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Class Habitus, Gender, and Age: Preliminaries to the Investigation of the Social Roles Held by "Seniors"¹

Abstract The aim of the article is to examine the relationship between social class, gender, and aging. The author discusses the outcomes of existing quantitative research and a number of in-depth interviews conducted by the author in 2012 in Warsaw and two other cities in the Mazovia Province. In the course of the article the practices of elderly people will be presented successively in terms of class, gender, and seniority. The theoretical binder is provided by Bourdieu's practice theory, in particular the concept of three class relational social structure, notions of habitus, forms of capital, and symbolic violence. The number of interviews is too small to draw general conclusions from, but is an exercise in sociological thinking about these three qualities in Bourdieu's terms.

Keywords Pensioner, Gender, Class Habitus, Bourdieu, Narration

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The subject of the article is the meeting point between gender, class, and old age, all of which are treated here as social qualities. Data were taken from the reports from CBOS (the Center for Social Opinion Research), SHARE and others² about household duties and leisure during retirement. Secondary data analysis forms the basis for the interpretation of in-depth interviews conduct-

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² For the full list see: literature.

ed with elderly persons (men and women) in the year 2012. The research concerns the social roles held by retired people. The interviews supported the hypothesis that retirement can be treated as the start of social senility and revealed the connection between different types of "being a senior" according to class and gender. Moreover, the three qualities make up a mixture of influences whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The sections following the methodological introduction and the theoretical background overview (Bourdieu's conception of class structure) will develop the interpretations of the declared practices by showing them from the three angles of gender, class, and age. Concentrating on only one quality at a time promotes analytical clarity that is necessary in an attempt to grasp the highly complicated merging of the practices. Therefore, some simplifications and reductions are indispensable. In this case, the reduction to three qualities: social age, gender, and class described sequentially.

Characteristics of the theoretical background and empirical study

The theoretical core of the research is based on an interpretation of class structure in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's theory.

Social structure is seen here as formed by relations between classes. Classes are distinguished on the basis of the amount of different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986:241-243). What characterises this structure is that the antagonism between the extreme, upper, and folk classes is revealed on the level of habitus and manifests itself in different life

styles (tastes) (Gdula, Sadura 2012: 21). Though life styles may seem to create monadological communities of shared tastes, they function only in relation to each other and their meaning is essential for the reproduction of social structure. Therefore, the analysis of lifestyles is simultaneously an analysis of social legitimacy. This situates Bourdieu's sociology on the line of a theoretical critique of social order, even though his premises may evoke the impression of social change being caught in a vicious circle of reproduction. This is an important point of this theory for the research of social senility, provided that the impression of continuous reproduction of social order will be treated as an analytical tool, not a prophecy which may be used as a prism enabling the interpretation of social practices that at first glance look unreasonable or idiosyncratic.³ Furthermore, the notion of habitus, which represents embodied class relations, provides a useful tool for understanding the boundary position of pensioners who recently ended their professional activity. This position may manifest in relation to their own social category, namely pensioners, as on one hand they are treated as if they were in a privileged period in life with no obligations, thereby enabling them to develop hobbies, and at the same time as a phase when people become "useless" or withdrawn from social life. Such ambivalence seen in upper-middle class people in terms of the meaning of work for social status and identification will be more widely discussed in the next section of the article.

³ These kinds of practices of pensioners in terms of practices of exclusion the author has analysed in the article "Śmierć społeczna a styl życia: o krzyżujących się wpływach wieku, klasy i genderu" in: Żuk 2014.

The author of this article does not agree with Domański's (2011) statement that there is no upper class in Poland. The attribution to the upper class was based on economic (rather than cultural) capital and made in relation to the other interviewees. The statements and actions of the upper class spouses proved to be similar to those of the upper-middle class, however their reasons were different. In order to show the internal complexity of class relations the article divides the middle class into two fractions (lower and upper). The reason for this was that although both spouses shared characteristics such as education and many practices typical for the middle class, the differences between them (as will be shown in the example of the practices of men) were significant. In spite of the differences, the similarities between lower- and upper-middle class couples were incontestable (education, professional status).

In the research, couples were assigned to different class positions on the basis of the amount of their cultural and economic capital: initially by education and profession. The classification was then verified through questions about preferred and undertaken cultural activities (reading, cinema, theatre, restaurants) and leisure (kinds of activities and whether they were organised or not). It turned out that the basic assumptions of Bourdieusian categorisation, as elaborated in *Distinction*, are still relevant when describing class differentiation of practices. For example, the representatives of the upper-middle class go to the cinema, visit restaurants during holidays, and like trips on cycling routes, whereas the couple classified as folk class do not join any organised activities, visit the cinema, or go cycling in their neighbourhood.

The proposition of the following article is that this multiplicity recorded at the level of culture is not limited to class structure is also combined with other factors, most importantly gender and age. The aim of this analysis is not to investigate if the two concepts of class structure and gender differentiation are helpful in interpreting social senility. For this reason it is crucial to decide whether gender is treated as a type of capital (McCall 1992) or part of the social field (Moi 1991). In this article I follow the interpretation of Moi, who claimed that gender can be treated as a factor organising the structure of the general social field (Moi 1991:1036). For this reason gender will be treated as internally hierarchically differentiated, but most attention will be devoted to masculinity as among the interviewed people the heterogeneity of this gender visibly manifests itself according to class. An important insight made by Skeggs which helps in understanding the class differences in playing or perceiving gender roles, is that gender is not only (always) unconscious and definite but ambivalent, and can be the subject of conscious resistance and redefinitions (Skeggs 2003:28-29), however this does not weaken main insights of Bourdieu. Although in the following descriptions it might sound like a "divine force", it should be remembered that the "conservative" gender division which plays out in many moments described by the interviewees (and seen in statistics) is not the whole story and there are counter discourses that define gender relations differently that often take the form of an apparent agreement or are too modest to be clearly seen. While the narrations of the interviewed pensioners turned out to be gendered, confirming Bourdieu's theory about masculine domination (Bourdieu 2004). However,

it was shown at the same time that this domination seen in the sphere of household duties can change into "deprivation" when it mixes with class subordination. In this sense our interpretation is close to Skeggs' insights about ambivalence on gender roles. (Skeggs 2003: 29) Notwithstanding the specificity and conservatism seen in the interviews it seems more appropriate for the article to use the "classical" Bourdieusian way of interpreting class and gender.

The diversity among the genders is usually explained in terms of power and subjugation (Kaufman 1999: 61), so while not denying its very corporeal effects, The author of the article favours the interpretation of gender diversity in terms of the multiple power relations which shape practices and identifications according to a mixture of simultaneous influences. Paradoxically, the theory of habitus can serve as a convenient tool for such a description. Firstly, it may be treated as a kind of sociological theory of unconsciousness. Habitus organises practices through structural adjustment and "emotional" engagement (cf: Jacyno 1998: 28-36). Secondly, the interpretation of habitus as an unconscious structure implies that it is a structure which creates a basis for shaping other identities and practices and is simultaneously shaped by them. This means that during the analysis the defined class relations may be treated as frames for gender, senility and other qualities, thus helping to organise the interpretation. Moreover, habitus is a relatively constant structure, despite the individual's changing position between fields and within the frame of one field, like in the case of retirement. There is another reason why Bourdieu's terminology was chosen instead of intersectional,

for example, as it allows the description of the multiple relations which create a social entity. According to Bourdieu, individual integrity is "built up" through first person narration, merging different positions and identifications like gender, age, and occupation (Bourdieu 1986: 70-71).

The "biographicality" of human experience is especially important for research of age specificity. In the following interpretation senility is treated as a social variable and is understood in terms of a life phase determined by "moments of transitions" in which biological factors (like menopause) get their meaning from social frames of interpretations and practices. The distinguishing features are pensions and having grandchildren. The first is connected with work as a primary activity which determines the position of an individual in a social field. Profession (status in Weberian terms) and income are here as important as adjustment to the cultural importance of productivity as this can be interpreted in terms of a general attitude to work as an ethical requirement. The ascertainment derived from Protestant ethics that social legitimisation is specified by one's capability to work is actually also found in postmodern culture, after the introduction of some shifts in its interpretation and extension of the scope of its meaning. Arnold Rose, a pioneer of research of social senility, hypothesised that the end of a professional career is a moment when both the social identification and position of a pensioner collapse due to psychic and cultural factors. The psychic factor reduces the ability to organise practices and defines the social status of an individual who has to find his – Rose thought that it is only masculine experience – place

in the world anew. The cultural factor is associated with the cult of youth. According to Rose this started with the introduction of pensions. The elderly receiving money from the state formed an impression of unproductive, demanding people (Niezabitowski 2007:120). Leaving aside critics of the limitations of the original hypothesis, its androcentrism, its conservative view on gender roles, and the assumption about the existence of a specific subculture of pensioners (Niezabitowski 2007:140), it emphasises an important aspect of that "moment of transition" in its connection to productivity as a cultural factor. These images of ageing associated with pensions are embodied as negative by the traits of modern, liberal culture which embraces independence, the youthful appearance, mobility, and flexibility et cetera. This negative impression of old age comes from the conviction that pensioners are unproductive. Work may be interpreted as a typical, but not only a productive activity. Another feature of productivity refers to biological productivity as the birth of a grandchild can be the moment when a new mode of reproduction, which is "secondary" as it is not direct, starts. Polish pensioners help their children and grandchildren in many areas such as raising descendants, financial support, housework, et cetera. This was called "secondary" reproduction because the work is done in households with children. The interpretation of these practices can be twofold, as responses to the economic requirement in the case of the growing polarisation of social structure during the economic crisis and an answer to cultural injunction.

It is also significant that contemporary researchers set the age limit of senility on the basis of work and

biological reproduction (Szukalski 2008; Niezabitowski 2007; Szukalski and Kowalewski 2006). This makes it possible to interpret productivity as an important component of modern culture and regards the aforementioned factors of pension and grandchildren as appropriate distinguishing features of social senility.

The study was preceded by examination of data about leisure, relations between grandparents and grandchildren, and expectations and gender divisions in household duties. The author's research is based on in-depth interviews. Purposive sampling (Silverman 2008:271) was used and eight people (four married couples) who represent three fractions of two social classes and a few restricted characteristics were interviewed. The insights from the quantitative research revealed that the interviewed spouses' practices have typical class and gender traits. However, some practices turned out to be atypical and were interpreted in terms of particular interviewees' class and/or gender space. The mixture of quantitative data and IDI is made possible by reading the outcomes of the interviews as showing individual experiences which are at the same time exemplary of their class or gender. Another reason for choosing the qualitative method for this research was that it allows the researcher to interpret not only plain responses to the limited questions but all the social background, the complexity of the milieu as well as non-verbal communiqué of the interviewees (Silverman 2008:242; Konecki 2010:18), such as the appearance of dwellings, dress style, facial expressions, manner of speaking, and gestures. Furthermore the respondents were not limited in their answers as

the interview was akin to a conversation which allowed them to develop their own interpretation of questions. To summarise, the interviews were used in the article to enhance the statistical data. Additionally light was shed on practices which may, for example, seem inconsistent or be interpreted or interpreted as voluntary passivity.

The sampling unit for the interview was a pair of individuals who formed a heterosexual couple, had grandchildren and lived in the same flat in a city. This limits results from the three following assumptions. Firstly, marital homogamy and presupposition about adjustments of habitus among couples allowed spouses to be treated as sharing class characteristics. Secondly, it was predicted that being a grandparent may influence an individual in two ways: it may change one's view on age, and the roles played by grandparents may differ according to gender. Thirdly, all couples lived in areas which had Universities of the Third Age, libraries, parks, swimming pools, restaurants, cinemas et cetera within a radius of three kilometres. This made it possible to eliminate differences resulting from accessibility to cultural facilities and concentrate on cultural capital as the differentiating factor. Fourthly, only people in a heterosexual relationship were interviewed in order to avoid expanding the analysis of the sexuality factor. Moreover, the assumption was made that heterosexual, monogamist relationships are the best place to trace gender relations and roles. The interviewees' age was not taken into account, instead the determinant was pension. All interviews were held in the respondents' apartments and recorded. Most of the conversations, except for one middle class cou-

ple, took place without the spouse to assure privacy for the interviewee. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 3 hours⁴ and were conducted according to a loose scenario including questions about leisure, household duties, cultural activities, and time spent with grandchildren. During the conversations only phrases such as pension, grandparent, and grandchildren were used. All notions strictly evoking aging came from the respondents.

Gender roles in the retirement

Michael Kimmel wrote that people live in gendered institutions (Kimmel 2008). According to this idea, division of labour based on gender pervades different dimensions of individuals' lives, locating them in a social space. Family roles are the most obvious example of this phenomenon, but traces of this may be found in many other social arrangements, such as ways of spending time, grandparents' roles, and social networks. These four dimensions of pensioners' lives will be portrayed to show the workings of gender identifications during retirement.

Gender roles are most visible in terms of household duties. This division is not only typical for the interviewed couples. According to research on the division of household duties (CBOS 2006) and the role of females in family (CBOS 2013), almost half of Poles declare that their preferred relationship model is partnership (CBOS 2013). The percentage of women doing housework and the time they

⁴Interviews lasted (in minutes): (W1) folk class woman (78 years old) : 33, (M1) f.c. Man (75): 48, (W2) lower-middle class woman (63): 207, (M2) l.m.c. man (66): 56, (W3) upper-middle class woman: 43, (M3) u. m.c. man: 37, (W4) upper class woman (65): 61, (M4) u. c. man(67): 53.

spend on it is inversely proportional to their educational status, whereas for males the relationship is not so direct, as less housework is done by males with a secondary education (GFK 2013). The same data shows that 91.3% of females aged 60-64, 87.9% of females aged 65-70, and respectively 63% and 60.6% of males do unpaid housework. Similar findings are contained in the CBOS report on the division of household duties among Poles. Preparing food, laundry, and cleaning are women's duties. It is worth mentioning that in the case of washing and cleaning almost one third of interviewees said that they do it "separately or together", which in the case of cooking this was 18%. (CBOS 2006) In every household the interviewed women prepare meals, clean up, and do the shopping. Men purchase heavy items and if they prepare meals, they treat it as deviation from the norm or as help for women ("Cooking? That's my wife's domain. There are only two of us, so she can cope with cooking without my help" (M2)). It can be seen in their comments about family members that interviewees do not reflect on the division of duties, for example advice on childcare or laundry is given to women, never to men, even though it may concern them too. Moreover, when women were asked about family celebrations they spoke about preparing meals and cleaning. If they expected any help, it was from daughters and daughters-in-law and never male relatives. In contrast, the interviewed men spoke about spending time with the family and emphasised its festive character.

Similarly, ways of spending time with grandchildren have a gendered character. According to Kurczewski and Oklej (2007) both male and fe-

male grandparents claim that their main duties as grandparents are: taking care of grandchildren when their parents are absent, passing on moral principles, being willing to listen, and cuddling (giving a sense of security) (Kurczewski and Oklej 2007:4-5). However closer examination of the answers revealed that gender differences are found in the distribution of the chosen and unchosen duties. For example, it was more often grandfathers than grandmothers who claimed that they should relay national and family history, go for walks, and teach practical skills, hobbies and interests to their grandchildren. Women often chose to imbue moral principles, give love and snacks, and prepare daily meals (Kurczewski and Oklej 2007:4). Interpretation of the interviews may shed some light on these male-female discrepancies. The activities undertaken by interviewees can be divided into supervision and care. In the case of caring, which pertains to women, babysitting is treated as a complex task which involves both emotional and protective work. The roles of grandmothers and grandfathers differ on the level of practices and declarations. Grandmothers provide food, cleaning, protection, emotional support, give advice, and listen to problems at school. Grandfathers are mainly concerned with organising grandchildren's time in terms of going for walks and watching over them during play. A clear example of this is this excerpt from a lower-middle class female:

When my grandchild lived at our place I took care of him with my husband... usually after lunch my husband took him for a walk and I had time to do some washing, clean clothes, you know, a child gets dirty very easily. (W2)

Moreover, rare visits of grandchildren are described differently by males and females. Women raised the question of preparation of the apartment, meals et cetera. Even when they stressed the emotional and playful character of the grandmother's role, they spoke about the loosening of rules of cleanliness or diet, whereas men concentrated on the ludic, holiday-like character of such meetings, for example games and trips. This may be interpreted as an effect of the different roles of male and female grandparents: women mentioned that grandchildren during this time are less clean and eat more sweets because watching over grandchildren's cleanliness and meals are their responsibility. Therefore, time spent with grandfathers has a "festive" character compared to time with grandmothers which is seen as more "mundane". It should be noted that there are a lot of similarities between the way that men and women spend time with their grandchildren: playing, walking, cycling, and emotional support.

Although, it may sound like a tautology, there is something like duty and leisure time for pensioners. Tobiasz-Adamczyk and Brzyski (2006:123-126) showed that women aged 65 and over were more likely to judge their physical and mental wellbeing as lower when they felt that their children wanted their help and that providing this help limited their time (it can be assumed that help provided to children is in many cases caring for grandchildren). Men felt worse when they thought that their children needed financial support. However, men stressed that helping to provide for their children did not cut of their time (Tobiasz-Adamczyk and Brzyski 2006:123-126). Moreover, men's declarations may be seen on one hand as resulting from the lower amount of time de-

voted to these activities by men than by women. On the other hand, men are more likely to support their posterity financially, which could be the reason why the feeling that their children need financial help affected their well-being. This resembles the traditional gender role model in which man is a provider and woman caregiver. For the interviewed couples their leisure time activities varied according to gender, class, and relationships with grandchildren in terms of whether they participate in their upbringing on a daily basis or not. For grandparents who live nearby, caring for their descendants took a lot of time, sometimes almost all day.

With the youngest (two years old) granddaughter I spend almost all day. The typical day starts in morning: I wash Tosia, dress her, put her on the potty, brush her teeth, feed her... and once wash her again. After that we go and play in the room where her toys are. Later, grandpa comes and takes her for a walk. (...) When I was healthy I walked with Tosia while my husband peeled potatoes for a meal. I make fresh soup every day for Tosia's lunch. After the meal she takes a nap. (W4)

On the other hand, those who do not meet their grandchildren often fill their time with many activities which may be classified as being somewhere between hobby and duty. Available time and ways of spending it are affected by the interviewees' gender. In general women have less free time than men, moreover when asked about leisure they listed activities which can be called productive work, such as cultivation of vegetables on their daughter's land (woman from the lower-middle class). Furthermore women more often spend their free time with

friends and distant relatives while men stay at home tinkering, solving crossword puzzles, watching TV, and reading. This does not mean that women do not do these things, but they do them less frequently. There are also many activities which couples do together such as walking, cycling, shopping, and meeting with friends.

Social networks, in terms of how often interviewees met people outside of the family circle, are more extensive in the case of the interviewed female seniors, which is quite surprising in comparison to data showing that retired men visit family relatively often and spend time with friends outside the house (CBOS 2012:5). In the author's research, women from the folk and lower-middle classes spoke about more frequent meetings with friends than their husbands. It is worth noting that males from the same classes narrowed the semantic field of the notion "family" to the closest relatives (wife, children, grandchildren), whereas women asked about meetings with family members spoke also about cousins. This begs the remark that senility somehow reverses the order of "contract" (Siemieńska 2011:196) between sexes whereby women are assigned to the domestic sphere. Among the interviewed pensioners women were the ones who mediate between private and public spheres in terms of maintaining contact with extended relatives and neighbours.

Space and time in the narration of representatives of the folk and lower-middle classes

The influence of social class may be seen in all the aforementioned dimensions of the "gendered" prac-

tices of the interviewed seniors, therefore in this section they will be presented in the light of structural influences. Notwithstanding the general similarities in role playing within gender, class diversified the methods of fulfilling them. The amounts of economic and cultural capital define the fields of possible activities within the space of being a grandparent or a housekeeping woman. This does not mean that practices are structurally determined, but indicates that the structure of society and its culture is of the greatest significance for the shape and scope of the practices of its members. Family roles encompass such activities and identifications such as relations with children and grandchildren, or domestic duties. In turn, the occupied space relates to both common and private zones and is connected with the experience of time. Men statistically more often than women spend time with friends in and outside the house (respectively 82%, 93%, 83% of men and 74, 84, 72% of women), at the other extreme women more often help their children in professional work, housework, and caring for grandchildren (32, 38, 46% of women to 24, 28, 39% of men). Women also go to theatres, galleries, concerts et cetera. more often than men, whereas men do gardening (60%) (CBOS 2012:6). The quantitative research shows that seniors' activities can be put in seven groups: 1 participation in culture; 2 common activities (meetings with friends and family, walking, watching TV); 3 educational activities; 4 helping relatives; 5 volunteering and work in religious communities; 6 gardening and growing plants; 7 listening to music and radio, reading books and newspapers; 8 religious practices (CBOS 2012:11-12). These practices are connected with people's position in social structure. The factors were also grouped according to the

types of pensioners' activity: the most, moderate and the least active pensioners. The distinguished types correlate with their education, self-assessment of health, wealth, and age (where the most active are the best "equipped": the wealthier, healthier, and youngest, and the less active are at the bottom of all scales). The types can be connected with a three dimensional class structure, for example group 1 is the most diverse, meaning "active seniors" engage most in cultural activities as they are wealthier and better educated. Also, the most interesting and fruitful information concerns not quantitative but qualitative descriptions. Upper and middle class seniors are more likely to take activities in groups 2 and 5, these seniors also often help their children and take care of grandchildren (CBOS 2012:13).

Interviews revealed significant similarities between folk and lower-middle class couples. Especially the experiences and behaviour of men correspond to each other. Their cultural participation, preferred physical activities, and ways of interpreting the world are quite convergent. Firstly, men from both the folk and lower-middle class use organised forms of entertainment such as cinema, theatre, excursions, and Third Age University. It is worth noting that most of these activities are available for free or at an affordable price in the community centres in their towns. This allows for an explanation of this "avoidance" in terms of structural factors. The same applies to cycling, as is apparent compared to upper-middle class for whom cycle paths and marked trails were an important aspect of cycling. Contrarily, riding as such appealed to representatives of the lower classes as it is an activity which is healthy, enjoyable, practical (all those factors were present in the narration of

the upper-middle class too, but the orderly character of the "infrastructure" of cycling was highly important for them). Secondly, interviewees from folk and lower-middle classes usually prefer television or crosswords than reading books, and they do not have computers. This translates into activities with grandchildren: they organised their time on their own, playing at home, and walking or riding, whereas couples from upper classes were more likely to go to museums and cinemas, et cetera with their grandchildren. The significant aspects of the grandfather role (financial support and shopping) characterise class distinction, but are not connected with economic factors. Although all interviewees except for the folk class representative, whose financial situation does not allow any extra spending, mentioned gifts, and money for grandchildren, while the lower-middle class man was not inclined to accompany his family shopping at a shopping mall. He did not refer to gender differences or the crowdedness of the shopping centre, but laconically stated that "it is not for him", leaving room for interpretation in terms of social age. However, in the light of other statements about spending time and public spaces, this seems to be a result of class habitus.

This kind of activity (going to cinemas and restaurants) already felt over because of my poor health and the fact that my wife is also undergoing treatment. But, most importantly we cannot afford restaurants, theatre or cinema. (M1)

(Do you go sometimes to the restaurant or cinema?)

No.

(Never? Your wife told me that you like music a lot...)

Oh yes, I like music. But, I listen at home. When I was

still working, we did sometimes go to the circus or to some performances. The last time it was the famous Polish movie "Zemsta" which was in cinemas here (2002). Now I watch TV at home. (M2)

Here the lower-middle class and folk class men's narrations are similar. Firstly, in terms of communicating, both men spoke less than their wives, answered questions strictly, and did not introduce new topics in the interview. More significant, however, is the similarity between the content of their statements which concerns stories about circumstances of retirement and ways of spending time (occupying space). In the first case a man from the folk class spoke about the dishonesty of his employer and ZUS, which led to him being granted the lowest rate of retirement pension. He saw this as one of the causes of his present difficult material situation, others include his illness and the loss of his own business (after retiring he started his own auto repair shop, but had to liquidate it due to ill health). The narration displays the characteristics of explaining a life situation as independent from the interviewee, who was caught in the net of stronger and somehow divine forces:

...And this is how it ended. First heart attack, second heart attack, paralysis. And if the pension were as high as it should be, it wouldn't be so bad. But, my last employer robbed me along with ZUS. For the (last) 15 years of work I got nothing. They said that after 20 years they can destroy employee records (...) It was like the employer and ZUS agreed to rob a few employees. (M1)

The lower-middle class representative less directly indicated the structural factors of his earlier retire-

ment. He tried to present it as his (and other employees of the same age) decision: they decided to take early retirement after rational calculation. The story of the modernisation of his workplace and the fact that the younger employees had more suitable skills was presented so incidentally that it almost vanished in the course of the narration. In this case "the divine force" appeared between the lines. It seems that middle class habitus is better attuned to modern culture discourses, as it exhibits an "internalised" rationalistic self-responsibility model of explaining. Both men stated that they were not the only workers to whom it happened. According to their stories the circumstances of retirement explain the present situation, which is different in particular practices, but surprisingly similar in their general character.

The folk class man spends his time mostly at home where he does not do any housework. A regular point of the day, if his health allows, is a walk with his wife. He does not often see friends. Strolling and walking the granddaughter to the swimming pool, where he likes to sit on the bench "looking at the children" are his ways of his being in common space in the city. The lower-middle class interviewee spends lot of his time on the balcony where he grows flowers. In winter he tinkers and listens to a lot of music, recording it from the TV to tapes. He also regularly walks and cycles with his wife. The practices of the two men outwardly look completely different as one seems to prefer idling whereas the other has a lot of hobbies. Both, however, may be interpreted as strategies of the excluded. Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that both pensioners explained the fact that they

do not visit public places like cinemas, restaurants or Universities by external factors, and at the same time found in such factors justifications and causes to be in the world as an observer. A clear example here is gardening on a balcony, which is situated in front of the market square: the man can observe ongoing life, but as he is working on the flowers he has legitimacy to do it and at the same time he "is" there, taking part in social life. On the other hand, his hobbies have the character of "mock" labour, they are time-consuming, requiring exactitude, and justify his being in the public sphere and at home.⁵ Occupying space concerns less the geographical position than the fusion of time spending with the mode of being in a social space. In the cases presented above, being at home as well as being "outside" lost its legitimacy at the moment of retirement. This shows the importance of work (professional as well as reproductive labour) for the position of an individual in a social field. Gender division pervades class and age and can be seen in differences between the practices and narration of women and men from the same class. Namely, the female folk class representative never worked professionally, the schedule of her day did not change according to the same social calendar as her spouse. This may be the reason why her occupying of space is less mediated. She does not look for "mock" labour because she is constantly working for her family. Despite her poor health she did not stop doing most of the housework. This fact reveals another angle of her spouse's narration about ill health. Not denying the objective fact of illness, the story about malady which does not al-

⁵ See: Bourdieu 2005, Jacyno 1998 (especially pp. 37-48).

low for many physical activities may be interpreted as a similar strategy (in the discursive plane) as the hobbies of the lower-middle class male. This is a justification of being in the social world for the individual whose legitimacy for presence in that world, which is organised according to ideals of work and productivity,⁶ no longer exists. To reiterate, this mixture of class, gender, and age functions in a particular cultural milieu as the social field is a matrix for possible practices. Consequently the positions within that general field do not distribute vertically but instead create a diversified pattern. This is most noticeable in the case of women from lower classes who "should" be the most excluded. Nevertheless, the interviews show that in retirement men seem to experience social annihilation somewhat more than women. This does not mean that men are socially excluded in a sense of limited access to resources or that women do not face the collapse of previous identifications, but it shows an important feature of society, in that its diversification according to various qualities which are not spread among individuals are contained in the same being. The qualities mingled together can create different scopes. A disadvantage in one field can strengthen a position in the other, with different rules of distribution.

Active ageing and "free choice" in practices of pensioners from the upper classes

The case of the upper fraction of middle class pensioners shows another side of class habitus. If in

⁶ See, e.g.: Weber 1994, Bourdieu 2005.

the former examples of folk and lower-middle class representatives it may be called a distributive one as the strongest point was in stratification and legitimacy, in the case of pensioners from the upper-middle and upper class its role is rather maintenance in the social field. Moreover, there are no sharp gender differences between spouses apart from those shown in the previous section in which the woman is responsible for household chores. She did not speak about this directly, which may suggest that she found the division of duties obvious. Both spouses, however, maintained broad social networks including friends and neighbours. They benefitted from and enjoyed the cultural life of the city such as movie and theatre going and taking trips on tourist routes, and the woman was thinking about enrolling at the University of Third Age. Family roles played by pensioners are, like among other couples, centred on care of grandchildren, although their descendants live abroad. The couple sees them regularly at Christmas and during the holidays when the grandchildren come to their place and stay for a while, while the rest of the time they are in contact by telephone and Internet. Their Christmas and holidays are entirely devoted to their grandchildren. The couple stressed that they want to perceive that time as ludic and festive, not as just an ordinary day. ("Because grandparents are supposed to mollycoddle the children!" (M3)) This is why they organise trips for the grandchildren to the zoo, cinema, and planetarium whilst relaxing discipline, meaning the children can go to bed later, eat more sweets, et cetera. The most obvious reason they organise it like this is that they see each other only for a limited time each year. Another reason, connected with the social role of

grandparents, is the conviction that the transfer of family and national heritage is the responsibility of the grandparents (Kurczewski 2008: 300). Notwithstanding the former treats, there is another side of being a grandparent at a distance. The range in kilometres translates into the distance to one's own family role, which is sometimes seen in gender differences in the attitude to some obligations that are thought to belong to the grandparents. Namely, men are most likely to find the expectations more inconvenient when they require more time (Tobiasz-Adamczyk and Brzyski 2006:125). In the case of the middle class couple this attitude may be considered to be affected by class. On a primary level the amounts of cultural and economic capital in combination with their distance from their relatives allowed for them more free organisation of their time and the obligations to take care of grandchildren are sometimes treated like demands made on the part of the children. They stressed that there are a lot of pensioners whose children require from them total dedication to grandchildren, but fortunately theirs do not.

Children think that when you are retired, you should surrender to them.(...) "Mother, father you have a lot of free time"... and they try to use their parents as much as they can. Because we don't work anymore. Yes. (W3).

Compared with others, showing one's own adjustment and the ability to perfectly fulfil duties, may be treated as typical narration for the middle class, however, in the case of pensioners it requires careful attention.

Both of the upper-middle class representatives were familiar with stereotyped images of grandparents and senility. The catalogue of the traits of elderly people can be reconstructed from their narrations which contain the opinions that grandparents should transfer traditional heritage to grandchildren, make them feel happy, give them a lot of joy, and they usually cannot resist exploitation by their children due to their considerable amounts of free time. Yet, according to the interviewed upper-middle class couple pensioners have a lot of free time, stay at home a lot, are demanding, have bad health, are reliant on others, and are not familiar with modern technologies. The grandparents' characteristics are mostly positive and emphasised the value of an intergenerational covenant in which grandparents are the ones who somehow protect grandchildren from the world of inevitable obligations and liability, and provide them with ground for social identity. Similarly, the negative features of pensioners served to show that the interviewees are different: they do not retreat from active social life, are physically fit, and use computers and the internet. The maintenance function of the class habitus is revealed on the interface between the cultural image of the pensioner and the practices of the interlocutors. The interviewed upper-middle class couple's focus on negative characteristics served not only to show themselves in a better light, but also showed what features are ascribed to retirement age and that pensioners fear being old and self-withdrawn from society.⁷ This

⁷ Illness and loss of means of subsistence are no less threatened – here I abstract from them in order to concentrate on factors which may concern pensioners regardless of their financial status.

fear of withdrawing reflects a view that is significant for modern culture on the social subject of *homo oeconomicus* (Foucault 2011). *Homo oeconomicus* is a planning being who takes full responsibility not only for his or her own actions but also for his or her social position. It may be said that *homo oeconomicus* is a legitimised social entity defining him or herself and being defined by work as well as by rational choices. As was mentioned earlier, work is understood here in a broad sense encompassing professional and reproductive activities. Care taking attaches the individual to social hierarchy just as much as profession as both determine the point by which the subject can be categorised and also finds his or her own place in society. Notions connected with social age and gender play an analogical role. The response strategy to the demand for being active, engaged, productive "seniors" can be seen as a way of preserving social status by upper-middle class representatives.

In comparison to the former interviewees, those from the upper class seemed to be more traditional. They live with their grandchildren in the same house in a district of detached houses. They spend most of the day on housework, with the woman babysitting, and the man often mixing tinkering with manual work on the house (even making a terrace by himself). He did not do such things before he was retired. The spouses stressed that they do the care work because their children need their help. Grievance and fatigue sometimes appeared in their narration, but the importance of those issues is mitigated quickly. Their stories, however, are distinguished from the previous ones by the lack of reference to external factors which cause

the present unhappy situation, as was the case with the lower-middle and folk class men (the lack of such references in women's narrations was explained earlier) or extraneous rules or obligations like in the case of the middle class couple. Bourdieu's phrase about two types of choices of necessity and freedom, which are typical of lower-and upper-social classes, is relevant here: free choice of the upper class spouse manifests perversely in utterances about family obligation and exhaustion due to care work. The freedom of upper class spouses can be seen in the fact that their economic capital allows them to buy services. The second is the internal source of these obligations. This may be called ethical because the justification here is derived from moral obligations expressed in terms of love and familiarity.⁸

The girls (granddaughters) helped me, but I did everything so that they could rest, because Monika (the daughter who lives upstairs) is tired when she comes back from work. (W4)

In their narration, legitimisation of their social position by comparing themselves to other pensioners was absent. Also, in terms of being in public space, they regularly went to theatres, restaurants, and cinemas, either as a couple or with friends. That changed recently because of the woman's illness, which does not allow her to walk. None of the pair spoke about organised forms of leisure like walking tourist trails or senior university courses. Neverthe-

⁸ The decision which was made there by daughter may be interpreted as the reverse of this. She decided to settle with her family in the neighbouring plot although they have apartments in London and Paris and do not feel any economic pressure to change the place of living.

less upper class interlocutors are not free from the patterns of productivity and rationality which are a key part of modern culture. This is clearly seen in the playing of grandparent roles. What differs in their stories slips somewhat from direct answer to discourse, maintaining an "enclave" of self-turning "traditional" justification in terms of family. And, ironically, traces of searching for a place in the world and time filling may be found in the family roles taken by them. Their dedication to the descendants suggests they are looking for a productive activity which can fill time during retirement.

Age as a social label

There are three elements which mark out senility as a social phenomenon: cessation of professional activity, the birth of grandchildren, and attitude to physicality. These elements are dependent on gender and class in two ways. Firstly, on a general level, they may be considered a manifestation of the structural qualities of class and gender in a particular period of life. Then the experience of retirement may be interpreted as an effect of class habitus, like in the example of the middle class couple, and the role of a grandparent that differs according to gender, marking different patterns of behaviour. Secondly, on the micro-level of the individual and his or her practices, all of the practices consist of a mixture of other qualities and factors. A clear example here is the folk class interlocutor, whose practices are mostly limited to short walks and spending time on physically undemanding activities such as watching TV et cetera, that are the outcome of class position and gender. Thirdly, physicality was implicitly present throughout all of the analysis so far, interviewees

referred to physicality in their descriptions of the inconveniences of everyday activities (poor health) and as an absent element in narration (body image, sexuality).

Interlocutors talked about their health on many occasions, as when they spoke about their present well-being, their main concern about the future was disease and the inevitability of dealing with healthcare agencies. In the narrations they linked senility with illness as well as with disability. The struggle with their own physicality is an everyday reality for most of the interviewees. Sometimes it is almost a heroic battle to go for a walk in spite of painful legs or dizziness. The decision not to introduce this topic in previous interpretations was dictated by the wish to see the pensioners' practices afresh, to avoid repeating common truths about senility or focus the analysis on the state of Polish healthcare. It allowed the author of the article to disconnect wellbeing from the image and practices of experiencing illness. How much they can differ is proven by the comparison of the folk class pair: for the man the disease was the main cause of his withdrawal which cut him off from his previous life. On the other hand, the narration about bad health served folk class men similarly to the "mock" labour practices of the lower-middle class male representative, thus legitimising the practices of the interviewees. For the woman, however, malady was something that cannot stop her everyday activities, like in the case when after returning from hospital she only stopped doing the heaviest tasks (cleaning the windows), but did not stop doing the everyday housework and cooking. This may be interpreted as gender mediated. For the

woman, for whom household duties are comparable to professional work and as such are distinctive practices, giving them up has the same effect as retirement for her spouse. It is significant that a similar pattern in the practices of folk class women may be found in the upper class couple. Both spouses do house and care work despite their poor health, despite the fact that they could afford to buy these services. This is a point of convergence of practices of class habitus family roles and occupying space, as both can be interpreted as being dependent on temporality. Time is something which must be filled, survived, and organised under new rules. Time spent on both work and leisure is the factor which distributes individuals in social space.

In order to complete the image of social senility drawn from the interviews one more less abstract element must be introduced: the body of the pensioners. Men and women's experience of their bodies appears to be the same in that corporeality is reduced to health and illness. None of the interlocutors spoke about appearance, which is quite surprising taking into account the number of mass media campaigns concerning looking good (i.e., young) at every age. Although those campaigns – mostly cosmetics adverts – are targeted at young or middle aged people, they are watched by all age groups. The explanation for this may be a deep "internalisation" of the ideal of eternally young beauty. Their silence on this subject suggests that for the pensioner the young, fit athletic body is unattainable, but it is still an important point of reference in evaluating his or her own social position. It is again a matter of legitimisation, but this time on the physical level. What that exactly means is visible in the narrations about leisure, all

of which contain activities rather typical for elderly people. There was no mention of clubbing, swimming or other activities requiring exposure of the body or its efficiency. It is even more apparent in the absence of narration about sex or any other aspect of physicality and pleasure. Furthermore, some of the interviewees said that they do not sleep with their spouse in the same bedroom. They explained it as more convenient when both of them go sleep and wake up at different times.

An attempt to rejoin the considerations on the mutual impact of gender class and social senility on the example of the common elderly practice of walking will be presented as a summary. Strolling, which is an important point in the daily schedule of everyone, has a few different functions, each of which may be drawn from the impact of social ageing on practices. The first, indicated by the interlocutors themselves, is the health benefits. In this case walking is a kind of fitness or light sport. The second is connected with occupying space and time (here shopping at the market is a more flagship activity during which chatting with sellers and other shoppers is even desired and in somewhat considered to be in good taste). Strolling is a good pretext to wander in the city and observe daily life, while a tired stroller can sit on a bench and possibly speak to a neighbour. Thirdly, walking is an activity which can be undertaken in many different ways: Nordic walking, going to the park, strolling along the streets and shops, going alone or with friends, all of this is influenced by gender, health condition, and class habitus. One more aspect of strolling should be mentioned. Namely, its health value is the reason why the respondents

do it. At first sight this is a quite logical assumption followed by a rational decision to walk: it is cheap, can be done at any time of the year, and is not too tiring for pensioners. Its role in daily practices may be seen in the fact that it is portrayed by interviewees as a marital activity, but spouses go out alone if the other one cannot because of, for example, a health condition. However, the fact that pensioners of all social classes and ages spoke similarly about this kind of activity raises the need for an interpretation which can capture all the qualities. Social senility, the period when practices are still gendered and class-dependent, is also the time when the justifications of one's position in social structure (namely in social space) needs to be renegotiated. Strolling, in the sense of the practice of staying healthy, is an activity which can be interpreted as an attempt to renegotiate presence in a social space and, on a deeper level, one's legitimisation. Through taking care of physical health the individual shows his or her recognition of and conforming to the rules of "entering the game".

Conclusion

Class, gender and age characteristics have been presented successively in order to highlight the various spaces of human experience, but this attempt to extract only one quality from the mixture of everyday life practices revealed difficulties even on the analytical level. It showed that it is impossible to disconnect the impact of these qualities on a person's life. Practices organised by class habitus take place in gendered institutions and vice versa; the manner in which "typical" gender activities are conducted, such as care work, vary according

to the class of the interlocutors. The third quality, age, seems to transverse them all, reconfiguring some of them, giving a new meaning to the other. Specifically, retirement seems to strengthen the characteristics connected with habitus in lower class men, reconfiguring their practices in the models which for the external observer look like withdrawal and passivity whereas upper-middle class somehow "fight" the threat of being excluded from social life through various activities. Thanks to the greater resources of the cultural capital they can counteract this threat at the level of narration. At the same time, however, those narrations were similar to those of other interviewees in that they were built around the stereotypical treatment of senility and a model of individual responsibility and self-development. Thus, life in retirement was revealed to consist of a series of practices whose aim was to remain within the social structure and fill the time which is no longer taken by professional activities and/or regular care work. It should be stressed that although the interviews revealed significant similarities between folk and lower-middle class couples, this does not mean that the class structure is divided into two instead of three parts. The similarities could be an outcome of the similarities between the experiences of the interviewees. Another explanation, which unfortunately cannot

be proved in this study, is a hypothesis about the decline of the social status of some middle class representatives, according to post-communist transformation.

Findings about gender roles played by interviewed seniors correspond with those from "Masculine Domination" concerning the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity which pervades all classes. Notwithstanding, there were important differences between the classes in the manner in which gender roles are played.

The interpretations presented in the article cannot be generalised, but can be treated as an attempt to think about and investigate the practices of seniors which can be developed further. There is a need for research which involves a representative sample of interviewees and draws on biographical interviews, thereby showing a more complex picture of the intersection between class, gender, and ageing. Other research which includes variables such as place of residence, household size, length of the retirement, ethnicity et cetera. could shed new light on the practices of pensioners. Moreover, future analysis should examine the connection between natural, demographic trends (ageing of society) and wider socio-economic trends.

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Habitus klasowy, płeć społeczno-kulturowa, wiek: wstęp do badań ról społecznych pełnionych przez seniorów

Abstrakt: Artykuł prezentuje wyniki analizy ośmiu wywiadów pogłębionych przeprowadzonych w 2012 roku w Warszawie i w dwóch mniejszych miastach na Mazowszu. Celem wywiadów było prześledzenie relacji pomiędzy klasą społeczną, płcią kulturową i wiekiem. Te trzy jakości formują „węzeł gordyjski”, którego rozwiązanie nie jest możliwe bez poczynienia pewnych skrótów i uproszczeń. Dlatego praktyki starszych osób będą prezentowane sukcesywnie, jako formowane przez przynależność do określonej klasy, płci kulturowej oraz starszego wieku. Jednakże takie przedstawienie ma na celu jedynie uwypuklenie poszczególnych elementów doświadczenia, nie zakreślanie jego odrębnych sfer. Teoretyczną podstawę stanowią pojęcia wypracowane przez Bourdieu: klasy społecznej, habitusu, form kapitału oraz przemocy symbolicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: emeryt/emerytka, płeć kulturowa, habitus klasowy, Bourdieu, narracja