, when one girl sits in one corner, and the other girls are in another corner, and they say nothing to him, he feels the atmosphere is not like he would want it to be. It has to be fun; he must have a lot of fun to leave his money here. [woman, 35 years old, 4 years of indoor sex work]

The clients become an audience, but at the same time, they form a team (cf. Goffman 1959), presenting themselves in front of the women in a particular way (e.g., playing the role of someone wealthier or tougher/bolder than they are):

It's worse when three or four of them come, and one pretends to be such a hero in front of the others. But, when you take them to the room, they're so quiet and nice. He's so macho, but only in front of his friends. And he's so timid in the room as if he wasn't there

at all. They're like children! Like children! [woman, 35 years old, 1 year of indoor sex work]

When there's a group, everyone shows off in front of their friends. And it's most intensive in the lounge. [woman, 30 years old, 4 years of indoor sex work]

Sex work in social agencies is, therefore, interesting space for analyzing the interactive and dramatic aspects of work.

Performing Sex Work

The analysis of the interactional work carried out in the escort agency by various categories of social actors draws attention to the process of performing sex work. This is an important issue because, as Konecki noticed, sociologists of work often do not deal with the work process itself. They usually research the employee's mental traits, their social position, or the result of work. As a consequence of such analyses, the sociologists lose the problem of how a person works, how they are linked to other people in a particular work situation, and what is the division of work and its temporal entanglement (Konecki 1988).

While conducting ethnographic research in social agencies, I paid a great deal of attention to the interactions between all the participants in these organizations. They make up the work process that takes place both in the lounge (in the presence of others) and in the room (usually only between the employee and the client). While observing the women's activities in the lounge, I created the category of *strategic seduction*, that is, the process of a worker gaining a client. This is how I draw attention to the fact that women who provide sex services are not only passive participants of the interaction (it is not

that they are merely selected by the clients), but they actively create the situation of a meeting with a client, encouraging or discouraging him from further interactions:

You sit down in the lounge, you talk about prices, smile at him. So, he sees you. And when you sit in the corner [curls up, pretends to be sad], you don't give a shit about him. And when you sit and try to, like, chat, it's obvious that he sees you're interested in him, so it's normal that you would like him to choose you. Of course, a lot depends on us, on our approach! You need to have an approach! If you sit in the corner—you won't get paid. [woman, 30 years old, 9 years of indoor sex work]

It is also interesting which techniques the women use to discourage clients from a meeting. In this case, it is not only the effectiveness of that action that is important but also the form of the action itself. The workers are willing to interact in such a way that the client feels that he was the one who turned down the meeting. If he does not feel offended by the woman's behavior (but is satisfied that he avoided an unsuccessful interaction), he might decide to meet another worker, which will be reflected in the agency's profit. Furthermore, such actions reduce the risk of any possible criticisms from the agency manager, as the workers usually should not refuse to meet clients—except for the cases of aggression or other dangerous behaviors:

When you don't want to go to the room, you just sit, look at the ceiling, or whatever; you can pick your nose [laughter], or, for example, when he comes to sit with you...for example, I don't know, I sit next to him, and if there's nobody around and no one hears it, you say that you have your period and you can't work, that you're sore. The period is the best solution, or that I'll do nothing in the room if he wants any

extras. I say all of this to discourage him, but not in anybody's presence; but, when he chooses me, we go to the bar to pay, and then I'm like, "No, come, let's sit and talk," and then I tell him all this stuff so he doesn't choose me. [woman, 23 years old, 4 years of indoor sex work]

The analysis of the women's narratives considering the course of meetings with clients also allowed me to generate categories related to various types of work during such meetings. I refer here to the concept by Strauss and colleagues (1985) who observed many types of medical work performed by hospital staff and patients, and even by their family members. Based on the analysis of actions undertaken by the escort agency workers, I differentiated various types of work that they perform during the meetings with the clients, for example, working (with/on) the client's body, parapsychological work, work on the relationship, "feeling" the client, and safety work. Effectively combining all types of work during an interaction with a client (and each client has individual expectations) is a challenge for the workers. It requires not only careful observation (a client does not always express their expectations verbally and directly) but also flexibility in tailoring their actions to the changing situation:

It depends on the girl and the client. Each client is different and should be approached differently. You observe the client, what he's doing. Some clients like hugging, because they lack this warmth from a woman. And others just want to have sex. They do what they need to, and they leave. It's really different. [woman, 40 years old, 3 years of indoor sex work]

The analysis of the sex work process shows that prostitution—commonly seen as not requiring any skills—is a complex work on the interactional level.

Secondary Socialization

While analyzing the work of women in escort agencies, I treated these premises as organizations (Ślęzak 2019). On the grounds of symbolic interactionism, the organizations are perceived as being designed, produced, maintained, and changed in everyday interactions (Konecki 2006:11). Therefore, the organization brings together numerous groups and people within the process of continuously creating and maintaining a collective action (Konecki 2006:13). While analyzing the agencies as organizations and workplaces, I paid more attention than is usual in research on prostitution to secondary socialization, understood here as socialization for sex work, but also socialization to a specific workplace, namely, the escort agency (Ślęzak 2019:118-122). The latter process should be understood as more than just an apprenticeship. It is also the process of transferring the sets of rationalizations, neutralizations, and ways of dealing with social stigma. The secondary socialization makes it possible to carry on with the provision of sex services by silencing the women's doubts and their emotions of shame (Cooley 1922:184-185), which I have already mentioned. It also makes it possible to build the role of an agency worker, based on observations of actions undertaken by the coworkers:

Some girls who were there a little longer, even a month, in an agency, they know something more about it, so I ask them about everything...how they do it, more or less, so the client doesn't cheat in some way or anything. To make money. They have their ways. When they go into the room with the client, they are not like… like… like afraid or something, but they are… they feel at ease simply, and they are completely different. [woman, 43 years old, 3 months of indoor sex work]

Observing the behavior of other workers, who apparently do not feel such strong negative emotions and, in some way (which is unclear for the newcomers), managed to cope with the difficulties of the first period of work, allows the beginners to believe that it is possible and perhaps it will also happen to them:

I am troubled every time I have a client, but I think I can do it somehow. The girls somehow treat it normally, but I'm like… I'm happy that I've been chosen because it's money, but, on the other hand, I go with the client, and I'm shaking. [woman, 43 years old, 3 months of indoor sex work]

During my analysis of the secondary socialization process, I was interested in the context of role-taking/role-making (Turner 1962) during interactions with all categories of participants of this world, but also the process of changes in identity (which I have already stressed). The key factor in these processes is that the coworkers become a reference group, whose system of values and cognitive perspective are *taken for granted* (Shibutani 1962:130-132). This makes it easier for newcomers to define prostitution as work and to accept the rules in a given team of female colleagues. Depending on what is considered a normal and desirable working pattern in a team, a newcomer behaves differently towards the clients and coworkers. The following quote provides an example:

So, a client comes in, and all the girls pounce. They kiss him and do everything; they sit on his lap, hug him, get undressed, dance on those poles. It's a real fight for the client. I sat there like [eyes and mouth wide open] shocked, totally shocked. It was a completely different system of working at night there. And here we're these innocents; we go out, we sit

down. For example, only E. does the striptease here, and you need to pay for this, and only one girl does it. And in that place all the girls undress, they dance to the music, simply to present themselves to the client. So it's not for me. I think it's like the girls have more courage there, they have this personality, they can work with every client. [woman, 28 years old, 6 years of indoor sex work]

The values and standards of the coworkers also influence the attitude of employees towards taking psychoactive substances (Ślęzak 2012; 2016), how they perceive their own body (Ślęzak 2018c), and how they protect themselves against violence and respond to violence (Ślęzak 2017). The transferred knowledge also included ways of reducing the risk related to the provision of sex services and solving emerging dilemmas and problems (cf. Prus and Irini 1988:28).

In addition to coworkers, clients are an extremely important category of interactional partners. They are a distinct group (Marciniak 2010) for the female workers, allowing them to develop their roles in contrast to the role of a client. They may also be the teachers of a role (especially for novice workers), communicating effective ways of conducting commercial meetings during interactions.

I learned a lot from my clients. What they want, how to do the stuff. Because if a client is ok, he will lead you. [woman, 40 years old, 1 year of indoor sex work]

Bosses are a very important category of interactional partners. For novice employees, they are often the source of meanings about whom the person providing the sex services is. In professionally run premises it is easier to adopt a definition of self as a worker. In the case of oppressive places with violence

against women, the perspective of prostitution as a pathology may dominate, where women have no rights or respect. The difference between these two approaches adopted by the bosses is shown in the following quote (Ślęzak 2019:64, 198):

> The boss called us names, which I didn't like at all: "You morons, you idiots, you morons with no school." This killed me the most. [woman, 30 years old, 5 years of indoor sex work]

> There is a boss who is an alcoholic, and when he drinks too much, he beats the girls, because he unloads his aggression on these girls. He has two favorites, and the rest are treated very badly. [woman, 41 years old, 2 years of indoor sex work]

> There was this client here, and he started, "You whores, fucking bitches." And the girls were like: "What? Are you talking to us?" So we went to our room. And the boss heard it. And he said: "Sir, please leave, you won't insult the girls here." So, such a boss is all right! And in other places, they wouldn't pay attention to this, only MONEY matters. And here, I can't say that. They take care of us, and they pay attention to us. Such a client is asked to leave. [woman, 32 years old, 2 years of indoor sex work]

The attitude of the bosses towards the workers is also imitated by other workers of the premises. It is, therefore, a highly important point of reference that helps to establish who the female workers are and who they are not, in their own eyes, or the eyes of their most frequent interactional partners.

The analysis of the organizational entanglement of the women who provide sex services and the interactional work between the women, the clients, and the agency coworkers makes it possible to in-

clude important categories that explain the process of redefining the situation and one's identity. This perspective allows us to understand not only how women are involved in the provision of sex services and how they learn to do this work, but also to discover the dynamics of carrying on with this practice over time. Continuing to work in a particular place depends to a large extent on the interpersonal relations that will be developed between the newcomer and other employees, for example, whether they are going to support her in developing ways of dealing with the risks and difficulties of sex work, or, alternatively, whether they are going to try to make her leave. The different experiences of the women in this regard are shown in the following quotes:

> I didn't know what it would actually be like here. I mean, when I started working, the first days I just came here and sat and watched, got to know the girls, and the girls told me about the principles here. They took me in, and I stayed. [woman, 24 years old, 1 year of indoor sex work]

> I had a very sad beginning HERE, but there were other girls then. Very upsetting girls. They thought I would go. They did everything so I'd leave on my own accord, but as this was not my first agency, I knew it wouldn't be easy at the beginning...You know, they got pissed off that it didn't work. Everything they did, I just sat and read a book. Because I thought there was no point; if they tease me, what can I talk about with them? So, I brought books, I sat down, and I read, because what could I talk to them about if they did all of that? And they were so pissed off. But, you know, it took a month, a month and a half at most, and they saw that they could do nothing because I just… I came to work at the same time, I did my job, I left, and, you know, they let it go. [woman, 30 years old, 4 years of indoor sex work]

Effective secondary socialization in agencies equipped the women with the skills to cope with the sex market, not only in social agencies but also in other segments or other roles. An example may be the women who started their sex work career as escort agency workers, and later they gave up that work in favor of individual escorting or starting their own small business, hiring one or two sex workers:

I'd call an agency a private dwelling hatchery. This is where the girls mature before going on to open their own business. Because they have to start somewhere. They prepare to do something similar on their own. And to not share the money with anyone. A LOT of girls from this agency have opened their businesses. You wouldn't believe how many girls actually did come and go, and 3/4 of them have something of their own. [woman, 35 years old, 1 year of indoor sex work]

Conclusions

I believe that adopting symbolic interactionism as the ontological perspective and grounded theory methodology combined with ethnography as the procedures for studying the social world of escort agencies produced interesting results. This is especially true regarding the literature on the subject that dominates in Poland, which (mostly) adapts the assumptions of a normative paradigm, perceives prostitution as pathology, and which verifies presumed hypotheses rather than giving the stage to the researched individuals.

In my opinion, the elements of my approach that are most interesting for other researchers would be:

- the analysis of sex work provision as a social activity (Prus and Irini 1988:26). Getting involved and carrying on is of a social and not only of an individual and psychological character. Such an approach makes it possible to shift the stress from seeking individual conditions of prostitution to researching the process of sex work. Hence, it is possible to supplement the results of previous (mainly quantitative) research, which point to the social, economic, or psychological factors that contribute to becoming involved in prostitution, with the dimension of interactions between novices and other participants of this social world (Ślęzak 2019:25).

- the analysis of the collective component of identity transformations, which is especially important in the context of escort agencies. Taking up a job in an agency is related to intensive actions by the interactional partners who introduce and socialize the new female workers. They are, therefore, the actors of collective work on redefining the meanings associated with prostitution (Blumer 1969). The multitude of interactional partners in agencies means that the *role-making* (Turner 1962) process may be very intensive. An escort agency is a place of playing various roles: colleagues, coworkers, a woman providing sex services, a subordinate, a lover, a worker at different stages of her career, et cetera. The dynamics of the interaction between the actors of the escort agency world is of great significance for the women continuing their involvement in prostitution, and it influences the shape of the work and the potential discomfort for the female workers. The collective interactional work of all the social actors involved in the operation of escort agencies keeps the novices in prostitution and makes it difficult for them to leave. This provides clear differentiation between the work in

the agency and the individual provision of sex services. The former is of a team character and should be researched as such. Thanks to this approach, the researcher may draw special attention to the interactions between the participants of the world of escort agencies and their meaning in the context of both organizational order and actions related to the provision of sex services (Ślęzak 2019:26).

- the analysis of the organizational context of the provision of sex services and its impact on how they are provided and for how long (in a biographical sense). The everyday experiences of remaining in the agency are related to playing social roles that result from membership in the organization. Adapting the micro-sociological perspective makes it possible to analyze the group processes (previously committed in the research) that take place, where several (or even a dozen) people cooperate within a common and not very sizable space. In turn, looking at

the escort agencies from the perspective of the sociology of work allows us to pay attention to the processes of adaptation and socialization, and the interactions with the boss, coworkers, and clients (Ślęzak 2019:25).

Therefore, the work situation in an escort agency results from the joint actions of numerous individuals who guarantee the infrastructure, the safety, and the flow of clients, and, last but not least, those who provide the sex services (cf. Becker 1982:34; see also: Blumer 1969). The constant attunement between particular members of the team (female workers, security staff, boss) and clients is of key importance (cf. articulation work [Strauss et al. 1985:151-191; Ślęzak 2019:226).

Adapting the proposed analytical perspective allows us to see prostitution not just as a status and the result of particular conditions, but as a process that takes place in given organizational surroundings (Ślęzak 2019). I believe it provides many new questions within the sex work research.

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Citation

How Non-Heteronormative Mothers Negotiate Meaning: Experiencing and Contextualizing *Invisibility*

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Abstract: This article aims to shed light on how non-heteronormative mothers—whose child had been conceived via artificial insemination of one of them with the sperm of an anonymous donor—decode, experience, and make meaning of diverse (symbolic) dimensions of their social *invisibility*, as well as how their understandings of the category at hand have an impact on projecting and negotiating their roles as mothers (especially in case of those women who did not give birth to their children). Drawing on specific examples from the field, I analyze how—while acting within the *context of anxiety* exemplifying their non-existing legal status—non-heteronormative mothers construct the image of self against the backdrop of no ready-made role scripts available, as well as strive towards making oneself (socially) *visible*. The insights at hand are based on data collected during my six-year ethnographic study of planned non-heteronormative motherhood in Poland, where same-sex relationships are not legally recognized.

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Two-Mother Families in Poland: Introductory Remarks

"Look, they are those dykes!" This is the sentence that Julia, the head of one of the largest departments of an international company from the financial industry, heard from one of the fathers while picking her child up from preschool. She is privately Anna's

longtime partner and the biological mother of their child, who was born thanks to artificial insemination with the sperm of an anonymous donor. She remembers the day when she heard it very well, as well as the phone conversation she had with Anna a few minutes later. It was the last day when their child went to that preschool. The names of both women are, of course, fictitious, while their story, portraying challenges that two mothers of one child encounter in Poland on a daily basis, is real.

Having instanced the above situation, it should be noted that same-sex couples living in Poland receive no legal recognition, which represents for them both symbolic, as well as practical issues. Their circumstances become even more complicated when they raise a child[1]—like in the case of planned families of women who bring up children together conceived through artificial insemination of one of them with the sperm of an anonymous donor. Why is it so? To begin with, Polish law does not allow for the acquisition of parental rights in relation to a biological child of one's partner by a person of the same sex as the child's parent (formal guardian), nor is there a possibility of adopting a child by same-sex couples. This means that although the biological moth-

er's partner (social mother[2]) participates in raising their child, she cannot make any legally-sanctioned decision concerning the child; the offspring is not her heir; in the case of the women's separation, the child will not receive legally-established alimony; and—in the event of the death of the biological mother—the offspring may be legally taken away from the social mother (in light of Polish law the will of the biological mother in this regard—expressed in her testament—may not be taken into account).

How does it affect the everyday lives of women I have met during the project? Having internalized norms and values embraced by the heteronorm framework—embodied and exemplified, for instance, in Polish law—they often adopt a strategy of hiding the nature of their relationship (family) in front of certain people and in certain situations. Why are they acting so? Because of anticipating the possibility of experiencing some form of emanation of homophobia, which—at various levels of meaning—would pose a threat not only to them, but—which they fear the most—to their child. Their anxieties in this respect are fueled, on the one hand, by how such families as theirs are portrayed in everyday Polish discourse—as an aberration. On the other hand, some of the study participants, like Julia and Anna, do not have to go as far as deconstructing the content of casual conversations or Internet comments, since they have experienced its materialization for themselves. The report regarding the "Attitude to People of Homosexual Orientation" (CBOS 2017:4) further contextualizes the situation of those beyond the heteronormative framework in Poland:

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[1] It is estimated in the introduction to *Tęczowe rodziny w Polsce* (*Rainbow Families in Poland*) that "data provided by the media speak of over 50,000 children who are raised in Poland by same-sex parents" (Abramowicz 2010:8 [trans. MW]). Still, no information about the source of that information is provided. Meanwhile, a research report drawn up as part of the *Rodziny z wyboru w Polsce* (*Family of Choice in Poland*) project refers to the collection of 7028 questionnaires, of which 3038 were qualified for the analysis (Mizielińska, Abramowicz, and Stasińska 2014). "Among the respondents, 9% declared that they had a child, more than twice as many women (11.7%) than men (4.6%)" (Mizielińska, Abramowicz, and Stasińska 2014:130 [trans. MW]). In relation to conceiving a child in a same-sex relationship—"[in] 8% of cases [concerning the aforementioned 9%], the child was conceived during the current relationship with a person of the same sex" (Mizielińska, Abramowicz, and Stasińska 2014:133-134 [trans. MW]).

[2] It should be noted here that while describing the situation of social mothers I refer to them in the empirical parts of this paper as non-biological mothers. It was the research participants' choice to be referred to thusly in potential publications since they believe the term at hand is the closest to their situation in the socio-legal context of Poland.

One sixth of respondents (16%) regard homosexuality as something normal…Over half of Poles (55%) treat homosexuality as a deviation from the norm, which should be tolerated, while every fourth respondent (24%) thinks that it should not be tolerated. The last attitude in this decade is much less frequently expressed than previously…Most Poles are reluctant to extend to homosexual couples norms and rights of heterosexuals. Over the years, however, we have seen some change in this respect. One third of respondents (32%) are in favor of same-sex couples publicly showing their way of life. Slightly fewer approve of their right to enter into marriages (30%), and one-ninth (11%) think that they should have the right to adopt children.

Also, according to a more recent report regarding the attitude of Poles towards homosexual relationships, "While we have observed a slow increase in openness towards gays and lesbians…this trend has slowed down…Significantly more people than in 2017 do not want homosexual couples to publically show their way of life." Also, three-fifths of Poles do not approve of their right to enter into a civil partnership, and there are even more opponents of their right to enter into marriages, not to mention adopting children (CBOS 2019:12 [trans. MW]).

Having the above in mind, when it comes to contextualizing the situation of two-mother families in Poland, it is worth noting that while, on the one hand, diverse cultural messages seem to glorify the role of the mother, framing motherhood as the obvious, and even obligatory, stage of life of every woman, on the other hand—it turns out that such a role is, in fact, reserved for those individuals who are *normal* (i.e., heterosexuals who follow traditional, preferably catholic, values). Thus, while the heteronormative society can turn a blind eye to certain "flaws"

of heterosexual mothers (e.g., their very young age, physical/intellectual disability, being addicted to psychoactive substances, etc.), non-heteronormative motherhood in Poland is socially perceived as, at best, inadequate. Such a view seems to embrace the patriarchal approach to motherhood—reserved for *normal* women whose sexual orientation will not threaten the proper socialization of the child (see: Majka-Rostek 2014). The above can be seen in terms of a manifestation of social control guarding the traditional order, whose effectiveness is exemplified by the fact that when considering enlarging their family, the women under study undertake an intense emotional and (auto-)identity work aimed at answering the question whether they have a moral right to become mothers at all. As Krzysztof T. Konecki (2018:35) observes:

> Auto-work on identity is…part of the motivational process to carry out activities consistent with the identity and sustain it and, in turn, to keep the continuation of these activities. Auto-work on identity appears automatically in connection with a specific, planned, or important action for the individual…Auto-work on identity can be treated as a certain form (quality) of the existence of the mind and the self.

Needless to say, the situation of a social mother seems to be even more complicated. Due to this, she is at risk of experiencing double stigma and double *invisibility*—not only as a non-heteronormative mother (oxymoron), but also as an outsider involved in raising a child of another woman. The circumstances at hand reflect the heteronormative society's value system which upholds the belief that one child can have only one "real" mother, which seems to complicate further the difficult situation of a social mother raising a child who, in the eyes of Polish law, is not, and simply cannot be, hers—for she faces

a difficult task of constructing a coherent image of self, piecing together the elements that seem to not have a socio-cultural underpinning.

Not surprisingly, one's personal acquaintance with those beyond the heteronormative framework significantly shapes the way they perceive the rights of such people (see: CBOS 2019)—most probably because they are no longer perceived in terms of an abstract social issue, but as actual people—one's acquaintances, friends, colleagues; in short, someone they know. "Those who know a gay or lesbian, more often than others, perceive this sexual orientation as something normal and express the need for tolerance, while they are less likely to treat it as a deviation that should not be accepted" (CBOS 2017:4). Further, the 2019 survey shows that more than every third respondent (36%) knows someone of homosexual orientation (CBOS 2019). The above observations resonate, to some extent, with Zimbardo's (2007) insights about cognitive processes—that people tend to fear what they are not familiar with, and that not knowing somebody makes it easier to lose sight of that person's humanity, seeing them instead as, for instance, an abstract social problem—and thus further contextualize the situation of two-mother families in Poland. Thus, although the aim of this article is to shed light on how the anxieties of two mothers of one child residing in Poland contextualize their experiences, it should not be forgotten that the mistrust at hand is, in fact, mutual, and, in this sense, co-constructed by the parties involved—those who assume to be seen as non-normative and the normative society at large, with whose norms the former constantly interact—resulting in creating everyday realities for everyone involved.

In the following empirical sections of the paper, I will focus on one of the parties involved in the co-construction of their everyday realities, and thus explain how—while interacting with the norms they find oppressive, as well as based on the assumptions they make about how they may be seen—two mothers of one child give meaning to their experiences in relation to dealing with finding oneself socially *invisible*. Also, in the course of subsequent analyses, I will emphasize the situation of those women who did not give birth to their children—for, as discussed earlier, being at risk of experiencing double *invisibility* and having no ready-made role scripts available, they engage in an intense "auto-work on identity" (Konecki 2018) aimed at "establishing" their roles as mothers.

Normality and *Deviance* in the Lens of Symbolic Interactionism

The attempt to describe the experiences of two-mother families in Poland emerges from reflection on constructing social reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966), inscribed in the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. For this reason, the analytical emphasis has been placed on how, while interpreting the world around them, the participants give meaning in the process of negotiating their *whatness* and *howness* (Kleinknecht 2007). Following Herbert Blumer (1969), I assume that the influence of any element of the reality external vis-à-vis the individual is mediated by a continual process of interpretation, during which one gives their experiences a specific meaning. In this context, human acting emerges in the course of constant construction of meanings, which—as any realized element of social reality—are unstable, since every action, interaction, and phenomenon are continually defined and adapted to the individual's interpretations (Strauss 1959; Prus 1997). Therefore, any description of a certain entity does not exclude re-negotiating it

concerning other levels of meaning, which exemplifies the (cognitive) perspective of the one who gives meaning rather than the ambiguity of the object at hand. Furthermore, such a perspective allows one to take any action based on suppositions towards the object, whose direction may change in the course of interaction with the one being named (see: Strauss 1959). For this reason, human experience can be seen in terms of social products—emerging and/or ongoing constructs (Prus and Grills 2003).

The above considerations outline the analytical paths that I follow in this paper while attempting to understand the experiences of individuals who, interacting within certain symbolic frameworks, see their situation in the context of acting within undecoded social meanings rather than in terms of "paving the way." For it should be outlined that the conceptual complexity of the situation of non-heteronormative mothers is largely because although the content of specific social roles cannot be equated to a specific set of guidelines that compliance would outline the only proper way of taking a certain role, individual actions are, nonetheless, anchored by the rule of intersubjectivity, which implies that people behave in such a way as if certain universal roles existed (Turner 2001). Thus, one of the major obstacles the participants of the study face on a daily basis is dealing with stigma—being seen (and, due to having internalized specific norms and values, understanding that they, indeed, can be seen) as *deviants* operating in the so-called *normal* world.

As Erving Goffman (1986) observes, *normality* is, for the most part, conceptualized in relation to that which has been socially established as *deviant*. This indicates the recognition of *normality* in terms of a certain collective representation of subjective perceptions about how it should be (now, as well as in

the future). Thus, one's *normality* seems to require displaying during social encounters. This is the case as one can attest to being part of a certain community, but also maintain a specific self-image, based on which the individual shapes one's identity being subject to the process of negotiation and verification—precisely during an interaction (Strauss 1959). Therefore, the act of displaying *normality* can be seen as a mechanism aimed at protecting the social actor from being labeled as *deviant*—that is, symbolically stigmatized (Goffman 1986). Referring to the issue of constructing and reproducing *normality* (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Prus and Grills 2003), Erving Goffman (1986) highlights two mechanisms having an impact on the process at hand: 1) the internalization of specific norms and values in the process of socialization and 2) the normalizing social control aimed at "disciplining" the individual accordingly. Still, it should not be forgotten that social actors adapt to certain norms of social life, guided by a variety of motives, by matching the line of their actions with the guidelines provided by their interactional partners. In such context, striving to be labeled *normal* (insofar as one's stigma is not known or visible, making one discreditable rather than discredited [Goffman 1986]) can be seen as protecting oneself against potential symbolic sanctions. And yet it is worth noting that while, on the one hand, doing so can, indeed, free the individual short-term from the anticipated consequences of disclosing one's deviation from what is considered *normal*. Acting thusly can also, on the other hand, lead to internal conflict(s)—as "playing the game" contributes to reproducing precisely those norms one finds oppressive in the first place. Exemplification of the above is provided by the situation when the participants—precisely out of fear of symbolic sanctions—hide the nature of their family, in front of certain people and in certain situations, based on the availability

heuristic, as well as the norm of monomaternalism (a woman with a child must be the mother). However, giving meaning to such *passing practices* (Goffman 1986) can prove problematic in the context of building a child's strong self-esteem (which the participants strongly emphasized during interviews). Thus producing numerous dilemmas they face in the course of identity narration—an issue that I will discuss further in the empirical part of the paper.

A Study of Planned Non-Heteronormative Motherhood in Poland—Methodological Note

Issues discussed in the paper at hand are based on data collected during my six-year ethnographic study of two-mother families in Poland. Among the couples who participated in the study are 21 families[3] whose child had been artificially conceived (due to intrauterine insemination or in vitro fertilization of one of them with the sperm of an anonymous donor) in the course of their relationship.

Semi-structured interviews, which I conducted in various configurations, were the leading technique of data collection. When meeting a given family for the first time, I interviewed both of the women, unless the couple split up. The next step was to interview the women separately—during our succeeding

meetings. Although I am aware of the limitations of conducting the interviews thusly, my decision to do so was twofold. First, the majority of the research participants insisted on telling their stories in the presence of their partners. This, although can be interpreted in terms of anticipating tension such a meeting may cause, was explained in more pragmatic terms. Since their child was still very young, one person was unable to simultaneously take care of the child and focus on narrating; another thing is that the women perceived such a solution as lucrative for me. Instead of one person, I was able to interview two people, which was to guarantee that no important fact was to be omitted or distorted. This, at the analytical level, allows the researcher to make assumptions regarding the nature of the relationship those women had. Second, being aware that such a way of conducting interviews would allow witnessing how the women relate to their partners, as well as their child,[4] what, in the context of the study, is extremely valuable, I decided to comply with their request. During the interviews with both partners, I paid special attention to not touch on any sensitive, or potentially so, issues, which, if emerged, were brought to light at the time of individual meetings. Moreover, since most of the couples do not publically reveal the nature of their relationship (in certain situational contexts or in front of certain people), the participants involved have been anonymized. In sum, I have conducted 76 interviews with the women whose child had been conceived in the course of their relationship—30 interviews with

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[3] At the time of our first meeting, the women were aged 26-40, and their children's age varied from 2 months to 6 years (5 couples were expecting). Before deciding to enlarge their families, women were couples from 18 months to 5 years. One of the couples separated before their child reached one year of age, but they still raise the offspring together. It is also worth noting here that all of the couples in the study enjoy both cultural and economic capitals allowing them, in their opinion, to protect themselves, as well as their child, against anticipated emanations of homophobia, including moving to another country (which, due to the lack of sufficient social capital, one of the families did—it was the only family in the study whose relationship, as well as their decision of having a child, was not accepted by their families of origin).

[4] The research participants' children (usually toddlers) were present at the time of the interview. Still, none of the women insisted on keeping the interview short. Furthermore, as one of the participants has stated, our meeting was important for her since she viewed it as the opportunity to raise—via potential publications—social awareness in the area of two-mother families in Poland. On the other hand, I do not exclude that such motives could have an impact on the way they constructed their narrations.

both mothers and 46 individual interviews (21 with biological mothers and 25 with social mothers).[5] The interviews lasted around three to five hours (in case of interviews with both partners) and around one to two hours (in case of individual interviews), and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

The second technique of data collection was overt participant observation, aimed at capturing how the women under study present and practice their family in a visible (both common and institutionalized) social space, as well as how specific social responses to their actions, as interpreted by the women, have had an impact on adapting certain strategies of functioning in the social milieus at hand (such issues were clarified during conversational interviews [Konecki 2000]). Three families allowed me to accompany them in their everyday life activities such as going to the park, to the shopping mall, to the zoo, picking the child up from nursery school, or playing with the child in the yard or at the playground. I have conducted 28 observations lasting around one to three hours, with the notes being taken during or right after the observation.

All data gathered during the course of the study have been analyzed according to grounded theory methodology procedures (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Konecki 2000). Following the procedures of theoretical sampling and constant comparative method, I have been deciding on what data to collect next, as well as where to find them, to understand how various dimensions of the participants' everyday lives are interconnected, and thus construct a theory grounded in the data. Therefore, it should be noted that, at first, the scope of the project was much wider—encompassing the situation of same-sex female and male families in Poland. Still, since during the course of the study the issue of parenting emerged as one of the most important categories for the participants (mostly in the narrations of women, but also in those of men), I followed their lines of verbalized experiences. During the course of the study, I interviewed both planned, as well as reconstructed families.[6] Still, since the situation of reconstructed families turned out to be quite different from what planned families encounter, for instance, due to the simple fact of the presence of the child's father (or their mother) within institutionalized social spaces (see: Wojciechowska 2020), data obtained from the former mostly served comparative purposes (and are not included in the paper). Furthermore, having conceptualized my research inquiries as exploring the experiences of two mothers of one child residing in Poland, I intended to see whether/how their situation, perceived as marginalized by the study participants, evolves, as their children grow up and thus become a (more) aware interactional actors; or whether/how other contextual, situational, and interactional factors shape their experiences in the area of non-heteronormative motherhood.[7] The re-

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[5] Since one of my aims was to see whether/how the research participants' situation evolved, I intended to interview each of the couples at—a minimum—two points in time. I have interviewed 8 couples twice (2 families in 2014 and 2016, 3 couples in 2015 and 2017, and 3 other families in 2016 and 2018) and 4 families 3 times (2 families in 2013, 2015, and 2017 and 2 other couples in 2014, 2016, and 2018). Also, although a two-year interval may not seem enough to offer insight into potential shifts, many of the women narrated how and why they had revised their strategies of presenting their family as their child was growing up, and thus becoming a more aware social actor (preschool children).

[6] Among the reconstructed families were three lesbian couples who raise a child being a biological descendant of one of them (conceived during her marriage ended with divorce). I also interviewed one gay couple where one of the partners has a child being raised by his ex-wife.

[7] During the course of the study, I had a chance to converse with some of the participants' family members, as well as observe how they interact (i.e., the mother of one of the participants accompanied us—out of curiosity—during one of the first observations), which enabled me to further contextualize the line of my analyses. Still, since I aimed to reconstruct the perspective of two women who decided to enlarge their family (and conver-

sults of thusly conducted explorations—concerning one of the analytical categories, that is, dealing with *conceptual invisibility* (and the processes thereof), are presented in the subsequent sections of the paper.

Dealing with Stigma in the Context of *Conceptual Invisibility*

> I remember, for example, but it was before we moved, in the elevator, I mean, a neighbor said to M. [interviewee's son] in the elevator something like, "Hey, little guy! Don't you have a nice auntie?" And, you know, it wasn't like rude or something, I don't know, discriminating, but... You know, it's just that they have to name me in some way. That is, it seems to me that it's in our nature to call things by their names, and, when it comes to me, well, there's no name that would apply here, right? [Cynthia, non-biological mother]

The above quote represents an apt manifestation of the socio-cultural norm of monomaternalism, which can be seen in terms of the ideological doctrine that "resides at the intersection of patriarchy (with its insistence that women bear responsibility for biological and social reproduction), heteronormativity (with its insistence that a woman must pair with a man, rather than other women, in order to raise children successfully), capitalism (in its conception of children as private property), and Eurocentrism (in its erasure of polymaternalism in other cultures and historical periods)" (Park 2013:7). In this sense, the above interpretation of one's situation—"it's in our nature to call things by their names, and, when it comes to me, well, there's no name that would apply here, right?"—directly points to a conceptual gap indicating potential difficulties in understand-

sational interviews [see: Konecki 2000] with their next of kin did not provide the context of theory discovery), while collecting the data, I decided to focus on the issue at hand.

ing the socially unconceptualized figure of the *other* mother. Due to such *conceptual invisibility*—in a situation of decoding her status towards the child—the woman is, most likely, to be seen as *different*, thus constituting a symbolic threat to the "known" and—more importantly—*normal* (Goffman 1986). Of course, having internalized the frame of meaning at hand, the participants not only deal with keeping their status of (only) "discreditable" (Goffman 1986), but they also strive to build a coherent image of self, often based on such meanings that they know, that is, conceptually available ones.

The above considerations outline the analytical paths that I follow in the next part of the article—in an attempt to illustrate how non-heteronormative mothers negotiate the sense and meaning(s) of their role(s).

Everyday Living in the Context of Anxiety: Being Nobody in the Light of Law

The heading *context of anxiety*, socially, culturally, and legally underpinned, is one of the sensitizing concepts that not only outlined potential areas of research, but also proved to be an important frame of meaning in the process of contextualizing the experiences of non-heteronormative mothers—especially of those women who did not give birth to their children. In this sense, the context at hand stands for a conceptual representation of the (emotional) state that arises among the interviewees in a situation of conceptualizing oneself at the legal level, that is, in the context of one's (formal) impuissance to regulate their status towards both the partner, as well as the child. Such a conceptual location is relativized by the women with whom I have spoken both to issues they find—simply—problematic (e.g., when a child is ill only the biological mother is entitled to get sick leave), but also to matters of much greater impor-

tance—for example, when their anxiety is accumulated and drains from one simple question—*What happens when the biological mother is gone?*[8]

> I'm actually scared of the future, especially when I think about such matters that one of us could pass away, and such fears that I have are, so to speak, so very real in our situation, I mean, in Poland, where nothing changes for the better. Things only get worse here. [Kate, non-biological mother]

The verbalized experience of fear seems to have its foundation—above all—in anticipating potential difficulties most of the non-heteronormative mothers are expecting to face at some point. For this reason—to elucidate the issue at hand as experienced by the women under study—I give voice to Agatha who brought up the above-mentioned concerns in the context of painful and difficult interactional episodes she experienced as the postoperative complications of her pregnant partner induced the premature arrival of their child into the world.

> **Agatha:** I was looking for her like everywhere. I got to the hospital, I went to the delivery ward, but they told me she wasn't there. Somebody made me leave. I didn't know what was going on, so I kept on asking about her 'cause I knew she was there…I heard her, I knew she must have been there, in this hospital room 'cause I heard her screaming…One lady approached me and asked who I was, so I told her I was entitled [had legal competence] to be informed about Diana's health condition. And she said: "Then show it to me." I tried to explain it was in their files, right, but she only replied: "Sorry, I have no time for this," and she shut the door to the other ward. I didn't know

what else to do. I was standing there, banging on the door. […]

> **Me:** Were you allowed to see Adam?
>
> **Agatha:** Not a chance! Diana told me she had authorized me to see our son, so I went to the nurses' room and asked them to let me in. Again, they told me I was not a family member so I wouldn't be able to see him. "Even grandparents can't see their grandchildren, only parents." I told them about the authorization, "Then go to the doctor's office." And so I went to the doctor and explained the situation all over again. She said that if such authorization has been written, I would be let in, but she was too busy to look for it… So I left her office and went back to the nurses' room, and I simply told them I have cleared things up, right. And, I went there to see Adam.

The above excerpt—consisting of two utterances aimed at illustrating the (legal) non-existence of non-biological mother(s) within the institutionalized social space—represents, of course, an extreme example of a situation that may happen to a non-heteronormative family. Still, it was not brought up here to stir emotions, but to draw attention to two analytical paths emerging from the verbalized experiences. First, it is worth taking a closer look at the issue of refusing the woman to see her child—to which the biological mother authorized her partner. Leaving aside the issue of potential motives behind so doing, what should be elucidated is the difficult and ambiguous situation of a non-biological mother—not being recognized in Polish law as a person having any right to her child, she made sure that her partner completed the formalities that would authorize her to see her offspring, and yet this cannot happen, since the decision-maker in this regard claims to have other issues to be covered. Second, such experiences, especially if they become interiorized, can lead to one's functioning within the *closed context of anxiety* produced in the

[8] Fear of the death of one of the mothers of the couple can also be seen in terms of an indicator of one's basic experience, that is, "fundamental anxiety" (Schütz 1962).

aftermath of one's (empirically confirmed) inability to extinct fears about the child's future when the biological mother is—at different levels of meaning—no longer around. The following excerpts of women's narrations further contextualize the issue at hand.

> We live together, we raise our son, but nobody would ask if we are a loving family 'cause it doesn't matter, you know. I practically don't exist. I need Anna's authorization to do things any parent should be able to do. I can't even take John to the doctor because I cannot make any decision regarding my own son. I changed my last name to make things easier, I have all possible kinds of authorizations, and we both wrote our last will, but life is unpredictable, you know. I don't know what may happen in, I don't know, a week's time, you know. To be honest, I'm freaking out. I really don't know what our life would look like if something happens to Anna. [Barbara, non-biological mother]

> If something would happen to me, right, my family knows that fighting for parental rights with Mary can't cross their mind...We have all kinds of documents involving a notary public, but this is not enough! I mean, they [attorneys] have no knowledge as to how to secure us. [Susan, biological mother]

Everyday functioning within the *context of anxiety* is highlighted in a similar vein by another non-biological mother, whose situation is further complicated since she split up with her partner before their child reached one year of age. Women continue to raise their offspring together, however—despite having worked out how they would share custody—the non-biological mother continues to worry whether her partner's will in this regard is, indeed, irrefutable.

> As I said, Kate wrote her last will. If something would happen to her before Anne is of legal age, I am to take care of her, that's Kate's will. She also told her parents she wants me to be Anne's legal guardian. I think they are okay with this, but, yeah, you can never be sure, right? We're not together anymore, and I don't see them so often nowadays, so… The thing is, Kate's attorney told her she can write her last will and name me as Anne's legal guardian, but it doesn't mean a thing. Anne is not an object, so Kate's will doesn't apply here. [Anna, non-biological mother]

As reflected in the above narrations, striving for some form of regulation of their uncertain everyday living, the women under study undertake two kinds of attempts to normalize their situation, thus trying to manage (minimize) the *context of anxiety* in which they operate. On the one hand, they explore the possibilities they have in the area of formal "recognition" of their rights (and duties) towards their child that can be granted by (marginalizing) Polish law (which, in this sense, can be seen as one of the emanations of specific socio-cultural context which demarcates what is *normal* from what is not). Still, most of the non-heteronormative mothers under study referred to the issue of poorly developed institutional background, as well as insufficient knowledge of legal advisors, which—exemplifying the gap in Polish legal regulations—confirms their *conceptual invisibility* in various dimensions of social life. The situation at hand encourages women to resort to informal solutions, which—based on formally unrecognized "social contracts" with their families of origin—seem to serve (above all) symbolic purposes—that of comforting the women, as well as making them *visible* among their closest interactional circles. Such informal arrangements with their families were made by the majority of the informants, which can be seen in terms of seeking a sense of ontological security (see: Giddens 1991; Konecki 2018). However, it is worth noting here that this was possible due to spe-

cific (good) relations most of them declared to have with their families of origin. For the vast majority of women enjoyed both acceptance and support from their closest interactional circles. Still, this situation looks different in the case of a couple—the only one in the sample—who have practically no contact with their next of kin (which is due to the lack of acceptance of their *deviant* relationship). Their inability to formally regulate the situation of the family, as well as to proceed with informal arrangements translates into considering—as a possible solution—emigrating to a country where they would be seen (and recognized) as a *real* family—just the way they understand their situation.

> It may sound a bit dramatic, right, but our situation is that we're all alone. I mean—ALONE. You know, Magda, how my or Julia's family situation looks like, right? So you know that there's no one we can turn to. If something happens, if I have an accident, what then? What will she do? What about our child? It's fucked up that all my life I'm trembling to think about the future…For me, the only way out is to leave, to go to some normal country, so, you know, we keep on talking about the options. [Anna, non-biological mother]

Who Am I? Patchworking the Image of Self in the Context of No Ready-Made Role Scripts

One of the dilemmas identified in the narrations—especially of those women who did not give birth to their children—is identity work in the context of conceptualizing oneself in relation to the role of the (*other*) mother. Therefore, to highlight their situation in the process of negotiating the image of self, it is worth referring to the issue of decoding the parent's status based on internalized concepts embedded in a wider socio-cultural context. Thus, it should be mentioned at this point that the traditional (and—in

this sense—socially legitimized) understanding of the term "parenthood" is based on a silent assumption that such a social setting would consist of two figures—that of one mother and a father (Lubbe 2013). The question of how easy it is to decode the parent's status when a child is to be born seems to be relevant in the light of this assumption. While the changing body of a pregnant woman is an obvious indicator of becoming a mother, the social decoding of a man as a father usually comes due to noticing him alongside an expectant mother. Of course, the above considerations highlight the issue of comprehending motherhood in relation to, above all, its biological component, which, again, brings up the problem of building its meaning in the context of the socio-cultural norm of monomaternalism. In this sense, the figure of the *other* mother, which occurs in the family constellation next to the "true" one, seems to be *conceptually invisible,* which translates into the lack of a cultural frame of reference when embedding her in various interactional configurations (Wojciechowska 2015).

> **Agnes:** When it was for sure, when we were certain Alex was pregnant it was like a huge WOW, I mean, don't even know…amazing, just an amazing feeling. I felt like I was to fly up to the sky! I was so proud that all I thought was to tell everyone that I was to be a mom!…We were not to tell anybody, but I eventually gave my mom a call. She was so happy, I mean, 'cause she knew what we've been through during the whole process…she said something like: "Congratulate Alex and give her big hugs," and all of the sudden there was this little pinch, "Mom, aren't you gonna congratulate me?" I said it more like a joke, you know, we were OK, like she said how much she loved us and stuff like that. But, it hit me pretty hard, you know. I mean, you usually say something like, congratulations to you both, you think of both parents,

but here… I mean, will people ever see me this way? Wasn't so sure about that, you know.

Me: Then how did you expect to be seen?

Agnes: Absolutely no idea… I mean, when you see two ladies with a child, your first thought is there's a mom and somebody else, like an aunt maybe…Honestly, I expected people to be less tolerant than they actually are, but you know how it is—for the most part, they probably have no clue who we really are. [Agnes, non-biological mother]

The above narration excerpt illustrates the verbalized process of making meaning of oneself in the course of integrating diverse semantic strands, in which the subject seems to refer to such optics that she considers to be dominant in a specific socio-cultural context. Thus, it is worth following two interpretation paths: 1) contextualizing meaning within the heteronorm framework (due to its internalization) and 2) one's difficulties in referring to the ready-made (cultural) role scripts (of the *other* mother) at the level of both everyday functioning, as well as one's *visibility* in general, which the subject reconciles in the process of negotiating meaning that is given within the context of one's awareness of the common understanding of parenthood. Furthermore, in the process of identity narration, a specific context of suspicion arises—when the woman, expecting to experience at some point some form of social marginalization, sees her mother's utterance in terms of potential threat to her socially unrecognized status (that of a mother). As the informant's statement indicates, the emergence of the above-mentioned context of suspicion results from her failed attempt to unify alternative dimensions of understanding oneself as a mother (me in the role of the mother vs. me seen in the role of the mother). This manifests itself in anticipating the untranslatability of one's optics (referring to herself,

the woman states who she *is* ["I was to be a mom"]) to the perspective of generalized other (referring to the anticipated social perception, she talks about who she *is not* ["I mean, will people ever see me this way?"]). Having the above in mind, it is worth noting here that one's acting within the context of suspicion may result in interpretational pitfalls. Since "they probably have no clue who we really are," people may act with no intention of discrediting anyone's status, especially when the social location at hand is *invisible*. On the one hand, acting so resembles what Barney Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (1965) referred to as "suspected awareness" (when the patient suspects, but is not certain whether their illness is fatal, and thus endeavors to find out). On the other hand, it highlights to what degree the participants' anxiety and fear that they may not be seen as *normal* shape the way they make meaning (cf. Strauss 1959), which, in this sense, can be interpreted in terms of one of the defense mechanisms they adapt to protect oneself against anticipated emanations of homophobia. For instance, while accompanying the participants and their children at the time of doing observations, I have realized that, for the most part, they would interpret any form of unexpected interaction initiated by a stranger (e.g., gazes, smiles, small talk) in terms of unwanted (potentially threatening) or surprising (in case of positive reactions) events, as if the only social reaction they expected from people they did not know in case of revealing the nature of their family was rejection (see: Wojciechowska 2020).

Other interviewees have addressed the issue of *conceptual invisibility* in a similar vein when talking about experiencing the interactional marginalization of their status. The following excerpt from Mandy's narration exemplifies the situation of those informants who—while talking about the condition of

their pregnant partners—experienced some "tension" in relation to understanding their interlocutors' utterances in terms of overlooking their experiences of becoming mothers. In this sense, such "tension" can be seen in terms of cognitive dissonance which arises as a result of confronting the perspective of one building her role with the dominant optics (heteronorm) that seems to exclude so doing from the horizon of meanings that are available to one's interlocutor(s).

> So I thought about the guys, how it works for the guys, right, how it is in their case, and I guess, um, that's just how it's done, you know. Like, you look at that lady, and straight away you can tell she's pregnant, right. You see her pregnant belly; you see this big change going on [*laughs*]. Well, I guess it's not easy for the guys either [*laughs*]. Still, you know, it's a different situation, in a sense that you have a mom, you have a dad, and you have a crystal clear case. Nobody wonders what it means, um, if people don't ask me about those things, so… Sometimes you get so confused that you don't know what to think anymore. Need to talk to someone about it, to some guy, right [*laughs*], perhaps I'll figure out how I am supposed to feel about it [*laughs*].

The above utterance seems to illustrate the process of identity narration where giving meaning to one's situation takes place in the course of "filling" the conceptual gaps of one's *invisible* role with the meanings adapted from the anticipated interactional location of the socially conceptualized figure of the father. Thus, such an interpretative process seems to exemplify the fundamental difficulty in defining oneself by the subject, since it reflects a strong emphasis on the frame of meaning which describes non-heteronormative motherhood as an oxymoron. Furthermore, in the process of rationalizing the actions that she sees as marginalizing her status, the woman did

not attempt to reframe (Goffman 1974) the meaning of her interactional location, but instead referred to such positioning through the prism of meanings embedded in the heteronorm, which *cannot* recognize her as a legitimate mother. Thus, the "filling" of conceptual gaps of one's *invisible* role with the meanings belonging with the heteronorm represents another interpretational pitfall. Still, it also exemplifies one's auto-work on identity (Konecki 2018).

Making Oneself Visible: Identity Co-Work

Since acting within the context of *conceptual invisibility* involves women in the vast amount of interpretative work they undertake to define oneself, it is worth stressing here how they make oneself *visible* in the process of identity co-work with their partners.

First, it should be noted that the process of making oneself *visible* can be seen through the prism of its symbolic dimension, regarding both those activities that are aimed at presenting the family (and oneself in it) overtly, as well as ventures whose implementation 1) enables symbolic "strengthening" of the family and 2) facilitates it to *pass* (Goffman 1986).

> **Agatha:** We very much wanted to avoid any stressful situations, you know, we so much wanted to make sure that this very beginning of our motherhood, um, that no ambiguity is involved here. That's why we decided that Diana should give birth in a private clinic so anyone around knows [that the baby is ours].
> **Diana:** We already had our contract signed.
> **Agatha:** We both wanted to be 100% involved, make people know so there were no issues.

The above excerpt of narration illustrates how women—acting to protect oneself against "stressful situa-

tions"—overcome the taboo of non-heteronormative motherhood, thusly laying the foundation for (co-) created scripts of an unconceptualized social role(s).

> There was this long list [the nurse] brought so we could choose a donor. Some basic information like eye color, hair color, height…Also, some info on a person's education, age, a hobby even. So we had this pool of data from which to choose. We basically wanted a person that would physically resemble both of us. But, Joanna insisted on choosing a person that would look like I do. [Lisa, non-biological mother]

The actions verbalized above can be seen in terms of a symbolic response to one's inability to relate to their child in a dimension of motherhood different than social. In this sense, aiming for increasing the potential for physical similarity to one's offspring can be interpreted as a form of compensation in the area of the biological dimension of motherhood—the one "reserved" for family members related to the child by blood. Following the analytical path at hand, it is worth pointing to two potential consequences of so doing. First, acting thusly can be seen in terms of (more or less intentional) laying the foundation for symbolically "strengthening" the family relations, in the process of which the research participants may "outsmart" the imagined generalized other when it comes to decoding the dimensions of one's relationship with her child. Second, it is worth noting that one can see a certain practical value in acting so (in the context of its potential consequences)—one's physical resemblance to a child can help a woman to *pass* as the child's ("real") mother, and help her to avoid anticipated interactional hardships.

A crucial role in the process of identity narration—conducted by a woman who did not give birth to her child—is played by a biological mother who—

through her actions—can facilitate her partner to project the family-based understanding of herself onto "external" (relative to the private sphere) areas of social reality. In this sense, the way women practice their family can be seen as one of the anchors based on which they conceptualize, as well as manage its *visibility*, but it also—by fitting together the lines of their actions—exemplifies how they support one another in the course of joint action (Mead 1934). Furthermore, due to overtly presenting their family relations, the women under study make *conceptually invisible visible*; and this allows them to go beyond the "safe haven" of their private lives.

> We went to the clinic together, and there was this question, um, totally natural given where we were, "For how long have you and your [male] partner been trying to get pregnant?" So I said it was not the case, told him I was romantically involved with a woman and artificial insemination was the only choice I had. [Diana, biological mother]

Although acting within the context of anticipating some form of symbolic exclusion due to revealing a non-heteronormative identity, as long as they can resort to a certain (economic) capital—allowing them to symbolically control the interaction, most of the research participants tend to overtly present their family relations. Also, due to contributing to making symbolically *visible* both the role, as well as the status of a non-biological mother within the institutionalized social space, the after-effects of such actions—as interpreted by the informants—can be seen in terms of interactional success and, in this sense, allow the projection of specific patterns of acting onto wider areas of everyday life. Thus, it is worth mentioning here that the research participants perceive such a strategy in the context of managing stress, which could potentially occur due to

hiding the (conceptual) presence of one of them. Of course, acting so would usually take place in a private clinic where—as clients—women can, to a large degree, control the course of an interaction.

Concluding Remarks

This article aims at highlighting the contexts and dimensions of the complexity of the situation of non-heteronormative mothers, especially those of them who did not give birth to their children. Therefore, two frameworks of meaning in relation to which women tend to embed their—often non-linear—streams of identity narration were elucidated, that is, complementary manifestations of the heteronorm as exemplified by the *conceptual invisibility* of (non)mothers-lesbians in the light of the law, as well as in the wider cultural context, where the understanding of motherhood is relativized to the ideological doctrine of monomaternalism. Bearing the above in mind, it is worth mentioning here that while the cultural phenomenon of *conceptual invisibility*—although actually experienced and, in this sense, luring women into "never-ending" conceptualizing of oneself—seems to complicate the situation of the informants concerning—above all—the semantic fields of (non)presence of (non)mothers-lesbians, the issue of their literal invisibility in legal regulations entangles them into a spiral of uncertainty, framed by the *context of anxiety*, and—in this sense—can be seen as (almost) tangible. For it is at this level of their everyday functioning where non-biological, non-heteronormative mothers experience—in a very painful way—their formally attested "foreignness" towards their children and partners. The situation at hand has an impact on their identity narration, in the process of which they may encounter interactional pitfalls, exemplified, for instance, by filling conceptual gaps in the scripts of

their role(s) with the meanings they give to the anticipated interactional location of figures that are not similar to them. In this sense, the potential of "overcoming" such an interpretative deadlock seems to lie in the process of giving meaning to partners' (co-)actions aimed at making the family *visible*—if, of course, in the light of unfavorable socio-cultural conditions and marginalizing Polish law, the research participants will have resources and motivation (or—courage) to undertake such actions.

Of course, the problem of how non-heteronormative mothers make meaning of who they are should also be analyzed within a broader context of Polish society. First, the way women see themselves in the context of their roles is underpinned by internalized heteronormativity (see: CBOS 2017; 2019), which can be seen as a particular form of social control, thus exemplifying how traditional societies tend to stigmatize those who "have chosen" to go beyond the frame of heteronormativity. In this context, non-heteronormative mothers can be seen as "discreditable"—those who, although are aware of their stigma, can manage its *visibility* (Goffman 1959; 1986) and thus—avoid being decoded as "deviants." Second, the way they see themselves (and are seen) stands for the hypocrisies of the Catholic Church which—although refrains from (directly) framing homosexuality as a sin—do stigmatize same-sex relationships due to not recognizing them in terms of (normal) families (Lubbe 2013; Wycisk 2017). Third, initiatives such as "LGBT-free zones"[9] or controversies that arose over the LGBT+ subject during the 2020 presidential elections in Poland,[10] widely covered in the Polish and international media, seem

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[9] See: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/world/europe/LGBT-free-poland-EU-funds.html. Retrieved September 20, 2020.

[10] See: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53039864. Retrieved September 20, 2020.

to have deepened the mutual distrust between the parties creating the everyday realities for everyone involved, which can result in same-sex female families being more reluctant than before to reveal the nature of their relationships, and the normative society at large more persistent in opposing their right to live like (a normative) everyone else.

In light of referring to the context-specific heteronormative framework (see: Ryan-Flood 2009) to explain the situation of the study participants, one may ask whether the situation of those forming same-sex female families in a more favorable socio-legal-cultural climate is, indeed, significantly different from what Polish non-heteronormative mothers encounter. Of course, many issues, especially those concerning social mothers, may turn out to be quite similar to what the study participants face. For example, the issue of negotiating one's role in the family (see, e.g., Pelka 2009; Paldron 2014) or the one of challenging people's definition(s) of *normality*, which can translate into facing a variety of obstacles (see,

e.g., Bos and van Balen 2008; Mezey 2008; 2013), to name a few. In fact, being seen as lower down on the ladder of *normalcy*, as Warner (1999) framed it, is yet another social construct. Still, what seems to further complicate the situation of the study participants is that, in the case of Poland, the heteronormative culture—surfacing, among others, from social anxiety—is manifested in Polish law. And, as outlined in Polish-specific research on the subject at hand (see: Wojciechowska 2014; 2015; 2020; Mizielińska, Struzik, and Król 2017), it is at this level of their everyday acting where two-mother families experience their marginalization—*invisibility*—most severely.

The above reflections draw attention to a number of barriers and challenges that two-mother families living in Poland face on a daily basis—while acting within a specific socio-cultural, but also legal context. In this sense, they allow the seeing of how, and for what reasons, two mothers of one child make sense of specific elements of their reality that fall within a broad spectrum of their everyday experiences.

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Body and Social Interaction—The Case of Dance. Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

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Abstract: The article aims at presenting the symbolic interactionism as a useful and flexible theoretical perspective in research on the human body. It shows the assumptions of symbolic interactionism in their relation to the human body, as well as explains how basic notions of this theoretical perspective are embodied—the self, social role, identity, acting, interacting. I depict the unobvious presence of the body in the classical works of George H. Mead, Anselm Strauss, Howard Becker, Erving Goffman, and in more recent ones, such as Bryan Turner, Ken Plummer, and Loïc Wacquant. I also describe the Polish contribution to the field, including research on disability, hand transplant, the identity of a disabled person, together with the influence of sport, prostitution as work, yoga, climbing, relationships between animals and humans based on gestures and bodily conduct, the socialization of young actors and actresses, non-heteronormative motherhood, and the socialization of children in sport and dance. In a case study based on the research on ballroom dancers, I show how to relate the theoretical requirements of symbolic interactionism with real human "flesh and bones." I depict three ways of perceiving own bodies by dancers: a material, a tool, a partner; and, two processes their bodies are subjected to: sharpening and polishing a tool. I draw the link between the processual character of the body, of the symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective, and process-focused grounded theory methodology.

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...objects have the meanings and are acted toward. Among these objects are the body, certain of its parts, and possibly some of its physiological systems.

[Strauss 1993:111]

Anselm Strauss claims, "Concerning bodies, and their biological connotations, there are ghosts that haunt the social sciences" (1993:107). Until the social and cultural changes of the last thirty years, the interest in the human body was manifested primarily by biological and medical sciences. The transformations caused by the feminist movement, development of medicine, globalization, and increasing migration have altered the way social scientists approach human corporeality. The meaning of the human body, its appearance, functions, and the influence it has on others have recently gained in importance. Due to cultural changes in the modern world, the body is no longer a mere physical entity, an instrument of the soul, as Descartes claimed. It is a life project, an individual construct, one of the elements of a modern individual's life. As various social institutions, such as family, marriage, local and religious communities, or work, had undergone multiple changes and no longer stand for foreseeable determinants of one's social status, the body seems to be one of the most predictable elements of life.

The research on social and cultural influence on the human body is developing in sociology, anthropology, philosophy, pedagogics, and psychology. The literature on the subject offers numerous examples of studies in the field. However, most of them focus on narratives and the influence that macro-social phenomena, such as marketing, fashion, food, the medical industry, have on the human body. Such phenomena are thought-provoking, as they influence big groups of people, and sometimes shape corporate marketing strategies, health policies, or cause global problems, such as the obesity pandemic. The quantitative studies on the issues at hand are necessary and may help to understand and influence the macro-social processes. However, it may be beneficial to have a closer look on a micro-level and recognize the processes that affect individual actions to understand the specificity of the human body. The macro-social phenomena always constitute a mix of people's experiences, decisions, acts, and identities.

This article aims at proposing symbolic interactionism (SI) as a useful and flexible theoretical perspective, which may help recognize various social aspects of the human body as experienced, managed, and utilized by an individual. The characteristics are perceived as influenced by social and cultural processes through interacting, role-making, negotiating, constructing identity. In the subsequent paragraphs, I depict how the assumptions of SI refer to interest in the human body. Additionally, I present some classical works in the field and shed light on the Polish contribution to the SI research on the human body. In the next part of the text, I present original findings based on my SI study of the human body in dance. The presentation of the research serves as an example of how the SI perspective helps to explain how social interactions have an impact on the human body. I describe the process of the social construction of embodiment: its influence on identities, role-making, the way social actors use their bodies as tools of social interaction. In this part of the text, I will shortly discuss the assumptions of SI. I do not describe them in extension, as I aim to show their relation to the human body and its social aspects.

SI is a theoretical perspective, according to which society, reality, and the self are created through interactions and based on communication. The leading assertion of this orientation is the processual character of social reality, as a result of its permanent creation by social actors in the process of interpreting the actions of others. Society is a continuously produced and reproduced effect of joint human actions (Blumer 2007).

The first assumption of SI is that people do not react automatically to stimuli, but act consciously towards objects based on the meanings these objects (situations, other people, own and other's bodies) have for them (Charmaz 2006:7; 2014). Everything can become an object of interpretation, also intangible and imagined phenomena. Therefore, the significance of objects to which individuals operate should occupy a central place in the analysis and understanding of social phenomena (Blumer 2007). The body, like any other object, is not "given"; the individual provides its meanings, just like in the case of other objects. The difference is that it is an object of particular importance because we are unable to get rid of it, or distance ourselves from it, as it is always present. Through our bodies, we interact with others, and we also perceive them from the perspective of their corporeality. It is significant for research concerning the human body, as the issues of perceiving one's body have a fundamental meaning for understanding their activities (see also: Denzin 1972:77).

Secondly, the meanings of objects derive from social interactions. The way others act towards a particular subject, for example, their own body or other bodies, is crucial because it results in how one defines a given object (Blumer 2007). People are conscious individuals whose actions depend on their inner conversations (e.g., with imagined significant others). The questions and answers depend on a reference group that sets the fundamental cognitive perspective from which an individual assesses themselves and others. Namely, the way we perceive, treat, use our bodies relies on the way significant others and our reference group treat them. We learn it during primary and secondary socialization and see our bodies through the eyes of others.

Thirdly, people employ meanings and modify them through interpretation. Therefore, the meanings of objects are never explicitly determined, but always recognized and subjected to modifications during the interpretation process. That is why the most fundamental and only "real" phenomenon observable for the researcher is the activity of an individual. Social norms work through actions, which is possible only through the body. Humans change the way they see their bodies depending on how they look, how they act, and whether their capabilities are growing or diminishing.

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The body has been implicitly present in sociology. Some researchers claim that it has always been one of its main categories. As Dennis Vaskul and Phillip Vannini state (2006:13), after Chris Shilling, the body had a specific status of "absent presence" in the history of sociology. It was there in reflections on race, gender, illness, death and dying, disability, sport, aging, or ethnicity (Strauss 1993:108). At the same time, human actions were rarely perceived as embodied, and until lately, the experience of one's body was seldom studied within symbolic interactionist tradition. The body appears in various

contexts in the classical works by Anselm Strauss, Howard Becker, or Erving Goffman. Still, it explicitly takes on meaning, and its significance for the social activity of an individual becomes visible. However, each of the authors captures the human body differently, from a different standpoint. Moreover, this is in line with the symbolic interactionist perspective on the human body—multithreaded, ambiguous, diverse, just like the operation and people's experiences of their bodies. That is why it is hard to find common ground, or even a shared definition, in symbolic interactionist reflections on the body.

The works of George Herbert Mead, one of the "founding fathers" of SI, serve as an excellent example of the ambiguous presence of the human body as a part of social reality in the sociological gaze. Paradoxically, it was initially absent from his works (see: Konecki 2005). Mead marginalized the importance of the body in social interaction, and thus in the construction of the self. In his view, the self results from the existence of the mind, being underpinned by a conversation with oneself. It points to the importance of using language. However, he seems to ignore non-verbal communication and the meanings it conveys, although it also affects the individual and their interactional partners. The ability to transmit and receive non-verbal signals (through the body) is a necessary condition for interpretation and an inseparable element of this process.

Furthermore, Mead omits the importance of bodily feeling in self-construction. Numerous examples confirming the significant role of the body in building the self also manifest in verbalized experiences of dancers or athletes whose self-identity completely collapsed after a severe injury or due to

aging (Rambo Ronai 1992; Turner and Wainwright 2003; Wainwright and Turner 2004). Changing the perspective on your own body is an element that has a significant impact on the transformation of the self. The human body is the primary medium of existence in the world—people interact with each other through their bodies; the body is also a means of defining the situation and interpreting meanings (e.g., emotions).

Classical work introducing the issue of embodiment into the practice of symbolic interaction research date back to 1953, when Howard Becker published "Becoming a Marihuana User." In the article, Becker analyzes how an individual *learns to use* their *body* and learns to *recognize the sensations of the body* influenced by marihuana usage. It is one of the first sociological attempts to offer what may be called a social perspective, in contrast to the biological and objective perception of the human body. The body, in Becker's view, is a tool that needs to be mastered to experience the effects of the drug. An individual must interpret bodily experiences in a proper, socially constructed manner. The adoption of this manner is decisive in whether the individual will become a marihuana user. However, bodily practices, and the body itself, are presented implicitly in the text. Other important classical symbolic interactionist works by Anselm Strauss and associates (e.g., Becker et al. 1961; Glaser and Strauss 1965; Strauss 1993; Strauss et al. 1997) include reflections on illness, the ill body, and illness trajectory. They shed light on the situatedness and social construction of illness, the social role of an ill person. However, just as in Becker's work, the body itself is present only implicitly, as an internal context that shapes the situation of the ill person and their relationships with the family and medical staff.

In *Continual Permutations of Action*, a classical book by Anselm Strauss (1993), one may find an explicit reflection on the importance of the human body. The first of Strauss's (1993:23) assumptions concerning action and interaction is that no action is possible without the body. He challenges the implicit division between mind and body, which prevails in philosophy, but also in Western culture since the popularization of Descartes' work.[1] Strauss claims that although the body is a necessary condition for every action, its notion varies—it is "multifaceted," as he terms it. It includes understanding the body as a subject, but also as an object providing complex bodily practices. Such a perspective entails a specific, sociological way of perceiving the human body by symbolic interactionists—in terms of bodily aspects of interactions and relations. As Strauss (1993:24) writes, "The body processes include protecting the body, abusing the body, training the body, shaping the body, presenting the body, symbolizing the body." Due to the diversity and complexity of the body-interaction relationship, his main concern was its adequate conceptualization in social research (Strauss 1993:108). In his opinion, our primary focus should be on action and interaction through the body. As he states (Strauss and Corbin 1988:53-54 as cited in Strauss 1993:109), "communication entails cooperative activity with others…giving meaning to what one feels, one hears, smells and touches."

The managing of the body surfaces in the work of another classical symbolic interactionist, Erving Goffman. He introduced the perspective of bodily aspects of human interaction. In his reflections on

stigma, gender advertisements, the face, and bodily work, the body appears as a primary aspect of human existence. As he states in *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face to Face Behavior*, "[a] body is subject to falls, hits, poisons, cuts, shots, crushing, drowning, burning, disease, suffocation, and electrocution. A body is a piece of consequential equipment, and its owner is always putting it on the line" (Goffman 2005:167). The body, especially gestures and facial expressions, has a crucial meaning for the course of an interaction. In Goffman's work, also identity is inscribed in the human body, as in cases of gender (1979) or stigma (1963). In his works, vital sociological issues, such as identity, role-making, gender representation, and status, were all embodied and reproduced through interactions, including active body management, as we understand them now—explicitly.

In 1984, Bryan Turner published *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*—a cornerstone of the sociology of the body. Although he does not often refer to social interactions, Turner has made the human body a fully-fledged area of sociological interest.

Another classical work that focused the attention of the general sociological public on the human body was Loïc Wacquant's (2004) *Body and Soul. Notes of an Apprentice Boxer* (2004). The book offers a unique ethnographic description of the specific cultural and social contexts in which boxing was popularized as a bodily practice that constructed an individual's bodily capital. What Wacquant shows is the importance of *becoming* a boxer, the construction of a new identity through bodily practice. The great value of the book is its author's own boxing experience, which led him through the process of becoming a boxer in the most physical way.

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[1] The idea of the soul as separate from the human body dates back to ancient times. Claudius Galenus, a Greek physician, philosopher, and surgeon, claimed that the human soul was in the heart and the brain.

The next symbolic interactionist who also referred to his own experience in sociological research on the human body, namely, illness, is Ken Plummer. In his article entitled "My Multiple Sick Bodies: Symbolic Interactionism, Autoethnography, and Embodiment" (Plummer 2012), he presents his various incorporated identities, as well as the unique experience of a liver transplant. The importance of this work lies in its first-hand perspective and the author's dedication to research during his illness. What Plummer also does is an explicit declaration of the limits of sociological research on the human body. His example is pain—a phenomenon impossible to convey by words. Additionally, intense pain is impossible to remember. Therefore, it cannot become an object of analysis.[2]

As mentioned earlier, the issue of the body in international sociology has been present for the last decades, at first, implicitly, and later—explicitly. In the past few years, the same goes for Polish sociology, where the interest in the body increases. It is visible in the growing number of publications on different aspects of the body/embodiment (e.g., Byczkowska-Owczarek 2018), as well as conferences and theses (Jakubowska 2012). The analysis reveals that the majority of Polish sociological investigation is still more focused on theoretical aspects and discourses of the body than on human actions that concern embodiment.

On the one hand, there is a significant number of quantitative studies on physical appearance or physical activity (like fitness or sport), but, on the other hand, the number of qualitative studies, also those embedded in SI tradition, is growing. The research topics refer to various aspects of human bodily activity. One of them is a broad topic of disability, including research on the hand transplant process and its effects on the social life and identity of a patient, conducted by Katarzyna Kowal (2012), and studies on constructing the identity of a disabled person, as influenced by practicing sport, by Jakub Niedbalski (2015). Izabela Ślęzak and Magdalena Wojciechowska researched female prostitution understood as work, depicting such a phenomenon in the context of social identity changes, bodily practices, and role making (Ślęzak 2012; 2018; Wojciechowska 2015a). Krzysztof Konecki, being a practitioner himself, conducted a study on yoga as a bodily practice engaging the soul and emotions (Konecki 2016). A similar situation took place in the case of Anna Kacperczyk's research on climbing as a unique communication between the human body and the work of nature set in the context of a particular social world (Kacperczyk 2016). Another topic of Polish symbolic interactionist research on the human body refers to the relationships between animals and humans, as concluded based on gestures and bodily conduct (Konecki 2008). They offer a comprehensive analysis of interspecies interactions in the social world of pet owners. Also, there was a multiyear study on parenthood among non-heteronormative, mainly lesbian, couples, whose bodily aspect of motherhood is socially created (Wojciechowska 2015b; 2020).

Additionally, symbolic interactionist research on the human body undertakes the issue of socialization of young actors and actresses within the context of various processes of social control, which

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[2] Due to the limited length of this work, I have included only a few researchers who, in my opinion, have had the most significant influence on the development of the symbolic interactionist perception of the human body. However, *Body/Embodiment: Symbolic Interaction and the Sociology of the Body*, edited by Dennis Vaskul and Phillip Vannini (2006), presents the issues at hand broadly and profoundly.

focus on appearance (Dwojnych and Kuczkow-ska-Golińska 2018). The issue of socialization was also studied in the case of children in sports (Jakubowska and Byczkowska-Owczarek 2018), as well as in dance (Byczkowska 2009; 2012). The last research project will be discussed in the following sections of the article. It is presented as an example of the SI study of the body.

The Body and Dance—An Example of the SI Research on the Body

In the following part of the text, I will present one of my studies concerning the social construction of the human body. Showing how theoretical assumptions of SI "work" in specific research may be helpful, especially for younger researchers. The theoretical perspective may shape the research when we apply a methodology based on similar foundations. That is why the methodological framework for the study was the grounded theory methodology. Like in the case of SI, this methodological perspective focuses on the dynamic, processual quality of social reality and the crucial meaning of interactions in constructing everyday human actions (Konecki 2000:33-36; Oktay 2012:12-13; Charmaz 2014: chapter 10). Grounded theory methodology seems to be fit when it comes to research on the social influence on the human body since its procedures are flexible yet require methodological discipline.

In the study, I applied qualitative data gathering techniques. They included semi-structured interviews, photo and video elicited interviews, autoethnography, observations, and the analysis of photographs, films, and other existing data (e.g., a radio broadcast, an autobiography of a ballet dancer, official regulations). As a social phenom-

enon, the human body is not entirely intersubjectively communicable. Therefore, it is methodologically recommended to apply various research techniques, including those operating with data other than the participants' narratives (Byczkowska 2009). During the analysis, the data are coded, allowing the derivation of categories. The researcher returns to the field, where they may find the data, and looks for new information based on the initial analysis and theoretical questions, arising until the saturation of categories is reached. At such a stage, no new proprieties of categories emerge, and we may thus define and develop them (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2007).

The Body and Ballroom Dance

The research concerned the social subworld[3] of ballroom dancing in Poland and lasted six years. The theoretical background was the social worlds theory (Strauss 1978; 1982; Clarke 1990), Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective (1965), the dramaturgical perspective (Goffman 1959), and the concept of dreamwork (Nelson 2001). The analyzed data led me to construct an ethnographical description of the social subworld of ballroom dancing. Additionally, I proposed a concept of the social construction of the human body. It depicts how social phenomena, such as institutionalization, career constructing, adapting a dancer's body to the requirements of the social world, non-verbal embodied communication, the spatial aspects of dance, the socialization of children in ballroom

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[3] The concept of the social world refers to certain social entities whose boundaries are determined by effective communication, discourse, constant interactions between its members, as well as their reactions to each other (Strauss 1978; 1982; Clarke 1990:18-19; Kacperczyk 2005:169-170).

dancing, influence the human body in a physical manner (Byczkowska 2009; 2012). Some of the outcomes referring, in particular, to symbolic interactions, will be presented below.

The cultural context of actions and interactions in the social subworld of ballroom dancing requires a short introduction. The omnipresent and reproduced formalization and institutionalization of this culture are its most significant aspects. Unification and codification include dance steps, rules, figures, and, subsequently, shoes and gowns. Consequently, they determine the specific character of bodily movements in ballroom dancing, as well as the dancers' career paths.[4] Dancers train in couples, so sometimes a dancer has the same dancing partner for several years. They participate in competitions and receive one score as a couple. To progress to a subsequent class, a couple must collect several first, second, and third places in dance contests. Therefore, participating in dance contests is the main activity of dancers who subordinate other actions (like training sessions, choice of trainer, private life, etc.) to it—the meaning of rivalry and determination to win increases over time. A "skating system" of complying scores, where there can be no ties, influences some of the dancers' controversial actions, such as catching the judges' attention with seductive glances and performing figures which are formally forbidden at the particular dance level.

Such a kind of culture creates a context for the actions of dancers, whose main activity is focused on the strategic development of their career. Their interactions are also subordinated to those particular actions. Situations such as ending the cooperation with a many-years' dancing partner or trainer over the phone, or focusing on the partner's "objective" features exemplifying their potential effectiveness (a financial situation, career plans, or physical abilities) instead of liking them, are regular practices in this social subworld. This type of social context is reproduced by all the actors involved, as all of them interpret ballroom dancing as a competitive action. The dance is not the most important—winning is. Having such a value shapes a specific interpretation pattern—being focused on the effectiveness of each action. And, as the dancer's only means of existing and succeeding in this world is the body, they transform it to fit the requirements of the social world. In this way, through the dancer's actions and interactions with others, the meaning ascribed to the body becomes flesh.

The Perception of the Body

From the age of six or seven, children who practice ballroom dancing are taught a specific perspective from which to perceive and treat their bodies. In the process of acquiring bodily knowledge through interactions with a trainer or dancing partner, a dancer learns how to communicate with their body, differentiate its various states (e.g., fatigue) and sensations (different kinds of pain, see also: Byczkowska-Owczarek 2013). The definition of those states is usually provided by trainers, who become significant others through the process of a dancing career. The way they transmit the culturally specific perspective of the body is illustrated below, by a young female dancer describing the issue of breaking one's bodily limits:

[4] The course is formally specified: every dancer must pass through levels, from the lowest level—E—to the highest—A, and later, the international level—S. A dancer starts without any level ascribed, and by participating in training sessions, they learn the dances which are next performed in dance contests and judged.

> In my case, this [breaking the limits—DBO] took place basically during one training session when my trainer approached me. He caught me by the face, and, I mean, he touched me so gently, so passionately, and, as if he wanted to kiss me. I was very scared because I was a little girl [laughs], but since then, I've been able to do basically anything, with every partner, to dance what you need; these are actually difficult matters... but simple recipes. [interview with a female ballroom dancer, 18 years of age]

Such kinds of interactions, based on mutual trust, construct in the dancers' minds a specific image of their bodies. Young dancers start looking at their bodies through their trainers' (and judges') eyes. They begin to perceive them as being excluded from general cultural rules, especially in the context of a ballroom dancing training session or contest. Ballroom dancers become their reference group along with the change of their social identity—that of a ballroom dancer. As Everett Hughes (1997) states, the identities depend on the activities. The more frequent and more prolonged training sessions, the stronger the dancer's identity. Also, the sessions are time-consuming, so the individual has a smaller chance to develop alternative identities, for example, of a footballer, ice-skater.

The specific perception of the body is not limited to their bodies. Along with the socialization in the social world at hand, ballroom dancers start interpreting *all* dancers' bodies in terms of effectiveness, especially that of their dancing partners. The bodily limits and the concept of intimacy are perceived through the prism of effectiveness. Social actors act towards the body according to such a definition. One of the interviewees, a thirteen-year-old male dancer, described the way he treats his partner's body. When he is to perform some passionate movement, for example, to grab his partner's hip, he sees such a gesture in a purely task-oriented way. He does it because he knows that their result in the tournament depends on it. Although in the beginning, it may be difficult and require breaking their and partner's bodily limits, the trainers provide definitions of situation normalizing the gestures as not intimate, but effective. The close and seemingly erotic contact between the partners is perceived as an element of the judges' assessment.

In diverse situations of such kind (e.g., wearing revealing dresses, erotic movements, sexy glances), through interactions with trainers, dancing partners, other dancers, and parents, a dancer learns to perceive their body effectively. Also, through their experiences during training sessions and hours spent working on and with the body, the dancer learns what meanings internal bodily sensations may have. Older dancers and trainers usually provide the definitions of such states. Just like in Howard Becker's classical "Becoming a Marihuana User" (1953), others teach an individual how to interpret what is going on with their body. The kinds of pain (injury or muscle development?), fatigue (injury risking or toughening?), emotions (personal or imposed by the dance genre?) are subjected to the interpretation provided by (significant) others.

As a result of the processes of interactions, the dancer internalizes three coexisting ways of perceiving their (and others') bodies. They act differently towards the same object—the body—depending on the definition of the situation: training session, contest, training camp. A male ballroom dancer, judge and trainer, describes such situatedness:

> **Dancer:** You have to feel your own body and sometimes listen to your own body.

Researcher: Listen to the body, or should the body listen to us?

Dancer: If I train, the body should listen to me, but if I feel that it hurts me so much that I cannot cope, then I cannot be stupid enough to try to do something against my body...because the body can rebel, say "enough," break something, and not cooperate with me anymore. That's exactly what this is.

They may appear separately; however, a dancer may perceive their body in two coexisting ways at the same time, depending on the actions undertaken through the body. These types are:

1. A **tool**, thanks to which they may achieve a higher position in the social subworld of ballroom dancing, and develop and construct their identity. As a thirty-year-old female dancer declares: "for me, my body is a way of expressing things."

2. A **material** changed according to a specific trend, set by the dance genre, usually embodied by famous dancers and the dance teacher. This category mainly refers to appearance, but is not limited to it. The dancer learns to look at their body through the eyes of a generalized other, comparing their body (shape, skin color, hairdo, etc.) with the internalized image of a perfect looking dancer.

Two perspectives mentioned above may be categorized as the Straussian "the body as object" (1993:119). It is acted towards by other actors: individuals, groups, organizations. Moreover, as presented in the example, a social actor may also act towards their body.

3. A **partner**, whom they must take into consideration when making plans and who applies its

logic, sometimes different from the dancer's will. Experienced dancers usually interpret the signals from their bodies in terms of their meaning for current and future actions and plans. The dancer interprets a specific sensation, and future actions depend on it. One of the female dancers describes how this process may take place:

And the worst thing for my body is my mind when it **knows** that I'm a workaholic, because it has already **got used** to that, and it knows that the body starts to go flat, doesn't it? That it is already overtired, that it has too many toxins, that it needs to rest...Then my body invents a forty-degree fever. I'm unconscious, and the doctors don't know what's going on, maybe an inflammation, maybe something. And with my body, it is simply like this, that it invents a forty-degree fever, and that forty degrees knock me down. **Because, if it gives me** a thirty-eight-degree fever, I will go to work anyway. I will take an anti-fever injection and go anyway 'cause I'm not normal in this case...I think it is a lack of **respect**, isn't it? For the body.

Such a way of perceiving one's body may be characterized by a Straussian term "the body as agent." As humans always act through their bodies, consciously or unconsciously, the body becomes particularly evident when it loses its normal abilities. This type of body limits an individual in their everyday actions and interactions, which results in redefining the meaning of the body, and usually also individual identity.[5] The body becomes a silent actor with whom the dancer must negotiate (Strauss 1993:110, 117).

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[5] For example, in *Murderball*, a documentary showing the life of disabled American rugby players, we can see a change in the self-identity of an individual as a result of losing former physical abilities and then acquiring new ones.

Communicating the meanings of the body by a dance teacher takes place more directly when handling the body as a material and a tool. A dancer receives a clear definition if they performed a movement properly or not, or if their look is "Latin enough" to dance the cha-cha-cha in a contest. In the case of treating one's body as an interactional partner, the communication is more indirect, referring to more general hints of how to interpret certain sensations from the body. The relationship between the dancer and their body as a partner is more of an individual, intimate nature, and is developed at higher levels of a dancer's career. It requires more significant experience in recognizing the signals from the body. Interpretation of information coming from the dancer's body is due to a long process of interaction with one's body.

Such a way of negotiating with the body or interacting with it is characteristic not only of dancers. People undergoing psychotherapy, or the so-called *self-study*, in which the subject, oneself, becomes the object of the study, also use their bodies as one of the ways to discover their personality and solve problems. They do this through contact with the body, which is perceived as being autonomous, to some extent (Lussier-Ley 2010).

Dancer's Body in Two Processes

The course of a dancing career is influenced by two processes, which consequently and intentionally lead a dancer to gain the best possible results in a contest. The body is both the means and an effect of the processes at hand. The first process is supposed to satisfy the expectations of physical strength, stamina, and technical skillfulness. Such values are brought to life (and flesh) through in-

teractions with a trainer and actions towards one's body. This process is called *sharpening the tool*. The term refers to the actions of a dancer and their partner aimed at physical preparation for the performance. They include frequent training, following a specific diet, muscle building exercises, et cetera. Such actions not only affect the way one perceives their body, but they also shape it directly, through muscles and bones. If the dancer wants to exist in this social subworld, they must adjust their body to the image internalized by those who are in power—the judges. The body must work in a certain way. Therefore, the social actor must perform specific actions towards it. They must develop bodily skills, which make the body exercise similarly to the ideal. That is how, in ballroom dance, some general values become flesh—through internalization of the notion of a "proper" movement, skill, ability.

The second process refers to a dancer's practices aimed at preparing their appearance. They are called *polishing the tool*. When a ballroom dancer performs at a contest, their body must be adequately prepared by, for example, tanning, makeup, hairstyle, nail work, teeth whitening, et cetera. Dance, as a genre of art,[6] needs an aesthetic effect, which is also judged during a contest. Such activities have a significant influence on the way a dancer perceives their body, also in terms of gender roles. The latter are defined in a specific way in this social subworld. The looks and precisely ascribed characteristics of both genders must be performed during the contest and are a part of the judges' assessment.

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[6] The question of whether ballroom dance is more a sport or art is addressed in my article "Performing on the Boundary of Art and Sport: The Case of Competitive Ballroom Dancers" (Byczkowska-Owczarek 2019).

Both practices, *sharpening* and *polishing* the tool, incorporate the specificity of ballroom dancing in a dancer's body. The culture, values, norms, social control, and individual and group identities transmitted through interactions with trainers, as significant others, and other dancers become embodied in their muscles, bones, hair, skin.

Conclusions

In the article, I aimed at presenting the processual link between symbolic interactions and the human body. From the very beginning of our life, we interact with individual and group social actors. No action is possible without the body (Strauss 1993:109). Such interactions shape the process of socialization, our identity, social roles, which we direct towards ours and others' bodies (Plummer 2012:77). In the process, social phenomena are incorporated in the most literal, physical sense. The intermediation of culture and the human body becomes evident when we study people's experiences—take a closer look and try to understand their actions. SI, a perspective that places the individual experience first, is a useful and valuable theory in sociological research on the human body.

Ken Plummer (2012:77) argues that the human body has multiple meanings and is shaped by the number of social roles, selves, and relationships with significant others we are engaged in. SI is a "down-to-earth approach" (Blumer 1969 as cited in Plummer 2012)—its theoretical assumptions demand that we get as close as possible to actual bodily experiences in their natural worlds. The researched body must be grounded in the cultural, group, political, or ethical context. There is no "objective," "average," or "constant" body in social reality. Bodies, continuously emerging from social

interactions, are available only for their owners' experiences. As Strauss claims (1993), when we consciously focus on the body, we study the social aspects and processes of the body, which become visible through actions and interactions. The processes include various aspects or parts of the body, its diverse actions, and the body may be seen as an object and as an agent.

Therefore, to study their actions, a researcher is always dependent on the bearer of the body. Such a situation requires challenging the methodology and research methods, which enable us to touch the experience of the body, especially its unconscious, incorporated knowledge (Jakubowska 2017). Additionally, as a physical entity, it is always analyzed by a researcher as an embodied actor, with their feelings, emotions, sensations, social roles, and experiences. It may be both advantageous and disadvantageous when conducting research (Byczkowska-Owczarek and Jakubowska 2018).

When it comes to the essential concept of SI—**identity**—it is considered to be a result of interacting with others (Berger and Luckmann 1983), but also undertaken actions (Hughes 1997:393). The time spent on various bodily activities (dancing, yoga, work, medical operation, conducting an orchestra) builds individual and group identities (including bodily identities) based on these actions. It is not only an activity that constructs a person's identity, but also a lack of one. People who had undergone severe physical changes due to illness or accident deal with a deconstructed identity, as they cannot use their bodies the way they used to (see also: Manderson 2011:30, 67). Persons who are, in some way, perceived as undergoing a physical crisis are stigmatized (as understood by Erving Goffman 2005), so they do not define themselves with the

normal rules of interaction. Strangers approach and ask about the most intimate details of their disabilities, whereas loose friends avoid contact. In both cases, the status of *normals* has been suspended and, consequently, different rules of interaction apply. A person who is ill is forced to create a new **identity** in interactions with others, learn new rules of interaction, and take on the role of a person with stigma. A vital element of those new interactions is a "flattened" interactional identity. For disabled partners, the disability is in the foreground, which reduces the importance of other aspects of their identity (Manderson 2011:88). It involves entering another, a new reality, and the need to face new, interactive challenges (Goffman 2005). Such an individual needs to learn to interact with their new "set" of physical features and capabilities. They may also need to incorporate technology into their bodies, to replace the lost capabilities (e.g., wheelchair) or the bodies of others (people or animals) who help them (Strauss 1993:110). The definition of "my body" is, in this case, reconstructed.

The way our bodies are transformed is dependent on social processes on several levels. The first one is a **cultural dimension**, which includes the media (as described in Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* 1979), specific subcultures of social worlds, and subworlds. Socially constructed ideas of beauty, health, femininity, or masculinity influence the way we act towards our bodies. The looking-glass self is highly sensitive to all the interactional information concerning our bodies.[7] What is more,

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[7] The cultural changes concerning norms of beauty and health may take a destructive form of, for example, anorexia, bulimia, or orthorexia nervosa. Such diseases do not only change the physical body, but may lead to severe dysfunctions or death, which shows the strength of social influence concerning the human body.

the body is our primary tool of being in the world and of completing tasks connected with our social roles. The individuals develop their bodies in a gym, at a beautician, tattoo artist, along with the expectations of the generalized other.

Our bodies are also socially constructed on a **group level**, as bodily conduct differs significantly not only between national or regional cultures, but also in different social groups and communities. Each role-making requires differentiated bodywork, different perspectives of perceiving one's body, as social groups need a "social body" to perform various responsibilities. The physical skills concerning any social role, the process of doing work show the bodily character of **socially constructed knowledge** and how theoretical knowledge is acted out in the practice of work (see also: Hughes 1958; 1971; 1997). Since interpretation underpins every action and interaction, the body becomes symbolically meaningful. Bodily processes, parts, movements, systems, gestures are interpreted by the social actor or by others and acquire meaning (Strauss 1993:120). To use the body properly as a tool of role-making, we need to learn how to use and incorporate technologies specific to our social roles and the groups we participate in. The processes mentioned above are realized in interactions between humans, but also between humans and objects, such as photos, food, technical equipment. All the cultural and group norms concerning the human body are brought to life through symbolic interaction, including emotions, persuasion, exchange, identity construction. Based on such interactions, humans direct particular actions towards their bodies and construct them socially (Strauss 1993). There is no interaction without body and no body / nobody without interaction.

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Citation

The Role of Sport in the Process of Negotiating Identity: Dealing with the Stigma of Disability by People with Acquired Bodily Dysfunctions

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Abstract: This paper is intended to present the role of sport in the lives of people with physical disabilities and to determine how practicing sports changes the way a person with a physical disability sees themselves. The paper reflects the experiences of people who started practicing sports, which allowed them to adopt an alternative perspective of their bodies and thus pushed them to negotiate their identities. Using the concept of Goffmanian stigma, I point to the sports activities' usefulness in understanding the management of stigma by those dealing with a physical disability.

Taking into account the above theoretical references, in the research, which constitutes a foundation of this paper, I refer to the subjective perspectives of the researched individuals, rendering their points of view, and, based on that, construct and offer theoretical generalizations. Therefore, the research materials employed in this study are constituted by the personal experiences of people with physical disabilities who practice sports. All data have been gathered by conducting unstructured interviews with such people. The research materials were analyzed and interpreted following the procedures of grounded theory methodology.

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People with disabilities constitute a social category that is often referred to in the context of exclusion and marginalization (Kirenko 2006:101). This marginality refers to an individual with a disability or a social group (the disabled) in terms of various forms of their functioning: the sphere of production, consumption, as well as social, political, or broadly understood cultural spheres, defining the possibility of performing social roles corresponding to the standards of dominant groups. The marginal situation of people with disabilities is accompanied by numerous stereotypes. In general, the stereotype of a person with a disability is dominated by two characteristics—one is their weakness (weak, fearful, insecure), while the other justifies the lack of acceptance and social isolation of this group of people (suspicious, secretive, lonely). The stereotype of a person with a disability defines two main parameters—mentally weak and socially isolated (Ostrowska 1994:43-45). Therefore, people with disabilities bear various labels that are characterized by negative moral judgments and express fear and pity, and sometimes contempt or disgust (Niedbalski 2013:38). This seems to confirm the dominant position and superiority of the stigmatizing over the stigmatized and means that *normals*—in this case, healthy people—are inclined to value themselves and other people from their group differently in comparison to the stigmatized, the disabled. They tend to perceive "their persons" (the fully capable) as more valuable (Czykwin 2008:19). The negative stigma accompanying disability leads, on the other hand, to the devaluation of the person as a bearer of stigmatizing characteristics (Crocker and Major 1989; Major and O'Brien 2005; Heatherton et al. 2007). Thus, the stigma is equivalent to the situation of an individual deprived of full social acceptance (Goffman 1963:27). According to Goffman (1963), the stigmatized have an attribute that disqualifies them in the eyes of others and excludes them from full acceptance by their social environment. People who receive incomparably more unpleasant feedback about themselves because of the stigma can form a negative identity. Often, they also have underestimated self-esteem and a sense of dignity (Czykwin 2008:19). A dehumanization process associated with exclusion can, in extreme cases, lead to an increase in feelings of guilt, as well as weakening or losing identification with others and their reification (Czykwin 2008:20).

Taking into account the above issues, the paper aims to bring closer the situation of people with disabilities, revealing the problem of exclusion and stigmatization, but also to show how sport and physical activity can counteract those negative phenomena which members of our society with disabilities are exposed to. Therefore, the discussion will be focused on the issue of experiencing one's own body by people with physical disabilities in the course of construing identity, accompanied by the process of maintaining a positive image of self—threatened by externalization of the stigma related to the social perception of bodily deficits. The objective results of a disability are accompanied by subjective transformations in the self of an individual and in the arrangement of categories and assessments applied to themselves and other people that are related to the reconstruction of the image of their previous lives and themselves (Carey 2013:142). One's bodily dysfunction can affect the entire self-definition of an individual, concerning various social roles and contexts, such as the family, work, or simply relationships with other people (Charmaz 1995). It is a process in a mental sense, connected with the development of a certain cognitive perspective. The course of this process triggers numerous factors, and its effect is a reconstructed identity of the individual (Strauss 1959). This is relat-

ed to transformation in self-narration and self-perception by a person with a disability (Charmaz and Rosenfeld 2006). This means that an individual with a disability changes their view on reality and themselves in a more or less conscious way.

Therefore, the text will include an analysis of the determinants of a person's body perception in the various categories of inadequacy, as well as their social consequences. For this to happen, it is vital to see the body as an element of identity, a source of stigma, an object of property, and a place of social control (Charmaz 2019:19). The analysis is mainly focused on grasping the processual dimension of the transformations which take place in the self-perception by people with disabilities who have found the source of inner strength and ability to oppose the stigmatizing reality in sports, thus winning the process of reconstructing their identity.

The Literature Review and Theoretical Considerations

In this paper, the basis of the analyses carried out is an interpretative perspective—describing the world in the categories of reality construed in the course of symbolic interaction. According to the assumptions of the above paradigm, it has been assumed that individual actions are taken in specific situational and interactive contexts, thus resulting from the interpretation of a given event, situation, or phenomenon by a specific social actor. The definition of a situation is co-created and maintained in the course of interaction. Symbolic interactionists are inclined to perceive people as active social actors who continuously reconstruct a picture of surrounding reality and their place in the life of a given community. Robert Prus and Scott Grills (2003:19) believe that symbolic interaction "may be perceived as an exam-

ination of the ways in which people provide meaning to their life situation and interact with others on an everyday basis." Herbert Blumer (1969:48) argues that "the process of interacting with oneself places a human being before the world, not within it, thus causing the need to deal with the world through the process of defining and not just responding to it." However, to become an object for ourselves, we first need to become an object for others (Marciniak 2015:44). Using a metaphorical comparison, we can say that we need a mirror in the form of other people in which we can put ourselves in their roles (Cooley 1922; Scheff 1990). Therefore, the reality of subjects appears as a configuration of certain meanings, the sense of which can be discovered as long as the experiences of people who produce them can be captured.

The leading theory explaining the phenomena analyzed in this paper is the concept of stigma (Goffman 1963), which allows the understanding of the mechanism of the formation of unfavorable social attitudes and barriers of awareness separating a person with a disability from society. According to Elżbieta Zakrzewska-Manterys (2010:123), using the conceptual framework proposed by Goffman (1963), disability can be treated as "an archetype of stigma, as something that is stigmatized almost always and by many, and as a kind of stigma that is not always realized by those stigmatized."

From the perspective of capturing and understanding the phenomenon of stigmatization of people with disabilities, it is important to reach for the etymology of the word "disability" itself, which in Poland appeared in the official nomenclature in the 1970s (Zakrzewska-Manterys 2010:46). Previously, words such as "cripple" or "invalid" were applied to label people with physical disorders. However,

regardless of the way disability is defined, it has always been described as something unnatural, deviating from accepted standards, and the people with disabilities were usually attributed to various negative features. This is how a relatively clear social image of people with observable and embodied disorders was developed. It resulted from the fact that great importance was attached to the signs of "normality" seen in people's behaviors and appearance (Niedbalski 2015a:222). The canons of beauty and ugliness, normality and deviation, have changed over the last few centuries, but there have always been clear boundaries defining what is and what is not accepted as being compliant with common standards legitimized by members of a given society in a given time and space (Kowal 2012:164). Human corporeality is also subject to such criteria, and as an area of social control, it can be evaluated as a product of this control. It happens because a body significantly determines who we are, how we perceive ourselves, and how others perceive us. While determining the human identity in an increasingly more significant way, it also needs to determine our place in the social hierarchy (Mason 1990:17).

Therefore, identity covers personal and mental elements, which are unique, as well as inherited ones, such as appearance, sex, race, ethnicity, age, experience, and social position. It is something that shapes the identity and social biography of individuals (Konecki 2015:17). Identity grows based on the awareness of one's own physical and mental potency; it is a creation of an evolutionary process, related to the human ability to develop, advance, and adapt to the surrounding world, and to change this world and improve living conditions (Lipson 2004:205). Identity is not given, but, based on the thought and self-understanding that accompany human existence, embedded in the narrative as a cognitive and

time structure, the basic function of which is to give a holistic sense and coherence to a series of events, intentions, actions, and unforeseen circumstances (Strauss 1959).

Any visible bodily defects, deformations, or features that deviate from the standard, such as a disability, provide the identity of an individual with different content. This happens because identity is very clearly and visibly related to a person's physical appearance and biological characteristics. It does not alter the cultural orientation or worldview fundamentally, but it often situates group members who are believed to be different because of their appearance or mental qualities on the margin of group life. Through stigmatization, it condemns them to life on the margins or with special status (Shakespeare 1996:96). As a consequence, such people define themselves in categories of stigma, which often leads them to feel anxiety or worry, especially since they may be discriminated against and excluded due to their differences. If people expect that those with certain features that are perceived as disavowing see themselves as worse in some way, their self-esteem will be lower. Thus, a central notion of stigmatization is the self-esteem and self-evaluation of the stigmatized people (Czykwin 2008:44).

According to Erving Goffman (1963:155), the existence of stigmatized people is determined in almost all respects by a society of people who identify themselves as normal (*normals*), both in terms of determining a certain life sphere for themselves and subordinating themselves to social control, which may be related to creating separate enclaves of "misfits." Furthermore, Goffman (1961) highlighted the fact that significant factors that determine the manner of conduct and self-identification of an individual constitute a part of social reactions. Pub-

lic response to a given behavior supports not only its consolidation, but it also changes the manner of defining the identity of a "stigmatized" person. According to Howard S. Becker, a negative feature ascribed to a person becomes generalized by the environment. This, in turn, means that within the course of further negative stigma an individual is inclined to identify oneself with the ascribed role. Such experiences were shared by the respondents, who saw their disability in the behavior of those around them (Niedbalski 2015b). How others approached them somehow reflected the disability of the respondents. Hence, those around them consolidated the people's with a disability belief about their "otherness" and meant that they were unable to think about themselves in categories other than being not fully capable.

In Erving Goffman's categories of analysis, stigmatized people are characterized by having a *spoiled identity*, because stigmatization leads to their social exclusion regarding their features, which are disqualifying in other people's eyes. The problem of stigmatized people is related to the desire to be like anyone else, meaning "normal." This leads to permanent negotiations carried out by the stigmatized individuals regarding their image in terms of societal beliefs and commonly adopted stereotypes versus owning this stigma and its consequences (Darling 2013:3). Goffman (1963) stresses that stigmas are social constructs, not qualities of social actors, because the differentiation between "normal" and "stigmatized" people is only a perspective that emerges within the course of individuals' responses to certain features of stigmatized people. According to Goffman (1963:31-34), stigmatization means that an individual's identity adversely deviates from the expected identity, that is, a certain socially desirable model of "normality." Therefore, stigmatization

poses a certain type of symbolic designation, at the same time enforcing a status to which an individual is subjected to. Therefore, the readiness of people with a disability to undertake any actions decreases, not to mention they do not have effective defense mechanisms against the negative social perception of their situation (Stryker 1980:129-135). Hence, people with a disability experience deep, often irreversible socialization, which results in acquiring a lower social status, but they also produce a deviant picture of themselves (cf. Goffman 1963). As a result, this may lead to further social degradation, which takes the form of self-marginalization, meaning, the self-limitation of people with disabilities in their perception of opportunities, perspectives, as well as determining and striving for life goals (Ostrowska 1994). This, in turn, causes a gap between the socially expected identity of an individual and their real identity (Strauss 1959).[1]

At the same time, certain efforts are constantly being made to overcome the disadvantages of people with disabilities. Very often they take the form of activities aimed at extracting the potential of these people, by activating them in various areas of life. One such form is the sport, which not only promotes the improvement of an individual's physical condition, helps to compensate for specific dysfunctions of the body, encourages the initiation and development of one's activity, but also creates space for building interpersonal interactions. The sport will

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[1] Goffman's (1963) concept of stigma has had enduring scholarly influence. As Sharon Barnartt (2017) states, Goffman's concept has had a major influence on sociological views of disability by casting it as a form of deviance. British sociologists of disability, such as Paul Abberley (1987) and Colin Barnes (1998), challenge Goffman's emphasis on deviance. Instead, they argue that being cast in a deviant role not only places the person with a disability in a devalued position but also the symbolic interactionist treatment of disability ignores oppression and the material structures supporting it (Charmaz 2019).

also have a special role in strengthening the self-esteem of the disabled (Molik, Morgulec-Adamowicz, and Kosmol 2008:12).

Data and Methods

Taking into account the theoretical references mentioned above, I refer to the subjective perspective of the participants, using their point of view as the basis to construct theoretical generalizations. Hence, the research materials adapted in this work are composed of the personal experiences of people who lost their physical abilities due to various random events. Unstructured and narrative interviews were performed. While triangulating the data, the study also exploited records from observations made during meetings devoted to therapy and medical consultations.

The research was carried out between 2014 and 2017 in rehabilitation centers intended for/adjusted to the needs of people with a disability across Poland.[2] There were, in total, 74 in-depth unstructured interviews carried out along with almost 30 observations made during rehabilitation stays, among others. The group of subjects included people with disabilities, as well as the people who took care of them, that is, rehabilitators, physiotherapists, consultants, specialist doctors, and instructors.

The selection of subsequent cases for the study was of theoretical character (*theoretical sampling*), based on the constant comparative method. Thanks to theoretical sampling, the researcher, while collecting, coding, and analyzing the materials, decided on an ongoing basis where and what kind of data to col-

lect next (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006). While applying the constant comparative method in my search for other data, I attempted to choose cases that are both highly various and similar to each other, to grasp a maximum number of conditions differentiating the categories and their mutual correlations (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967:45-53). Doing so resulted in there being people representing different types of motor disabilities in the examined group. These included people with four- and two-limb paralysis, cerebral palsy, and lower limb(s) amputations. In the selection of subsequent cases, I also took into account such variables as the type of sport or the period of practicing it. The selection of cases lasted until the *theoretical saturation* of the generated analytical categories was achieved and served to differentiate the comparisons made at a given stage of the study, as well as to increase or decrease the case variation, capture the variability of conditions and replenish the database (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

The premises that support the selection of the above-mentioned techniques arise, firstly, from the accepted ontological (human experiences, interpretations, knowledge, evaluations, interactions perceived as significant interdependencies of the social reality) and epistemological assumptions (the legal manner of data generation based on those ontological assumptions comprised of interactions, conversations with people, listening to stories, and obtaining access to the knowledge, evaluations, and impressions of individuals). Secondly, the obtained data are complete and in-depth, which complies with the ideas put forward by Rubin and Rubin (2005), according to whom qualitative research should be applied in the case of notions that require deeper comprehension, and this is served best by detailed examples and expanded narrations.

The analysis of the research material was performed according to grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Konecki 2000). The motive for selecting this method was the need to identify the "factual" ways of life, the actions of the individuals, the processes of creating meaning, and therefore—the desire to bring science closer to "life" and recognize social reality from the perspective of the subject that creates it (Wyka 1993:34). Furthermore, the biographies and their construction in time must consider the individual's life perspective. At the same time, all biographical materials are a potential source of data on the identity of a person talking about his or her life, as he or she interacts with the listener/reader as a social actor endowed with a specific set of self-definitions (cf. Prus 1999).

Selecting subsequent cases was theoretical, based on the method of constant comparison, which means that subsequent cases were chosen based on current analytical determinations, not according to assumptions decided on beforehand (Glaser and Strauss 1967:45). The selection of cases lasted until theoretical saturation of the generated analytical categories was achieved.

Findings

The people with disabilities who participated in the study experienced clear physical and psycho-social discomfort related to the dysfunction of their bodies. The problems with their body hindered their lives, and in some cases even rendered it impossible to function independently and "normally" (Niedbalski 2015a:226). What is more, because of its limitations, a dysfunctional body was perceived by the researched group as a source of suffering. According to the individuals, it was their bodies that controlled their lives, not them, and forms of this power were determined by resistance, experienced in various activities of everyday life.

> I was unable to do a lot of things. Actually, I was able to do nothing on my own. Someone needed to help me clean myself, get up, get dressed...I was even unable to get to the toilet on my own. It was torture; I thought I wouldn't be of any use anymore. [i.5.16][3]

As Katarzyna Kowal writes (2012:170), "a person suffering because of bodily dysfunctions is, first of all, their own body. They perceive and define themselves in bodily terms over everything else." This is how bodily limitations reduce the respondents to their bodies, thus embodying their "self." It is related to losing the "sense of normality," but also having some socially acquired patterns of this "normality," and being aware that they are not fulfilled (Niedbalski 2015a:226). The researched individuals shared a common ground in that they felt depreciated in the eyes of other people, being seen as "odd" and "other," because of their disabilities. All of this meant that they were unable to escape from feelings of shame and humiliation which they felt concerning others, especially able-bodied individuals. They saw the source of their limited self-confidence in their body dysfunction. They believed that they would not be accepted and that they would not find any understanding among able-bodied individuals (cf. Charmaz 1991). Hence, they could not reveal their disabilities to those people (in fact, they made every attempt to hide it); at the same time, they were afraid of being exposed (Fitzgerald and Paterson

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[3] I use indications of the quoted fragments of my respondents' statements throughout the article, where the letter "i" means an interview, the first figure indicates the number of the interview, and the last figure is the year when the interview was carried out. For example, the indication i.5.16 means that it was the 5th interview carried out in 2016.

1995:15). If it could not be hidden, then the people avoided contact with others, especially strangers, and tried not to show themselves in public space. As a result, they were pushed to self-exclusion, which related to almost every aspect of their lives:

> It was simply humiliating for me; I was afraid that someone would see me. I used to be a big man, I had strength, others respected me, and after the accident, I was unable to wipe my bottom. This is what was most disturbing for me. Not even the fact that I would need to deal with it for the rest of my life, but that the others, who remembered me as a real man, would now see a cripple who could do nothing. [i.12.15]

Although a stigma ascribed by society is often a very strong determinant in shaping their lives, stigmatized individuals may still try to engage in actions which might enable them to fight the sense of inferiority, thereby limiting or minimizing the negative influence and pressure exerted by the environment (Coleman-Fountain and McLaughlin 2013). If emotions connected with such a set of self-definitions provide a source of strong discomfort or suffering for an individual, they may start searching for new ways to characterize themselves (Brune and Wilson 2013). Hence, a social actor whose attitude is active when compared to the stereotype may transform this negative image of themselves and reject any harmful stigmatizations, thus obtaining a definition of a person who is an exception to a rule. This can redefine the concept of self and any negative attributes related to the stigma, so they become a source of positive self-evaluation (Goffman 1963:42-43).[4]

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[4] Erving Goffman quotes statements made by people with disabilities that are related to their special sensitivity in perceiving themselves and the world as a result of their physical disorders (Goffman 1961).

Based on my research, it was found that "freeing" oneself from the feeling of stigmatization and the biographic "breakup," moving towards a new plan of action and redefining the self, and one's role takes place within a three-dimensional process. Firstly, there is focusing on oneself, which means *introspection of "I"* and concentrating on *interactions with one's body*. Secondly, there is changing of the object of comparison, for instance, seeking a new *reference group* and *significant others*. Thirdly, there is a revision of the social identity, meaning, the development of a strategy of coping with a *public proclamation* of disability and *presenting oneself*. These are not separate phases, as they overlap one another to various degrees and in different scopes. It means that, for particular people, their biographies will have overlapping phases, mentioned above, meaning that the course is not stadial but synchronous.

The Bodily Transformations and the Process of Reconstructing the Self by a Person with a Disability Who Practices Sport

A body marked by a disability remained a stigma for the participants, especially in social relationships, where it became a reason for discrimination. The respondents stated that they did not like their bodies and that they were ashamed because they differed from generally accepted norms. The same relates to a dysfunctional body, which meant that these people tried to hide their handicaps and mask their deficits (Vickers 2014; Oldfield et al. 2018). Not until they undertook a given type of physical activity (e.g., professional work, sports practicing, etc.) with its accompanying experiences did a gradual and positive transformation in the perception of their disabilities begin. As emphasized by the individuals, it was connected with becoming familiar with their bodies and their possibilities "again."

These individuals very often realized that something they had once found hard or even impossible could be achieved thanks to practicing sport. Hence, the boundaries of not only their bodies but also their belief in their strengths changed. The vision of the individual changes; he/she goes from being a feckless and dependent person to an individual who is capable of acting in a manner and scope that they were unfamiliar with.

> You know, a man doesn't know himself until he faces a particular situation until he tries to do something, especially if it seems impossible. And that was the case with me. I also didn't believe that I could do something with myself, that I could be so capable at all...This is what sport gave me. [i.5.17]

For the participants, activity became a route that could be followed to support the process of accepting themselves and their disability more effectively. The people with a disability gradually began to perceive their disabilities differently. In the beginning, the changes took place slowly, and they got bigger and clearer with time. It was accompanied by intensive work on their bodies, which they had to do (Niedbalski 2015a:332). It usually involved complying with particular regimes related to, among others, intensifying certain actions and gaining a higher level of self-control. It is worth mentioning here that the individuals usually realized that by neglecting their physical activity they would cause not only the functional regression of their bodies but also some damage to their "external image" (Kowal 2012:190).

> I got involved because I can see the effects, because it's important to me, and I can't imagine that it could be different, like it was some time ago. It costs a lot of energy and time, but it's my life now, and I need to

subordinate myself to it if I want to get something out of it. [i.12.15]

In their lives, the activity they chose to get involved in became the factor responsible for the process of regaining faith in themselves and their possibilities. It also provided a source of belief in their value and in the fact that despite having a physical dysfunction, they remain fully-valuable and entitled members of society. In this way, the people with disabilities carried out an internal dialog regarding, on the one hand, the way they see themselves, and, on the other hand, the way others see them (cf. Cooley 1922:184). Such a dialog, in both cases, was determined by certain stimuli from the environment. The more positive the stimuli, the higher the degree to which the person with a disability was able to develop a more beneficial image of themselves, and the quicker they were able to "get over" the traumatic experiences connected with the situation that led to their disabilities.

A person with a disability who took up an activity began to perceive their disability differently. There were slow changes at the beginning, but over time they got bigger and clearer, which was related to "training" the body's capacity. Transformations in the life of an individual pursuing a given form of activity meant that they gained more capacity and thus control over their bodies, which is well-illustrated by the fragment below of one of my interviewees.

> There is an improvement, a significant improvement in shape, health, and mood. My regular exercising has definitely had an impact on my agility. I remember that my friend, who hadn't seen me for a couple of years, was really surprised that I had changed so much [laughing]. And I think this is the best evidence of how my activity affects me. [i.20.17]

A handicapped body with dysfunctions was not perceived by the disabled as something to be ashamed of or to be hidden. While observing the changes in their bodies, they became satisfied and self-fulfilled. Therefore, a disabled body, which quite often had been a reason for stigma, negative emotions, or even humiliation, was no longer associated with such experiences (Niedbalski 2015a:334). This is how the body, as an outline of the actions and practices of an individual, became a significant element of constructing the feeling of identity, through engaging in a given type of activity, and the control that had provided a basic resource to maintain this biographical continuity (Goodley 2011).

The Role of Significant Others in the Process of Reconstructing the Identity of People with Disabilities Who Practice Sport

In the process of reconstructing an identity special significance is given to contacts, interactions, and bonds with others whom the people with disabilities encounter at various levels of social life. A central place in confirming (and shaping) the identity is occupied by significant others, that is, people who the individual is related to through intensive and emotional relationships (Berger and Luckmann 1979:170-171). Anselm Strauss (1959:132) devoted considerable attention to the relationship between the self and significant others. He claimed that maintaining a coherent definition of self by an individual depends on the positive validation of each new element of their identity. Rejecting such a validation means reinterpreting the individual's actions, which means reinterpreting the concept of oneself. Strauss noticed that the feeling of being an integral part of the group they belong to plays a significant role in an individual's perception of self. As he wrote, "a path of the group becomes the path of

the individual, and mistakes of the group become its mistakes" (Strauss 1959:41).

While choosing a given type of life activity (e.g., professional work), the interviewees gained the possibility to become members of groups that other people with disabilities often belonged to. In such a situation these people perceived themselves as an integral part of that group and identified with its goals. Participation in such a community was connected with socialization processes that involve not only shaping collective identity, but also the potential (re)construction of the whole self-definition of the social actor. Through observing and identifying with others a person with a disability internalized new roles, accompanying identities, motivational and interpretation schemes, as well as various entitlements, regarding their social value (cf. Berger and Luckmann 1979:151-155).

In this context, the notion of a *reference group* may also be applied as a comparative scheme concerning which people form basic judgments and evaluations regarding their social position. It also provides measures and criteria that allow them to determine their social position, which constitutes a basis for the individual developing one's self-esteem (Kuhn 1972:175). A person with a disability compares their social position with that of others, which results in identifying with groups of a similar level of relative privileges or disabilities and adapting their attitudes and patterns of behavior (Merton 1949). Within such groups the individual agrees on plans of actions and permanently reinterprets the reality while interacting with its members, leading to a discussion with oneself. Thanks to those interactions and particular auto-narrations the individual obtains a key to interpreting one's place in the world and the things that should be done in a given situation (Mead 1934).

After the accident, I was down in the dumps. My world actually collapsed. I thought it would be better if I had died and not become disabled. It was a hard time, so when Maria [name changed—JN] came and said that I could do this or that and that people such as myself can even play, I thought she was nuts. Despite all of this I wanted to get out, as I could not sit in that cage anymore. I listened to reason...Now I know that it was the best thing I could have done in that situation. It let me take a different look at my life, set free from dark thoughts, and I think that I can still live, work, and function among other people relatively normally. [i.14.17]

Such positive empowerment, which is created thanks to building group bonds, as well as the possibility of showing a person with a disability that he/she can still function in society, is, on the one hand, an important resource to realize one's life plans. On the other hand, it supports *self-acceptance*. From this perspective, individuals become subjects of consideration for themselves. This process is additionally enhanced by people in the group who became especially important for the individual (they obtain the status of *significant others*) as they play the role of guides, teachers, and mentors. Such people may also become guardians of the individual's biography, exerting a strong influence on their identity and faith. The notion of coaching, introduced by Anselm Strauss (1959:111), might describe the relationships between a person with a disability practicing sport and someone who becomes a "signpost," pointing to the desired action. Such a relationship is most often established between people who are characterized by certain features that are significant in a given situation. The main qualities of the coaching relationship are rooted in the fact that a pupil needs a guide while going through subsequent stages (Niedbalski 2015b:39). It

applies not only to the conventional sense of teaching skills, but also the fact that while the "coached" person is moving within the social space, there are highly important processes taking place which require an explanation, and this is where the "coach" plays a crucial role. These notions are also raised by Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001:220), who emphasize that "teaching the professions, craft, vocation...requires a pedagogy that is slightly different from the one applied in knowledge acquisition... There are numerous ways of thinking and acting, often livelier ones, transferred in a practical form, in a whole communication, and thanks to practices based on direct contact between the one teaching and the one being taught." While these authors highlight characteristics of the "teaching" process, Strauss refers in this context to identity transformations, which become a part of the "student" themselves.

Alex was a coach of ours here, as far as I remember. I think it has always been like this; that's what I heard. And when I came here, he took care of me, showed me around, explained the principles and everything, he simply took care of me. I felt more confident when he was here, telling me what to do. Others also listened to him because he knows a lot, and he played professionally in the past. [i.10.16]

A highly significant element of the *coaching* is the schedule. A *coach-guide* needs to take care of the balance while going through subsequent stadiums—they cannot allow themselves or their wards to be impatient, nor permit any sluggishness. Various tactics may be applied while trying to maintain this balance. One of them is prescribing how to act—how to find fulfillment and succeed in a given type of physical activity. Therefore, the coach's role is to point out what needs to be done, what you need to

distinguish yourself, which qualities need to be developed, and which need to be gotten rid of. In one word, it is a formula that may not guarantee success on its own, but the application of which may bring someone closer to their goal.

Coaches also apply "tactics," namely, a schedule that determines the subsequent steps people with disabilities need to follow to progress gradually. A coach introduces different people at different stages of their development, not only shaping their career but also exerting an influence on their biography (Niedbalski 2015b:39). Therefore, they perform continuous work on the individual's biography and identity. For a person with a disability, completing each stage means they have not only achieved subsequent levels but that they are pushing their own, often symbolic, boundaries. Therefore, a coach might not only motivate a person with a disability, but they may also trigger positive emotions related to the successes which pertain to completing subsequent challenges.

The people with disabilities who practice sports often mentioned the exploration of the "unknown possibilities" and "unidentified potential of their bodies." In other words, this was the process of learning about the possibilities of their bodies, which were related mostly to their physical capacity (Jakubowska 2009:95). While analyzing the interviews with people with disabilities, we can distinguish situations where the individuals discovered that something that had seemed difficult or even impossible to do (for example, a given action) became achievable thanks to this activity and that the individuals not only pushed the limits of their bodies but also the boundaries of their faith in their strength. That meant that the vision of themselves changed from being a person who was often dependent on others

to someone capable of acting in a manner and scope that they had been unfamiliar with.

> When Mark came to me for the first time when I was still at the hospital and he told me that I would be doing the long jump, I looked at him like he was nuts, because how was I supposed to do that with one leg… You know, a guy comes to you and says that you can do this or that, and you are lying in bed, and you can't even move very much. [i.4.16]

The activity of people with disabilities supports positive thinking about themselves and their possibilities, which leads to the fact that the disabled ascribe a higher value to their "life vitality" than to the other life spheres. It may symbolize a bridge between different types of actions undertaken by a person with disabilities, and it means that the activity may be a source of inspiration, but also the creation of internal power. From this perspective, an especially significant aspect—as suggested by the people with disabilities—is that they regain the belief in their possibilities, leading to the reconstruction of life goals and priorities. It very often means they are more open, which in turn supports their progress in life, both in the private and public spheres. Within the first sphere, it concerns courage in establishing friendships and potentially establishing romantic relationships. On the other hand, the courage and self-esteem derived from an activity such as practicing sport mean that an individual starts to present a more definite and assertive attitude in regular, everyday relationships.

Public Presentations as a Proclamation of One's Identity

Anselm Strauss (1959:9) believed that each of us presents ourselves to others (and ourselves) by

looking in the mirror of their judgments. In such a context, some of the disabled believed that they would not be accepted or understood by the able-bodied. This meant that they were unable to reveal their disabilities in front of others, and were afraid of being exposed. Here it is worth recalling the words of Erving Goffman (1963) who believed that people with a stigmatizing feature are afraid of a lack of acceptance from their environment. This, in turn, pushes them to self-exclusion and social isolation.

On the other hand, as suggested by Strauss (1959), an individual may reject imposed definitions, adapting a clear identity project. Therefore, the moment of *public performance* is of great importance to a person with a disability. This is when a person may reveal him/herself in an open (public) space, for example, by taking part in get-togethers. Such a situation includes some elements of Strauss's *meeting a challenge*, but it is also related to the *public proclamation*. According to Strauss (1959), it is an individual's statement about their views or attributes. It is a passage in the process of exposing a person with a disability to a larger group of—importantly—able-bodied people. What is more, it suggests that a person with a disability encounters another turning point in their biography when they decide to expose their dysfunction in a wider social framework (Niedbalski 2015a:331).

> For me, the first performance in front of an audience was unique. When you see all those people who are observing you, looking at you, and you don't know what they're thinking, it's really paralyzing. You have thought then—wouldn't it be better to run away, to pull the plug on it? But, it would mean that you gave up halfway, you'll be defeated by your own fears. [i.17.16]

In such conditions, a person with a disability needs to make a qualitative jump in their biography, which involves revealing to the public the hidden qualities of their bodies. Such situations may be compared with the *open context of awareness* described by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1965), where the parties of the interaction do not hide the existence of a certain situation—in this case, disability. The audience knows whom they are dealing with, and they make no comment and do not belittle them. Meanwhile, the social actor does not try to hide the attributes which are an indispensable part of them (and which, according to them, are belittling), and this is reflected in how they perceive themselves (Niedbalski 2015a:332):

> For me, it was almost like, I don't know how to put it, simply like something unreal...that I took the plunge and took off the prosthesis with everyone around, simple as that. But, it was easier than I'd thought because I wasn't thinking that I was removing the prosthesis; in my mind, I was in a different place. I thought more about the competition, about the game, the result, that I'd need to sweat, to do my best. And this was what counted, nothing else. And when I understood that it can be done, that this is what it is, I stopped being afraid of showing myself without the prosthesis, that others could see me what I really am like. And I told myself that when you don't think about it so much, you can do a lot more when you aren't afraid and blocked anymore. [i.19.16]

The activities pursued by the participants became a path they could follow to support the process of accepting themselves and their disability more effectively. The moment they took up the activity was often a breakthrough in the individual's biography and the beginning of transformations in the dimensions of their self-definition.

Conclusions

The people with a disability who participated in the study experienced clear physical and psycho-social discomfort related to the dysfunction of their bodies. According to their statements, a body with dysfunctions hindered their functioning. What is more, they perceived a dysfunctional body as a source of suffering, caused by its limitations. According to the respondents, their bodies took control, and forms of this power were determined by resistance, which was observable in various activities of everyday life. For example, this resistance might be manifested in their inability to perform even the simplest activities, such as tying laces if the person did not have a working hand, or moving around freely if the dysfunction of the body consisted of limited use of the legs. This is how bodily limitations reduce the respondents to their bodies, thus embodying their "self." It may be related to losing the "sense of normality" and being aware that they are deviating from socially acquired patterns of it in one way or another. A disabled body becomes an observable one, having lost many of its original embodied schemes (Olney and Brockelman 1991:86). Therefore, it is permanently present in an individual's life, showing itself not in a strictly physical sense, when they are unable to do some things, but it also exists in a psychophysical dimension, as the awareness of "otherness" (Niedbalski 2015a:227). An incomplete, faulty, or deformed body violates the applicable socio-cultural standards on corporeality because of its dysfunctional nature and "ugly" appearance. It is also worth recalling what Thomas Osborne said in this context. He stated that stigma is an element that does not allow us to forget about the body, the stigma being the bodily *memento* which hinders liberation from the body—and this becomes the main problem for people with disabilities (Osborne 1997). A disabled body, although stigmatized

by the disability, is not a stigma in itself. However, in social relations, anything that bears the imprint of disability or dysfunction can still be a source of discrimination.

This research demonstrates that people with disabilities who are active in various spheres of their lives can overcome negative experiences. Being active allows people with various dysfunctions not only to change how they perceive themselves but also to influence the way they are perceived by those around them. Through their actions, including successive, repeatable, and planned physical activities, people with disabilities may improve their psycho-physical condition, gain additional practical skills, and significantly enhance their functional fitness (Niedbalski 2017:227). Furthermore, an active person (e.g., one who practices sports) starts to perceive their body in categories other than those arising from their disability and body dysfunctionality.

Although sports activity does not eliminate the damage to health itself, it does make it possible to strengthen those areas of the body that can, to some extent, take on the role of dysfunctional spheres. In this way, the general condition of the whole body improves, and thanks to regular exercises the person with a disability has greater motor coordination and better control of their bodies. In many cases, an individual can achieve a level of efficiency that gives them a high degree of autonomy and freedom, and consequently significantly reduces their dependence on other people. In this way, the person with a disability gains a sense of greater control over their own life, which is reflected in a sense of the quality of life.

Crossing subsequent mental and physical barriers moves the people with disabilities away from the

feeling of the attached stigma and allows them to define themselves in new and "normalized" categories. The body is no longer an impassable barrier, and it acquires a new, unknown face that emphasizes the underlying potential and unexplored possibilities. The awareness of their bodies, improved through the activity, allows a person with a disability to experience stimuli in a controlled manner, flowing from the outside; on the other hand, it makes it possible to control the body itself, its functioning, its condition, and its reactions (Snyder and Mitchell 2001:373). A body, as a system of actions and the source of practices, becomes a significant element when developing the feeling of self-identity through participation or involvement in physical activity, and the regulated control over their bodies becomes a basic resource for maintaining biographic continuity and identity. This takes place through the work on the body and the identity carried out in two dimensions—through rejecting the stigmatized identity and through reconstructing and maintaining the belief in their "social normality." Both processes merge, becoming complementary elements of one whole, namely, the identity transformations of an individual. At the same time, both courses of action are never fully completed, and they must be seen as an ongoing process.

In this context, a dysfunctional body—as given by nature or resulting from life incidents and circumstances—is a starting point, the beginning of a project created by an individual (Kuppers 2004:45). The activity shown here, which influences the corporeality, boosts the confidence of the person with a disability. Instead of feeling imprisoned in their bodies, they get a sense of control over their bodies and, as a consequence, over their lives. This is how a body, even a disabled and dysfunctional one, may become a form of capital, provided that the individual goes beyond one's biological perceptions alone, and thinks of the body as a "material" which can be transformed, modernized, and improved (cf. Leder 1990).

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The Interactive Dimension of Creating Cultural Artifacts Using Agile Methodologies

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Abstract: The authors consider symbolic interactionism to be a suitable theoretical framework to analyze projects in creative sectors because it affords ample space for individual and collective creativity. Furthermore, teams working on different cultural artifacts establish a negotiated order (interactionist term coined by A. L. Strauss) among artists, managers, the audience, and sponsors, et cetera, by discussing and translating various meanings and perspectives. This is especially noticeable when projects are managed using an agile methodology. The application of agile methodologies in creative sectors is a relatively new idea, although it seems to be in harmony with the nature of artistic work. For instance, it implies the acceptance of unpredictability and flexibility while also recognizing the ability and individuality of project participants. There are also specific problems related to the personalities of the artists and the irregularities and discontinuities inherent in the process of creation. The first part of the article raises the topic of creativity in symbolic interactionism. This perspective is subsequently extended to teamwork in creative sectors employing the description of collective work in Howard Becker's book entitled *Art Worlds* as an example. The authors reflect on other contemporary works explaining the cultural shift transpiring during the move from the analog age to the current digital age and its influence on the process of creation in the world of artists. This leads to a discussion of distributed agility, a concept stemming from agile management. The various agile methods are mentioned and shortly characterized; we also present a succinct depiction of historical perspective. The literature on the use of agile methods in creative sectors is referred to along with some of the challenges they face. The need to develop an agile management methodology specifically for creative industries is emphasized. This article utilizes the literature on symbolic interactionism to explain group dynamics by drawing analogies with agile management.

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Faulkner and Becker show that musicians collectively negotiate and improvise their way to a successful performance. Players must explore each other's areas of expertise, develop an ability to fake their way through unfamiliar territory, and respond to the unpredictable demands of their audience—whether an unexpected gang of polka fanatics or a tipsy father of the bride with an obscure favorite song. [*Do You Know..? The Jazz Repertoire in Action*, 2009, back cover review]

Creativity in Sociological Sciences

In sociological theory, one was not always perceived as a creative[1] individual. The attribute of creativity was assigned to outstanding people, as is the case with Weber's charismatic leaders and Znaniecki's "abnormal perverts." Rather, as Gabriel Tarde observed, social continuity was maintained thanks to the ability to imitate, sometimes interrupted by creative personalities. Over time creativity began to be treated as an attribute of human beings. Georg Simmel wrote about the growing tension between subjective and objective culture, in other words, the spontaneous work of individuals and the established heritage that limits them.

Creative activity can be seen at different levels of human activity. Symbolic interactionists took note of them in the basic interactions between individuals. Even though he distinguishes the subjective and objective elements of the self in personality, George Herbert Mead writes about the social creativity initiated by the former. However, creative energy is sublimated and limited by the latter, an "organized collection of other people's attitudes." According to Blumer, symbolic interactionism shows that society is a collection of individuals in an endless creative process[2] (which does not mean

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[1] Creativity in general understanding is connected with the ability to go beyond established patterns. Krzysztof Konecki (2019) enumerates the circumstances that must occur for something to be deemed to be creative, such as collective acceptance, appreciation by a specific audience, historical adequacy, et cetera. Arthur Cropley (2011:511) states, "[t]he modern definition of creativity has broadened from a focus on esthetics towards practical products in science, technology, or business, and away from the creation of beauty towards overcoming competition." Although esthetics form the core focus in these considerations, other aspects will be presented because collective work in creative industries is predicated on various specialists cooperating with one another.

[2] In contrast to Kuhn's interactionist Iowa School, which limited the creative abilities of individuals because of the existence of a core self and a social structure, for instance.

that there are no institutional limitations). The course of symbolic interaction is to some extent unpredictable because it is based on individuals' freedom of interpretation. Various "connected actions," such as a parliamentary discussion or a commercial transaction, follow certain models, but each case has to be recreated to some extent. In groups, new problematic situations that do not comply with the existing rules of conduct always emerge; the interpretations and actions of individuals exert an impact on changes in the course of connected actions and in society itself.

Ed Petkus (1996) analyzes the motivations for creative behavior, especially for the creative fulfillment of social roles. He bases his considerations on symbolic interactionism and refers to the concept of role-identity developed by McCall and Simmons, as well as to the concept of the looking-glass self. According to the latter, individuals want to be perceived as not only belonging to their role, but also as being creative in its performance. The authors mention other researchers who combine symbolic interactionism with creativity: Hormuth (1983) combined the originality of answers (in interaction) with self-focused attention, while Chapman and Carrigan (1993) associated originality with the size of the group in which a given task was performed (an inversely proportional relationship).

Reflection is given to creativity in research methodology. According to Krzysztof Konecki (2019:7), qualitative research, in particular, is considered to be creative due to the lack of strict rules and methodological freedom, which allows for creative design and research activities. Practitioners of grounded theory methodology (symbolic interactionism is often the meta-theory in this case) often write about theoretical sensitivity that enables researchers to yield a glimpse of new regularities and phenomena in the data. Theoretical sensitivity is a characteristic that develops as research experience is gained. There are many techniques to enhance research creativity, for example, contemplative practices (Konecki 2018) and other practices cited by Marek Gorzko (2016) in the literature on the subject (2016): the dual nature of thinking—rational and free, removing blockages and the attitude of "patience," and theoretical comparison techniques. However, these examples pertain to individual practices. Many textbooks on grounded theory methodology advise using teamwork as a means to cultivating creativity because it entails a clash of perspectives and triangulation of researchers.

Some symbolic interactionists participated in a genuinely creative process, which is particularly important for these deliberations. In this context the analyses conducted by Howard Becker and Robert R. Faulkner (both sociologists and jazz musicians) deserve mention.[3] Faulkner deliberates on the essence of the complex interactive sequence of a jazz concert, whether on stage or in a studio. On the one hand, it involves the interpretation and improvisation of free creative individuals; on the other hand, it calls for constantly thinking about who the partners are and skillful and harmonious reactions to given impulses while also adhering to the pertinent conventions and rules.

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[3] George Herbert Mead (1926), father of symbolic interactionism, put the aesthetic experience in the context of his conception in "The Nature of Aesthetic Experience." Philipp Vannini and Dennis Waskul (2006) provide a detailed analysis of interaction mediated (and not only) with music, in the article "Symbolic Interaction as Music: The Esthetic Constitution of Meaning, Self, and Society."

The level and intensity of interplay between the routinized and the innovative vary…within bands, and across bands. Improvising together is collective action, concerted work that couples these elements, both within players as they solo with other musicians, and between players as they immediately respond to one another on the bandstand… or wherever they perform. The musical activity is simultaneously deliberate and spontaneous, imitative and experimental, routinized and innovative. [Becker et al. 2006:92]

Howard S. Becker used a jazz metaphor to analyze the interactions of individual creativity and the social limitations imposed on it (Katz 1994). In his book, *Art Worlds*, he addresses the problem of artistic criticism and the development of aesthetic theories, which can impede artistic creativity. He observes that influences usually run in the opposite direction.

R. Keith Sawyer (2003:96), in his book *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration*, when referring to Dewey's pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, analyzes how group creativity is born during improvisation. He refers to jazz concerts and improvisation theater. Creativity in these groups is characterized by processability, unpredictability, intersubjectivity, complex communication, and emergence (the performance of the group is more creative and valuable than the sum of its members' individual contributions). He also stresses the importance of group interaction, acceptance, and development of each artist's contribution. In order to understand this interaction, interactional synchrony, flow, chemistry, and group dynamics are needed. Sawyer also attempts to ascertain the degree of improvisation in a group and enumerates 11 dimensions to make

that assessment. He stresses that group creativity cannot be explained by employing a traditional structural model because it is an unpredictable, collective, and emergent phenomenon.

Creative Sectors

In his *Art Worlds*, Becker (1984) describes the functioning of collectives in which some cultural artifacts are created. Artistic circles constitute a distinct sub-world. Using the example of a film, Becker shows the specificity of the division of labor among artists, which is often undefined and based on performing double and triple roles. Considering that artistic work needs to be promoted, another group of specialists, namely, distributors are involved. They differ from artists in terms of their attitude towards the work and the organization of work. They are charged with the task of striving to bring order to a chaotic creative process.[4] Sponsors, representatives of state institutions, and art critics may also play a part as additional actors.[5] This description shows the limitations imposed on creators. At the same

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[4] Izabela Ślęzak (2009) describes in her monograph another field of creative activity, namely, poetry. Beginning from the symbolic interactionism framework she traces the long process of acquiring a new identity—becoming a poet. The last two stages of the process—"intensive career-building" and "mature career"— consist precisely in relations with poetry circles and the diverse social world of poetry.

[5] This situation also resembles the interactionist concept of "negotiated order." Anselm Strauss illustrates this concept using the example of a psychiatric hospital, where many different actors are engaged (physicians, residents, interns, nurses, social workers, nutritionists, clerical personnel), for the common general aim of achieving a patient's well-being. All these members have different training and professional socialization, various experiences, and different personal backgrounds, leading to multiple theories regarding how the general tasks will be completed and how labor will be divided (Strauss 1963). When applying agile management in a work team, the situation becomes more dynamic and the roles become more fluid.

time, it demonstrates that this system of work as described is needed to produce and disseminate their products.

The question arises whether the remarks made in *Art Worlds* are still applicable. After all, that book was first published in 1982 and reflects the circumstances on the American market at that time. Over time, the pace of change has dramatically increased, requiring the rapid delivery of products, addressing and adjusting to contemporary needs, responding to the actions taken by competitors and customers who are constantly searching for something new. The ensuing changes pose a significant challenge in creative project management.

Moreover, Becker's book refers to the analog world of art present in the 20th century. Music and, more generally, art have undergone a major transformation in the digital age. In their analysis of new music industries, Hughes, Evans, Morrow, and Keith (2016) developed the concept of "distributed agility" (this term is derived from agile management). They point out that in the current digital age, artists, managers, and all of their collaborators engaged in the process of creation have become more alert and "reactive" to the choices made by their audiences. The previous networks and mechanics of artistic recognition have changed. Guy Morrow (2018:47) expounded on their idea as follows, "artist managers have to be agile in order to react quickly enough to help artists seize opportunities in the digital age and help them manage the risks that have been externalized to them...Instead of investing time and money in what they 'assume' will receive attention from the audiences, artist co-managers, particularly those working across different international territories, need to deploy

distributed agile methods." He also suggests that new research areas should include the idea generation processes transpiring in distributed agile and self-organizing teams. Dezutter's (2011) concept of distributed creativity may also prove to be useful in this context.

These processes are inherent in the attention economy (Simon 1971). The trend towards digitalizing cultural content has deprived some artistic works of the audience's attention. At the same time, it has significantly augmented the body of other artistic content. Recipients are inundated with an overabundance of content to consume, meaning that their attention becomes an important albeit scarce resource.

Recognizing the pithy role played by the creative industries in economic development, at the national and European levels alike, is vitally important. Andreas Reckwitz (2012:166) writes that the creative industries were originally complementary to other industries. Design, advertizing, and fashion merely added value to functional objects; over time, these industries have been revalued and transformed into "leading cultural formats." The concept of creative industries/sectors itself dates back to the 1990s. However, as Rafał Wiśniewski and Tomasz Kukołowicz (2017:103) point out, "creative industries are characterized by a relatively high economic potential. They include not only creative areas of high artistic value, but also popular culture as a whole."

As defined by the EU (INTERREG IVC Report[6]—Creative Industries), Cultural and Creative Sec-

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[6] The INTERREG IVC program was implemented within the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation objective,

tors (CCIs) include Architecture, Archives and Libraries, Artistic Arts, Audiovisual (Film, TV, Video Games, Multimedia), Cultural Heritage, Design (including Fashion), Festivals, Music, Performing and Visual Arts, Journalism and Radio. The report also defines the characteristics of entities working in the cultural and creative sectors: a small number of employees (usually fewer than 10), highly qualified people who frequently work as freelancers on temporary project-related contracts. The development of CCIs fosters the creation of networks in narrow specializations and clusters or other forms of cooperation.

To conclude, special management techniques should be applied in artistic and creative projects. This may also entail the development of novel methods specifically designed for activity in this area.

Agile Methodologies in Project Management

In 2004 Jim Highsmith wrote about a quiet revolution in the market to which managers and engineers have to adapt. He notes that other industries, such as the IT, pharmaceutical, and car manufacturing industry exert constant pressure for innovation accompanied by falling research and development (R&D) costs. The original method of manufacturing products based on meticulous upfront planning and a linear cascade structure proved to be inefficient. Former practices did not fit in contemporary "fleeting environments" in which products are and were produced (Highsmith 2004:25). It was therefore necessary to shift to adaptive manufacturing. The author

emphasizes that if production changes, project management must also change. It must focus on speed, mobility, and experimentation.

His book serves as a manual for agile project management. Three years earlier, a group of 17 software engineers had formulated the memorable *Manifesto for Agile Software Development* (Beck et al. 2001) concisely depicting vital assumptions and values for the new types of teams to function:

- **people and interactions** rather than processes and tools
- **operating software** rather than extensive documentation
- **cooperation with the customer** rather than formal arrangements
- **responding to changes** rather than following the plan

Change management is inevitable in the manufacturing process, which also entails innovation; so is the analysis of deviations from the plan. The ability to adapt to changing conditions in the design is a success. No wonder initial plans are rather hypotheses than predictions (Highsmith 2004). Craig Larman (2004), while recognizing the legitimacy of abandoning precision planning, notes that both customers and users at the beginning of a project are not sure what they want, and have problems with the formulation of requirements; many details are revealed only during the project implementation, implementation details are impossible to guess at the beginning. The customer's way of thinking evolves during the product development process; one should not forget about external forces (e.g., competition) leading to a change in requirements.

Table 1. Comparing Agile Methodologies.

AGILE METHODOLOGY	EMPHASIS	FOUNDER(S)
Extreme Programing (XP)	Efficiency, customer focus and feedback, and quality	Kent Beck
Scrum	Teaming, organizing work	Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber
Feature-Driven Development	Iterative development of user focused features	Jeff De Luca
Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM)	Structured approach to rapid development, collection of best practices	DSDM Consortium
Lean Software Development	Eliminate work that doesn't create customer value	Mary and Tom Poppendieck
Kanban Method	Visualize and manage workflow, just-in-time development	David J. Anderson
Crystal Family	People, communication, process rigor map to product and organizational dynamics	Alistair Cockburn

Source: Ashmore and Runyan (2015:51).

The table above shows some of the best-known types of agile methodology. Most of them were designed before Jim Highsmith's work in 2004 or originate from older concepts signaled in the 1990s. Other concepts not included in the table also exist, such as the Systems Development Life Cycle (SLDC), which some consider being inflexible and too time-consuming for the present day; now some attempts are being made to adjust it to current needs (Harris 2019).

There are also important techniques used in contemporary agile methodologies. The Digital Feedback Loop proposed by Microsoft is based on five connected pillars: Engage Customers, Empower Employees, Optimize Operations, Transform Products, Data & Intelligence (Thibeault 2018). We should also mention Cognitive, Intelligent Connected Product (Cyran and Dybka 2019:243) extended across the product lifecycle and supported by enabling technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. Practitioners also emphasize the role played by the User Experience (UX) technique, especially with the participation of the end-users of a given product. UX is a more complex practice of engaging customers in the process, often with the use of mobile devices. Agile teams often neglect the UX stage even though making this invest-

ment significantly mitigates the risk of product failure (Convertino and Frishberg 2017:35-36).

In agile methodology, there is a clear orientation towards creating a self-organizing and self-disciplining team. Project groups are usually small and have a flat, non-hierarchical structure. Respect for the individual and their competence is emphasized. All team members should feel responsible for the project and are kept informed about the work of the other participants in daily meetings. Sometimes, they take over each other's functions. They are also able to admonish a manager (courage is one of the five basic values of the SCRUM related methodology). This emphasis on individual creativity makes it harder to introduce agile methodologies in the collectivist and conformist cultures of the East (Ramesh et al. 2017:215).

When analyzing the use of agile methods in Big Data projects, the author advises the selection of omnibuses rather than narrow specialists for inclusion in teams (Jurney 2014:24-25). The former are able to undertake various tasks and communicate more efficiently with the team. He stresses that, as creative workers, they deserve working conditions that allow them to focus their attention and utilize their special working conditions. Agile is also referred to as a social movement aimed at creating a good, adaptable working environment that is able to provide innovative products. The contention in agile textbooks that APM (adaptive project management) supports artists, not managers, is important from the point of view of our analysis (agile sectors involving artists).

Agile Methodologies and Creative Industries

Agile methodologies have been developed based on the experience of the IT sector and specifically

for its management. In 2018, Papadakis and Tsironis analyzed 71 projects, and only four concerned other sectors (the service sector and the construction industry). Kiril Angeuelov (2019) writes about the use of agile methodologies in management in public administration and university classes.

Meanwhile, the creative sector has started to advocate more vocally, though still modestly, the use of agile methodologies citing their prospective beneficial influence. Managers and researchers who have followed computer game developers, who are most closely related to the IT sector, have already amassed some experience. Damian Hodgson and Louise Briand (2013) have analyzed a Canadian computer game studio. All 12 team members—directors, producers, game designers, leaders, programers, artists, and animators—were interviewed. Several months of participatory observation took place during scrums, sprint reviews, brainstorming sessions, poker planning sessions, et cetera. They regularly stressed the group's egalitarian and democratic structure, but the real challenge proved to be eradicating former power structures and stronger decision-making centers in the group. An important observation articulated by several members of the group was that "artists aren't agile." Artists and animators failed to work at the pace set by the group and refused to meet some of its demands.[7] Certainly, apart from strong creative personalities, the specificity of creative work was at play. As the manager said, in programing everything is Cartesian, but in art, there are days when you are inspired and days when you are not—it is difficult to manage and direct it. Artists were therefore excluded from at least

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[7] In fact, issues involving the retention of individual creativity and some artistic freedom need to be addressed in the course of the process of designing agile methods for creative sectors.

a few agile methodologies and procedures, including tracking tasks and poker planning; they were limited to asking general questions about progress and proposing possible assistance. The authors conclude that the work of aesthetic and symbolic nature is relatively resistant to control practices even in flexible methods such as agile methodologies, not to mention the former cascade management models. They pointed out that there is an urgent need for extensive and critical research into the control of such projects.

Thomas Paris and Sihem Ben Mahmoud-Jouini (2019) conducted research in 42 companies operating in 12 sub-sectors of creative industries. Interviews, observations, analysis of archival documents, and conference materials made it possible to identify challenges in project management in these sectors: a high degree of uncertainty as to the audience's product perception and acceptance; the need to combine freedom and intuition of creation with economic and market analyses; the initial multitude and diversity of ideas that must be concentrated in one particular product; the diversity of actors involved in the project—strong personalities that require a wide range of autonomy and freedom, but also others seeking coordination and organization.

Four practices have also been identified that make up the creative process in the projects of companies operating in creative sectors: *inspiration* consisting in immersing oneself in environments different from one's own, contact, and conversation with people operating in different fields; *framing* the idea into a compact form in order to outline the direction in which it will be developed; *creating a prototype* by transforming the idea into a material reality (scenarios, scripts, models depicting the structure); *vali-*

dation through selecting, modifying, or rejecting the inadequate parts (often after consulting the team) of fragments. The authors point out that in creative sectors these four practices do not occur sequentially (although they are arranged in a logical sequence of consequences and in other types of projects this sequence may occur), but they may take place in different combinations. Citing the mismatch between the linear management model and "creative projects," researchers suggest that agile methodologies are suitable. At the same time, they formulate some recommendations regarding the challenges faced by managers.

Thomas Paris, Gerald Lang, and David Masse (2020) analyze the distinct nature of creative industries using the example of the perfume sector. They introduced the concept of "contextual creativity," a course of creative creation and its effect depends on the environment in which an individual operates. The group management style is very important here.

Kiril Angeuelov (2019) analyzes the applicability of the principles contained in the "agile manifesto" to individual creative sectors. Thus, the assumption of; 1) *achieving customer satisfaction through early and continuous software delivery* is possible in the case of advertising and architecture, where there is the greatest probability of discrepancies materializing between the customer's vision and the work of the team; 2) *frequent software delivery* is possible in the case of archival and library projects; 3) *frequent response to changes in customer requirements* is most probable in architecture, advertising, and in some cultural sectors; 4) *cooperation between business stakeholders and developers during the project*, that is, clients and experts, is most probable in advertising, design, and architecture; 5) *support, trust, and*

motivation of employees—correspond to all sub-sectors, although as mentioned above—it is particularly problematic in teams composed of renowned artists; 6) *enabling face-to-face interaction* is possible in any CI team, especially since it is usually not frequent or invasive; 7) *operating software as a measure of progress* is possible in architecture and advertising; 8) *constant pace of progress of the project* is linked to motivation, the author does not mention the difficulties associated with the irregular and "volatile" nature of artistic work, but certainly this difficulty is present in many subsectors; 9) *focus on technical details that support agility*—this is essential in architecture and interior design; 10) *simplicity*—this is the most difficult principle to apply in the creative sectors—the products produced in these sectors are not (according to the author) the result of simplicity in the manufacturing process; 11) *self-organizing teams creating specific architectures, requirements and designs*—here the author notes that although such organizational independence of the group is possible (again) in architecture, design, or advertising, in the sphere of culture the role of leader is indispensable (orchestra conductor, director in a film or theater); 12) *regular reflection on efficiency* is possible in architecture and design, and hindered in architecture where there are precise legal requirements and limitations, also in cultural sectors where the creators are guided by other values other than economics. Angeuelov's analysis, therefore, showed the relevance of agile principles in creative sector projects: in some of them, they are totally relevant, while in others they are only partially relevant (architecture, media, and culture).

Conclusion

These few works concerning the application of agile methodologies in project management in cre-

ative sectors clearly indicate their adaptation to the specifics or distinct nature of this type of complex creative process. Becker's *Art Worlds* portrays the characteristics of some creative sectors (without using this name) and outlines the need for an extraordinary and flexible approach to management. It is certainly worthwhile to develop or create agile methodologies for CI projects with respect to their specific challenges.

Symbolic interactionists emphasize the importance of entering roles in an efficient manner and the ability to anticipate other people's behavior in a team, which was perfectly illustrated by G. H. Mead (1934:256) in his example of playing baseball:

> The very organization of the self-conscious community is dependent upon individuals taking the attitude of the other individuals. The development of this process, as I have indicated, is dependent upon getting the attitude of the group as distant from that separate individual—getting what I have termed "generalized other." I have illustrated this by the ball game, in which the attitudes of a set of individuals are involved in a cooperative response in which the different roles involve each other. In so far as a man takes the attitude of one individual in the group, he must take it in its relationship to the action of the other members of the group; and if he is fully to adjust himself, he would have to take the attitudes of all involved in the process. The degree, of course, to which he can do that is restrained by his capacity, but still in all intelligent processes we are able sufficiently to take the roles of those involved in the activity to make our own action intelligent.

These methodologies are smart, or agile, to put it differently. Mead perfectly portrays the ideal type of management in a self-organizing group attempting

to achieve a single purpose and presents an ideal understanding and the responsible attitude shown by its team members. This ideal is desirable in the creative sectors, but it is not always achievable because the varying dynamics of work in artistic creation must be factored into the equation.

Theoreticians in agile methodologies mention the possibility of individual team members changing roles. Symbolic interactionist Ralph H. Turner (1990:88) wrote about role changing, which he defined as: "change in the shared conception and execution of typical role performance and role boundaries." New roles can be created or disappear, they can change quantitatively or qualitatively by reinterpreting their meaning (Turner 1990:88). Many modifications of social roles are caused by social changes over time and that is the nature of participation in projects now managed in a new way.

Transparency in the decision-making process and participation in management are other agile assumptions, which at the same time suggest an analogy to acting in the open context of consciousness described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Such a situation of non-hierarchical creation of cultural artifacts in creative sector companies is what Blumer (1969:18) refers to as joint actions. In such an interactive chain, there is a characteristic division of labor as noted by the author. A mature theory of symbolic interactionism can help practitioners of agile methodologies comprehend the processes taking place in observed or coordinated groups. Reading numerous social studies based on the meta-theory of symbolic interactionism can also provide interesting examples of problematic situations and their solutions. Grounded theory methodology inspired by interactionism can provide valuable lessons regarding theoretical concepts that can be used immediately in project management strategic planning.

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Citation

Revealing the Silenced Spots: The Influence of Thomas and Znaniecki on the Study of Marginalized Aspects of Social Life*

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Abstract: This article aims to highlight the influence of the work of William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki on the perception of social reality by sociologists. I focus on the social practice of creating personal documents (memoirs, autobiographies, and letters) as a form of enacting individual agency and speaking their voice in the social space. I show the contribution of various social classes in this memorializing practice in Poland, reaching back to the 17th and 18th centuries. While doing so, I emphasize that a big part of society was practically muted in literary discourses. The voices of peasants and working-class were silenced as they had no access to the means which would enable them to speak and be represented in the discourse. Against this background, we can see how the "memoir competitions"—a very popular research practice being introduced in Poland by Znaniecki in 1921—have changed the power relations in the field of generating knowledge about social reality. The institution of Polish Memoirism that systematically gathered a huge number of autobiographies, enabled the poor and voiceless to speak and be heard by social researchers. In this sense, the monumental work of Thomas and Znaniecki was a trigger to the gradual process of revealing "blind spots" on the map of social reality and giving voice to the muted. Throughout the article, I return again and again to the main methodological questions, that is, what does it mean to include the consciousness of the participants of social life in sociological research, how to represent them in sociological theorizing, and how they can regain their voice in the scientific narrations about them.

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We take up our job with the belief that in the world of human actions, just like in nature, nothing is lost.

[Florian Znaniecki 1911][1]

The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918-1920), one of the most influential monographs in sociology, is a multidimensional and dense work that can be studied in many different ways. Reading this monumental study, one can still discover new threads and dimensions of the analysis. In this article, I focus on the influence of the work of William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki on the domain of sociological investigations, which provided sociology with "a new direction of the attention" (Thomas 1905:445).[2] I am especially interested in their then groundbreaking approach that linked the theory construction with in-depth empirical research, and particularly the idea of taking into account human consciousness as an indispensable element in establishing and understanding social reality. Additionally, I take up the methodological thread of what it means to take into account the consciousness of the participants of social life being studied and to what extent the authors have succeeded to do so.

I thus offer a journey through the social reality that Thomas and Znaniecki attempted to explain by referring to the peasants' experiences. And by so doing, I show the power relations in Polish society—being the source of peasants' voices. This journey attests to the uniqueness of the approach of the authors of *The Polish Peasant*, but, at the same time, illuminates its shortcomings, hard to avoid at that time.

Another layer of my considerations is tracing the mass gathering of life records launched by Znaniecki as a response to the need for reaching the minds of the individuals under study. Showing the extraordinary career of mass memoirism in Poland, I will juxtapose the ideas of *The Polish Peasant* with the results of those collective activities—again asking about the agency and representation of the silenced parts of the society in the literary discourse.

As Thomas argued: "the individual mind cannot be understood apart from the social environment and…a society cannot be understood apart from the operation of the individual mind" (Thomas 1905:445). In his work, *Introduction to Sociology*, Znaniecki (1922) emphasized that the fundamental property of cultural phenomena is that, as being objects of theoretical reflection of the researcher, they already are the objects of their individual experiences, their conscious actions (Znaniecki [1922] 1988:25). The observed phenomena are objects of human consciousness, and we should study them thusly. If we wish to understand social reality, we should consider the meanings and interpretations of the situations constructed and employed by the individuals, their *definitions of the situations* (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918, vol. I.:68). Outlining the role of the social researcher, both authors state:

> We must put ourselves in the position of the subject who tries to find his way in this world, and we must

[1] The sentence expressed by Znaniecki in the first issue of "Wychodźca Polski [Polish Emigrant]" cited for Dulczewski (1992:77).

[2] I refer here to the sentence expressed by William I. Thomas (1905:455): "But, after all, there is but one reality, and a new science never represented anything more than a new direction of the attention."

remember, first of all, that the environment by which he is influenced and to which he adapts himself, is his world, not the objective world of science—is nature and society as he sees them, not as the scientist sees them. [Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:20-21]

This means that any social phenomenon depends on the subjective standpoints taken by individuals "toward this phenomenon and can be calculated only if we know not only the objective content of the assumed cause, but also the meaning which it has at the given moment for the given conscious being" (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918, vol. 1:38). In another part of *The Polish Peasant* the authors state:

> The individual subject reacts only to his experience, and his experience is not everything that an absolutely objective observer might find in the portion of the world within the individual's reach, but only what the individual himself finds. And what he finds depends upon his practical attitudes toward his environments, the demands he makes upon it and his control over it, the wishes he seeks to satisfy and the way in which he tries to satisfy them. [Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:20-21]

Afterward, Znaniecki will name this epistemological principle *humanistic coefficient*, explaining that social researchers as the "inductive student of culture" should approach the empirical data, including how they are perceived, experienced, and used by the studied individuals.

> In contrast with the natural scientist, who seeks to discover an order among empirical data entirely independent of conscious human agents, the student of culture seeks to discover any order among empirical data which depends upon conscious human agents, is produced, and is maintained by them. To perform this task he takes every empirical datum which he

investigates with what we have called its *humanistic coefficient*, i.e., as it appears to those human individuals who experience it and use it. [Znaniecki 1963:132]

Thomas and Znaniecki attempted to meet this challenge by referring to *personal documents*. They assumed that "personal life-records, as complete as possible, constitute the *perfect* type of sociological material" (Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:6). For them, the human experiences and attitudes are "data and elementary facts which are not exclusively limited to this individual's personality, but can be treated as mere instances of more or less general classes of data or facts, and can thus be used for the determination of laws of social becoming" (Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:7).

It was Thomas who first expressed a need for the use of, as he named them, *undesigned records*,[3] like "letters, diaries, newspapers, court, church, and club records, sermons, addresses, school curricula, and even handbills and almanacs" (Thomas 1912:771-772). In 1912, he already projected the research methods using immigrants' letters: "The letters, for instance, of the immigrant to his home people, and theirs to him, reveal life and mind in a very intimate way" (Thomas 1912:772). In his *Masters of Sociological Thought*, Lewis A. Coser observes that Thomas came up with the idea of using letters by accident. Initially, during his study on Polish immigrants, based on observations, he even tried to learn Polish, as part of ethnographical methods developed and typically applied in studies of nonliterate peoples at that time. At that moment, he did not yet think of gathering written information (Coser 1977:533).

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[3] Characterizing materials and research methods for the interpretation of the mental life of a race, Thomas indicated three principal forms of data gathering: *personal observation*, *undesigned records*, and *designed records* (Thomas 1912:770).

After deciding to concentrate his study on the Polish community, Thomas, befitting his ethnographical training and following, established procedures among anthropologists who mastered the Polish language. He then set out to develop extensive contacts with the Polish community in Chicago, as well as to take field trips to Poland. At that point, Thomas still used methods that had been developed in studies of nonliterate peoples and did not yet think of gathering written information.

One rainy morning, while walking down the back alley behind his house, Thomas had to side-step to avoid a bag of garbage which someone was throwing from the window. As the bag burst open at his feet, a long letter fell out. He picked it up, took it home, and discovered that it was written in Polish by a girl taking a training course in hospital. It was addressed to her father and mainly discussed family affairs and discords. It then occurred to Thomas that one could learn a great deal from such letters. This was the unlikely incident that led to Thomas's development of the life-history method for which he has since become famous. [Coser 1977:533]

True or not, this picturesque vision still enlivens the sociological imagination and nourishes it as a "methodological legend" with the historical view of a quest for science on the social reality that would rely on humanistic explorations. Thomas, indeed, initiated gathering the letters of Polish immigrants from 1909-1910, which was immediately after obtaining the funds from Helen Culver to the sum of 50.000 USD. He encouraged the Poles through Polish newspapers "to hand in their letters from family members in Poland and offered 10-20 cents for every letter" (Dulczewski 1992:103). A few years later, this source of data was successfully applied in *The Polish Peasant*. The set of 764 letters (dated 1893-1914)

was an entirely new type of research material in sociological research.[4] These letters[5] gave way to the communication reality of Polish peasants who were at a distance. And yet, being far away from home, they wanted to keep in touch, settle various matters, solve practical problems, and still be an active element of the world they came from, or at least be in touch with it. This rich collection of peasants' letters gathered for longer periods was ordered in a family series and meticulously described and commented on by the authors.

Besides this epistolary material, the attitudes and behaviors of Polish peasants were described based on: court reports, folk culture descriptions in the literature, correspondents' letters written for Polish newspapers, entries in parish documents, chronicles of Polish-American societies, protocols of various social institutions and agencies set up to deal with social problems such as crime, alcoholism, and difficulties in adapting, and, of course, autobiographical accounts, including the famous life record of an immigrant—Władek Wiśniewski.[6]

Personal documents (diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, letters) can become a source material in sociological research in two ways. First, when one handles those as extant data, already existing in social reality, created regardless of the researcher's activity, as it was in the case of immigrants' letters.

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[4] In his work *The Condition of the Working Class in England* published in 1845, Friedrich Engels also used workers' letters and documents from various institutions. However, his work does not constitute a theoretical, but rather an ideological account of the circumstances of working-class life.

[5] The letters were mainly obtained from the archives of the Cracow newspaper *Gazeta Świąteczna* [*Festal Newspaper*] and readers of the emigrant *Dziennik związkowy* [*The Union Journal*].

[6] In Polish literature, the author of the famous personal life-record is recalled as Władek Wiśniewski. I keep this Polish spelling here, although in the original work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1919:82) his name is spelled Władek Wiszniewski.

The second way is to elicit those, to make them happen, which assumes asking people and making them create such documents. The memoir of an immigrant, Władek Wiśniewski, presented in the third volume of *The Polish Peasant* (Thomas and Znaniecki 1919), is an extensive example of autobiographical material of the second type, eagerly gathered by the social researchers. Polish sociology has a long tradition in that respect. The first one who introduced the organized collecting of such kinds of sources and practicing empirical research referring to them was Florian Znaniecki.

The Memoir Competitions in Poland

In 1919, when Poland regained independence, Znaniecki was offered to chair the Department of Philosophy at the newly organized University in Poznan. He accepted the Chair and, in 1920, renamed it into the Department of Sociology and Philosophy of Culture. The same name was given to his sociological seminar. Znaniecki brought to Poland the idea of gathering and elaborating sociological materials and founded "a school of theoretic and applied sociology" (Dulczewski 1992:140). From the very beginning of his work in Poznan, it was clear that Znaniecki was interested in the autobiographical method. He also demanded that the participants of his seminar "write their own life history. He justified this, asserting that people who intend to do researches upon the lives of other people should show the ability of reflection about their own way of life"[7] (Dulczewski 1992:143).

Thus, immediately after returning to Poland, Znaniecki implemented the idea that emerged from his collaboration with Thomas. His first move towards adding to the knowledge about contemporary society was the very announcement of a competition for memoirs. The first memoir contest announced by Znaniecki in 1921 was addressed to physical workers. Interested in the situation of life conditions of the urban and rural proletariat, Znaniecki elaborated a comprehensive program of research in which he indicated issues to be investigated and methods to be applied (Dulczewski 1992:151; see also: Dulczewski 1975; Wincławski 2012). The central theme of this study was the working class's conditions of life. The precise terms of participation were detailed in the contest announcement:

> The Sociological Institute in Poznan, wishing to study the social conditions of working in Poland, announces a competition for the best biography of an employee, written by himself.
>
> First prize: 100,000 (one hundred thousand), Second prize: 50,000 (fifty thousand).
>
> The Institute will pay from 2,000 to 6,000 marks for unawarded resumes, depending on their volume, as a form of reimbursement. Everyone who makes a living by physical work can participate in the competition: workers in factories, mines, industrial plants, city workers, farmworkers, railway workers, craftsmen of all professions. Supervisors and work managers can participate in the competition if they have once worked in physical labor themselves. This is a great opportunity for all those who are temporarily out of work. A biography must have at least 600 pages, the size of a regular quarter of paper; the more

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[7] Znaniecki also wrote an autobiography, which was published anonymously in 1920 as an article "Intellectual America" in *The Atlantic Monthly*. He created this life record during a research program carried out with William I. Thomas for Carnegie Corporation. The theme of the research was the Americanization of various immigrant groups settled in the U.S. In this autobiography, Znaniecki expressed opinions about his own "Americanization," giving an example of a special category—"Amer-

icanization of intellectualists" (Dulczewski 1992:126-127). The results of this research were published in the book *Old World Traits Transplanted* (1921) signed with the names of Herbert A. Miller and Robert E. Park.

pages, the more likely the reward. Whoever cannot write, may dictate to someone else. Grammatical errors, incorrect style, poor penmanship do not interfere with getting the prize. You should not think that writing a story of your own life is very difficult. One of the best autobiographies worldwide was written by a Pole—a tramp, a bakery journeyman. The only thing is to describe honestly, truthfully, and in detail your whole life from childhood to the present. [a fragment of the competition appeal; Polish Sociological Institute in Poznan, 1921; Chałasiński (1931) 1979:68 (trans. AK)]

There have been cash prizes planned, and illiteracy of a diarist was not an obstacle to participate in the contest since people who did not know how to write were able to "dictate to someone else. Grammatical errors, incorrect style, poor penmanship do not interfere with getting the prize." There were also rules established to anonymize the participants. This first memoir competition addressed to the working class brought 149 autobiographies. Additionally, the organizers received 70 workers' life histories that were assessed as a material of low sociological value, which consisted of very short several-page resumes. The effects of the contest are two published biographies of workers—of Jakub Wojciechowski (1930), who was the winner of the competition, and of honorable mention Władysław Berkan (1923). Also, a monograph based on gathered materials was written by Znaniecki's student and collaborator, Józef Chałasiński (1931), *The Paths of Social Promotion of the Worker*.

The First Winner: Jakub Wojciechowski

The winner of the first autobiographical contest, Jakub Wojciechowski (1884-1958), was a son of landless illiterate workers from a very poor family. He attended school up to the age of 14, at the same time making a living as a shepherd or doing other works. At the age of 15, he immigrated for work to Germany and returned to Poland after 25 years of living abroad. When writing a memoir, he was an ordinary worker, 37 years old.

The Worker's Biography, edited by Józef Chałasiński and published in 1930, aroused the admiration of literary critics in Poland. The work was fine enough to impress famous Polish writer, poet, and critic, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, who was entranced with the memoir and became the promoter of its author, referring to Wojciechowski "a Polish classic in a worker's sweatshirt."[8] The publisher intentionally preserved the original wording used by the author, his peasant dialect "sounds" in the stream of words, in meticulous descriptions of the scenes, conversations, and interactions. On 443 pages of the manuscript, Wojciechowski depicted his life in detail, with dense reconstructions of events, contexts, interactional situations. The material is valuable in a historical, sociological, and biographical sense, giving deep insight into the life and experience of a country boy. Despite the distinct dialect language, the readers know for sure that they are dealing with an autobiography in its best form.[9]

The fate of the narrator was featured by randomness, dependence on external events, factors, and other people. Very often, the trajectory of his life hinged on somebody's arbitrary choice, which was evident in the scene of deciding whether to send Jakub to school. As a young boy, Jakub eagerly ex-

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[8] After winning the first prize, Jakub Wojciechowski was appointed a member of the Polish Academy of Literature, introduced to the representatives of the highest state authorities, and—due to his cordial promoter, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński—was included in intellectual circles.

[9] See also: Pietraszek 1985; Kwilecki 2011.

pected to attend classes. He visited the neighboring village to see what the school was like. He asked his mother many times when he would finally go to school, and she pointed out to him the successive events in the agricultural calendar: when a goat delivers her babies, when we bring the Easter basket to the church, when the storks arrive. And, when it was finally the time for Jakub to start education, his father brought a message from his employer, who was persuading Jakub's parents to not send the boy to school yet. "You know, Jagna, what Piasecki said, that we are not supposed to send our Jakub to school this year" (Wojciechowski [1930] 1971:39). Jakub began to cry, he even threatened his parents that he would run away from home. But, it did not help. His father argued that Jakub could look after his younger siblings, and due to that his mother would go to work for Mr. Piasecki and earn some money (30 pfennigs a day). At first, the mother did not agree with that. In her first instinctive reaction, "she started scolding father that we are such oxen that we must ask everyone to write us a letter. Is it supposed to be the same for our children, so that they would have to ask someone to write a letter on their behalf? Jakub will go to school and that will be the end" (Wojciechowski [1930] 1971:39). When the father informed his employer that he could not reach an agreement with his wife and that Jakub was about to go to school, Mr. Piasecki started to interfere and to visit them at home. "And after lunch, this employer came to my mother, confused my mother's head so much that my mother let herself be persuaded to do so. And he said that my mother could go to work in the afternoon and earn nine 'trojak' [Polish money] for a week, but if she would send me to school, she would have such a loss that my mother let herself be persuaded" (Wojciechowski [1930] 1971:39). Further peripeteia included the father's attempt to obtain a medical certificate from a

doctor that the child was unfit for school. The first doctor throws the father away, yelling at him that the child is healthy and should go to school. But, then Mr. Piasecki intervenes again. He talks to the doctor privately, perhaps bribing him, and finally, the doctor agrees to write out a false certificate of Jakub's inability to attend school.

This is just one example of the hundreds of mini-stories described by Wojciechowski in his dense and rich autobiography. What is striking here is that the child's fate and his opportunities were decided by a stranger, who felt entitled to interfere in decisions concerning the education of his subordinate's child. In this way, not only he had access to the energy of his employees, but their time, resources, and even the future of their relatives were also at his disposal. The mother was aware that their illiteracy condemns their family members to be perpetual "work oxen," to perform the hardest physical work, the inability to be socially promoted and independent in handling their affairs (always in need of asking others for help in reading and writing a letter).

> Let us imagine a farm worker who does not know how to read and write, who is attached to the manor, perhaps not so much legally, yet, in fact, through his illiteracy, burdened with a large family, the lack of entrepreneurship, and helplessness in life...Suppose, moreover, that such a laborer has such bearable conditions that he does not starve and may get drunk from time to time. How will his social consciousness develop? His most important feature will be a submissive attitude. [Chałasiński (1931) 1979:53 (trans. AK)]

The content of the memoir of Jakub Wojciechowski may be shocking to the present-day reader. One can see the everyday struggle of the poor to survive there, to get some food, to have a shelter, to secure

the very basic life needs in the situation of severe social inequality. Until 1900, the farmworkers were subject to corporal punishment.[10]

It is essential to observe that this memoir was written from the position of a person coming from a lower social class, whose promotion and social advance depended mainly on the possibility of participating in culture and the ability to use the written word (see: Freire and Macedo 2005). It was a person for whom the peasant world was a natural life world, and who created a peasant story. This life history was written from a particular position—necessarily different than created in memoirs of manor houses that reproduced the culture of higher social classes. Therefore, this was the exceptional record that enacted the voice of peasant society. And this voice could be heard due to the unique interest of Polish sociologists in the autobiographies of peasants and the working class. In this way, voices of the lower class were allowed to become part of "people's history" of Polish society.

The Memorializing Practices

If we go back in time, we would see that in Poland, but also other countries, only some part of society was literate, could read and write.[11] And for this rea-

son, illiterate parts of society were excluded from the memorializing activities. Creating memoirs was always a part of cultural practices that encouraged participants of a given *milieu* to preserve some objects or memories for future generations and to share stories. People who create these kinds of notes or transcripts must have access to the specific technology of "making such records," know how, and for what reason to perform it. In Poland, there exist extensive archives of memoirs created by the representatives of the nobility and clergy—the ones who had access to *know-how* and were able to record the traces of their lives, thoughts, and memories. The gentry wrote memoirs not challenged by anyone, out of their own need and under the prevailing custom. Having time, means, writing materials, and, above all, the skills acquired in the education process they received at home, they treated this form of narrative expression as a form of communication suitable for literate and educated people.

Today, we understand the memoir as "a literary work describing the author's fate and internal experiences, as well as the events in which he participated, witnessed, or heard about" (Cieński 1981:9 [trans. AK]). However, this genre is not evident. Even though the term *memoir* means notes taken from a certain perspective of time, many old Polish documentarians conducted diary reports regularly, describing what happened on a specific date, making memoirs a utilitarian, not literary form, and those serving reporting or information purposes (e.g., during missions, war campaigns, various types of ceremonies, or

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[10] "An industrial worker who has been insulted or hit has the right to quit his job immediately. Until 1900, a farmworker was still subject to corporal punishment by his employer. Only the new civil law abolishes this barbaric law, but even now, the [rural] worker who has been beaten has no right to quit his service immediately" (Marchlewski 1903:268).

[11] There were some exceptions, for instance, Iceland, where peasants were literate a few centuries back from now and thus could save their family histories. At the beginning of the 18th century, a large part of the Icelandic population could read, "and this had probably been more or less the case from the close of the twelfth century. Even at this early date…nearly all chieftains and better-off farmers could both read and write" (Tomasson 1975:67). Additionally, "in 1744, religious training was made mandatory for all youth, and…the pastors were ordered

to make regular visits to all homes in their parishes to ensure that this training was properly carried out. The legislation also contained a provision stating that illiterate parents, whenever they had the necessary means, must engage someone in their place to teach children to read." In effect, as the study of parish registers shows, in the period 1780-1790, near-universal literacy was achieved in Iceland (Tomasson 1975:68).

parliaments).[12] Also, travelers usually kept diaries, presenting what they saw and whom they met on a given day. Among the nobility, such notes commemorating the events considered by the author to be valid were popular and can be easily found.

It is interesting that in the old-time Polish language, till the mid-18th century, the "memoir" was understood as "a man who remembers a lot" (Cieński 1981:8 [trans. AK]). And, what made this term even more blurry, was some shift in its meaning in the age of Enlightenment that brought the idea of memoir as something material. A "memoir" was "a specific object that remembers an event…Then the 'memoir' begins to be semantically identified with the former word 'souvenir'—as 'a piece to commemorate an event or person'" (Cieński 1981:8 [trans. AK]). Thus, the Enlightenment memoir was a material thing: "a monument, a memorial tree, a building, a specific place in the area, finally, some pictures, some numismatic item, some trinket. This is something that needs to be embedded in a particular spatially specific place," or "a collection of material things" (Cieński 1981:10-11 [trans. AK]).[13] However, "according to the universal postulate of utility, the souvenir should be decorative, functional, and economical

in addition to its commemorative function. Such souvenirs were: magnate mansions, family parks and gardens (Sofiowka, Pulawy, Tulczyn, Powazki), galleries of family portraits" (Cieński 1981:11 [trans. AK]). One can easily see that accumulation of the capital allowed the noble and aristocracy, and even the bourgeoisie, to leave some permanent material traces of their lives and activities.

Whereas the genre of "memoir text," that is of our interest here, includes records that varied in formal terms: from autobiography, reminiscences, diary, memories, chronicles, through intimate journals, to epistolographic accounts (Cieński 1975:18). Letters or their entire collections constituted a separate category of texts containing the personal reference. But, even those fell into the category of "hybrid writings"—formally being a collection of correspondence written "with a clear, fully conscious purpose of making them a memory source for future generations" (Maliszewski 1928:viii [trans. AK]).[14]

A Polish literary scholar, Alojzy Sajkowski (1964), sees the primary aboriginal links of memoirs in rough records named "raptularze"[15] and "memoir books" (*księgi pamiętnicze*) written by the gentry for mostly

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[12] In his *Bibliography of Polish and Concerning Poland Memoirs* (1928), Edward Maliszewski mentions Janko of Czarnkow (ca. 1320-1387) as the first Polish diarist, a chronicler and diplomat in the service of Polish bishop and later Deputy Chancellor of the Crown and Archdeacon of Gniezno. In 1377-1386, Janko wrote a chronicle about the years 1370-1384, based on the events he witnessed.

[13] This conception originates from the philosophical views of the era of Enlightenment, which operated in the "antinomy between the shortness and ephemerality of the human's life and the desire to 'survive' longer than an individual life, to secure secular immortality by placing oneself permanently in the memory of the human species, which is immortal and everlasting" (Holbach as cited in Cieński 1981:10 [trans. AK]). To commemorate oneself, significant others, or relevant events, material objects were used with full confidence to their permanence as a part of the order of the physical world they represented.

[14] For example, *Letters from a Journey* by A. E. Odyniec or *Letters* by A. E. Koźmian (Maliszewski 1928:viii). Moreover, handwritten memoirs may intersect with numerous varieties of travel journalism, like: letter account, regular and irregular diary, memoir, or travel poem (Sajkowski 1964). Andrzej Cieński (1975:18) asserts that practically in every epoch, apart from "explicit" and "proper" memoirs, there were numerous hybrid texts, which, however, represent—recalling the term of Anna Robeson Burr (1909)—"an autobiographical intention," the essence of which is the individual's accountability to oneself and the world.

[15] The name "raptularz" came from Latin *rapere*, which means to seize, take, or snatch. In old Polish culture, it was a kind of a housekeeping book, in which events from the family life or gossips from the neighborhood, notes on social ceremonies and events, jokes, public affairs, anecdotes, expenditures, prices of commodities were randomly written down (Sajkowski 1964:33-34).

private and family use. In Polish culture, rich sources of such records from the 16th and 17th centuries arose and have been accumulated in libraries and private collections.[16] Especially the 17th century was a time of the lively development of memoirs. "This change was caused…by the rapid increase in the literacy of the gentry, which, starting from the second half of the 16th century, began massively gaining the education and, as a consequence, writing down memories of their lives" (Krzywy 2012 [trans. AK]).

In Poland, the tradition of writing diaries and memoirs was strong and widespread (Cieński 1981:35). How many of them have been created? In his comprehensive *Bibliography of Polish and Concerning Poland Memoirs*, Edward Maliszewski (1928:ix) lists 5,445 items (4,465 prints and 966 manuscripts plus some supplements) covering the period from 1370 to 1928. There is no doubt that those memoir archives were mainly the source of the collective self-knowledge of the nobility.[17]

The Silenced Parts of the Society

In contrast to the nobility, the peasantry has not left any material "souvenirs." All human energy of this social class fueled the survival, the maintenance of life. In 1900, peasants constituted almost 75% of the population of Poland (Łepkowski 1973:630). Despite their number, they were a non-privileged social class, whose rights were gradually taken away from them over centuries.

Although until the 10th century, free peasants made up the majority of the Polish population, during the 11th and 12th centuries, most of them lost their freedom and fell into feudal dependence. The ownership of the land they cultivated passed into the hands of the feudal lords, and therefore they were obliged to pay a feudal rent in labor, grain, and other products. Additionally, the peasants were burdened with tributes and services to the king or prince, and tithing to the church. Over the centuries, the peasants became increasingly poor and dependent on their lords (prince, church, nobles). Around the 14th and 15th centuries, their right to leave the land became restricted. Besides the right to migrate, peasants also lost the rights to own land and judicial recourse towards their feudal lords (Bardach, Leśnodorski, and Pietrzak 1987:98-99).

The burdensomeness of serfdom was unquestionable. Historians emphasize that the oppression resulted in numerous cases of escapes of peasants as a form of resistance (Śreniowski [1948] 1997:39; Rauszer 2020:59-60).[18] It is worth mentioning that many voices lamenting over the captivity of peas-

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[16] The most famous are the memoirs of Jan Chryzostom Pasek (1836) whose writings provide an excellent example of Polish Baroque prose (Rytel 1962).

[17] Maliszewski reported that he drew information on handwritten diaries mostly from the printed catalogs of larger Polish libraries. At that time the National Library already had a rich collection of memoirs consisting of three big complexes: old Rapperswil collections; extensive collections left by J. Kraszewski, purchased from the family of the writer, and manuscripts from the former Załuski Library, which have been regained from Russia, and temporarily stored in the University Library in Warsaw. Also, he examined the manuscript collections of the libraries of Krasiński, Przeździecki, Zamoyski, and the manuscript sections of several private collectors. Courtesy of Mr. Stanisław Piotr Koczorowski, he also provided a list of diaries from the collection of the Polish Library in Paris (Maliszewski 1928:ix). Those materials from the entire collection belonged to the nobility, were created by them, and stored in their libraries.

[18] Michał Rauszer (2020:45-49) listed various forms of peasant resistance resorted to daily in the course of serfdom slave labor: sabotaging work, laziness, pretending to be stupid, the spectacles of humility (bowing and taking off the hat in front of a lord in humble prostrations), stealing lord's property, poaching, working with faulty tools to justify wasting time on repairing broken equipment (not to work). Since open revolts constituted a suicide act for the peasant and flight was not always possible, the peasants used these forms of hidden implicit defiance in everyday life.

ants or terrible living conditions of the working class came from activists and political writers of the 18th century (Konopczyński 1966).[19] In his *Anatomy of the Republic of Poland*, Stefan Garczyński (1751) deplores Polish poverty and backwardness, stating that:

> The lord does not regret the resting of the tired hunting dogs, but he does regret it for the serf workers. Dirt, sloppiness reigns in the countryside, for who can desire a profit, savings, neatness, when even what he has collected, his master can always dispose of! 271 days of free serfdom, sometimes three people; when the peasant will go to church and how people are to respect holidays if it is not possible to go to the market on weekdays. [Konopczyński 1966:147 (trans. AK)][20]

Another political writer, Antoni Wiśniewski (1760-62), asked:

> Is it compatible with humanity that every particular lord of the manor should be the lord of human life and death? And the whole poor household of his subject? That the subject should have nothing of his own, nothing certain? To take everything from him and squeeze him out of tribute? To take from him almost all or most of the days of the week and of the year [making it impossible] to work for his children, and home, and food? That it would not be allowed to change the place and the lord in the greatest oppression and misfortune? So, in this respect, like a beast so a man could be of one condition? [Wiśniewski 1760:82-83 (trans. AK)]

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[19] Polish historian, Władysław Konopczyński, lists in this respect the political writings of Stefan Garczyński (1751), Antoni Wiśniewski (1760-62), Wincenty Skrzetuski (1773), Antoni Popławski (1774), Michał Karpowicz (1776-77), Józef Wybicki (1775), Andrzej Zamoyski (1778), and writers gathered around the *Monitor*—the magazine, published in 1765-1784. We should also add Stanisław Staszic (1790).

[20] Konopczyński paraphrases the original text of Garczyński (1751:128-129) written in old Polish.

Another shocking image of the peasantry of the times of serfdom was given by Stanisław Staszic (1970) in his *Warnings for Poland*. Based on an autopsy image, the overwhelming majority of Polish society is characterized by him as follows:

> Five parts of the Polish nation stand before my eyes. I see millions of creatures, some of which are half-naked, others are covered with leather or a sharp coat. They are all dry, weary, stubborn, blackened, eyes sunken deep in their head, with breathless breasts constantly going. Gloomy, infatuated, and stupid, they feel little and think little—this is their greatest happiness. You can hardly discern a rational soul in them. At the first sight, their superficial figures show more resemblance to animals than to humans. The peasant—the peasant has the name of the last disdain...This is the delight of that part of the people on whom the fate of your Republic is drawn! Here is the man who feeds you! This is the condition of a farmer in Poland! [Staszic 1790:454 (trans. AK)]

However, after so many regrets and testimonies about "the hopeless situation of the regular people, Garczyński recommends only one modest breach in the prevailing system: let the peasants have at least one day off from enlistment a week, so they can go to markets and stock up on the most essential things and spend Sundays in God's way" (Konopczyński 1966:150 [trans. AK]). All of the above-mentioned political writers who pointed to the plight of the peasant, the injustice of the serf system, emphasized the need for deep reforms, but their voice was either poorly heard or quickly suppressed by the nobility and clergy, who saw a threat to their rights and freedoms in improving the lives of peasants.

The Constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, given on July 22, 1807 by Napoleon Bonaparte, overthrew

the former inequality of status. By proclaiming the principle of equality before the law (Article 4), it abolished the submission of the peasants, granting them personal freedom. However, no decision was made on granting them any property rights, nor was serfdom abolished. It caused a more complicated situation for the peasantry, especially since the later decree of December 21, 1807 granted the lords of the manors full ownership of peasant farms and allowed them to remove peasants from the land.

Since 1795, Poland lost its independence and till 1918, the Polish territory was split between Germany, Austria, and Russia. Different laws regarding peasants prevailed in different zones of partition, thus the abolition of serfdom occurred gradually on the Polish territory and differed in those zones. Finally, serfdom was abolished in Prussia in 1807, in Austria in 1848, in Russia in 1861, and in the Congress Kingdom of Poland in 1864 (Bardach et al. 1987:389-394). But, the abolition of serfdom did not fundamentally change the plight of the peasants and did little to improve their situation. Many peasants could not meet the new demands. They became free day-laborers, fell into debts, and lived in ever greater poverty than before, being still dependent on their employers.

The peasants' lives were encapsulated in the cycle of birth and death, cultivation of the soil, working, eating, and falling asleep. They hardly left any records or permanent traces, especially the written ones, because the vast majority of the peasants were illiterate. They did not participate in any discourse of society. They remained silent, sharing their fate with the factory workers (Madejska 2018; Urbaniak-Kopeć 2018) and servants (Kuciel-Frydryszak 2018). The working class lived from hand to mouth, laboriously upholding their existence and focusing all their efforts on it. In this way, a huge part of society was practically voiceless in literary discourses.

There were very perceptive and sensitive poets and writers who were carefully watching the lower class life and describing their situation.[21] For instance, Władysław Reymont (1867-1925), a Polish novelist, the laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1924, wrote his best-known work titled *Chłopi* (*The Peasants* [1925]) on the base of his observations held in the village Lipce in Poland. In this award-winning four-volume novel, he illustrated the life of the peasant community, its customs, conflicts, normative rules, values, and conditions of life with ethnographic proficiency. Reymont provided a full, vivid picture of the Polish countryside gained from the position of *intimate familiarity*, but still, offering a picture of peasants observed and described by an intellectual, not by themselves.

Marceli Handelsman (1907a:47) points to a distorted view of the peasants in literary and historical works, which refer to a one-sided image of the peasantry created by the nobility on the base of the reports and accounts favorable to the lords. He gives an example of the *Biography of the Peasant*

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[21] Polish writers who wrote about the fate of peasants were: Bolesław Prus in the novella *Antek* (1880), or his novels *Anielka* (1885) and *Placówka* [*The Outpost*, 1885-86]; Henryk Sienkiewicz (1893) in short stories *Yanko the Musician* or *Za chlebem* [*For Bread*]; Eliza Orzeszkowa in the novel *Nad Niemnem* [*Over the Niemen*, 1888]. In the poem *Wolny najmita* [*The Free Day-Laborer*], Maria Konopnicka talks about the problem of mass poverty among peasants. She ironically refers to the enfranchisement decree issued by Russia in 1864, which released the peasant from serfdom and offered them freedom and even small pieces of land. But, at the same time, it threw them into deep poverty. Having no help from the state, a free leaseholder was unable to cope with taxes and debts. Their freedom was illusory. In her novella *Our Rip*, Konopnicka gave the voice of a narrator to a young boy from the lower class (*Four Novels* 1888).

written by Ignacy Lachnicki (1815),[22] a Polish noble-man, who, being kind to his peasant, sees him only "as a child, a newborn" who comes to the privileged old noble family, and who entrusts himself to its care. This family, in turn, sees its own interest in choosing the appropriate means of disciplining and upbringing him, to prepare him to accept such an outstanding gift of being a serf to his masters (Handelsman 1907a:47). Thus, peasants are presented as people without any own history, with no origin, without tradition, modeled by their masters like clay figurines.

Describing the life of peasants, Lachnicki (1815:21 [trans. AK]) pictures the utopian scenes of their effective work, which means that they do not need to be whipped anymore, "the reasons have ceased, the need for reprimanding and pressure has disappeared before the intention, the power of lashing and urging has fallen." Although he, himself, emphasizes that the presented idyllic scenes are exceptional, they still contribute to discursive practices of idealizing the situation of the peasantry. Even defending the interests of peasants, even declaring explicit support for their rights to liberation, the nobility continued to use a very superficial and stereotypical image of the peasant. In his book *O kmiotku polskim* [*About the Polish Yokel*], Andrzej E. Koźmian (1843:5 [trans. AK]) wrote:

> the time has come to work on liberating the Polish peasants; I believe everyone has to make this belief

spread more and more and take root. Thus, the purpose of this little writing which…could be called the physiology of the Polish peasant, is a reminder of what he was, what our peasant always is; a hint of what his hopes are in him, what his future is, and finally, to feel pity for his misery and his violated rights.

But, by doing so, he also expressed an honest will "to mention all those who once and now became the protectors, guardians, benefactors of the rural people" (Koźmian 1843:6 [trans. AK]). In his work, he reflects on the etymology of the word "kmieć" (*yokel*), considers the origins of the peasants by referring to their second names, claiming that the rural people are the oldest inhabitants and workers on Polish soil, so they constitute the true national element.

> He is always associated with [Polish soil], never looked for a foreign sun, never accepted anything from strangers to his soul. [Koźmian 1843:12 (trans. AK)]

> Our rural people are the most important national element: an undeveloped element, underdeveloped, stagnant in its progress, but not spoiled, self-born, full of life and firmness. [Koźmian 1843:13 (trans. AK)]

Koźmian searches for the true Polish origin in the peasants, but, at the same time, he diminishes them as an "underdeveloped" part of the society that is inhibited in development. Reading this, we are dealing with a paradoxical stylistic measure of idealizing the peasants, and, at the same time, with their infantilization by the author. He also attributes to peasants other qualities, such as high religiousness and an aesthetic sense, presenting them as beautiful, handsome, and righteous people. "Simplicity, openness, and cheerfulness char-

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[22] After the partitions of Poland, Lachnicki settled in Vilnius, where he voluntarily worked for the local community and implemented the ideas of the Enlightenment towards his peasants. He belonged to the Rascal Society (Towarzystwo Szubrawców), a moral association organized to resemble freemasonry, operating in Vilnius in the 19th century with the goal of equalizing the rights of all citizens, improving the situation of peasants, and combating superstition, obscurantism, and ignorance (Hordyński 1883:18; Winnicka 1972:96).

acterize the inhabitants of our land," he claims (Koźmian 1843:16). It seems that this is how the gentry would like to see their peasants. One may wonder, however, what is the relationship between this view and the real image of the peasants' lives? And, was an authentic peasants' voice able to break through this idyllic picture—at least as the softest whisper?

Publications about peasants were written for various purposes, among others, to prove the misconceptions about the torment of the peasantry or, as in the case of the publication *O chłopach* (*Of Peasants*) from 1847, to stimulate reformist tendencies among the nobility, to avoid retaliation by the peasants or impending socialism.

> This book was written in large part before sad Galician events[23]: what was once thought to be useful has now become indispensable. The holiest duty of decent citizens is to make every effort to order peasant relations: the imminent danger of socialism and communism cannot be reversed otherwise, the heavy debt of the past cannot be repaid in any other way. To grant righteous freedom so that they will not be tempted by lawlessness. This is to be a byword of these actions. [*Of Peasants* 1847:v-vi (trans. AK)]

Handelsman sees such a type of literature as a form of struggle for the self-interest of the nobility. "Always the interest of one's class, consciously

or unconsciously, becomes the starting point for understanding the present and drawing plans for the future" (Handelsman 1907a:48 [trans. AK]).

To sum up, there existed writings about peasants, but not in their voices—those were messages and contents standing for the interests, views, and voices of other social classes and states. The peasantry could not bear witness to their humiliation or dramatic life situation, and, as the lowest illiterate part of society, they remained muted. None of their voices from the 18th century prevailed, but that was about to change in the 19th century.

Gaining Literacy, Gaining the Voice

The first peasant memoir, known more widely in the Polish culture, was written by Kazimierz Deczyński at the end of 1837, long before Thomas and Znaniecki started working on *The Polish Peasant*. The voice of Deczyński was preserved and passed on to the descendants by Marceli Handelsman (Deczyński 1907), who edited a handwritten 30-page memoir deposited in the Polish Library in Paris, and enriched it with a historical overview (Handelsman 1907b), placing this autobiography in the context of particular events experienced by the memoirist (Handelsman 1907a). The whole thing was published in Polish under the title *Żywot chłopa polskiego na początku XIX wieku* [*The Life of a Polish Peasant at the Beginning of the 19th Century*]. Handelsman saw this memoir as a valuable source of knowledge on peasantry and peasants' relations with the nobility.

It would seem that here we deal with the instance of a meaningful breakthrough since a serf was able to enact his subjectivity by loudly expressing his complaint about peasants' fate. But, when we closely

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[23] The "sad Galician events" is a euphemistic expression that allows us to bypass and obscure the "Galician Slaughter," the real name of the events in Galicia in 1846, which consist of a peasant uprising against serfdom and manorial oppression. Galician peasants led by Jakub Szela attacked the Polish gentry in dozens of manors and brutally murdered their inhabitants. About 1000 noblemen were killed, and half a thousand manors were destroyed. Certainly, the uprising of the Galician peasants can be perceived as a dramatic event, a cry of despair, and, at the same time, as their retaliation for the centuries-old oppression.

look at this story, it turns out that both Deczyński's course of life and the matter of writing his memoir or prospective publication illustrate rather explicit attempts to suppress his desire to write and to take his voice away—which, in fact, happened. During his lifetime, Deczyński did not publish his memoir,[24] and its translation into French was intercepted by representatives of the nobility on charges of libeling Polish countrymen.

And, again, when we take a closer look at the biography of the author, it turns out that, at the moment of creating it, he was not a serf peasant, but a descendant of such a peasant, who, from childhood, watched the scenes of the humiliation of his parents by the local nobility and officials.

> In fulfilling my duties [as the parish school teacher], I always watched as the Lord, the lessee, oppressed and raped the peasants of this village, among whom were also my parents and their numerous families. This indecent treatment of peasants made my heart even more envenomed and infused with hatred towards the tenants. I have never forgotten how, when I was still a little boy with my father, I often saw him hiding in a barn among sheaves of grain or somewhere under a thatched roof in a stable, cowshed, and often escaping into the forest when granger, steward, treasury, shooter, and court servants came to my father's house to take him to the court of the great Lord; and not being able to find my father when he hid well or ran away into the forest, they poke, push, beat, even with a whip or a stick on the back, reproach my crying moth-

er with the most hideous words to make her tell where her husband was.

> I could never forget it; how, often returning from the court from the Lord, I saw my father having his long hair torn out from his head, black eyes, not counting kulaks in the sides, with a fist or a leg, taken. [Deczyński 1907:54-55 (trans. AK)]

How did it happen that he was able to describe such scenes? First, of course, because he could write. His parents sent him to an elementary school in the local parish as a six-year-old boy, and when the school fell into decline, they sent him to another school. And when the father no longer had money to pay for the school, he continued looking for ways to provide him with an opportunity to become educated. He arranged a practice for his son with a friendly pastor so that he would not forget what he had learned thus far. Kazimierz was hired to write church records and register files. Finally, due to his father's efforts, Kazimierz gained the position of a teacher at the local school in Brodnia.

The second thing was the role of the father who appreciated the value of being literate and stimulated his son's development as much as he could. The third was the father's resistance observed by his son—the resistance that drowned in the stream of "unbearable sorrows and rapes." The father, himself, was a peasant aware of his rights and the fact of their breaking by the lords. He lamented the fate of his son, expressing regret that he could not provide him with a better future. "You see, my son, how hard we work, but this work is not hard for me. Above all my hardships, the most unbearable for me are the oppressions and rapes caused by our masters" (Deczyński 1907:52-53 [trans. AK]). Therefore, here we have the father who talks

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[24] After divesting him of the French translation of the manuscript and a ban on publishing it in France, Deczyński returned to editing its original Polish version, but he lacked strength and resources and failed at publishing it (Handelsman 1907a:44). He died in France on December 28, 1838, at the age of 38.

to his son, who names the state of his oppression and indicates the guilty ones. For Kazimierz, his father is not only a role model, a great significant figure, but also someone who sets a clear direction of development and pushes Kazimierz to the educational path, guessing that this is the only way for his son to be promoted: "So that you do not become a victim of such unbearable unpleasantness and rapes, and handicaps, like me, I wish you, my son, a different state of life" (Deczyński 1907:52 [trans. AK]).

Shocking observations of the everyday life of peasants left a permanent mark on Kazimierz. His later attempts to assert the rights of peasants resulted in divesting him of a teaching position and sending him "as a punishment" to the front. This circumstance made him a soldier and later an immigrant in France, bringing the experience of detachment from his *milieu*. From this distant position, he could begin to write down his reflections on the life of Polish peasants. But, here begins another scene of the theater of silencing voices about the living conditions of Polish peasants. Already while writing his memoir, Deczyński encountered ostracism, accusations, and threats. The local committee forbade him from publishing the manuscript. For the nobility, the description of the actual behavior of the lords towards the peasants was treated as an insult, they did not see reasons for any accusations. The cause was

> [t]he views of the then emigration on the inviolability of the past, the view that forbade any criticism, especially touching the peasants' issue. It was enough for Deczyński to describe the real life of Polish peasants to be ostracized, and his work to be regarded as a work in which the author-scolder "slanders" even on his homeland. This was the fundamental tone in

emigration. Under these conditions, Deczyński could not expect a fair, impartial judgment over himself, he could not receive a judgment consistent with the principles of elementary justice. And because of that judgment, Deczyński's memoir was not published. [Handelsman 1907a:46-47 (trans. AK)]

Perhaps precisely because Deczyński was not a typical serf, since he went beyond the framework of his state and social position—as a teacher, as a soldier, as an emigrant—he could speak and his voice could ultimately be heard.

A few years before the publication of Deczyński's memoir, another work, *Dwie dusze* [*Two Souls*] by Jakub Bojko (1904), was issued in print. A folk writer, Jakub Bojko, became a teacher due to self-education. He taught children while working on his farm. He wrote poems and short stories successfully published in magazines. In his book, Bojko attempts to deal with serfdom as a state of mind that still inhabits the souls of peasants after liberation in 1848.

> I can swear to it that in us, peasants, there atones, apart from our little soul, another one. And although it is the Jewish Talmud that writes that only a Jew, and only for the Sabbath, gets a second soul, I cry out boldly, let them do whatever they want to me, that the peasants, apart from their own, have a second soul!...The soul of a very old, ugly lady, who died in 1848 and was called serfdom, resides in us. This lady held our whole boorish tribe in captivity for over 400 years and killed a human in a peasant, and she simply made [him] trash, a machine with which it was possible to do whatever this lady wanted. And if, God forbid, this peasant would slightly oppose something, this lady had a way of knocking it out of his head, his children,

and grandchildren for a hundred years. [Bojko 1904:2 (trans. AK)]

This horror of serfdom got into the blood of the people so much that to this day it is reflected in a glaring way, not only on the regular people, but even on those of his sons who even, due to schools, took high positions. The spirit of serfdom, the spirit of a slave, is in all of us, and whoever does not believe should read on. [Bojko 1904:4 (trans. AK)]

Based on his careful observations and reflections, he shares personal stories that describe the clash of sequacious and civic attitudes among the liberated peasants (Bojko 1904:9-10; see also: Jakubczak 1968:108). In this way, Bojko touches on the problem of collective trauma of slavery caused by serfdom.

And what when you join, for example, a higher official, secular or clergyman. Your soul escapes down to your heels, and the other one, serfdom, makes you a calf, a snowman, who then bends at the waist like a slave, and not only that he will not do anything good for himself, but sometimes the matter of his own brothers—he will sell it for free… [Bojko 1904:7 (trans. AK)]

It turns out that serfdom has left permanent scars, remaining a collective trauma that affects not only the consecutive generations of those who lived in the humiliation of slavery, but also those several generations after them. That is trauma recorded in the body, in thoughts, in attitudes, in the limitation of horizons. Interestingly, Bojko directs his voice to his peasant brothers—they are the addressees of his message.

You, peasant, you became a teacher! For the whole cottage with the chimney, you have risen above your peers who envy you this knowledge and think that

you are wiser, it is not only for yourself that the peasant issue will have one more defender, and you, together with other peasant sons, you will not forget about the fate of those from whom you have strayed. [Bojko 1904:8-9 (trans. AK)]

He appeals to the collective solidarity of peasants, especially those who have achieved social advancement. Pointing to the goal of social transformation of own social class, he employs the term "citizenship" with the idea of making peasants "citizens worthy of the name," "to get rid of the slave spirit as soon as possible" (Bojko 1904:10 [trans. AK]). At the same time, he shows the way of escaping from low self-esteem and the serfdom trauma—it is self-education, reading books and magazines,[25] developing civic attitudes, raising interest in what is happening in the country.

This was the first such incisive and brilliantly written self-analysis that involved reflections on the entire state of the peasants based on their own observations and self-observations. It represented something more than just a complaint or wail. Autobiographies and memoirs were certainly a form of complaint, but, at the same time, the way of enacting their voice. As Katherine Lebow (2014:13) points out:

[the] social memoir has much in common with what, in other contexts, we would call witnessing or testimony, and was embedded in cultural assumptions about truth-telling and the rights and obligations of citizenship. While critics of the social memoir genre complained that it was too full of complaints, mem-

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[25] "[B]y the way—he writes—I will say that this slave-serf soul is not afraid of either holy water or the cross, but the most it is afraid of books and newspapers" (Bojko 1904:12 [trans. AK]).

oirists presented their ability to complain as evidence of their subjecthood: I complain, therefore, I am.

Certainly, there were many status differences among the peasants themselves (Grabski 1938:51). A careful listener to their stories and voices would probably hear many miscellaneous ones. However, to represent all those diverse social groups, various stories, and voices should be heard. But, in the world where peasants' accounts are silenced or distorted, where their voices are muted in the discourse, this general silence equalizes them, and we tend to see them as uniformly suffering under the pillory of serfdom. The problem with generating knowledge about Polish peasants was to let them speak and express themselves. This could have been done if they would only achieve enough literacy to create such accounts, and someone will be ready to hear their voices[26] in all their diversity. That is what the subsequent memoir contests made possible.

Polish Memoirism and Its Institutionalization

The history of memoirs competitions in Poland did not finish with the first success and the instances of autobiographies of Jakub Wojciechowski (1930) and Władysław Berkan (1923). Their life stories gave way to forthcoming studies and the gathering of more and more autobiographical data by sociol-

ogists. Since then, a systematic collection of large-scale autobiographical materials began.

In 1929, on the occasion of the Universal National Exhibition summarizing ten years of Polish State independence after World War I, Znaniecki announced another contest to gather autobiographies of the inhabitants of Poznan, which became the basis for his excellent book *The City in Views of Its Inhabitants* (1931). With this work, Znaniecki put a cornerstone for the development of urban studies in Poland (Dulczewski 1992:160). Following the view adopted by the Chicago Ecological School, he treated the city not as a spatial entity, but, according to the principle of the *humanistic coefficient*, as a "non-spatial humanistic whole that is realized in experiences and activities of people" (Sitek 2002:370 [trans. AK]). The method introduced by Znaniecki to investigate city issues by studying how these problems are reflected in the consciousness of its inhabitants was an innovative research approach. Using public competitions "became a habit for the new generation of Polish sociologists who utilized this method in many cities in Poland after World War II" (Dulczewski 1992:160).

Znaniecki raised students who took over his ways of asking research questions and collecting data.[27] Each of them had the ambition to gather and use autobiographical materials in their studies and participated in the development of the biographical method. In the interwar period, a total of 18 public memoir competitions were organized, almost all by scientific institutions (see: Tab. 1).

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[26] Stanisław Pigoń (1885-1968) was such an explorer of the work of self-born peasant writers and an expert on the culture of the Polish countryside. He, himself, came from a rural family and with great effort, against all odds, obtained his higher education. To listen to the voice of the handicapped, together with the ethical and educational club "Eleusis," he collected before the First World War several dozen biographies of emigrant workers—with the help of a special questionnaire. He was also the editor of a thematic volume of the magazine *Eleusis*, filled with workers' autobiographies. The materials were rashly burnt after the outbreak of World War II (Jakubczak 1966:6).

[27] The disciples of Znaniecki were: Józef Chałasiński, Tadeusz Szczurkiewicz, Jan Szczepański, Stanisław Kowalski, Władysław Okiński, Jerzy Piotrowski, Wanda Stróżyków-na-Mrozek, Zygmunt Dulczewski, Franciszek Mirek, and Walerian Adamski. Also Theodore Abel and Stanisław Andreski were under the influence of Znaniecki.

Anna Kacperczyk

Table 1. The list of Polish memoir competitions in the interwar period.

No.	Year	Title	Organizer	No. of gathered records
1	1921	Konkurs na życiorys własny robotnika [Competition for an Autobiography of a Physical Worker]	Instytut Socjologiczny w Poznaniu [Institute of Sociology in Poznan] (Florian Znaniecki)	149
2	1921	Konkurs na pamiętnik pracy wyborczej [Competition for a Diary Concerning Election Work]	Instytut Socjologiczny w Poznaniu [Institute of Sociology in Poznan] (Ludwika Dobrzyńska-Rybicka)	?
3	1930	Konkurs "Czym było i jest dla Ciebie Miasto Poznań?" [Competition "What Poznan was and is for you?"]	Instytut Socjologiczny w Poznaniu [Institute of Sociology in Poznan] (Ludwik M. Landau, Florian Znaniecki)	27
4	1931	Konkurs na pamiętniki bezrobotnych [Competition for Memoirs of the Unemployed]	Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego [Institute of Social Economy] (Ludwik Krzywicki)	774
5	1933	Konkurs na pamiętniki chłopów [Competition for Memoirs of Peasants]	Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego [Institute of Social Economy] (Irena Kosmowska)	498
6	1934	Konkurs na opis gospodarowania w gospodarstwach karłowatych [Competition for the Description of Farming on Small Farms]	Państwowy Instytut Naukowy Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego w Puławach [The National Research Institute of Rural Farming in Pulawy]	?
7	1935	Konkurs na życiorysy wiejskich działaczy społecznych [Competition for Biographies of Rural Community Activists]	Instytut Socjologii Wsi SGGW [Institute of Rural Sociology, Warsaw University of Life Sciences] (Władysław Grabski)	404
8	1935	Ankieta o kulturze proletariatu i samokształceniu [Questionnaire on Proletarian Culture and Self-Education]	Szkoła Nauk Społecznych TUR w Krakowie [TUR School of Social Sciences in Cracow]	104
9	1936	Konkurs na opis życia, prac, przemyśleń i dążeń młodzieży wiejskiej [Competition for Description of Life, Work, Reflections, and Aspirations of the Rural Youth]	Państwowy Instytut Kultury Wsi [State Institute of Rural Culture] and Journal *Przysposobienie Rolnicze* [*Farmer Education*] (Józef Chałasiński)	1544
10	1936	Konkurs na pamiętniki emigrantów [Competition for Memoirs of Polish Emigrants (in France, US, Canada, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay)]	Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego [Institute of Social Economy] (Ludwik Krzywicki)	212
11	1937	Konkurs na pamiętniki lekarzy [Competition for Memoirs of Physicians]	Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych w Warszawie [Social Insurance Company in Warsaw]	51
12	1937	Konkurs na pamiętniki rolnika działacza samorządowego [Competition for Memoirs of Local Government Activist Farmers]	Instytut Pracy Samorządu Terytorialnego [Local Government's Institute of Labor]	?

13	1937	Konkurs na życiorysy bezrobotnych [Competition for Autobiographies of the Unemployed]	Polski Instytut Socjologiczny w Poznaniu [Polish Sociological Institute in Poznan]	605
14	1937	Wychowankowie szkół rolniczych o swej pracy, życiu i dążeniach [Agricultural School Students about Their Work, Life, and Aspirations]	(Stanisław Łukaszewicz)	?
15	1937	Życiorysy Ślązaków [Autobiographies of Silesians]	Polski Instytut Socjologiczny w Poznaniu [Polish Sociological Institute in Poznan] (Jan Szczepański)	206
16	1937	Konkurs na życiorysy wychowanków Uniwersytetów Ludowych [Competition for Autobiographies of the Alumni of Folk Universities]	Państwowy Instytut Kultury Wsi [State Institute of Rural Culture]	?
17	1937	Konkurs na najlepszą autobiografię młodzieńca żydowskiego [Competition for the Best Autobiography of a Young Jewish Man]	Żydowski Instytut Naukowy [Jewish Scientific Institute]	303[*]
18	1938	Konkurs na życiorysy nauczycieli [Competition for the Autobiographies of Teachers]	Instytut Pedagogiczny ZNP w Warszawie [Pedagogical Institute of the Polish Teachers Union in Warsaw]	?

[*] In this competition, a total of 17,000 pages was obtained. Besides memoirs, it included over 20 diaries, letters, literary works, photographs, and drawings. Participants sent it from nine countries and over 150 cities (Jakubczak 1966:12).

Source: Own compilation based on Jakubczak 1966.

From 1931, the Institute of Social Economy [Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego] systematically organized competitions for memoirs of workers and peasants. The biggest success was the competition organized by Józef Chałasiński with the journal *Przysposobienie Rolnicze* [*Farmer Education*] in 1936. The topic of this competition was: "Description of my life, works, reflections, and aspirations." The organizers received 1544 autobiographical descriptions from young rural activists. Based on these data, Józef Chałasiński wrote his fundamental four-volume work: *The Young Generation of Peasants* ([1938] 1984). This made Polish interwar sociology an incredible "generator" of such kinds of data, and the unusual phenomenon in this respect on a global scale.

The largest post-war work continuing the endeavor of Thomas and Znaniecki, as well as *The Young Generation of Peasants* by Józef Chałasiński was *The Young Generation of the Villages of People's Poland* (1964-1980)—an eight-volume work containing rich autobiographical materials. The study includes methodological input by Józef Chałasiński and his collaborators: Eugenia Jagiełło-Łysiowa, Bronisław Gołębiowski, Franciszek Jakubczak, Zdzisław Grzelak, Wiesław Myśliwski, Piotr Banaczowski, and Dyzma Gałaj. These elaborations showed the third generation of peasants, the image of a Polish village, and its contribution to national culture.

Table 2. The list of Polish memoir competitions in the post-war period (1946-1950).

No.	Year	Title	Organizer	No. of gathered records
1	1946	Konkurs na pamiętnik robotnika z czasów okupacji [Competition for a Worker's Memoir from the Occupation Time]	Centralna Komisja Związków Zawodowych [The Central Commission of Trade Unions] and newspaper *Ekspres Ilustrowany* [*Express Illustrated*]	116
2	1946	Konkurs na opis przeżyć, przemyśleń i spostrzeżeń młodzieży wiejskiej w czasie pobytu poza Polską oraz po powrocie do kraju [Competition for the Description of Experiences, Thoughts, and Insights of the Rural Youth During Their Stay Outside of Poland and After Returning to the Country]	Polski Instytut Służby Społecznej w Łodzi [Polish Institute of Social Services in Lodz] (an announcement in the form of a leaflet)	14
3	1946	Pamiętniki lub wypowiedzi dotyczące okupacji niemieckiej [Memoirs or Accounts about the German Occupation]	Instytut Zachodni w Poznaniu [West Institute in Poznan] and Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk [Poznan Society of Friends of Sciences]	?
4	1946	Przeżycia dzieci żydowskich z okresu okupacji niemieckiej [Experiences of Jewish Children during the German Occupation]	Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Łodzi [Central Jewish Historical Commission in Lodz]	?
5	1946	Wspomnienia młodzieży wielkopolskiej z lat okupacji [Memoirs of the Greater Poland Youth from the German Occupation of 1939-1945]	Instytut Zachodni [West Institute] (K. Strzałkowski)	?
6	1946	"Warszawa moich wspomnień" – konkurs literacko-historyczny ["Warsaw in My Memories"—Literary and Historical Competition]	Redakcja gazety *Stolica* [Editorial office of the *Capital City* newspaper]	102
7	1947	Konkurs "Wspomnienia z Powstania Warszawskiego" [Competition "Memories of the Warsaw Uprising" (children under the age of 16)]	Czasopisma *Przyjaciel dzieci, Robotnik* [Magazines *Children's Friend* and *The Worker*]	126
8	1947	"Moje najdawniejsze wspomnienia o Warszawie" ["My Oldest Memories of Warsaw"]	Czasopismo *Wieczór* [Magazine *Evening*]	?
9	1947	Konkurs na opis udziału w walce z Niemcami w latach 1939-1945 [Competition for the Description of the Participation in the Fight against Germany in 1939-1945]	Zakład Historii i Socjologii Wsi Uniwersytetu Poznańskiego [Department of Rural History and Sociology of the University of Poznan]; appeal in *Nowe Wyzwolenie* [*New Liberation*]	?

10	1947	Ankieta "Niemiecki obóz koncentracyjny jako szkoła słowiańskich charakterów" [Survey on Source Materials for the Monograph "German Concentration Camp as a School of Slavic Characters"]	*Tygodnik Powszechny* [*Weekly Common*]	?
11	1947	Konkurs "Do jakiego zawodu chciałbym się przygotowywać i dlaczego?" [Competition Addressed to Rural Youth: "What Profession Would I Like to Prepare for and Why?"]	Editorial Board of magazine *Wici*; Zakład Socjologii Szkoły Głównej Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego [Department of Sociology of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences] Instytut Kultury Wsi przy WSGW w Łodzi [Institute of Rural Culture at the University of Life Sciences in Lodz]	252
12	1947	Konkurs "Moja droga do szkoły rolniczej i ze szkoły rolniczej do wsi" [Competition "My Path to Agricultural School and from Agricultural School to the Village"]	Editorial Board of magazine *Wieś* [*Village*]	?
13	1947	Konkurs na życiorys górnika [Competition for the Biography of a Miner]	Centralny Ośrodek Kulturalno-Oświatowy CRZZ w Sosnowcu [Central Cultural and Educational Center at the CRZZ in Sosnowiec] and magazine *Górnik* [*The Miner*]	115
14	1947	Konkurs "Charakterystyka mojego środowiska akademickiego" [Competition "Characteristics of My Academic Environment"]	Editorial Board of *Przegląd Akademicki* [*Academic Review*] (an announcement in the form of a poster)	?
15	1947	Wielki konkurs studencki "Moja droga do wyższej uczelni" [Great Student Competition "My Way to the University"]	Tygodnik *Po Prostu* [Weekly *Just Because*]	?
16	1947	Konkurs na pamiętniki o wyścigu pracy, działalności na wsi oraz w szkole i na uczelni [Competition for Memoirs about the Race for Work, Activities in the Countryside and at the University]	Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej [Rural Youth Union] and magazine *Walka Młodych* [*The Youth Fight*]	?
17	1947	Konkurs "Warszawa moich wspomnień" [Competition "Warsaw in My Memories"]	Magazine *Stolica* [*Capital City*]	102
18	1947	Konkurs na pamiętniki Łodzianina [Competition for Memoirs of the Inhabitants of Lodz]	Instytut Socjologii UŁ [Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz] and *Przegląd Socjologiczny* [*Sociological Review*] (Józef Chałasiński, Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, Helena Radlińska, Jan Szczepański)	18

| 19	1947	Pamiętnik Warszawiaka [Diary of the Inhabitant of Warsaw (memories of the period since the outbreak of the war of 1939)]	Instytut Badań Warszawy Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego [Institute of Warsaw Research at the University of Warsaw]	?
20	1948	Konkurs na wspomnienia walk partyzanckich na wsi [Competition for Memoirs of Partisan Fights in the Countryside]	*Dziennik Ludowy* [*People's Journal*]	?
21	1948	"Skończyła się wojna" ["The War Is Over"—memories of reconstruction, the fight against looting and corruption, and settlement in the Western Territories]	*Robotnik* [*The Worker*]	?
22	1948	Konkurs na pamiętniki i wspomnienia żołnierskie [Competition for Memoirs and Memories of Soldiers (concerning fighting in Spain, the September campaign, occupation, troops in the west, and the achievements of the Polish People's Army)]	Dom Wojska Polskiego [House of the Polish Army] competition appeal in *Odrodzenie* [*Rebirth*]	?
23	1950	"Moja wieś wczoraj i dziś" ["My Village Yesterday and Today"]	Magazine *Rolnik Polski* [*Polish Farmer*] and publishing house Czytelnik	1500*

* The material consisted of 50,000 pages of technically compiled and organized accounts relating to the transformations of the Polish countryside in the first five years of the people's power (Jakubczak 1966:17).

Source: Own compilation based on Jakubczak 1966.

Looking at the list of post-war competitions (see: Tab. 2 and Chart 1), one can notice the impressive number of them (in 1947 alone there were 13 announcements) and, at the same time, a huge variety of their topics. It is striking that with time more and more institutions were joining the memoirism practices, creating a peculiar social movement. Social researchers started to cooperate with newspapers and magazines, where the contests' announcements were published, as well as the results of the competitions. The announcements of jury verdicts were often followed by the publication of the winners' autobiographies.

The announcements of memoir contests and sharing life records in publications have become extremely popular.[28] The social memoirism movement was gathering more and more momentum. Thousands of people responded to the contests' calls and offered their life records. Franciszek Jakubczak counted that during the period 1921-

[28] The memoirs were systematically published by the Polish institutions: Institute of Social Economy [Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego], the Polish Sociological Institute [Polski Instytut Socjologiczny], the Institute of Rural Sociology of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences [Instytut Socjologii Wsi Szkoły Głównej Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego], and the National Institute of Rural Culture [Państwowy Instytut Kultury Wsi] (Kraśko 1996:67).

Chart 1. Number of Polish memoir competitions in the post-war period (1946-1966).
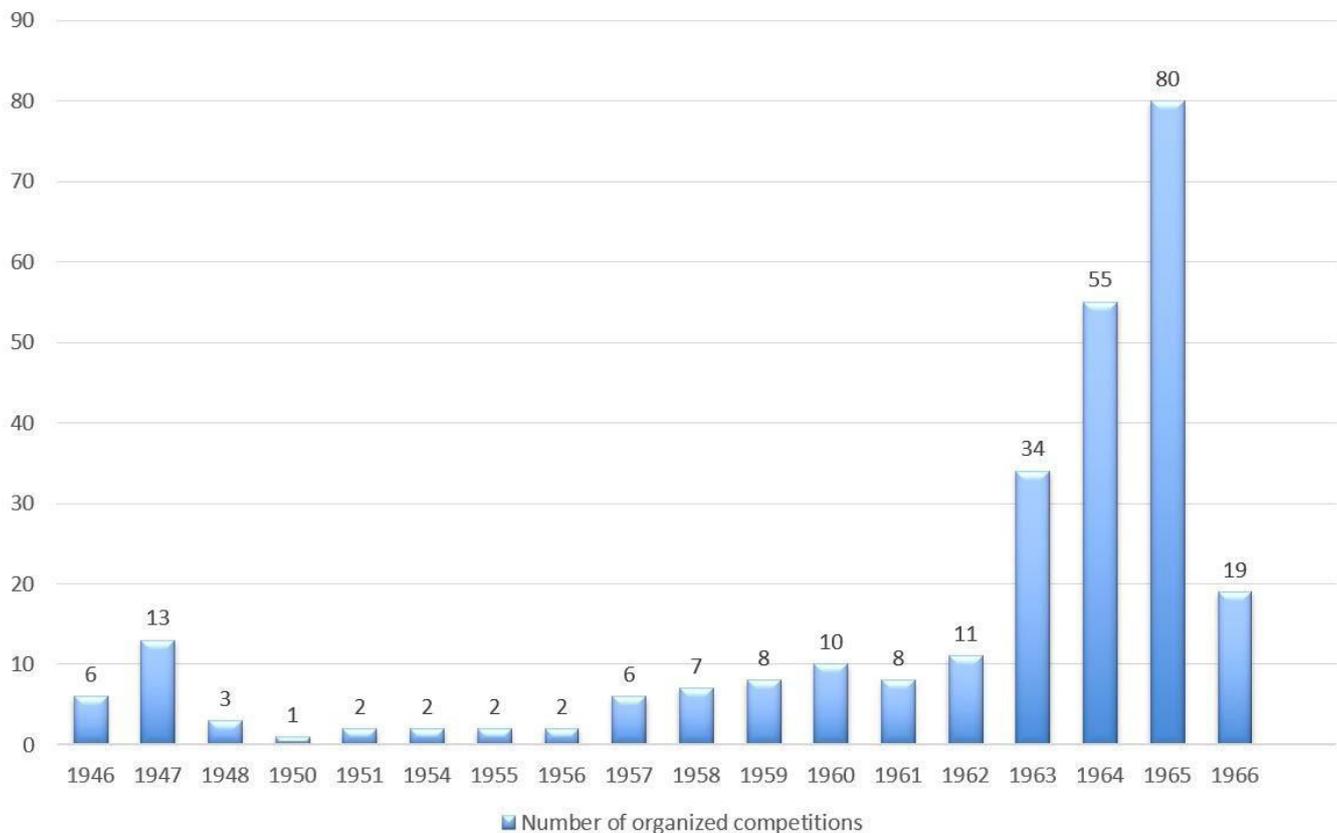
Source: Own study based on Jakubczak 1966.

1966 in Poland, 307 memoir competitions were organized, wherein 280 of them—in the Polish People's Republic. The estimated number of participants of these competitions reached 200,000 authors, and the summarized productivity of this autobiographical work was approximately 2 million pages of typescript.

Certainly, the application of the autobiographical method contributed to the development of Polish sociology and became its characteristic feature, adding to the knowledge about the condition of Polish society, especially about the life and situation of the underprivileged (Znaniecki [1923] 1976; Chałasiński 1971; 1972; 1974; 1982; Kwilecki 2011:327).

At the end of the 1960s, two outstanding scholars from the Polish Academy of Sciences, Jan Szczepański and Józef Chałasiński, came up with the idea of creating an institution intended to collect manifestations of human consciousness in the form of memoirs and other written records. Their idea was to continue the work initiated by Florian Znaniecki and William Thomas by gathering rich information on Polish society, based on life records and personal accounts. The Society of Friends

of Memoirism [Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Pamiętnikarstwa], formally established in 1969, was the first institution in Poland to collect oral histories and traces of everyday life of ordinary people. From 1971, the society started to publish the quarterly *Polish Memoirism*, edited by Franciszek Jakubczak, with the mission:

> To create a vital center of the scientific and cultural-civic movement, uniting scholars, authors, activists, and peasant workers, and diarists, and to provide it with lasting and effective fostering—this is the most general goal that the editorial office intends to implement with the best efforts and cooperation of all of the kind people. [*Polish Memoirism* 1971 1(1):2 (trans. AK)]

In 1976, Jan Szczepański (1976:38 [trans. AK]) concluded: "Never before, and in any country, has so much material been collected as in the Polish People's Republic. Tens of thousands of diaries, autobiographies, memories, et cetera were collected in hundreds of competitions. They gave huge resources of information about the changes in Polish society."

At the same time, one may observe the gradual separation of memoir competitions from the background of scientific institutes and the more vivid capturing of this idea by weekly magazines or newspapers. Over time, the editorial staff of magazines took over the organization of memoir competitions, making the gathered materials interesting content published on their pages, thus strengthening ties with their readers. However, scientific institutions were gradually losing interest in them.

It should be added that the memoirs easily fell prey to the propaganda machine of the commu-

nist people's state. Especially in their mass, they could become both: a form of symbolic violence against memoirists—suggesting to the authors what to write about and how to present their lives to be accepted, and to the recipients of this literary form, for whom the narratives became a model of experiencing socialist life. Hanna Palska points out that in the 1940s and 1950s, Polish memoirs were strongly entangled in ideology since the biography was supposed to be a political instrument. The propaganda machine of the socialist people's state treated the autobiographies extremely instrumentally. Each autobiography—journalistic, literary, or obtained through competitions—was a tool to serve the system. "It was an era in which the process of the political unification of 'competition autobiographies' [and] of using autobiography for political purposes…reached its apogee" (Palska 1997:13 [trans. AK], see also: Czyżewski 1992).

Additionally, intense development of quantitative sociology, survey research, and the advancements in statistical analyses, which began to dominate Polish sociology from the 1960s, pushed memoirist practices to the margin of interest. Both the autobiographical approach, as well as a peculiar method of gathering personal documents through the public contests began to be marginalized under the pressure of new research methods. Qualitative sociology, understood as a general orientation in social investigations, "a qualitative way of thinking about the human experience," which allows reaching the subjective meanings of individuals (Konecki 2017:144), was reborn in Poland only in the 1990s. This does not mean that Polish sociologists have given up on biographical research[29] or ceased us-

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[29] On the contrary, the biographical method developed dynamically, although recently it primarily relates to data obtained in the presence of the researcher, like autobiographical

ing such excellent materials as autobiographies. Contests for diaries have not been abandoned,[30] although as a research practice, they have clearly lost momentum, and the scale of this phenomenon has significantly decreased. Polish researchers still use the archival materials, obtained as a result of competitions, to analyze and re-analyze the preserved narratives.[31]

Many of the memoirs obtained in the competitions were lost or damaged during the war. Some of the archival materials went to the Society of Friends of Memoirism. However, in the 1990s, during the political transformation, many of them were destroyed or discarded. A small part of the saved materials went to the Archives of New Files [Archiwum Akt Nowych] (Posłuszny and Kubicki 2019:97). The rest were protected by the KARTA Center Archive, an independent non-governmental organization keeping the largest social archive of the 20th century in Poland.[32]

narrative interviews or life stories evoked during biographical interviews. See: Rokuszewska-Pawełek (2002); Kaźmierska (2012).

[30] For example, at the turn of the century, the Institute of Social Economy announced another edition of the competition for the memoirs of the unemployed, for which 1,635 life records were submitted (Posłuszny and Kubicki 2019:99). It is also worth mentioning the research of Wojciech Doliński (2012), who carried out a study on the identification of members of Polish society with the European Union using memoirs obtained through competition. Even now, during the epidemiological lock-down of 2020, the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw, and the Institute of Polish Culture of the University of Warsaw announced a competition for diaries from the time of the coronavirus pandemic (see: https://edupolis.pl/pamietniki-pandemii-konkurs/).

[31] See: Grabski 1936; Gołębiowski and Grzelak 1971; Gołębiowski 1977; Szarota 1978; Budzyński 1993; 1997; 2003; Palska 1997; 1998; Sułek 2007; Pawłowska 2015; Praczyk 2018; Rura 2019.

[32] KARTA outlined its mission: "We discover, protect, and popularize history from the perspective of the individual" (The KARTA Center Archive, see: https://karta.org.pl/22 [trans. AK]). See also: Gluza 2012; Łuba 2019.

Discussion

In this article, I put forward a thesis about the great role of Thomas and Znaniecki in triggering the phenomenon of regaining collective memory of the life experiences and thoughts of lower social classes. The influence of the ideas contained in *The Polish Peasant* on the development of Polish social memoirism seems to be obvious.[33] The research practice of mass gathering of autobiographies and other life records started to develop rapidly after Znaniecki's return to Poland in 1920. The success of this enterprise was related not only to the impact of the monumental work of two scholars and the aura that surrounded its creators, but, above all, to the institutional activities taken by Znaniecki after his return to his homeland. Although, of course, his actions had to fit the fertile socio-cultural ground and people who were ready to follow him in a new approach in empirical research. But, a question may be raised as to whether this massive activity of giving the voice to the disadvantaged social groups was the intended goal or a side effect of the research procedures undertaken by Znaniecki and his disciples. Was he particularly interested in the lowest strata of society?

After his youthful fascination with the salons of Warsaw intelligentsia, where he wanted to shine, Znaniecki later criticized their intellectual apathy

[33] Analyzing the quarterly *Pamiętnikarstwo Polskie* [*Polish Memoirism*], Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz (1974:206 [trans. AK]) accused the editors of excessive promotion of social memoirism, carried out in the spirit of Znaniecki's approach, at the expense of omitting previous periods of memoir creation. "Memoirism...is a very old phenomenon and is of interest to many sciences," meanwhile "for the authors and editors of the magazine, it is primarily Jakub Wojciechowski and *The Polish Peasant*." Apparently, for the Society of Friends of Memoirism, the history of memoirs, indeed, started with Znaniecki, and they were especially interested in contemporary, folk, emancipatory memoirism.

and rejected class aspirations.[34] "As a democrat—[he wrote]—I concluded that the social role of the family aristocracy...is becoming more and more useless. However—[he did not fail to add]—I felt my reluctance towards any contacts with uneducated people" (Znaniecki [1920] 1978:36 [trans. AK]). In another part of his autobiography, Znaniecki ([1920] 1978:40 [trans. AK]) writes:

> I freed myself…from the rest of my earlier aspirations for aristocratic social distinction, I gave up much of the European formalism and began to appreciate the simplicity of personal relationships in this country [America]. Democratism, previously accepted by me for intellectual reasons, but not to my liking emotionally, became more authentic in me, in the sense that I was not offended by the familiarity of uneducated people, although I would not say that they did not bore me…I am still sincerely convinced that democratism should only be reduced to equal opportunities, but it cannot be a mob government. The slogan of human equality is not only false, but socially harmful in the long run, regardless of its provisional usefulness in destroying old institutions which, by sanctioning a political and social hierarchy based on external criteria, hinder the development of a hierarchy based on the social value of human individuals.

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[34] Describing himself as 18 or 19 years old, he wrote: "It was also a time when my temporarily revived aristocratic aspirations, as a consequence of my dealing with the living standards of the highest aristocracy, suffered a final defeat. It is surprising, however, that this double shock not only did not diminish the intensity of my ambitions and my self-confidence, but intensified them to the greatest extent. I gave up the idea of belonging to the aristocratic class. My ambition and the awareness that there was an unattainable limit here made me move towards other goals, reaching higher than I have ever dared to dream before. I was no longer satisfied with becoming someone great for my nation, I was striving for fame and importance throughout the world" (Znaniecki [1920] 1978:34 [trans. AK]).

The change in Znaniecki's attitude has been described as a move from the position of feeling "reluctance towards any contacts with uneducated people" into being "not offended by the familiarity of lower-class people" (albeit they bored him). Perhaps the matter was different in the case of his relations with the subjects of the study. It is difficult to ascertain nowadays. But, the question remains—Does this emotional shift not seem to be too weak to support research interest in the peasants and working-class—viewed by Znaniecki as dull, uneducated people?

The very fact of writing such a monumental in-depth monograph on Polish peasants may prove the authors' respect and attention towards the heroes of their work. Peasant families are given the floor—they speak through the correspondence exchanged between them. The source material is treated with care and accuracy, well-organized, and meticulously elaborated. The narration presented in *The Polish Peasant* is impressive, yet, at closer inspection, it is possible to find some unsettling fractures that prompt a different possible reading.

The first thing that strikes in this work is the parallelism of the narrative. As if the voice of Polish peasants and the voices of researchers ran parallel, occasionally touching each other. It is especially overwhelming when reading the third volume, *Life Record of an Immigrant*. Admittedly, the narrative of Władek Wiśniewski unfolds on his terms—he is given space for his speech, to tell a personal story with his words, but the whole of his account is framed by the narrative of the researchers. From the very beginning, they establish a way of reading it, anticipating in the introduction, how the story of Władek should be interpreted and prompting the proper reading in the consecutive footnotes through the

text. The authors prepare the ground for Władek's narration as follows:

> The material of our study is the autobiography of a Polish immigrant, written at our request three years ago. We hardly need to emphasize that the interest of this autobiography is exclusively scientific, not historical; the personality of the author is entirely insignificant from the point of view of the cultural development of Polish society, since he is a typical representative of the culturally passive mass which, under the present conditions and at the present stage of social evolution, constitutes in every civilized society the enormous majority of the population and whose only role seems to be to maintain, by innumerable and indefinitely repeated routine activities, a certain minimum of civilization in mankind at large, without being able to increase this minimum otherwise than by slowly assimilating and reproducing, very partially and inadequately, a few of the new cultural values produced by a small minority of creators and inventors. But, precisely for this reason, a record of this type can claim a great scientific and practical importance—greater perhaps than that of a creative man; for only the study of the commonplace man can make us understand why there are commonplace men. It makes us realize also that the greatest defect of our entire civilization has been precisely the existence of a culturally passive mass, that every noncreative personality is an educational failure. It will show the sources of such failures and thus open the way for a more successful social education in the future. [Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:81-82]

For the researchers, Władek was an educational failure, a "miscarriage case,"[35] a deviant, classified by

them as a representative of a particular section of Polish society, an example of a certain social class, "whose life is an alternation of periods during which he drifts into Bohemianism with periods of Philistinization, and shows a gradual increase of Philistine tendencies in the total curve of its evolution" (Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:82). In defense of such an external and distant approach to Władek, the authors present the argument that his biography sheds some light on the evolution taking place in the social layer to which he belongs (Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:83).

Interestingly, the authors did not provide the source of their belief that Władek was a typical instance since there were no other memoirs to compare with, and to state if he, indeed, was "typical" or "atypical." They started with the assumption that he represented the group they were interested in and, based on his story, they built an illustration of their theoretical model. Consequently, it is difficult to document the reasoning path from the autobiographical records to theoretical elaborations and conclusions reached by the authors.[36]

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[35] In the Polish translation from 1976, this exact term "a miscarriage case" was used.

[36] In his appraisal of *The Polish Peasant*, Herbert Blumer ([1969] 1998:120-121) made a similar argument: "In the absence of comparable studies of other societies which can serve as a test of the authors' generalizations and theories, we are not in a position to decide categorically on their truth or falsity…The problem, then, which confronts us here is that of the relation between their materials and their theoretical analysis…It seems quite clear that Thomas and Znaniecki did not derive all of their theoretical conceptions from the materials which are contained in their volumes, or from similar materials which they did not put into their volumes. Perhaps not even the major theoretical conceptions were derived from them." The memoir competitions as a research strategy somehow responded to the Blumerian criticism of *The Polish Peasant* by giving access to the life records in a huge mass and making possible the comparisons and building typologies grounded in the data. However, Blumer's discussion on the value of personal documents, and his doubts about the method, announced in 1939, came many years after Znaniecki had launched a "huge machine" for producing personal documents in Poland, and without knowing about those actions taken by Polish scholars.

The relationship between the author of the autobiographical record and the researchers is also interesting here. The subject of the research is only a provider of the initial material, and the researchers deal with it in a way they consider right. At the point when Władek is paid for the work ($300 for the written memoir), Thomas and Znaniecki, as its holders, do not consult Władek anymore. They do not look for new layers of meanings, nor discuss with him their concepts, do not agree on them with the author of the life record. The scientific work is held over him. They classify him as a Bohemian or a Philistine, without sparing any evaluative descriptions. It is hard to resist the impression that they typologize the way of his life and "attach" him to this typology like an entomologist who pins an insect. He remains only a case in which the general tendencies studied by them could be expressed or illustrated. The participation of studied individuals in the interpretations and reinterpretations of the researcher does not exist in this case. The asymmetry of this relationship is revealed in the passage when the authors admit:

> The sincerity of the autobiography is unmistakable. Its source is the self-complacency of the author, who naively accepted the suggestion of the editors, thought everything about him is interesting to others as it was to himself and did not distinguish at all between scientific and immediate interest…He did not know our standards, and any coloring or omissions can hardly hinder our understanding of his personality. [Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:86-87]

One may see this as the old-fashioned ethical standards of the research practice from the beginning of the 20th century when the researchers did not reflect on the hierarchy and power relations they established in the field of their investigations. But, it is difficult to not recall here the considerations on the "great erasure" in terms of the institutional legacy of imperialism as "a pattern in colonial science, carried forward to the postcolonial world, where data-gathering and application happen in the colony, while theorizing happens in the metropole" (Connell 2007:ix). In the light of such a hierarchical relationship, where the researcher has an intellectual advantage over the studied individual and can assess them in advance while developing their social theory, the question arises—whose story is represented in the resulting analysis? Do not those parallel narratives of the authors and Władek talk about two different visions of the world: the one of Władek—about his life as he lived it and remembered it? And Thomas and Znaniecki's—about their founding story-tale?

The story of Władek is immersed in the matter of everyday life, in experiences, emotions, events, encounters, and decisions. The authors' tale, on the other hand, locates a peasant's story, or even "immobilizes" it, in the grid of external concepts and socio-psychologizing typologies. What they offer is the exploratory point of view, a vivisection-style narrative, or even a restrained aloof report, not allowing any true encounter with the Stranger, classifying this Other, poor peasant, in advance, according to the pre-imposed criteria. No true meeting took place here, only the use of material provided by the peasants.

Especially in the context of assurance expressed by the authors that "we must put ourselves in the position of the subject" (Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:20), such a strategy must be thought-provoking. And, going further, is "putting ourselves in the position of the subjects" equivalent with giving them a voice or offering them some form of repre-

sentation in the discourse? Does it truly reach their vision of reality?

Admiring the scale of *The Polish Peasant*, the great erudition of its authors, the enormous amount of work involved, one must admit, however, that illuminating interpretations of Thomas and Znaniecki, although they talk about peasants, although they quote their written words, do not bring the true peasants' voice. They rather lose it in "the objective world of science," in the way "the scientist sees them" in their theoretical analysis (Thomas and Znaniecki 1919:21). In this sense, *The Polish Peasants* represented the interests, views, and voices of the students of culture.

The question remains whether and under what conditions would it be possible to overcome the dichotomy of a researcher occupying the higher position and a studied individual from the lower class? And how to avoid the asymmetry when an enlightened researcher sees oneself as a privileged one, who may show the studied ones the ways of their emancipation? Perhaps the Workers' Paper (Mothé 2013) could bring some help here, as they value the knowledge of workers, allowing them to gain higher self-awareness, and rise above the limitations of their own class.[37]

It seems that memoir competitions carried out on a large scale and addressed to such various social groups performed this task better. Certainly, the approach of Thomas and Znaniecki set the right direction here, outlined the path of research, and the way of reaching the underprivileged social strata.[38] The true implementation of this idea, however, can only be observed in the mass memoir movement, in which peasants, workers, and representatives of the lowest social classes were given the floor. They allowed the memoirists' voices to break through. In their mass, they had a chance to resonate, set the tone, testify to the living conditions of their own social class. But, also, to leave a "souvenir," a memento, a lasting trace of their existence, and elusive everyday life.

Conclusion

I focused here on the social practice of creating personal documents (memoirs) and using life records (autobiographies) as forms of enacting individual agency and allowing them to speak with one's voice in the social space. For centuries, the voices of peasants and working-class were silenced as they had no access to the means which would enable them to speak and prevail in social space. The eventual representations of these groups' views were created by other, more privileged classes. We can consider such a situation in terms of the "great erasure"—the phenomenon discussed by Raewyn Connell

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[37] Daniel Mothé describes the Workers' Paper (1955) as an effect of the self-inquiries of the workers, being "at the same time the expression of workers' experiences (and in the sense…that it *can only be written* by workers themselves) and the means of aiding in the theorization of this experience (and, in this way, contributing to the process of politicizing the working class). But, the paper *must not separate itself* from this experience, for otherwise it will necessarily escape the control of the working class" (Mothé 2013). "The collective, non-hierarchical production of knowledge, immersed in the everyday experiences of working people, does not treat them as things, objects of research, data, but as active entities gaining self-knowledge. Workers' inquiries are a manifestation of working people's autonomy, a method of learning from themselves" (Szwabowski 2019:30-31 [trans. AK]).

[38] Very similar postulates of researching "everyday heroes" and "nameless people" appeared in 1929 in the manifest of the French Annales School, which represented a new approach to the methodology of history. The founders of the school, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, suggested breaking with the dominance of political history, and instead proposed the so-called "total history" as extensive research on former societies combining interdisciplinary research. Assuming the collective nature of human mentality, they emphasized the importance of taking into account all strata of society and, above all, "the removal of barriers between various fields of knowledge…and reaching 'silent' social groups" (Kosiński 2004:134 [trans. AK]).

(2007:46)—that entails "the erasure of the experience of the majority of humankind from the foundation of social thought."

Based on that, one can see how the "memoir competitions"—a very popular research practice being introduced in Poland directly by Florian Znaniecki—have changed power relations in the field of generating knowledge about social reality. Znaniecki certainly understood the importance and consequences of these actions, as he claimed that he intended to reach social groups that for centuries had been "great mutes" (Znaniecki 1971:16). In this way, the collective experience of the whole generation of peasants and physical workers become recognized and represented in the discourse. The necessary condition for such an extensive collective process was the progressive literalization of Polish society. It should also be mentioned that historical changes played an important role in the entire process of the emancipation of the voices of the lower social classes. Violent social changes resulting, first, from the Nazi occupation, the extermination of Jews, and then taking power by proletariat after WWII, getting rid of the aristocracy, and communist radical reforms in the ownership structure were the significant part of this process (Leder 2014).

The memoir competitions in Poland have "become a universally recognized form of participation of the masses in the creation of lasting documentary and cultural values" (Jakubczak 1966:86 [trans. AK]). Social memoirism had many functions. For the authors, themselves, writing memoirs was an educating, socializing, and socio-cultural practice, as well as a transformative one:

> People who seldom use pens to write a letter to their relatives, a peasant or a worker by starting to scratch

their autobiography, which may be published in print, are transforming from a passive consumer of culture into an active creator of cultural values. It is not just about a positive...phenomenon of gaining practice in expressing their thoughts by the authors of the memoirs—more important are the internal changes taking place in the memoirist as he enters the social role of a chronicler of the history of his class. [Jakubczak 1966:87 (trans. AK)]

Asking people for their memoirs was perceived by them as ennobling. They undertook this task with great passion, and, as evidenced in their accounts, they experienced the whole process of creation as poignant. People felt grateful that they could express themselves and talk about their lives. Many memoirs have been published in extenso only with an introduction by the editor,[39] so they could speak with their very substance and become part of the cultural discourses, as well as add to the knowledge shared with others.[40] The institution of Polish Memoirism, that systematically gathered a huge number of autobiographies, enabled the poor and voiceless parts of society to speak and be heard not only by social researchers, but also by other members of society, as well as by themselves. In this sense, the monumental work of Thomas and Znaniecki was a trigger of the gradual process of revealing "blind spots" on the map of social reality.

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[39] *Pamiętniki emigrantów: Francja* (1939); *Życiorysy górników* (1949); *Nowe pamiętniki chłopów* (1962); *Pamiętniki osadników ziem odzyskanych* (1963); *Miesiąc mojego życia* (1964); *Młode pokolenie wsi Polski Ludowej*, volumes I-IX published from 1964 to 1980; *Wieś polska 1939–1948* (1967); *Awans społeczny robotników rolnych w Polsce Ludowej* (1975); *Antologia pamiętnikarstwa polskiego* (1982), and many others.

[40] Many voices, however, are still waiting for their chance. For example, in the case of the competition for memoirs of the unemployed in 1933, out of 744 biographies, only 57 have been published (Krzywicki 1933), the rest of the handwritten materials are still waiting to be processed and digitized (Posłuszny and Kubicki 2019:99).

Acknowledgments

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