

MIXED RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

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The more migration becomes a common ambition and other means of migration are closed, the more marriage becomes a major hope, a dream of a better life – not any marriage, but marriage to a man or woman resident in the West.

(Beck-Gernsheim 2007: 8)

Since Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 the number of mixed relationships in Europe, both formal and informal, has been increasing (Brzozowska 2015; Slany, Solga 2014). Consequently, there is a growing need of sociological analysis of this phenomenon, especially in the countries which are becoming home for such couples. Although the data regarding worldwide perspective are similar, information about how binational relationships mixed couples function is rather scarce. The 16th Polish Sociological Congress held in Gdańsk in September 2016 provided an opportunity to present studies concerning this issue and share the knowledge about it. Increasing mobility has an impact on the matrimonial market and affects the dynamics of the emergence of new types and patterns of relationships and marriages. On the one hand, migrations are

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conducive to the variety of families and intimate relationships involving cultural and ethnic diversity (McCarthy, Edwards 2011; Vertovec 2009). On the other, the growing number of mixed marriages generates tensions and conflicts related to intercultural differences, patterns of communication and scripts depending on the understanding of gender. Transnational families currently seem to be one of the subjects drawing most attention in the field of migration studies in the European Union (Ducu, Hossu 2016; Kovacs 2016; Baldassar, Merla 2014; Krzyżowski 2013; Gaspar 2011; Collet 2015; Glick-Schiller 2009; Levitt, Jaworsky 2007).

As a result of international migrations, families become pioneers of multiculturalism and individual ways of dealing with this phenomenon in everyday life, based on reflective negotiations (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2014). The above mentioned conflict potential in such families is high and tensions between their members stem from different styles of communication, languages, religious practices, level of adaptation of the migrating partner, social networks, cultural differences in parental styles, social roles and gender practices, habits and traditions. The issue of children living in mixed families is drawing increasingly more attention from scholars (analysing patterns of parenting and education, enlance of the culture of the sending country, the choice of identity and ethnic affiliation). Relations between partners and their parental styles are strongly influenced by local communities and by the level of control of public institutions (or, in other words, by defamilialisation).

In this Special Issue of *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny* (Migration Studies – Review of Polish Diaspora) we present both Polish and international perspective of binational couples. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim observe that “the mixed-nationality couple does not exist”. The strangers who “come today and stay tomorrow” undermine the natives’ “natural” beliefs about frontiers and belonging: they suddenly “live and love in our midst” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2014: 22). The texts presented in this volume focus not only on negotiating the couple by the partners involved (“doing couple”), but also on their relations with the environment (“displaying couple”) (Finch 2007). We are interested in bicultural aspects of mixed couples’ lives, in their ways of coping with cultural borders between the native and the host country, and in contrasts with their earlier life stages.

For the purposes of the present volume, we define a mixed relationship as one in which:

- marriage is only an option, a chosen life project
- the partners are born and raised in different countries of origin, but also one in which:
- the partners were born in the same country of residence and might hold the same citizenship, but are of different ethnic/national backgrounds.

Consequently, the studies included in this volume concern **binational relationships**, although each author chooses his or her own definition that suits their research project and target group.

According to Giampaolo Lanzieri, in European Union statistics mixed (citizenship) marriages are defined as those where one of the spouses has foreign citizenship and the other has national citizenship. Marriages where both persons are foreign citizens are termed foreign (citizenship) marriages, so a marriage between two spouses of different citizenship, but with neither holding national citizenship, is classified as a foreign marriage, not as a mixed marriage. A marriage between two nationals is termed a national (citizenship) marriage (Lanzieri 2012: 84). These definitions have implications for the coverage and quality of the data, which do not include the cases of cohabitation or any de facto relationship.

On 1 January 2010 twenty-eight European countries (members of the EU and EFTA) had about 32.4 million foreigners, making up 6.9 percent of their total population. In both 2006 and 2007 (the latest years for which the widest coverage is available) there were about 240–250 thousand marriages involving a national and a foreigner in Europe. On average across countries, the proportion on the total number of marriages was 15 percent (Lanzieri 2012: 89). In order to capture a better picture, we need to look at mixed marriages as a proportion of the total number. Among European hosting countries mentioned in this volume, Norway has been recording just below 25 percent in recent years; the figure is explained by decreases in national marriages rather than increases in the number of mixed marriages. Eastern European countries (including Poland) have quite stable trends (Lanzieri 2012).

According to Lanzieri, mixed marriages are on the rise almost everywhere in Europe. Although they are becoming more of reality in most European countries, the phenomenon is related to history and immigration traditions, the size of a country and its language. The smallest countries (such as Luxembourg, Switzerland and the Baltic States) have the most mixed marriages; they also tend to have close personal ties with their larger neighbours. As observed, while German-speaking Swiss often marry Germans, their French-speaking compatriots marry the French. In general, the share of the total population of marriageable age actually married to a foreigner is low, below 5% (Lanzieri 2012). Lanzieri explains that it is not easy to speculate about general future tendencies for mixed marriages, since there are several factors that will certainly play a role here. As a result of the progressive ageing of European populations (Lanzieri 2012), immigration flows are assumed to continue, influencing future population structures and leading to more diverse societies, especially in the younger generation and in the countries where migration flows are more significant

(Lanzieri 2012). As immigrants are usually younger than the host population, they are generally more likely to get married.

Information about the functioning of mixed couples in Poland is rather scarce and the issue requires sociological, anthropological and demographic investigation (Jaroszewska 2003; Rajkiewicz 2009; Solga, Slany 2014; Brzozowska 2015). The scale of this social phenomenon is observed by the Central Statistical Office of Poland. It is worth reminding that the number of mixed marriages concluded in Poland in 2004–2014 was about forty-seven thousand, most of them (70.3 percent) between Polish women and foreign men (most often from the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Ireland, France and the Netherlands). On the other hand, Polish men tended to get married with women from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. The total number of Polish citizens of both sexes who concluded mixed marriages abroad in the same period (2004–2014) was over thirty-seven thousand. Apart from marriages, what also needs to be considered is informal relationships, whose popularity is increasing. Their proportion to the total number of marriages concluded in 2004–2014 was 1.9 percent (Roczniki Demograficzne GUS 1995–2015).

Although the number of mixed marriages has been slightly decreasing in recent years, this does not necessarily indicate a decline in cross-national forms of family life. It should be noted that sociological and demographic research does not always seem to satisfactorily capture the phenomenon of cohabitation among emigrants, which might be more popular in this group than marriage. Consequently, the falling figures for mixed marriages may be an indication of the choice of cohabitation as a form of family life. This Special Issue offers a picture of international couples (both married cohabiting) from the qualitative and quantitative perspective, and sheds light on their everyday life and the challenges they face. It should be stressed that the cognitive value of the texts included in this volume is beyond doubt. Indeed, the question of the functioning of mixed couples is a relatively new study area in the Polish context. The authors aim to present cultural issues of “doing mixed couples” and their environment which often remain hidden. All the texts comply with the generally accepted standards of analysis of the material and its presentation, and all of them make an interesting contribution to the international sociology of the family and migration.

This Special Issue combines theoretical perspective (e.g. Anita Brzozowska, Marta Buler and Paula Pustułka, Ewa Nowicka) with international comparative reflection (e.g. Beate Collet, Katarzyna Juszczak-Frelkewicz, Beata Kowalska). The texts involve different methods and techniques of sociological research used to gather and process the material (e.g. observation, interview, statistical records) in order to offer the authors’ own interpretations of the phenomenon under consideration. Importantly, the readers will also have an opportunity to

become familiar with the latest Polish and international research projects which enabled the authors to pursue their investigation.

Thanks to the analyses presented by the authors, mixed couples are pictured in a broader perspective of migration, one involving transnational, multicultural, integrative and gender contexts. Most authors focus on issues of mixed couples involving a Polish spouse or partner (the United Kingdom: Marta Buler and Paula Pustułka, Anita Brzozowska; Norway: Dorota Rancew-Sikora, Magdalena Żadkowska, Krystyna Slany, Stella Strzemecka; Poland: Ewa Nowicka). A broader, original comparative perspective considers political aspects and concepts of citizenship in France (Beate Collet), South Korea (Katarzyna Juszczak-Frelkiewicz) and Jordan (Beata Kowalska). This Special Issue is divided into two parts. The first one concerns mixed couples involving a Polish spouse or partner. The second part, in turn, provides examples from other regions of the world, characterised by entirely different political, cultural and gender contexts (Europe: France, the Middle East: Jordan, Asia: South Korea).

The opening text by Anita Brzozowska deals with the theme of diversity of possible couple arrangements in a super-diverse environment. The author investigates the assumed link between intermarriage and the cultural, identificational and interactive dimensions of social integration of Polish migrants in the United Kingdom. Her original, cognitively inspiring contribution, traces three main patterns of interactive integration of Polish intermarried migrants and offers their categorisation: (1) the classic path of acculturation and integration, (2) inverse integration, and (3) a more pluralistic cosmopolitan mode.

Marta Buler and Paula Pustułka write about gendered family practices and cultural diffusion in binational couples involving Polish migrant women. Binational relationship is a specific space to examine the practices of everyday life and the process of negotiation and creation of a new inter-cultural gender order. On the example of three mixed method studies conducted in Europe, they argue that spousal attitudes to gender orders shape the degree of cultural diffusion in interethnic couples formed by Polish women in Western Europe. In addition, gender orders reflect preferences for a traditional or egalitarian model. The findings of these studies indicate that women remain the key agents of sustaining or rejecting Polish heritage and practices in everyday life.

The article by Dorota Rancew-Sikora and Magdalena Żadkowska concerns the situation in Norway. The authors give voice also to Norwegian husbands and partners of their Polish wives (partners). Analysing the content of in-depth interviews, the authors identify several strategies of mixing Polish and Norwegian habits adopted by mixed couples while receiving international guests.

The subject of children anchors the topic of binational relationships in many other social dimensions. Krystyna Slany and Stella Strzemecka show

the complexity of this issue on the example of daily lives of children living in mixed families. They give the children's perspective, which is unique in this field of studies, and compare the Polish-Norwegian context and multicultural experience of children living in Norway with the monocultural environment in Poland. Children of such mixed couples distinctly manifest their Norwegianness and point the emotional, intellectual and organisational effort of their Polish mothers to sustain Polishness.

The article by Ewa Nowicka concerns Poland as a hosting country. The outcomes reveal the stories of sixty-five couples living in Warsaw and some other big Polish cities, collected over the last decade. One of the partners is of Polish nationality while the other comes from Europe, Africa, Latin America or Asia. The couples share their dilemmas regarding their decisions about the place of residence, language(s) of communication, the culture of their children's education, etc. Ewa Nowicka calls this "case[s] of cultural contact under the circumstances of strong emotional ties and a special closeness which underscore the slightest of cultural differences separating the partners". What is familiar and what is foreign are the basic questions of their everyday life practices.

As mentioned above, the second part of this Special Issue is devoted to binational relationships involving intercontinental and interracial dimensions.

Beate Collet writes that conjugal mixedness (*mixité conjugale*) requires an intersectional approach; questions of ethno-cultural, racial or religious belonging are linked to gender, social class and migration history. This approach goes along with the variety of articles and perspectives we have selected for this volume. Discussing examples of mixed couples in France, the author shows how conjugal mixedness is studied from the outside, and also provides the inside perspective based on the couples' stories about their everyday life and the adjustments they make.

The article by Katarzyna Juszczuk-Frelkiewicz takes us to South Korea to see how homogenous Korean society is changing to heterogeneous on the example of data about international marriages. The text reveals the questions underlying the formation of mixed marriages (such as a limited number of women in the matrimonial market and gender changes stemming from higher educational ambitions among them), which force Korean men to marry foreign women (especially from China, the Philippines and Vietnam). This creates a new social order in terms of matrimonial market and family life courses. The author identifies a number of factors affecting international marriages, such as global structure and women's marriage migration, rapid industrialisation and changes in rural communities, demographic factors, the institutionalisation of marriage

brokers and explicit and implicit policies of the central and local governments of Korea for immigrant members of families.

The last article sheds light on the political perspective of international marriages and binational couples. Beata Kowalska takes us into the world of Jordanian women to show their expectations and chances for a different future through marriage. She also describes how religion, tradition and patriarchal order might influence mixed marriages embedded in the social landscape of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The gender perspective and the concept of citizenship are stressed in this article because the disproportion of possibilities and power according to gender is seen predominantly in this context.

In some situations binational marriages and relationships bring an opportunity to overcome gender, political and cultural differences between nations, in others they manifest the intensity of contrast between them. By offering this collection of articles we hope to provide more examples of complexity of intimate relationships and changes in the world families (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2014) that their members will face during their life course.

We would like to thank all the authors for their texts. The publication of this volume would not have been possible without their engagement in the project.

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We hope that this publication, which was made possible thanks to the effort of, and support from, so many academics working on the issues in focus, will be a helpful source for classes in the sociology of migration, sociology of the family and gender studies. We also hope that it can provide inspiration for further research on the phenomenon of mixed couples in different cultural, political, economic, gender and religious contexts.

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