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GENDER EQUALITY AND CHILDREN'S EQUALITY IN LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE DISCOURSES: IMPLICATIONS TOWARD LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT: This introductory article is intended to open the volume of work prepared by the participants of the 12th UNESCO Janusz Korczak Chair International Summer School. The participants presented these papers at the RC25 ISA Interim International Conference in Warsaw, entitled: "Language and Society. Research Advances in Social Sciences" (26-27.09.2019), exploring the concepts of gender equality and children's equality in liberal and conservative discourses and practices invested in language. The papers in this volume primarily use the methodology of discourse analysis and a range of tools and methods within this framework. The purpose is to shed light on how discourses inform preferences, behaviours and representations, towards the positioning of individuals in society, based on their respective gender and their individual status - whether an adult or a child. It is interesting to explore what is expected of the holders of these positions and whether they are able to confront and renegotiate their situation. The authors look into gendered childhood, analysing if differences can be found in so-called conservative and liberal discourses. The gender aspect of childhood and the resistance towards children's expected positions interlinked to their gender, is visible to diverse degrees in this selection of papers. The concept of social positioning due to one's gender is at the heart of this volume. Therefore, this Editorial forms a theoretical backstage for the volume of works included in the special post-conference issue of Society Register.
KEYWORDS: family unit, ideology, political orientation, sociology of religion, power, social positioning

INTRODUCTION

One of the aspects of this project is looking into the conservative or liberal orientation resonating from public discourses. The authors engage in defining and identifying the distinctive factors responsible for classifying certain discourses as liberal or as conservative. The next step is to link the influencing culture, social structures and micro-level factors such as family relations, treating these macro and micro instances as mutually conditioning and reproductive. The authors of the 12 papers in this volume, discuss various aspects of the social positioning of individuals within family and society, whilst linking them to political ideologies and produce direct and indirect evidence from discourse analysis of materials from numerous countries, covering five continents.

In this introductory paper, the author links internal relations within 'family units' to ideologies, treating the role of religious factors as the mediating aspect between political conservatism and family power relations and thus, decision-making processes and the division of labour within the family at home. So infused, the family may act as a force that reproduces the conditions of radical conservatism or liberalism. Furthermore, the social positioning of family members, based on their gender and on whether they are an adult or a child, may establish certain patterns, characteristic of the conservative or liberal orientation of a family unit. The concept of gender positioning within the family unit derives from an earlier study by Odrowaz-Coates (2019), dedicated to self-positioning and positioning by others, based on linguistic ability in English. A key finding of this study was that the soft-power relations based on language skills, permutated into the intimate relationships of partners and spouses, becoming an area of power struggle and the negotiation of gender positioning at home.

WHAT CONSTITUTES CONSERVATIVE OR A LIBERAL POSITIONING?

Definitions of conservatism or liberalism may be found for instance in works by Everett 2013, Feldman & Johnston 2014, Hirsh et al. 2010, Hunter 1992, Kanai et al. 2011, or Knight 1999. The identification of sources and mechanisms of conservatism and liberalism in family units is of great interest to the global community, which questions traditionalism and the recent rise of radical movements worldwide. This is not to say that conservatism is responsible for radicalization. The papers in this volume attempt to draw a demarcation line between conservative and liberal power distribution within families (c.f. Kanai et al. 2011; Everett 2013).

Conservative or liberal orientation, to an extent can be measured by a person's political alliance and their participation or not, in religious observance. The array of studies presented in this volume looks at public discourse and its social representation in family units and explores connections to conservative or liberal orientation. This is done to identify interrelations between the mechanisms of the reproduction of gender power relations within family units and with those of a wider social nature that lead to the liberalization or radicalization of social groups. A children's rights perspective is considered, and this helps to acknowledge their position in the repro-

duction of social systems (Greene&Hogan 2005, Greig et al. 2007, Warming 2011) and the strengths or weakness of their position in relation to domestic chores, domestic violence and corporal punishment. Children are considered to be a factor in positioning and self-positioning, contributing to certain power distribution at home.

Haidt & Graham (2007) and Graham et al. (2009) justify simple division into two opposite groups of liberals or conservatives, due to the differences they express in their orientation towards core values. Traditionally, liberally oriented people focus on the protection of human rights and individuality, whilst the conservatively oriented, focus on binding people into groups and institutions. 2007 CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre) data, shows that Polish people associate certain political parties with conservatism (PiS - Law and Justice) or anti-conservatism (PO - Civic Platform) therefore the researching of political preferences of family members is deemed appropriate. Liberalism per se, finds more support amongst larger cities dwellers and people with higher education, although data shows that 'liberalism' is often not fully understood by respondents. The CBOS (2007) survey of public opinion indicated that regularity of church observance is linked to a more conservative orientation and lack of such to a more liberal one, consequently expressed by political preferences towards the right or the left. Moreover, respondents declared a binary perception of liberalism as linked to anti-conservatism and conservatism as linked to anti-liberalism. Therefore, this simplified binary opposition seems logical for the purpose of this collection of works.

Continuing with Poland as an example of a country with strong religious movements, attendance at faith related ceremonies may be one of the factors accounting for conservative orientation. Despite ongoing secularization, Poland is still considered to be a hub of traditional Catholicism. Poland is a signatory of a concordat with the Vatican (1998) on the legal validity of church marriage. Therefore, the definition of marriage is shaped by the Roman Catholic church and it has some influence on social norms around marriage in a traditional sense. In Europe, only Italy, Slovakia and Malta have also signed this concordat with the Vatican and are distinctive from other European countries that have a completely secular approach to marriage (France, Russia) or with a more open definition of who may get married (e.g. Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Britain). The socializing impact of the RC church in Poland is a factor in power distribution within family units, with gender norms and a conservative political orientation (c.f. Odrowaz-Coates 2015) and conservatism is linked with paternalistic family organization by Long (1997). Examples of such organization may be found in countries strongly reliant on tradition, such as Saudi Arabia (c.f. Odrowaz-Coates 2015a).

SOFT POWER WITHIN FAMILY UNITS - A REPRESENTATION OF CONSERVATIVE OR LIBERAL ORIENTATION

Power distribution in families as an object of scientific enquiry is discussed at length by Odrowaz-Coates (2019) drawing from Boudon (1974), Harre (2012), Harre and Lagenhove (1999), who may be considered classical writers about social positioning. Their work was expanded on, establishing links to knowledge of certain language by

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The redefinition of "family" has evolved from the concept of a union between two people in order to have offspring (c.f. Gonzalez-Arnal et al. 2014), towards wider and more inclusive models. Heteronormativity and kinship in a traditional family model, connected to conservative ideal (Oswin 2010 Lévi-Strauss 1969; Schneider 1980) proved to be insufficient when drawing a family unit definition in XXI century, which is generally much more liberal. However, this would not apply to deeply conservative countries such as the above-mentioned Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Odrowaz-Coates 2015a). Recent cross-disciplinary readings dedicated to domestic spheres can be found in *Home Cultures* (Buchli et al. 2004), yet no relevant family definition was offered there. The conservative constraints of conventional models of family (man, woman and child) leads to the exclusion of the non-traditional groups evolving in today's modern societies, especially in the West. A liberal definition of a family unit may be constructed as two people living together in a long-term, intimate relationship (with or without children). In Poland, an average of 2,69 people per household was reported by Main Statistical Office (GUS, 2017), indicating the likely scenario of 2 plus 0, 1 plus 1, 1 plus 2 or 2 plus 1 as predominant family models. In cases where there are children in the family unit, their presence is without a doubt reflected in the family power matrix. Whilst children were already included as a factor in power alliances in conflict situations within family units (Caplow 1968, Jory et al. 1996, Stockard 2002) and in an imbalance of tasks when providing care for children and other family members (Fraser 1994, Crompton 1999, Corell et al. 2007 & Gornick &Meyers 2008), to enrich and further the current discourse, a children's rights perspective has been considered as it is clearly valuable (c.f. Clifton & Hodgson 1997, Lake 2011, Dyke 2014). In a study by Campione & Smetana (2003), the position of children within family unit was connected to four parenting styles, distinguished as: authoritarian, authoritative, liberal and negligent. A longitudinal study by Sharma et al. (2011), suggests that forceful parenting by fathers, with punitive measures and aggressive approaches (stereotypically considered as masculine) to their children's misbehaviour, have a direct correlation with future antisocial behaviour of their children. It is interesting to look into discourses on children's upbringing to identify which styles prevail in conservative or in liberal discourses. Moreover, under the social norm of a male breadwinner in the family (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004), becoming fathers may have an impact on men's motivation to work longer, harder, or to look for more lucrative employment in order to increase their earnings to provide for the growing family (Baranowski & Odrowaz-Coates 2018; Lundberg & Rose, 2000; Percheski & Wildeman 2008). However, this is very often achieved with detriment to the gender balance at home, with wives taking on the majority of unpaid work at home to support their husbands' increased earning efforts (Becker, 1981). Hodges & Budig (2010) showed that becoming a married father and having a university degree gave significantly larger financial benefits to white men. Therefore, in a North American context, a traditional and therefore conservative division of labour in middle class families of professionals, aided the men in their careers and raised their earnings. Szulich-Kałuża & Wadowski (2014) and Janowicz (2017), argue that Polish fathers are slowly adopting increasingly involved parenthood

models, yet lag behind in domestic chores, following a typical traditional and therefore conservative family model. An interesting source of observations in regard to the changing roles of fathers in the USA may be found in a paper by Dara Purivs (2019), who has observed a shift since the 1970s from conservative to more democratic forms of fatherhood and therefore a more liberal attitude towards models of parenting by fathers.

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES

When considering the issues of power within a family, symbolic violence may come to mind. Symbolic violence within family has so far been associated with invisible means of gendered domination through stereotyping, stigmatizing and gender roles (Montesanti & Thurston 2015). These may be noticeable in more traditional, more conservative settings. It is interesting to pursue this aspect in order to find if a conservative or liberal orientation brings any difference in the power distribution between people of different gender at home. Okin's (1989) concept of a one-sided exploitative relationship, which through marriage reduces female agency and prosperity in the labour market, reflected a feminist approach to marital power relations. Although Breen et al. (2009) show that educational inequality between genders and between classes in western countries has been on the decline, the overall time spent in unpaid work is still much greater for women than for men, especially in Poland, Ireland, Italy and Portugal. This is alongside limited access to affordable institutional childcare in these countries (ec.europa.eu 2016). These countries are predominantly Catholic, and as mentioned before, Poland and Italy signed a concordat with the Vatican, setting a marital template indicating that religious observance may have an impact on power distribution in family units and on positioning according to gender and child-adult distinctions. It is of value to observe in the papers if the boundaries between conservative and liberal orientations of family units are indeed noticeable and strongly defined, or if they are in fact blurred and soft [note1]. The attempts to do so is made by scholars from: Argentina, Iran, the Republic of Moldova, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine, USA and Poland. The volume is an interdisciplinary contribution not only to family studies in sociology, psychology and educational science, but also to the micro and macro-sociological research on the relations between.

NOTES
[1] On soft boundaries and soft gate please consult Odrowaz-Coates 2015a.

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