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# Women's academic career in the context of family life

## Introduction

Combining work and family life has become a current challenge for most working families all over the world, but the reconciliation of these areas is particularly problematic for women, who are more (than men) burdened with time-consuming family and household responsibilities.<sup>1</sup> Many of them are facing a choice between professional work and full commitment to family life. The choice is all the more difficult, the more effort a woman has put into acquiring education and professional qualifications.<sup>2</sup> Those with higher education often postpone their decision regarding motherhood,<sup>3</sup> and together with the rise in their education, the proportion of those without children is most likely to increase.<sup>4</sup> The reason for this phenomenon is the lack of, or insufficient, opportunities to reconcile the life roles chosen by women, and the need to choose between academic and professional development and family.

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<sup>1</sup> It is difficult, since it is still widely believed that their vocation is motherhood, but as emphasized by Piotr Szukalski "less and less popular is the opinion that motherhood is the only career being the monopoly of women, a career which must not be abandoned". Szukalski, P., (2004). *Bezdziemość w Polsce* [Childlessness in Poland]. [In:] Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, W., Szukalski, P., (Eds.). *Rodzina w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie polskim* [The family in changing Polish society], 104. Łódź: UŁ.

<sup>2</sup> Gawlina, Z., (2003). *Macierzyństwo jako wartość w kontekście przemian społecznych* [Motherhood as a value in the context of social change]. [In:] Tyszka, Z., (Ed). *Blaski i cienie życia rodzinnego* [Good and bad sides of family life]. *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny*, 15, 42. Poznań: UAM.

<sup>3</sup> Kotowska, I.E., (2007). *Uwagi o polityce rodzinnej w kontekście wzrostu dzietności i zatrudnienia kobiet* [Notes on family policy in the context of rising birth rate and the employment of women]. *Polityka Społeczna*, 8, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Szukalski, P., (2004). *Bezdziemość...*, op. cit., 92–93.

## Combining professional and family lives as a challenge for women realizing scientific careers

It is even harder for women scholars to act as a parent. Embracing academic research involves the necessity to be constantly up to date, and this requires much greater investment on the part of women, better organization and more support from the family,<sup>5</sup> but also from the state and the organization they work for – in this case, mostly, a university. Many young academic women decide not to have children for fear they might not cope with a doctorate or a postdoctoral degree later. Those who decide to become mothers must in turn accept the fact that either they will manage to maintain a balance between academic career and the parental role, or they will have to make constant choices between these two spheres of life. Bogdan Wojciszke points out that

[...] a serious, but kind of natural barrier on women's road to academic career is family life, the functions of a wife and a mother, the care for the family. [...] In the case of women scholars, a professional career is often pursued at the expense of the family, which is why they often tend to be single. [...] Women are aware of this natural barrier to the development of their academic career, which are the duties of a wife and a mother. In my opinion, whether a woman will devote herself to pursuing an academic career, or abandon it, or limit her ambitions in order to spend more time doing household chores is a matter of choice.<sup>6</sup>

However, the necessity to choose between the family and the child, and one's own academic and professional development seems to be unfair, and is a waste from the point of view of not only the whole society, but also from the perspective of the individual, and their potential, unfulfilled need of parenthood. A need that obviously affects the satisfaction and quality of life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Siemieńska-Żochowska, R., (2011). Niech będą zachowane proporcje [Let proportions be kept] (an interview conducted by A. Korzekwa). *Kwartalnik Urzędu Patentowego RP*, 1, 24–25, [http://www.uprp.pl/uprp/\\_gAllery/31/37/31378/KWARTALNIK\\_nr\\_1-2011\\_inter.pdf](http://www.uprp.pl/uprp/_gAllery/31/37/31378/KWARTALNIK_nr_1-2011_inter.pdf) [Re-trieved: 23.04.2015].

<sup>6</sup> Poros, J., (2004). Czy w nauce polskiej powinno być więcej kobiet? [Should there be more women in Polish academia?]. *Sprawy nauki, Biuletyn Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego*, 12.03.2004, [http://www.sprawynauki.waw.pl/?section=article&art\\_id=646&ref=search](http://www.sprawynauki.waw.pl/?section=article&art_id=646&ref=search) [Re-trieved: 23.03.2015].

<sup>7</sup> Jastrzębska, A., (Ed.), (2013). *MaMa na uczelni i tata też. Praktyczny poradnik dla władz uczelni* [MaMa at the university, and dad too. A practical guide for university authorities]. Warszawa: Fundacja MaMa.

Therefore, an academic career seems to be particularly absorbing in the context of reconciling it with family life. An **academic career** is a specific course of professional life, which concerns people seeking to obtain degrees (doctoral, post-doctoral, and the academic title of professor, obtaining which does not end, however, one's academic development). It is a process during which an individual working as an academic (scientist, researcher) primarily collects research results and development accomplishments (through, among others, academic publications, conducting research and implementing research projects), as well as achievements in teaching, popularizing and organizational activities necessary to obtain the indicated degrees and the academic title. An academic career requires a lot of dedication, and starting one's own family and being a parent may be a kind of burden, or obstacle, to its development. Therefore, academics, and particularly women scholars, pay a big personal price for pursuing their professional ambitions. As results from the practice observed, many of them are childless and/or divorced, and also single.

It is interesting in this context how women who pursue academic careers, and are professionally successful (not necessarily in their personal life); approach their own family life<sup>8</sup> (marriage and having a child/children, and being a parent). Hence, in the study presented an attempt was made to describe the situation and choices of women academics in the context of family life. These considerations are based on the literature of the subject (including the presentation of available results of research on how family responsibilities affect careers of researchers, and how professional lives of women working as researchers and achieving professional success affect, among others, their fertility), the author's observations from her own academic life, and the accounts of other academics (acquired during informal discussions, and by making familiar with opinions posted on an Internet forum).

## Situations and choices of women academics in the context of family life<sup>9</sup>

The situations observed indicate that professional/academic successes of women do not translate into a successful married life, since many of them are **divorced**. Both women academics that are mothers and those that do

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<sup>8</sup> The traditional understanding of a family consisting of two people (a woman and a man) remaining together in marriage, and their children, was adopted in this paper.

<sup>9</sup> More on this subject in: Krause, E., *Dziecko-rodzina a kariera naukowa – kariera kosztem życia rodzinnego?* [Child-family and the academic career – a career at the expense of family life?] (Text submitted for publication).

not play this role get divorced. Research shows that women pursuing a professional career more often get divorced, are more often unfaithful to their partners, and less frequently have children. If, however, they decide to have children, they are unhappy for this reason.<sup>10</sup> It can also be assumed that if they spend a lot of time at work and have a high income (earning more than their partner does), the number of divorces among this group is higher than among other groups of women.<sup>11</sup>

Pursuing academic careers, women consciously decide on **postponed motherhood**, or not having a child – **childlessness by choice**. These are women who do not want to (and perhaps never will) become mothers, even if they are married.<sup>12</sup> It is worth quoting some comments that were posted on the Internet, on a forum entitled “An academic woman and family life?” where the authors write:

Well, after all I wonder why I should struggle and vacillate so much. Having 2 or more full-time jobs. I like my research work, trips to conferences and independence. I would not swap it for a halfway doctorate and diapers; [...] At the moment, I cannot imagine children with this style of life. Certainly, after obtaining the doctorate, not before.<sup>13</sup>

Significant involvement in academic work is related to the deferral of the decision to procreate. Choices made in professional life, and continuous waiting for the “appropriate” time, lead to the fact that, at some point, women academics are forced to make a conscious decision that they will not have children, for there is no good time for motherhood. During the period of studies, there are usually no material conditions for it, and later it may just interfere with the professional/academic career.

Research shows that women pursuing an academic career do not have time for giving birth to and bringing up children, because the more

<sup>10</sup> Noer, M. (2006). Don't marry career women. *Forbes*, 23.08.2006, [http://www.forbes.com/2006/08/23/Marriage-Careers-Divorce\\_cx\\_mn\\_land.html](http://www.forbes.com/2006/08/23/Marriage-Careers-Divorce_cx_mn_land.html) [Retrieved: 10.04.2015].

<sup>11</sup> Gromkowska-Melosik, A., (2012). Sukces edukacyjno-zawodowy i problem maskulinizacji kobiet [Educational and professional success, and the problem of masculinisation of wom-en]. [In:] Gromkowska-Melosik, A., Melosik Z., (Eds.). *Tożsamość w społeczeństwie współczesnym: pop-kulturowe (re)interpretacje* [Identity in contemporary society: pop-cultural (re)in-terpretations], 82. Kraków: Impuls.

<sup>12</sup> This situation also applies to women scholars who have remarried (these are the so-called people who have been “through some trying experiences”), at the age that is not “condu-cive” to being a parent (it happens also that their spouses already have a child/children from their previous relationships).

<sup>13</sup> *Kobieta naukowiec a Życie rodzinne?* [An academic woman and family life?], [http://www.forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,87574,129554796,,Kobieta\\_naukowiec\\_a\\_zycie\\_rodzinne\\_.html?v=2](http://www.forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,87574,129554796,,Kobieta_naukowiec_a_zycie_rodzinne_.html?v=2) [Retrieved: 24.04.2015].

successful they are as academics, the more time they spend working. Sylvia Ann Hewlett studies women for whom a professional career is important and who have achieved professional success (High-Achieving Women).<sup>14</sup> In its objective sense, professional success is “doing” the doctorate, and certainly obtaining the post-doctoral degree, and very much so winning the academic title of professor. Hence, the results of the research conducted by the aforementioned researcher are worth mentioning. The women she interviewed constitute now a negligible proportion of women in senior managerial positions, and are 50 years old on average. It was interesting that all of them had no children, and most importantly, that they themselves did not consciously decide that they were not going to have them. A study conducted by Hewlett among working women who are successful and whose earnings are high, showed that as many as 33% of the women surveyed did not have children, and this percentage rose to the level of 42% among women working in American corporations; whereas, among women whose earnings were in excess of \$100,000.00 per year, childlessness rose up to 49%.<sup>15</sup> Among the younger generation, only 45% of the women surveyed had a child by the age of 35, while this figure amounted to 62% among women of the older generation. However, lack of children was not a conscious choice for the vast majority of those women. Going back to the time when they were 20, only 14% of the women surveyed answered affirmatively that they consciously did not want to have children.<sup>16</sup> Childlessness had become the price that they had to pay for meeting their professional aspirations.

## The conflict between scientific work and fulfilling parental roles and the factors determining women's procreation decisions

As results from other research, 80% of women lecturing at German universities are childless. The decision to give birth to a child is considered, for many German women working as researchers, as abandoning their academic career, and a longer break devoted to bringing up children as an obstacle to its

<sup>14</sup> Twarowska, K., (2015). Rezygnacja z dzieci pomaga w karierze? [Abandoning the desire to have children helps in pursuing a career?]. *Forbes*, 7.01.2015, <http://www.kariera.forbes.pl/kariera--zawodowa-kosztom-zycia-rodzinnego,artykuly,188131,1,1.html> [Retrieved 24.04.2015].

<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, only 25% of men at age of 40 did not have children, and among those whose annual remuneration exceeded \$200,000.00, this percentage dropped to 19%. Twarowska, K., (2015). Rezygnacja..., op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

development. They are convinced that these aspects cannot be reconciled. Reasons for these facts are seen in temporary contracts of employment and the long procedure to obtain the doctoral degree, which constitute a significant barrier to planning family life and academic work.<sup>17</sup>

The results of qualitative research (WorkCare 2006), which support the hypothesis about the impact of family responsibilities on women's academic careers, are important in the context of the issues discussed. The women academics surveyed mentioned the responsibilities related to childbirth and childcare as a major factor of reduced mobility. These responsibilities also constituted an obstacle when applying for positions providing better chances for career development, but entailing a higher burden of time. Having a child, let alone children, is one of the important factors retarding the development of academic careers of women. This retardation concerns mainly the postponement of the moment of obtaining the doctoral degree, and immediately after it. Work at university was at the same time viewed as one enabling the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities. The interviewees emphasized the fact that the attitude towards parenthood of their colleagues and the superior was an important factor.<sup>18</sup>

The results of the study entitled "Careers of young academics"<sup>19</sup> indicate that

[...] young researchers declare a minor impact of family responsibilities on their professional careers, until they have had children. However, one in four women having children has declared that family duties are an obstacle to her career. Similar declarations are made by one in five men.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Treude, N., Matzke, M., (2010). Kariera pomimo dzieci – trudna sprawa [A career in spite of children – a difficult matter]. *Deutsche Welle*, 8.03.2010, <http://www.dw.de/kariera-pomi-mo-dzieci-trudna-sprawa/a-5319580> [Retrieved: 10.04.2015].

<sup>18</sup> *Płeć w nauce – przeszkoda czy atut? Kariery naukowe a życie prywatne* [Gender in science – an obstacle or an advantage? Academic careers and private life] – a conference, Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw, Fundacja Feminoteka in cooperation with the chair of UNESCO Women-Society-Development. Warszawa, 1.06.2010 (a conference brochure), <http://www.workcaresynergies.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/PL%20Discussion%20paper%20PL.pdf> [Retrieved: 14.04.2015].

<sup>19</sup> 2005 Young Scientists in Poland (a PHARE project on the "National System for Monitoring the Equal Treatment of Men and Women").

<sup>20</sup> *Kobiety w lokalnych elitach. Problemy godzenia obowiązków rodzinnych z pracą i aktywnością społeczną* [Women in local elites. The problems of reconciling family responsibilities with work and social activity] – a conference, Instytut Socjologii, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Fundacja Feminoteka in cooperation with the chair of UNESCO Women-Society-Development. Podkowa Leśna, 20.05.2011 (a conference brochure), <http://www.workcaresynergies.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Podkowa200502011.pdf> [Retrieved: 14.04.2015].

The workload of household chores among scientists and entrepreneurs was also studied.<sup>21</sup> The results obtained indicate that

[...] equal sharing of family duties is more common in families of young academics, than in those of small business owners. Men scholars more often declare their involvement in housework than entrepreneurs do. However, it is women who are decisively more often responsible for all or most household duties.<sup>22</sup>

Being a parent can thus hinder research work, and be an obstacle to the development of academic careers, especially of women. The conflict between work and the parental role may then become inevitable. A child “slows down” the career, because the time for “making” it (obtaining degrees and the academic title) is limited, and requires compromises. A child also limits (especially in the early years of its life) mobility (which was con-firmed by the results of the qualitative research cited here) on the market of research work, which becomes the norm. Visits to foreign research centres support the development of further stages of a researcher's career, and the necessity of parting with the loved ones for the period of the visit, or the need to introduce changes in family life (e.g. change of the children's school or the partner's job) are obvious barriers. A major problem is thus to reconcile leaving for internships, scholarships, traineeships, and field studies with childcare, as well as with publishing. When being pregnant, it is also difficult to conduct some research (e.g. one that is bad for your health). This makes many parents, especially women, abandon research and academic work, or having children. In turn, mother academics who return to work after their maternity leave often feel that they are far behind their colleagues. In Poland, still only 20% of women attain the highest academic degrees.<sup>23</sup>

Procreational decisions of, in particular, young researchers (who are generally people at childbearing age) are significantly affected by their financial situation. Especially at the beginning of an academic career, earnings do not encourage enlarging the family, and low salaries make it difficult to finance the care for the youngest children. In the first place, mother academics, who can only resign from their job or attempt to combine working full-time (often at non-standard hours) with childcare, are to bear the consequences of this fact.<sup>24</sup> CBOS survey results confirm that the financial situation (51%), and the expected conflict between work and family roles (31%),

<sup>21</sup> 2005 Owners of small companies (a PHARE project on the “National System for Monitoring the Equal Treatment of Men and Women”).

<sup>22</sup> *Kobiety w lokalnych elitach...*, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Jastrzębska, A., (Ed.), (2013). *MaMa na uczelni...*, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

are a primary barrier to reproductive intentions and performing the parental role.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, a child also means hidden costs that relate to the reduction of earnings (sometimes their loss), limited mobility, lack of time for professional development, and pursuit of a career.<sup>26</sup>

## Women scientists trying to combine scientific career with their family lives

Due to the said difficulties that parenting involves, should a **married** woman academic decide to have a child, she will usually decide to have only one. She then consciously decides to **act as a parent of one child**. This is a usual situation that is consistent with nationwide (and not only) trends. This is because the 2+1 family model is becoming the most popular. One child involves lower costs of living and, in addition, it is easier for parents to find time to perform their parental duties. Acting as a parent of one child also applies to people **taking care of and educating their child alone**, i.e. people who got divorced (more frequently), or were not in a formal relationship (more rarely); this role may also be performed by women scholars who have remarried.

Rare is a situation in which a woman researcher performs the role of a **spouse and a parent of more than one child** and it is even less frequent when she is unmarried. In view of the fact that having more than one child entails a number of sacrifices at the expense of the academic career, women most often do not decide to start a large family. It is worth quoting here again the statements that appeared on the previously cited online forum. One of the authors writes:

I have three children, a husband (who is never at home, because he is busy making money to bring home the bacon), and an almost completed doctorate. My academic achievements are considerable, and I can see that the international academic community are beginning to appreciate my work, which I enjoy :) I work at home a lot. Somehow, I have to reconcile my research with raising children, doing the laundry, cooking, cleaning... I also want to look somewhat good, and I have to find some time

<sup>25</sup> CBOS, (2013a). *Postawy prokreacyjne kobiet* [Procreational attitudes of women]. Research report BS 29/2013 (March). Warszawa: Fundacja Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

<sup>26</sup> Górska, J., Weiss, A., (2013). Wyobrażenia studiujących kobiet na temat rodziny i macierzyństwa w kontekście współczesnych przemian [Women students' ideas about family and motherhood in the context of contemporary changes]. [In:] Garbula, J.M., Zakrzewska, A., Sawczuk, W. (Eds.). *Świat rodziny. Perspektywa interdyscyplinarna. Wobec wyzwań i zagrożeń* [Family World. The interdisciplinary perspective. In the face of challenges and threats], 274. Toruń: Adam Marszałek.



for myself. Sometimes, I want to go out and not to come back at all – like many mothers, regardless of the type of work they do... In fact, I take care of everything alone. [...] Actually, I have been living on the run since the beginning of my studies. In some circles at my institute, it is believed that a woman-mother is a moron – literally. How unpleasant.<sup>27</sup>

This statement confirms that it is extremely difficult for women pursuing an academic career to combine family responsibilities with professional/academic ones, in the absence of support from the loved ones and from their own academic circle. An example of such lack of support from the university in reconciling family and academic life of women may be the story of one of the academic lecturers employed in a unit in which women predominate.

And so, according to the words of the interlocutor, quite a few of thirty-year-old childless women were employed at the unit at some point. These ladies were forced to develop a «getting-pregnant schedule», so that work at the institute would not be disrupted by their leave related to the enlargement of the family.<sup>28</sup>

Another author expressing her opinion on the forum indicates that the reconciliation of these spheres

[...] depends a little on the children themselves. They can be more or less absorbing. Mine would not sleep at night and during the day; they required non-stop attention. There was no chance of doing academic work effectively. In general, having children means that a significant period of time (several months, if not more) is snatched from one's academic biography. Those who have no children will not understand.<sup>29</sup>

Another one writes,

[...] quite frankly, I do admire people who are so hard-working and determined, able to establish themselves priorities at a given moment/period. I have the problem that I would like to be a great mother, great wife, great cook, etc., and even to squeeze in somewhere my post-doctoral studies. It is impossible, I guess. And when it comes down to it, it is the children who are my priority, not work.<sup>30</sup>

Combining childcare and academic work causes that this professional area becomes less effective. Another statement seems to confirm it:

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<sup>27</sup> *Kobieta naukowiec...*, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Striker, M., Wojtaszczyk, K., (2009). Społeczne bariery rozwoju kadry naukowo-dydaktycznej uczelni wyższej [Social barriers to the development of research and teaching university staff]. [In:] Woźniak, M.G., (Ed.). *Nierówności społeczne a wzrost gospodarczy* [Social inequality and economic growth], 14, 480. Rzeszów: UR.

<sup>29</sup> *Kobieta naukowiec...*, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

In my case, the situation: academic work + children (3 small ones) and the home gives me a sense of balance in life. After work, I do take pleasure in looking after my children, but if I had only the home and my children, I would strongly experience lack of academic work. Organizationally, it can be arranged, though I certainly do publish quantitatively less than I would, if I did not have children [...].<sup>31</sup>

There is also part of women academics, who were not and/or **are not in any formal relationship** (and perhaps they will never want to), and they **do not perform the role of a parent**. Such a situation may result from various reasons, which were described earlier (divorce, deferred procreational decisions, childlessness by choice), but also from the impossibility to find a suitable life partner, or absence of the need to be in a relationship. Such positioning may also be a result of the approach associated with the need to choose one of those spheres (career or family), an example of which can be the following statement of one of the s/he-authors posting on the internet forum:

It's simple. A woman academic should not have children. As it is commonly known, it is impossible to reconcile family life with reliable academic work. Either this or that.<sup>32</sup>

A study conducted by Hewlett among women achieving professional successes showed that their professional life affected not only their procreational decisions, but also their private life in any other way(s). Only 60% of women aged 41–55 had husbands, and this number dropped to 57% among women working in corporations.<sup>33</sup>

There are also individual cases of abandoning an academic career – professional work in general, for the benefit of family life, and not engaging in academic work (a transition to the teaching position, becoming a senior lecturer). Such situations usually occur after having children. As results from Hewlett's research, most of the women who have abandoned their careers in order to raise their children would like to go back to professional work. Most of them also believe that their decision to “leave” the career path was forced by the **lack of employers' flexibility**, and long working hours. Only 16% of

<sup>31</sup> *Kobieta naukowiec...*, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> In contrast, up to 76% of men in the corresponding age group had a wife, and the number of married men increased to 83% among those earning more than \$200,000.00. Thus, while men found it definitely easier to maintain family life while pursuing a career and earning a lot, even at the expense of the time devoted to their family, in the case of women it was quite the opposite. It may be so because 40% of women believe that their husbands do not share their household responsibilities with them and, therefore, upon coming back home, women begin their “second shift”. Twarowska, K., (2015). *Rezygnacja...*, op. cit.

women were of the opinion that a woman “can have everything” with regard to a career and family, and 39% held that a man has a much easier life, and “can have it all”.<sup>34</sup>

It is interesting to recall here the WORKCARE Synergies international project, under which the results of the research on reconciling work and family responsibilities, as well as academic careers in the context of gender were presented.<sup>35</sup> In this regard, the results of the research under the national project “Careers of young scientists”, in which references were also made to stereotypes were presented. The results obtained showed that the conviction of harmful effects of women's professional work on family life still applies to quite a large group of people. Such views are more often declared by men (21%) than by women (14%), also more frequently by entrepreneurs (35%) than by academics (16%).<sup>36</sup>

The Poles, however, slowly change their views on traditional social roles assigned to women and men. Until recently (according to the results of the Public Opinion Research Centre from 1994), the majority believed that looking after the home and the children should be more important for mothers than work. According to a survey conducted in 2014 by TNS Polska, the majority (64%) were for women to have the full right to pursue a career, even if they were to take care of the family a little less. The vast majority (71%) believed that with some good will it was possible to reconcile the happiness of the family and a professional career, while almost 1/4 (24%) of respondents held the view that real family happiness required abandoning the pursuit of successes and a professional career. Women demonstrate more belief in the possibility of reconciling the family sphere with the professional one, and are more often than men against favouring women's roles related to the home and the family over the other roles (69% of women, compared to 58% of men believe that they have the right to pursue a professional career, even if they were to take care of the family a little less).<sup>37</sup> The possibility of reconciling these two spheres, however, depends not only on the individuals

<sup>34</sup> Twarowska, K., (2015). *Rezygnacja...*, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> The project was implemented in Poland by a team from the Institute of Social Studies at Warsaw University, under the guidance of prof. Renata Siemieńska, in cooperation with the Feminoteka Foundation, in 2010–2011.

<sup>36</sup> *Kobiety w lokalnych elitach...*, op. cit.

<sup>37</sup> TNS, (2015). *Polacy o roli kobiet i mężczyzn w rodzinie w 1994 i 2014 roku* [The Poles about the role of women and men in the family in 1994 and 2014]. Research report K.011/14 (February). Warszawa: TNS Poland; Cf. also: *Kobiety mają prawo do kariery zawodowej nawet kosztem rodziny* [Women have the right to a professional career, even at the expense of the family], 13.02.2014, [http://www.gazetapraca.pl/gazetapraca/1,90444,15454434,Kobiety\\_maja\\_prawo\\_do\\_kariery\\_zawodowej\\_nawet\\_kosztem.html](http://www.gazetapraca.pl/gazetapraca/1,90444,15454434,Kobiety_maja_prawo_do_kariery_zawodowej_nawet_kosztem.html) [Retrieved: 13.04.2015].

themselves (on their will), but also on the actions of the state and their organization/employer in this regard.

## Conclusions

Based on the research and analyses conducted, it can be concluded that women scholars pursue their academic careers at the expense of family life and, especially, at the expense of acting as a parent. For it is more and more often that we are dealing not so much with the postponement of procreational decisions, but rather with their rejection by women attaining professional successes, and such are women researchers. What then should be done in order to change the described state of affairs, to encourage women academics to have children and be a parent? Significant are actions under-taken by the employer, in this case mostly the university, supporting the reconciliation of professional duties and research work with parenting.<sup>38</sup> Universities, however, generally limit their actions to observing the provisions of the Labour Code regulating the rights related to parenthood.

The European Charter for Researchers requires

[...] employers to shape working conditions that are flexible enough for employees to achieve effective results of academic research, in accordance with the existing national legislation, and with national or sectoral collective agreements. They should aim to provide such working conditions that allow both women and men to reconcile family and professional life, having children, and pursuing a professional career. Particular attention should be paid, inter alia, to flexible working hours, part-time employment, telecommuting, sabbaticals and the necessary financial and administrative provisions governing such arrangements.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of combining the parental role with research work, it is very important to overcome stereotypes about the academic career.

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<sup>38</sup> Solutions supporting combining the parental role and the academic career have been described in another study by the author: Child-family and the academic career – a career at the expense of family life? (Text submitted for publication). It is also worth referring to the publication Jastrzębska, A., (Ed.), (2013). *MaMa na uczelni...*, op. cit., and to the planes of supporting the development of professional careers of people taking care of children, which the author wrote about in the text (2014): *Relacje Życie zawodowe – życie rodzinne. O płasz-czyznach wspierania rozwoju kariery zawodowej osób sprawujących opiekę nad dziećmi* [Professional life – family life relationships. On the planes of supporting the development of professional careers of people taking care of children]. [In:] Tomaszewska-Lipiec, R., (Ed.).

*Relacje praca – życie pozazawodowe drogą do zrównoważonego rozwoju jednostki* [Work – personal life relations as a way to sustainable development of the individual]. Bydgoszcz: UKW.

<sup>39</sup> Striker, M., Wojtaszczyk, K., *Spółeczne bariery...*, op. cit., 483.

Traditionally, the academic career is regarded as one requiring sacrifices and abandonment of family life. The stereotype of an academic totally devoted to their research continues to exist. It is a pattern that does not take into account the situations and experiences of women, and parents in general, who want to maintain a balance between their career and family life. Furthermore, gender stereotypes regarding academic development still prevail in the academic community. The desire to change these stereotypes by working on changing attitudes in this environment, as well as through education on many levels, is essential for improving the situation of mothers/parents in academia.<sup>40</sup>

In order for parenthood not to be an obstacle to women's research work and academic career development, activities supporting the combination of professional life with family life are necessary. For these are not, in fact, two separate domains of human life, but they often co-depend on each other, and the condition of success in life is for many people a sense of balance between them. The research shows that almost all adult Poles (97%) express a desire to have children,<sup>41</sup> and the vast majority (84%) believe that in order to feel fulfilled, you need to have at least one child.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it is important for women and men to be able to discharge their professional duties in accordance with their special role in the family, which is the care and upbringing of children.

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<sup>40</sup> Jastrzębska, A., (Ed.), (2013). *MaMa na uczelni...*, op .cit.

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<sup>42</sup> Zaraska, M., (2013). *Czy dzieci dają nam szczęście?* [Do children provide us with happiness?]. *Focus.pl*, 10.08.2013, <http://www.focus.pl/czlowiek/czy-dzieci-daja-nam-szczescie-9637?> [Retrieved: 10.04.2015].

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## Abstract

### Women's academic career in the context of family life

This study is an attempt to present the relationship between the academic career and family life, with particular emphasis on the situations and choices of women scholars in the context of family life (mainly performing the parental role). Results of available studies on how family duties affect researchers' careers, and how the professional lives of women embracing academic research and being successful professionally, influence, among others, their fertility, have been presented in it. It is on their basis, and based on literature studies, observations from the author's academic life, and accounts of other academics, that a thesis was proposed that

women's academic career is pursued at the expense of family life and, especially, performing the parental role. Indeed, we are increasingly dealing not so much with the postponement of the decision on procreation, but rather with its rejection mainly by women attaining professional success, and such are female researchers.

**KEY WORDS: academic career, woman academic, family life, parental role**

## Streszczenie

### Kariera naukowa kobiet w kontekście życia rodzinnego

Niniejsze opracowanie stanowi próbę ukazania relacji pomiędzy karierą naukową a życiem rodzinnym ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem sytuacji i wyborów kobiet naukowców w kontekście życia rodzinnego (głównie pełnienia roli rodzicielskiej). Zaprezentowano w nim dostępne wyniki badań dotyczące tego, jak obowiązki rodzinne wpływają na karierę naukowców oraz jak życie zawodowe kobiet pracujących naukowo i osiągających sukcesy zawodowe oddziałuje m.in. na ich dzietność. Na ich podstawie, a także w oparciu o studia literaturowe, obserwacje z życia akademickiego autorki oraz relacje innych pracowników naukowych uczelni, postawiono tezę, że kariera naukowa kobiet realizowana jest kosztem życia rodzinnego, a zwłaszcza pełnienia roli rodzicielskiej. Coraz częściej mamy bowiem do czynienia nie tyle z odroczeniem decyzji prokreacyjnych, co raczej z ich odrzuceniem głównie przez kobiety osiągające sukcesy zawodowe, a do takich należą kobiety naukowcy.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: kariera naukowa, kobieta naukowiec, życie rodzinne, rola rodzicielska**

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