

Reports

The 1st Polish Conference on Femininity and Masculinity, and Close Interpersonal Relationships: “Women—Men—Romantic Relationships” University of Silesia in Katowice 12–13th October 2016

On the 12th and 13th October 2016, 65 people attended The 1st Polish Conference on Femininity and Masculinity, and Close Interpersonal Relationships: “Women—Men—Romantic Relationships.” The conference was organized by the Department of Social and Community Psychology of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Silesia in Katowice. The aim of the conference was to promote research on conditioning and processes responsible for the establishment, maintenance and break-up of romantic relationships between women and men. More broadly, the objective was to integrate researchers dealing with problems of close interpersonal relations and create a forum for exchange of opinions on the topic. This was the first conference on this topic in Poland. During the two days’ sessions, three plenary lectures were given, thirty six papers and eight posters were presented; in addition, two workshops were organized; during the numerous discussions, participants raised many important issues.

The Academic and Organizing Committee, chaired by Professor Eugenia Mandal, included many outstanding psychologists specializing in masculinity and femininity, and psychology of close relationships: Professor Anna Grabowska from the Institute of Experimental Biology, PAN; Professor Zbigniew Izdebski from the University of Warsaw, Professor Iwona Janicka from the University of Łódź, Professor Alicja Kuczyńska from the University of Zielona Góra, Professor Andrzej Łukasik from the University of Rzeszów, Professor Jolanta Miluska from the University of Szczecin, and Professor Bogdan Wojciszke from the SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

The conference was first of all addressed to scholars whose main research interests focused on close relationships and gender identity constructs, but also to representatives of many other disciplines, such as psychology, family studies, pedagogy, sociology and sociology of marriage, demography and crisis intervention; teachers of Family Life Education and people interested in prophylaxis and promotion of effective patterns of behaviour in close romantic relationships. Among the conference participants, there were representatives of twenty seven institutions: sixteen universities and colleges, social policy institutions (the Regional Centre for Social Policy, the Silesian District), judicial institutions (the Regional Group of Expert Witnesses), societies (the Polish Psychology Association), therapeutic centres (the Centre for Family and Pair Therapy in Gliwice), and publishers (Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego).

The conference was sponsored by the Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Professor Stanisław Juszczyk; the Polish Psychology Association; the Regional Centre for Social Policy, the Silesian District; and the Metropolitan Association of

Upper Silesia. Among the media sponsors of the conference, there were Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, the psychological magazine *Charaktery*, and psychology web portals: *Psychologia.net.pl*, *Psychologia-Spoleczna.pl*, *badania.net*.

The main topic of the conference was conditions and processes responsible for establishing and functioning of romantic relationships between men and women. The aim of the conference was to discuss these issues from the broad perspective of constantly evolving views on masculinity, femininity and romantic relationships.

The first plenary lecture, entitled „Sztuka kochania – wczoraj i dziś” (The art of love—yesterday and today), was given by Professor Zbigniew Izdebski. The speaker discussed all the significant issues from the history of Polish sexology. The lecture was illustrated with clips from the film *Sztuka kochania: Historia Michaliny Wislockiej* (The art of love: The story of Michalina Wislocka), which presented the private and professional life of Michalina Wislocka, a Polish gynecologist and sexologist, the author of the book *Sztuka kochania* (published in English as *A Practical Guide to Marital Bliss*). Professor Izdebski also said a few words about the film itself, and how it came to be made (the film came out on the 27th of January 2017).

In the second plenary lecture, entitled „Płeć mózgu: mity czy fakty – spojrzenie z perspektywy neuroobrazowania” (Brain sex: Myths and facts—A neuroimaging perspective), Professor Anna Grabowska talked about the neuronal basis of sex differences. She also answered two important questions: Is the concept of *brain sex* grounded in empirical research on the brain structure? and What is important for sex differences, the volume of the brain structures, synapses, or the influence of sex hormones?

The third plenary lecture, „Ekologia strategii reprodukcyjnych kobiet i mężczyzn” (The ecology of the reproductive strategies of men and women), delivered by Professor Andrzej Łukasik, was devoted to structural, functional and behavioural adaptations which facilitate finding a partner, increase the possibility of fertilization, and improve the chances of survival of the offspring. The speaker discussed the key assumptions of the Life History Theory, according to which species and individuals develop specific reproductive strategies in accordance with the environmental clues.

During the first session of individual presentations, two symposia were organized parallel to one another. The first one, „Bliskie związki – różne oblicza zaangażowania” (Close relationships—Different faces of involvement), chaired by Professor Iwona Janicka, was devoted, among other things, to psychometric instruments used in research on interpersonal involvement, cohabitation and sexual experiences of single individuals. The second symposium, „Bliskie związki – emocje i potrzeby” (Close relationships—Emotions and needs), chaired by Dr Magdalena Śmieja, concerned emotional intelligence, love constituents in the context of types of experienced emotions, the system of psychological needs of men and women, and bonding behaviour.

During the second session of individual presentations, two symposia were organized parallel to one another. The first symposium, „Bliskie związki a płeć biologiczna i psychologiczna” (Close relationships and sex and gender), chaired by Professor Eleonora Bielawska-Batorowicz, involved diverse topics, including conditioning of the Premenstrual Syndrome, andropause symptoms, specificity of selected menopausal issues, and gender-related tactics of keeping one's partner. The second symposium, on close relationships in the developmental perspective, chaired by Professor Dorota Czyżowska, included presentations of research on close relationships in early adulthood; correlations between the relationship with parents and communication between spouses; the dependence of communication between spouses on relations in the family of origin.

During the third session of individual presentations, two symposia were organized parallel to one another. The first symposium, „Bliskie związki i poczucie satysfakcji z nimi związane” (Close relationships and satisfaction resulting from them), chaired by Dr Katarzyna Serafińska, was devoted to the adaptive and maladaptive influence of the sense of humour on marital well-being; correlations between the number of romantic pictures posted in social media and the quality of the relationship; the relationship between the type of family one was brought up in (two-parent family or single-parent family) and the level of communication between spouses; and the specificity of counselling for transgender clients. The second symposium in this session, entitled „Role kobiece i męskie a przemiany społeczno-kulturowe” (Men’s and women’s roles and sociocultural changes), chaired by Professor Jolanta Miluska, concerned cross-generational differences in the content of masculinity stereotypes among men; non-heteronormative gender narratives; and the current tendencies related to lower relationship satisfaction as viewed from the historico-legal-cultural and psychological-evolutionary perspectives.

The fourth session, entitled „Romantyczne relacje – trudności i problemy” (Romantic relationships—Problems and difficulties), chaired by Professor Grażyna Mendecka, was devoted to hetero- and homosexual relationships of great artists; prisoners functioning as husbands and fathers; aggression and victimization in close relationships; and relational problems of modern times, including problems encountered by persons who have decided to undergo detransition after gender correction.

In addition to paper presentations, there were also workshops. The first workshop, entitled „Konflikty intrapsychoiczne a seksualność w związku” (Intrapsychic conflicts and sexuality in the relationship), was conducted by Dr Marek Jasiński. Its main aim was to broaden the participants’ knowledge of intrapsychic conflicts caused by sexual problems, leading to different dysfunctions in a couple’s life. The workshop was conducted in the spirit of the psychoanalytical approach and included numerous examples from clinical practice. During the workshop, the following problems were discussed among others: lack of separation of an individual from the parental object; retaliatory tendencies towards the partner, which can result in sexual dysfunctions; and the fear of psychologically losing oneself in one’s partner.

In the second workshop, entitled „Dwa na dwa’ – propozycja modelu konsultacji terapeutycznych dla par” (Two by two’—A model of counselling for pairs), Dr Karolina Zalewska-Lunkiewicz and Ryszard Chłopek made an attempt to convince the participants of the significant role of the co-therapeutic team in working with couples. In this context, they discussed the importance of gender balance and imbalance in the process of therapy. They also showed how transference and counter transference reactions can be controlled in the therapeutic dyad, and presented a model of session restructuring developed in The Therapeutic Centre for Families and Couples.

To sum up, it is necessary to stress the great variety of topics presented by the participants, as well as the novelty and attractiveness of the issues discussed during the conference. We find it a very successful academic event which can boost the development of close relationships research and result in greater integration of the academic community. The 2nd Nationwide Conference on Femininity and Masculinity, and Close Interpersonal Relationships is planned to be held in October 2018.

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