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## IV

# MODERN FATHER PARTICIPATION IN CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND NOT ONLY THAT

Udział współczesnego ojca w rozwoju dziecka i nie tylko

### ABSTRACT

The main problem of the study concerns the role of a father in the family and in particular his contribution in upbringing of children. New phenomena and changes in the life context have stimulated development of a new approach to fatherhood. Increasingly often the father is not necessarily biologically related to the child but is a person contributing to development of child's psyche and engaged in child's upbringing. The question appears if contemporary father still is the head of family. To establish the role of the father today a study was made according to the ex post facto procedure. The study was based on analysis of documents, interview and a questionnaire proposed. The subjects of the study were 220 elementary school pupils brought up in full families and their fathers and 37 children from incomplete families – brought up without fathers. Results have indicated a significant importance of the presence of a father in a family and his engagement in the child's affairs on the child's development, school achievements and behaviour. Although many fathers are convinced about their influence on development of their children, only a few are aware of the significance of fatherhood on their own personal development.

**Key words:** father, role, family life, child development

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## STRESZCZENIE

Główny problem podjęty w niniejszym artykule dotyczy roli ojca w życiu rodziny, a szczególnie jego udziału w rozwoju dziecka. Nowe pojęcie ojcostwa pozostaje pod wpływem różnych zjawisk i zmian zachodzących w zmieniającym się kontekście życia. W dzisiejszych czasach jest on nierzadko postrzegany jako twórca psychiki dziecka, a nie koniecznie jego biologicznej formy. W związku z powyższym nasuwa się pytanie czy współczesny ojciec jest nadal głową rodziny?

W celu uzyskania odpowiedzi na tak postawione pytanie przeprowadzono badania zgodnie z procedurą *ex post facto*. Wykorzystano w nich między innymi analizę dokumentów, wywiad i autorski kwestionariusz. W badaniach uczestniczyło 220 uczniów szkół podstawowych wychowywanych w rodzinach pełnych oraz ich ojcowie i 37 dzieci z rodziny niepełnych – pozbawionych opieki ojców.

Wyniki badań wskazują na istotne znaczenie obecności ojca w rodzinie i jego zaangażowania w jej sprawy dla osiągnięć szkolnych dziecka: jego wyników w nauce i zachowania. Chociaż współcześnie wielu ojców jest przekonanych o swym wpływie na rozwój własnego dziecka, to jednak niewielu z nich ma świadomość znaczenia „ojcostwa” dla swego rozwoju osobistego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ojciec, rola, życie rodziny, rozwój dziecka

## INTRODUCTION

Parenting, especially fatherhood has attracted attention of many scientists mainly psychologists, teachers, educationalists, sociologists and theologians (Dowiat, 1985, Delumeau, Roche, 1995, Pospiszyl, 1980). However, the knowledge of the meaning of the father's role in the life of contemporary child is insufficient, and the meaning of fatherhood in the man's life and in his own development is even less recognised. We can indicate three sources of this knowledge: (i) theoretical ideas proposed in different areas of science and by different scientific approaches, (ii) empirical experiments and (iii) popular knowledge based on experience of many generations. They provide us with general information about different aspects of fatherhood such as procreative/sexual, economic, social, emotional, caring as well as educational. However, the hitherto accumulated knowledge is insufficient to fully recognize the role of the father in the period of social and economic changes that have been happening in Poland over the last twenty years.

The concern of teachers and tutors connected with inappropriate behaviour of children and the youth observed increasingly often not only at school but also outside it, as well as increasing educational difficulties and alarming media reports referring to this subject, substantiate deepening of psychological

research to find reasons for such phenomena. (Liberska, Matuszewska, 2007). One of the directions of such research is to revise the hitherto knowledge on the father's involvement in the child's development, including the preparation of the child to enter the adulthood. A contemporary father has become aware of the fact that looking after a little baby is an important life task and a challenge and needs his engagement from the first days of the child's life. According to some men this task should start even earlier, since the child conception or since the decision on becoming a parent (compare Hurlock, 1985, Kornas-Biela, 2009).

In view of the alarming demographical indicating increasing number of single mothers, divorces and non-formal relationships, the concern of scientists, theologians, welfare institutions, religious societies, volunteers about the father's role in the future in the context of correct development of the new generation has become a moral and social imperative.

## THE IDEAS OF 'FATHER' AND 'FATHERHOOD'

The word describing the father in the slavic language groups comes from praindoeuropean word 'atta'/daddy/ used as a pet name for 'father'. Although, the word 'father' belongs to the category of fundamental notions difficult to define but understood by the majority of people. According to the Polish Language Dictionary a father is somebody who has got his own child or children, while "fatherhood" is the fact of fathering a child or children (Polish Language Dictionary, 1992). There are also many secondary meanings of this word derived from it such as, e.g. an ancestor, founder, progenitor, initiator, author of some movement and a creator. In the area of religious associations this word refers to ordained monk, the name of an order, the Pope / Holy Father/ and God /Our Father/.

The ideas of 'father' and 'fatherhood' have got several aspects: biological, psychological, sociological and legal. Unfortunately, none of these aspects comprises the deepest meaning of this idea or all the elements making the entire picture of a person called the father or, what's more, full contemporary understanding of 'being a father'.

In the social area the legal fatherhood dominates over the biological fatherhood. The child's father is a man legally bound to the child's mother and does not have to be the actual biological father of the child. For this reason the word 'father' refers first of all to the social and legal status and not biological one.

## ROLE OF FATHER IN THE FAMILY. THE MODEL OF FATHER

The family as a basic social unit is not a hermetic entity excluded from the social life, on the contrary, it is closely related to all kinds of social structures and is subjected to all kinds of external influence. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological approach the family has the status of a social microsystem and functions within greater systems described as mezo-, egzo- and macrosystems. Hence it is clearly understood that all the political, social, economic, cultural changes taking place in society have profound influence on the family, inducing formation of its new model and within it a new position of the father, referring also to the sexual roles (see Miluska, 1999). The modern family is exposed to a great variety of external processes, among them the following:

- **Industrialization** – the replacement of human power with other sources of energy has caused technological changes which transformed the style of living. Appearance of a large number of new professions and specializations has resulted in elimination of social and professional traditions, professions no longer go from father to son,
- **Urbanization** – the depopulation of the country and migration to cities has brought profound lifestyle changes; families are no longer multigenerational, the frequency and intimacy of family contacts has weakened,
- **Democratization** which has been manifested as changes in family interrelations, changed woman's position in society and increased professional activity of women. Leading to gradual disappearance of the traditional family roles with the woman taking care of the family atmosphere and the man responsible for the family welfare.
- **Individualization** manifested by isolation of the family from other families or social groups ( for example: schools),
- **Atomization** manifested by breaking up the social structures into smaller partly isolated entities having special aims and roles; this phenomenon has also been noted in the family systems and is related to highly valued autonomization of its subsystems,
- **Medialization and virtualization of life**, which threatens to some extent the intimacy of the family life, traditions and family habits,
- **Liberalization** of social life including the family life (Tyszka, 2002).

The above process make a background of specific changes in the family model and the father's role. For a long time the patriarchal family model had been functioning, which was a legacy of the culture of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome and had been spread with Christianity and Hebrew culture. This

model was characterised by a strong position of the father acting as 'the head of the family' ("*pater familia*") and representing the family in the social and public life. His power ("*patria potestas*") inside the family relied on strong authority and entitled him to act as a judge in family matters. The father had great influence on the lives of the other members of the family. His main responsibility was to provide for the wife and children. The father-child contacts were instrumental; in contrast to the mother whose duty was to care for the children and the husband, the father preferred autocratic style of upbringing based on bans and punishment. The father had no deep emotional bonds with his children. Relations between the father and the child or children were purely instrumental.

The collapse of the traditional patriarchal family model has been preceded by profound economical, legal and historical changes. The father has lost the status of the "pater familias" and his position as the head of family has weakened. In the legislation the term 'parental authority' has been replaced by 'father authority' (in French legislation the Bill of the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, 1970).

The new concept of the 'fatherhood' has been influenced by different phenomena and changes in the areas listed below.

- **Changes in the type of marriage and model of family** – Breakdown of marriage as an institution has been manifested by changes in the family model. Apart from the traditional model (mother, father, children), the number of single parent families has increased in which there is only one parent to bring up the child, mostly a mother. The number of reconstructed families or the families with the so-called 'coming round parent' or with one parent temporarily absent has grown. As a consequence the status of the father has been reduced; the father's role in the family has been either completely eliminated or shared by a few men;
- **Filiation law**– The status of fatherhood has also declined in its biological sense. The father is not only the person who conceived the child but also the man who takes care of the child and participates in the child's upbringing.
- **Progress in the field of medicine and biology** – fast development of medicine and biology has contributed to the change in the meaning of fatherhood. The availability of artificial insemination introduced new types of filiation. Every anonymous sperm donor can be a father. Taking into account all the moral reservations related to this method, the problem of the meaning of fatherhood gets a new dimension in the form of the question who should be called a real father of the child, is it the sperm donor or the man who takes part in the child's development and upbringing.

- **Change in the woman's status in society** – Increasing professional activity of women has deprived the father of the status of the only responsible for the family welfare. Fathers earnings are often comparable with those of their wives' and sometimes even lower, which significantly changed the father's role in the family.
- **The child's position in the family** – General recognition of the children's rights has definitely decreased the power of the father in the family.

All the changes mentioned above have forced a change in the role of contemporary men including their family role.

What is the contemporary model of the father ? The contacts of father with children have evolved from strictly instrumental to more emotional (compare Przetacznik-Gierowska, Tyszkowa, 1996). Contemporary father is no longer the highest authority in the family, though, an authoritative style of upbringing has been evaluated as most favouring development of social competences of the child (com.. Bee, 1995). An important function of the father still is to provide for the family and protect the inner stability of the family.

The father has started taking over some household duties hitherto reserved for women (compare Liberska, Matuszewska, 2001). The father is increasingly often present at the childbirth, increasingly engaged in baby care, and in general in the problems of the child, giving his support, caring about development of the child's abilities and preparing the child for the future social roles. To some extent it resembles the earlier roles of the father assigned traditionally to him.

What is the beginning of playing the father's role? From the psychological point of view important is the moment when a man becomes aware of the fact of becoming one. This awareness triggers in man's psychic many psychological mechanisms, arouses imagination and dreams, stimulating the reconstruction of the concept of his own life and planning the child's future and many other processes of developmental nature. Many men are very proud of being fathers, which can result in changes in their own self-evaluation and self images. The fact of being a father changes the man's social stand. It stabilises his position in the adult mature men's world and at the same time makes him take up new developmental tasks (Havighurst,1972, Levinson, 1986). The fact of taking them up determines development of close emotional bond between the father and the child. If this is an attaching bond (compare Bowlby, 1988) it stabilizes the father's influence on the child for his/her whole life but, what is seldom mentioned in literature, the attaching bond will have a great influence on the future father's life as well as his further development (compare Plopa, 2005). Unfortunately, not all fathers are aware of the bonds connecting them with their children and not in all fathers the process of the development of the father's awareness is undisturbed.

Is a modern father still the head of the family? Surely he is not in the same meaning as before, there is some new content in this notion. Contemporary father is regarded to be mainly a creator of the child's psyche but not necessarily a creator of his/her 'biological form. The father today faces the task of shaping a new personality, preparation of a new human being to live in the society in a defined culture and to meet the challenges of the dynamically developing civilization. Even if the father does not understand his procreative role in this way (compare. Erikson, 2000), he is offered a chance to enjoy raising the children, contributing to creation of the atmosphere of safety and stabilisation in the family.

## METHODOLOGY

### The main problem, aims and questions of study

The main problem of this paper concerns the roles of contemporary father in the family especially his participation in the child's development. The interest in these problems has been stimulated by analysis of the work of outstanding psychologists and sociologists indicating the crisis of the family and authorities (Smetana, 1995, Bauman, 2006, Obuchowski, 2001). Does the current situation entitle us to assume the thesis about a decline in parental authority, including that of the father? Perhaps it is just the change in the hitherto form of authority which is replaced by the authority based on partnership and friendship? We tend to the second supposition.

The main purpose of the survey presented was to answer the question about the role of contemporary father in the child's development assessed on the basis of school success or failure and social adaptation.

The research questions were:

1. What functions are carried out by contemporary fathers in their families?
2. What family model is currently dominant taking into account the father's role?
3. What is the contemporary father's understanding of his parental role? Does he realise the significance of his parental role to his child, does he see the relation between his individual development and that of his child? Does he treat the realisation of the parental role as pro-developmental, i.e. stimulating their individual development?

The attempt to grasp the contemporary men understanding of fatherhood was also expected to bring information on social stereotypes related to fatherhood and the attitude to the activities involved.

The next problem referred to the role of the father in shaping the school performance of the child and has been expressed in two questions:

- 4.1 Does the father's presence in the family influence the success of the child at school? If yes, what are the areas of this influence?
- 4.2 Does the father's presence in the family influence the social adaptation of the child at school? The measure of success in social adaptation assumed in the study was the lack of educational problems or low intensity of such problems.

A survey of literature from the field of psychology of education published in the 1970s and 1980s provides arguments supporting the thesis that the influence of father on school success of the child and the level of child's adaptation to school conditions is significant (Ziemska, 1977, Hurlock, 1985, Przetacznik-Gierowska, Włodarski, 1994, Birch, Malim, 1995). Thus, we should expect to get the answer confirming the positive influence of the father on the school success, mainly in the general education subjects and behaviour. However, no premises have been given in literature to support any expectations as to the relation between the father presence and the child's success in the arts, except some known cases of particularly talented persons (Hornowski, 1978). Moreover, in the light of the earlier mentioned works of Obuchowski, Bauman or Smetana, the significance of family as the fundamental social environment becomes increasingly restricted. The works of these authors indicate declining authority of the parents and seem to point out that the influence of the father on the child's development, including his/ her school carrier, gradually disappears. In view of the two divergent standpoints regarding the influence of the father on school adaptation of the child and his/her school success and behaviour, we decided not to formulate research hypotheses but only research questions.

## **Variables and their indices**

The main independent variable (X-1) was assumed to be the role of the father in the family. The standards of behaviour and standards of execution of a given role have impact on the behaviour of the person taking a given role through social pressure and expectations. The role of the father is – among others – defined by the functions he should perform in the family (Woźniak, 2002). According to the traditional family model, the main function of the father is to provide the family with financial safety, decide about important family matters, including rewards and punishments, and to control the behaviour of the family members. In the traditional family model the father is supposed to be the person to look up to, a role-model, especially for the sons (Hurlock, 1985). In the egalitarian model,



the role of the father is on the one hand enriched by the functions related to the engagement in the care and upbringing of the child, participation in creating family atmosphere and in household chores, while on the other hand, the father is released from some duties, in particular from the control and disciplinary tasks (Hurlock, 1985, Harwas-Napierała, 2001, 2003). According to the family model with father unengaged in family matters and child's upbringing (full family) the functions of the father are drastically limited to providing financial support (Janukowicz, 2002), although such a father is formally entitled to have influence on child's upbringing. In general the role of father in such a family is highly restricted, his impact on the child's development is nonexistent or at most minimum. In the incomplete families (formally or informally incomplete, e.g. separation without divorce) the role of father is modified in a different way. When the father leaves the family, his control function disappears and he ceases to be a role-model for his child/ children and his role as breadwinner becomes limited.

The indicators of functions performed by fathers were the answers to particular questions in the questionnaire, given later in the text.

The dependent variables (Y) were the success and failures at school and social adaptation. The indices of the variables were provided by the responses to the questionnaire, class register, teacher's comment book and interviews with teachers.

Analysis of the three above mentioned family models has shown differences in the relations between the variables studied (Figs.1, 2, 3).

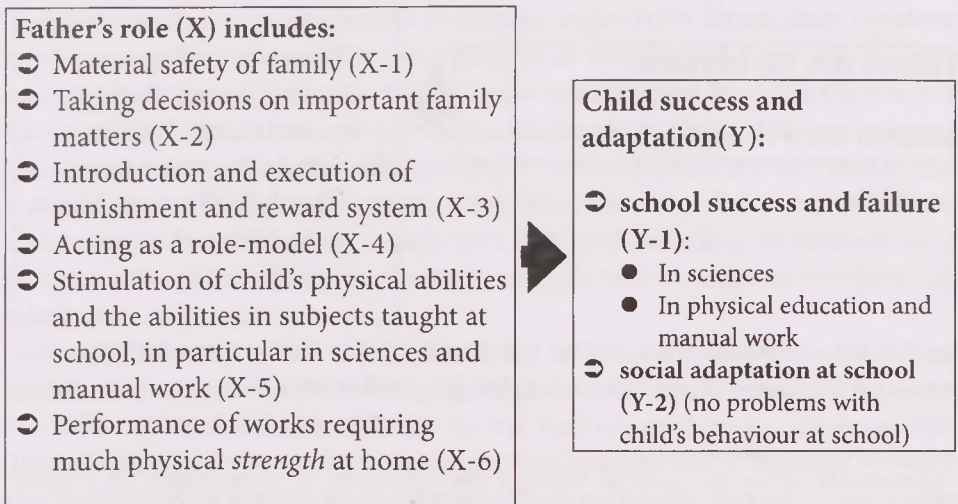


Fig. 1. Scheme of relations between the variables studied in the traditional family

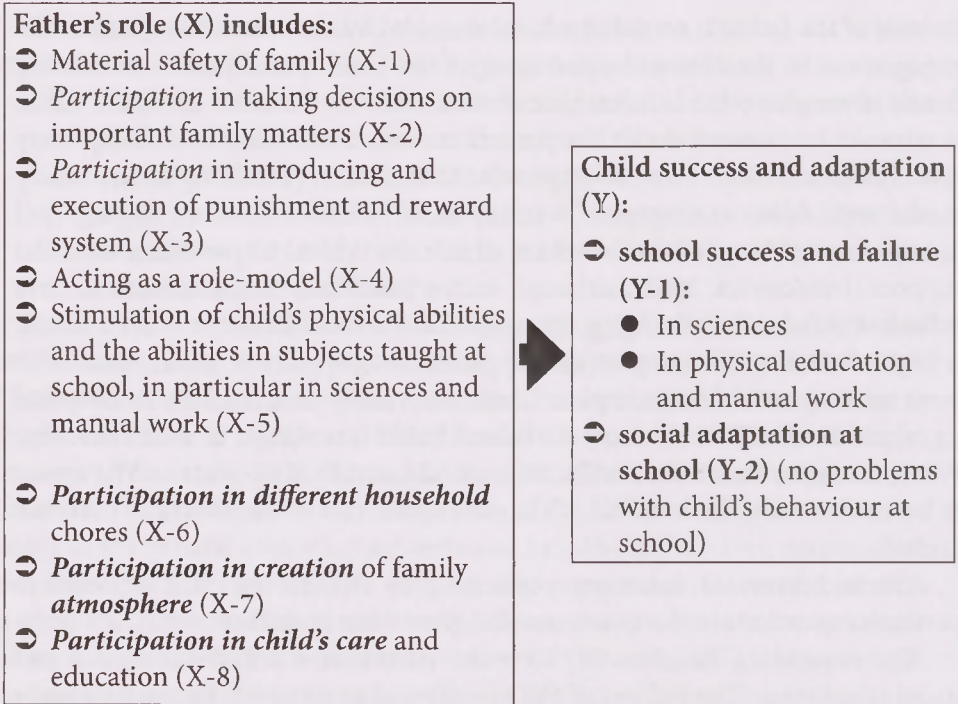


Fig. 2. Scheme of relations between the variables studied in the egalitarian model of full family<sup>3</sup>

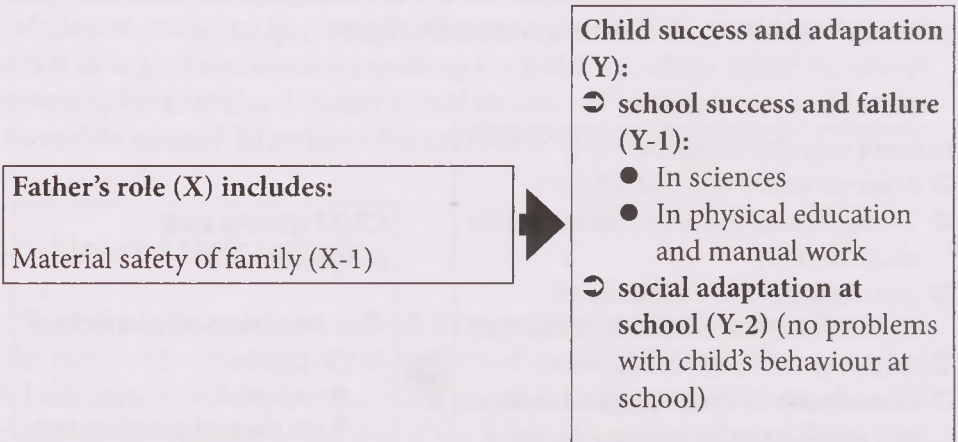


Fig. 3. Scheme of relations between the variables studied in the family model with father unengaged in family matters and child's upbringing (full family)

<sup>3</sup> (comment: italics was used to indicate the restriction in performance of a given function, bold italics was used to indicate taking up a new function or extension of the hitherto range of a given functions; (it refers to Figs. 2 and 3).)

## RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

The research procedure applied was *ex post facto*. The methods and tools employed included the analysis of documents, interview and questionnaire constructed by us.

**The questionnaire** was constructed to elicit information on the family structure, family atmosphere and father-child relationship. All family members were asked to fill in the questionnaire (children, father, mother). The responses were individual and anonymous. Each person was given the questionnaire and asked to respond to the questions individually and independently. In this paper we concentrate on the part filled in by fathers. The questions concerned the family structure, material conditions, cultural level, atmosphere at home, organisation of child's learning (doing homework), cooperation between parents and school. Fathers were asked to specify whether they live with the wife and children or separately, to indicate the main breadwinner of the family (in their opinion), give their profession and time devoted to professional duties, time devoted to wife and children, home duties (taking care of child/children, support given to child/ children in their problems, sharing child's interest and household chores). Fathers were also asked to describe their role in making a system of punishment and rewards and its execution, to explain the understanding of the father's role, to estimate the sense of responsibility for the family and children and to specify the model of family they come from (traditional, partnership, matriarchal, with father / mother/ unengaged in child's upbringing).

**Analysis of documents** was undertaken to provide supplementary information on the school success or failure and social adaptation of the child. The documents analysed included the school registration forms, class registers, certificates and opinions from Psychological or Pedagogical Counselling Units and teachers' comment books. The information obtained from the documents included: the family structure (complete, incomplete), material status, learning conditions at home (e.g. the child having or not having his/her own room, his/her own desk, table, part of a room, home library), child's behaviour at school, child's health status. The documents also indicated pathological phenomena if present in the child's family and threw some light on the quality of interpersonal relations.

**Interview** was applied to learn about the opinions of teachers on the school problems of a given child and the probable reasons of the problems as well as about the subjects the child finds difficult or easy and school learning achievements. The information from the interview permitted recognition of relations between the level of school success and failure and the family environment, in particular the role of father.

## RESEARCH INDICES

In the study on the role of father (X) the father's family functions were described by the following indices (Table 1).

Table 1. Indices describing the independent variable

Traditional model	Egalitarian model	Indices are the responses to particular questions indicated
Material safety of family (X-1)	Material safety of family (X-1)	2, 3, 5, 9, 18
Taking decisions on important family matters (X-2)	Participation in taking decisions on important family matters (X-2)	4, 7, 8, 17
Introduction and execution of punishment and reward system (X-3)	Participation in introducing and execution of punishment and reward system (X-3)	15, 16
Acting as a role-model (X-4)	Acting as a role-model (X-4)	23, 24
Stimulation of child's physical abilities and the abilities in subjects taught at school, in particular in sciences and manual work (X-5)	Stimulation of child's physical abilities and the abilities in subjects taught at school, in particular in sciences and manual work (X-5)	14, 19, 22
Performance of works requiring much physical strength at home (X-6)	Participation in different household chores (X-6)	12, 13
-	Participation in creation of family atmosphere (X-7)	6
-	Participation in child's care and education (X-8)	10, 11, 14, 20, 24, 21

The indices describing the dependent variable defined as the child's success and failure at school and social adaptation (Y) are defined in Table 2.

Table 2. Indices of dependent variable (Y)

Dependent variable Y:	Indices
- school success and failure (Y-1) ● In sciences ● In physical education and manual work	● School grades ● Opinions of Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Units on the child's abilities and interests
- social adaptation at school (Y-2) (no problems with child's behaviour at school)	● Opinions of teachers collected in interviews and data from the teachers' comment books used for evaluation of child's behaviour

## The course of study

The subjects of the study were inhabitants of Wielkopolska district, in seven villages close to a large city of Poznan. The study was carried out in two stages. In the first stage the subject of interest was determination of functions of fathers in complete families, while in the second stage – the success and failure of children in school education and their behaviour at school. The participants of the study in the first stage were 220 children attending elementary schools in the first few years of learning and their 201 fathers. In the second stage of the study the above group was extended by 19 children from incomplete families and 18 children from reconstructed families with their fathers or step-fathers and the school teachers of the children.

The study was realised in the years 2008 -2009, such a long time of the study was related to the need to develop individual personal contact with the subjects who took part in it.

## RESULTS

As follows from the results, the fathers perform many functions in family, also those related to the child's care and upbringing (Table 3). As the priority they declare the engagement in financial support of family and high level of responsibility related to this issue (97.3%). Many fathers declare high sense of responsibility for the intellectual development of their children (80.9%) and for their moral development (67.7 %). The fathers who declared that they were responsible for the development of their children in all spheres of life made as many as 90.5% of the respondents. The majority of fathers 81% take care of children but only on the days free of professional work and when the weather is nice. From this group of fathers almost two third (65.9%) devotes the whole day to their children. The interest in child's problems was varied; every third father admitted strong interest in child's matters (36.8%), more than half of the fathers studied declared moderate interest in child's matters (58.6%). The majority of fathers (73.1%) are sure that they control the peer contacts of their children. Almost all fathers studied (99.5%) declare that they decide about the system of punishment and rewards in the family. The fathers inquired believe that in this way they have impact on the success and behaviour of child at school, and they much prefer rewarding their children. The most often rewards include: watching TV (45.9%), giving sweets (39.1%), going for a walk or to the cinema together (9.5%), money (3.2%) and playing together (1.8%). They also use

punishment. The fathers studied declared engagement in taking care of their children being fully convinced that in this way they have positive impact on the children. Frequently they escort children to school (44.5% almost everyday and 55.5% a few times a week) and from school (14.1% everyday and 27.7% a few times a week). The fathers interest in children school activities is expressed by financing and buying the equipment needed for classes; in the group studied it was declared by 95% of fathers. This way of engagement in child's matters is practised on days free of work by 44.1% of the fathers studied, a few days a week by 29.5%, and almost everyday by 21.4%. Only 10.5% of the fathers studied helps their children in homework, but 89.5% never help them in homework.

The mode of engagement in taking care of the children changes with the children age. The majority of the fathers studied (83.7%) declared having taken care of their children from the first months of their life; 18.2% of them used to do it everyday, 33.2% – a few days a week and 32.3% – only on days free of work. At present when their children are school-age, they most often declare making meals for their children (30.5%), it is an everyday duty of 9.5% of the fathers studied, 5.5% of them do it a few times a week and 15.5% only on days free of work. Another area of taking care of children is that related to children health, almost every fourth father is engaged in medical care of their children; 5.5% of the fathers go with their children to medical appointments a few times a week, whereas 20.9% – do it only on work-free days. Over one third of the fathers (36.8%) share the interests of their children and spend time with children to develop them, while 58.6% – share the children interests in part. The majority of the fathers studied expressed satisfaction of their performance the role of father; 75% of the fathers claim that they are highly satisfied with their parent performance, 23.2% – are moderately satisfied. Only 1.8% of the fathers studied (four persons) claim that they have no reasons to be satisfied of their performance as fathers. Many fathers believe that they are authorities for their children (85%), but every seventh does not think so (See Table 3. on pages 90-91).

According to the fathers studied, the families they make most often represent the traditional model; 70.9% fathers share this opinion, 20.5% fathers claim that their family represent the egalitarian model, and 8.6% fathers think that their families are of mixed type. On the basis of the material collected it is difficult to draw a reliable conclusion as to the dominant family model (see Table 3). The dominant model would depend on the type of functions used for the classification. When considering the first three functions such as the financial support of family, taking decisions on important matters concerning family and introduction and execution of the punishment and reward system (variables X-1, X-2 and X-3) the dominant was the traditional model. Analysis of the frequencies of performance of acting as a role-model

(X-4) and stimulation of child's physical abilities and the abilities in subjects taught at school, in particular in sciences and manual work (X-5), has shown that some families realised the model of family with the father uninvolved in family activities. The data on the engagement in household chores (X-6) indicate prevalence of the model with the father unengaged in family matters and in child's upbringing over the egalitarian model. The data on the participation in creation of family atmosphere (X-7) and participation in taking care of children and their upbringing (X-8) point to the prevalence of the egalitarian model of family. The mode of realisation of the three functions was consistent with the traditional family model, the mode of realisation of next two was consistent with the family model with the father unengaged (in family matters and child's upbringing) and the last two – with the egalitarian model. Realisation of one function proved to be consistent with the model with the father unengaged and the egalitarian model, with prevalence of the former. Analysis of the responses obtained does not permit classification of the mode of father's role performance to any of the family models considered. At present stage we can only assume that this role is under transformation.

The third research question concerned the contemporary father's understanding of his parental role and their opinion on whether they perceive acting as father as stimulating their personal development. According to the results, the majority of the fathers studied –over 90%- believe that they have considerable impact on development of the child's personality, system of values and moral principles. The majority of the fathers, 85%, claimed that “you just are a father”, while only 15% responded that “you should learn how to be a father”. This result means that only a small fraction of the fathers realised the significance of parental activity for their personal development. This small group of fathers are, on the one hand, convinced of their generally positive impact on psychological development of the child and, on the other hand, they are aware of their own development following from this activity, so they see a connection between their personal development and that of the child.

The subsequent research question concerned the father's influence on the child's performance at school (the areas of influence) and his/her social adaptation, measured by the level of educational problems. Analysis of the data collected has shown differences in the school achievement of children depending on the presence or absence of fathers. From among 220 children from complete families, more than one fifth (20.4%) obtained very good grades from general subjects, nearly half (48.3%) got good grades and 27.8% got sufficient grades, while only 3.5% of these children got poor grades. From the same group of children over 61% got very good grades from artistic subjects, 30% got good grades and about 9% got sufficient grades, none got poor grade.

Table 3. Family functions of contemporary fathers (X)

Family functions performed by the fathers studied			Frequency (% of fathers studied):	
Traditional Model	Egalitarian Model	Full family with father unengaged in family matters and child's upbringing	Of performance	Of not performance
Financial support of family (X-1)	Financial support of family (X-1)	Financial support of family (X-1)	97.3% of fathers work (but also 92.7% of mothers do!)	2.7%
Taking decisions on important family matters (X-2)	Participation in taking decisions on important family matters (X-2)		100%	0%
Introduction and execution of punishment and reward system (X-3)	Participation in introducing and execution of punishment and reward system (X-3)		99,5%	0,5%
Acting as a role-model (X-4)	Acting as a role-model (X-4)		85%	15%
Stimulation of child's physical abilities and the abilities in subjects taught at school, in particular in sciences and manual work (X-5)	Stimulation of child's physical abilities and the abilities in subjects taught at school, in particular in sciences and manual work (X-5)		Help in homework (10,5% of fathers) and sharing interests with children (36,8%)	89.5% 63.2%



Modern father participation in child's development...

<p>Performance of works requiring much physical strength at home (X-6)</p>	<p>Participation in different household chores (X-6)</p>	<p>Household chores (90.5% fathers):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- washing dishes (30.5%)</li> <li>- ironing (19.5%)</li> <li>- cleaning (10.5%)</li> <li>- cooking or meals preparation (7.3%)</li> <li>- spring cleaning (5.9%)</li> <li>- washing clothes (3.2%)</li> </ul>	<p>9,5% 69,5% 80,5% 89,5% 92,7% 94,1% 96,8%</p>
<p>Participation in creating family atmosphere (X-7)</p>	<p>Participation in creating family atmosphere (X-7)</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>0%</p>
<p>Performance of works requiring much physical strength at home (X-6)</p>	<p>Participation in taking care of children and their upbringing (X-8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interest in child's matters (95.4%)</li> <li>- over 3 hours a day spent with children on workdays (76.4%)</li> <li>- escorting children to and from school ( 70.25%)</li> <li>- control of peer contacts (73.1%)</li> <li>- going for a walk or to a cinema together (87.3%)</li> <li>- meal preparation for children (30.5%)</li> <li>- medical appointments (26.4%)</li> <li>- purchase of equipment needed for classes (95%)</li> <li>- playing with children (47.3%)</li> <li>- sharing baby care (83.7%)</li> </ul>	<p>4,6% 23,6% 29,75% 26,9% 12,7% 69,5% 73,6% 5% 52,7% 16,7%</p>

From the group of children from incomplete families (mainly because of parents divorce) as far as general subjects are concerned, 10.5% got very good grades, 21% got good grades, 26.3% got sufficient grades and 42% got poor grades. From artistic subjects 10.5% got very good grades, 31.5% got good grades, almost 58% got sufficient grades, no children got poor grades. Among the children participating in the study 7.5% came from complete but reconstructed families (mother and step-father or father and step-mother). The main reason for the reconstruction of families was the divorce of the first parents and a second marriage with a person who took the place of the missing parent. In the group of children from such families the school achievements were much worse; no children got very good or good grades from general subjects, only one child had satisfactory grade and the others got poor grades. As to the results from artistic subjects one third of the children from this group got good grades and the rest got sufficient grades; there was no child with very good grade and no with poor grade.

The results confirm a significant impact of father's presence in the family on the level of school achievements of the child and his/ her behaviour. The differences in school achievements are statistically significantly correlated with the presence or absence of the father in the family. The school results of the children brought up in the full families (with the exception of the reconstructed families ) are significantly higher than those who come from not full family – without the permanent father's care. (divorce, leaving the family or something like that) (in the case of the general subject  $\chi^2 = 4,08 > \chi^2_a = 3,84$ ,  $k = 1$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; and in the case of the artistic subjects  $\chi^2 = 3,86 > \chi^2_a = 3,84$ ,  $k = 1$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

The children from the group of complete families did not have serious educational problems and most of them had their behaviour evaluated as impeccable (over 57%) or very good (over 30%), while some slight problems were noted for 12% of such children, only one child from this group had more serious problems and had his/ her behaviour evaluated as unacceptable. In the group of children from incomplete families, without constant father's care, only 10.5% had their behaviour evaluated as impeccable, 42% got very good grades and 37% got good grades. However, every tenth child from this group had some serious problems and their behaviour was evaluated as unacceptable. Grades describing behaviour are known to reflect child's problems with school adaptation.

Analysis of the behaviour grades obtained by the children from reconstructed families indicates that they tend to have serious education problems; only 33.3% had their behaviour evaluated as good, while as many as 66.7% were evaluated as showing unacceptable behaviour.

Results of our study have confirmed the importance of presence of fathers in the family structure in the aspect of educational problems of children at school.

Statistical analysis has shown significant differences in the child's performance at school between children from complete and incomplete families. The children from complete families show higher level of adaptation to school environment than those from incomplete families (without father's care) and those from reconstructed families ( $\chi^2 = 27,89 > \chi^2_a = 13,82$ ,  $k = 2$ ,  $\alpha = 0.001$ ). As follows from the results presented above, the children from full families and developing in relatively stable conditions (emotional stability included) get statistically significantly better results in general subjects and artistic subjects as well as show better social adaptation to school environment.

## SUMMARY

The above presented and analysed results provided the grounds to answer the research questions posed in the study. At present it is impossible to indicate a single dominant model of fatherhood. The model currently realised combines three types of models: the father -patriarch, the father unengaged in family matters and child's upbringing and the partner of wife and children. It can be expected that in future one of them will become dominant. According to the results, the presence of father in the family and his engagement in family matters have significant impact on the school achievements of the child both scholarly and in social adaptation. The support and acceptance of the father are needed for the children of both high abilities or limited abilities. The support and care shown by fathers can take different forms: material, physical, emotional, intellectual and instrumental. Some father still prefer the limited involvement in child's upbringing offering mostly material and instrumental support (Freudenreich, 2010). In conclusion, irrespective of the earlier dominating models of fathers "strict authority", "breadwinner" or "playmate", which are still functioning in some families, contemporary fathers increasingly often tend to be engaged in everyday activities of their children. Contemporary father stops being a breadwinner only and takes up the role of care provider, sometimes a playmate. Is such a partnership of the father and the child an expression of the postmodernistic spirit that is to bring increased effectiveness of father and child functioning or is it another restriction of the father's role, moreover a restriction which is rather risky from the point of view of correct child development? At the present stage of the study it is impossible to give a reliable answer to these questions, but it is possible to put forward a thesis that contemporary fathers approach the stage of being aware of significance of fatherhood for their own personal development.

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