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MATERNITY AND SCIENTIFIC CAREER – A GOOD TEAM? MOTHER-SCIENTIST AT UNIVERSITIES

Introduction

The widely commented issue of maternity is a subject of interest of many fields of study and many discussions held in various dimensions of social life. There is still a firm conviction that maternity is a basic (biological) and social function (frequently perceived as responsibility) of every woman¹, being treated as, “the only career path monopolized by women”². Women’s reluctance to have a child is thought of as a derogation from the standard, deviation, a sign of her immaturity, or even her being “unfeminine”³. Even though these opinions continue to function, the approach to maternity has changed. What influenced this process are a number of social and cultural changes, including economic changes.

Nowadays, maternity is discussed from an individual’s angle, as a matter of personal choice of a woman in terms of their hierarchical value. It takes the form of ethical imperatives. A woman makes a decision to become a mother taking into account many factors, e.g. health, maturity to be a mother, having a responsible partner, economic conditions, or a professional career⁴. Today, the necessity of reconciliation between a professional career and family life becomes more and more common. The phenomenon of having multiple roles has been the subject of interest of scientists representing many scientific fields.

Research shows that it is still harder for women on many levels of social life, where they encounter quite a number of obstacles / difficulties. Certain terms like “glass ceiling”,

¹ Keywords underlining the myth of maternity are “command”, “mission”, “insinct”, “the natural vocation of a woman”, cf. K. Dzwonkowska-Godula, *Poglądy młodych kobiet na rolę matki we współczesnym świecie. Komunikat z badań*, [in:] M. Budrowska, *Macierzyństwo jako punkt zwrotny w życiu kobiety*, Wrocław 2000, p. 54.

² M. Budrowska, *Macierzyństwo jako...*, op. cit., p. 14.

³ K. Dzwonkowska-Godula, *Poglądy młodych kobiet...*, op. cit., p. 54.

⁴ J. Dereęowska, M. Majorczyk, *Konteksty współczesnego macierzyństwa. Perspektywa młodych naukowców*, Poznań 2012, p. 7.

“sticky floor”⁵ “leaking pipeline” have already been defined which characterise the problems that women must face on a path of the development of their careers, especially when their social functions are taken into account.

1. Social role of modern women

The social role should be understood as a set of expectations towards an individual that are related to having a particular social status (when it comes to women, it is usually gender)⁶. Social function is determined by culture and an individual’s personality⁷.

Roles of women which result from their biological characteristics as well as those assigned by society are above all: a mother, wife, employee (in any order). Only until recently, being a mother (The Polish Mother stereotype) and a wife indicated being a woman. These roles gave a certain social prestige to women⁸. Substantial changes occurred within each of these roles, changes caused by social-cultural conditions⁹. The social position of women has changed significantly when they became a part of active population. A woman who is a mother and an employee at the same time often experiences a so-called “conflict of roles”.

The issue of the conflict of roles emerged over 50 years ago¹⁰. It has been observed that the necessity of participation in a certain organisation is in discord with the necessity of participation in other social groups. Basing on this observation, an inconsistent pressure in terms of work and family is visible; they concern women mostly. It has been established that a woman trying to meet the requirements of those roles is subjected to constant pressure because the necessity of acting as one makes it difficult / impossible to act as another. Reconciliation between the family life and work life is often the source of the conflict of roles¹¹.

J. Greenhaus and N. Beutell define the conflict of roles as an inconsistent pressure at work and within a family, where the requirements of one role make it difficult to fulfil the other role. One of the effects of that phenomenon is the conflict of work – family roles that takes on two forms: work demands complicating the family life (conflict: work – fami-

⁵ The terms “glass ceiling”, “sticky floor” refer to the invisible barriers that limit employers, usually women, in professional advancement. It refers to the women that perform management duties, and it symbolises an opportunity of advancement and its unavailability at the same time. Cf. *Szklany sufit. Bariery i ograniczenia karier kobiet. Monografia zjawiska*, ed. A. Titkow, Warszawa 2003.

⁶ W. Duda, *Role społeczne kobiet-między życiem rodzinnym a pracą zawodową*, [in:] *Praca w życiu człowieka i jej społeczno-edukacyjne uwarunkowania*, ed. J. Matejek, K. Białożył, Kraków 2015, p. 122.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ D. Gębuś, *Rodzina. Tak, ale jaka?* Warszawa 2006, p. 44.

⁹ W. Duda, *Role społeczne kobiet...*, op. cit., p. 121–122.

¹⁰ R.L. Kahn, D.M. Wolf, R. Quinn, J.D. Snoek, R.A. Rosenthal, *Organizational Stress*, New York 1964, <http://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1993&context=aerc> [20.03.2017].

¹¹ J. Kowalczyk, *Konflikt ról rodzinnych i zawodowych a poczucie satysfakcji z życia*, http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-afd76d69-e8df-4263-b768-c3c6a6878cbb/c/Kowalczyk_Rzepa.pdf [20.03. 2017].

ly), and family obligations hindering work performance (conflict: family – work)¹². The necessity of making a choice raises tension within a family¹³. The desire for personal fulfilment in one's professional area is often in conflict with the need, or even "the responsibility" of maternity¹⁴.

The conflict of Mother-Scientists roles was defined as a situation "when the requirements of a scientist work and raising a child that a woman has to meet while being a mother prevents that woman from achieving the aims of a scientist (formal conditions of working at the university) or, respectively, of being a mother (i.e. providing livelihoods, creating a safe place for physical as well as emotional growth, forming and maintaining relationship with a child that develops towards respect and trust) that are in a research entitled »Functioning of Mother-Scientists in the field of family and professional life«"¹⁵.

2. A modern mother – "The Polish Mother" or "Superwoman"

Anna Titkow, Danuta Duch-Krzystoszek and Bogusława Budrowska, among others, examined the issue of modern women-mothers; they used the term "The Polish Mother" to describe a type of women "that is overburdened, sacrificing herself for her loved ones, convinced of her irreplaceable competency as a family-life manager"¹⁶. Later in their study, the authors write that such a woman limits her subjectivity multiple times, reducing her being to maternity, which B. Budrowska describes as a total institution. Budrowska also states that giving birth to a child is a turning point in a woman's life because it initiates important changes in her biography, modifying her goals and priorities¹⁷.

In the article in Newsweek entitled "Perfect and Furious", we can read that modern mothers are more and more frustrated. The reason for this is years of living being overwhelmed by requirements, with the conviction that a modern mother has to work, raise a family, and look pretty on top of that, and best not to complain". Women show that linking work and family life is one of their myths of success". They show more and more often that idealisation of women-mothers is tough and leads to frustration. Modern mothers are "primed, well-educated, they raise children and they are furious"¹⁸.

¹² A.M. Zalewska, *Konflikty „praca-rodzina” oraz ich źródła i skutki w zależności od płci i posiadania dzieci*, [in:] *Kobiecość w obliczu zmian. Studia interdyscyplinarne*, ed. A. Chybicka, B. Pastwa-Wojciechowska, Kraków 2009, p. 102–105.

¹³ *Uniwersyteckie gry – czy płęć ma znaczenie? Wybrane dyskursy społeczno-edukacyjne*, ed. M. Grochowska, W. Sawczuk, Toruń 2011, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Funkcjonowanie matek-naukowców w obszarze życia rodzinnego i zawodowego*, team leader E. Paprzycka, <http://docplayer.pl/5772917-Funkcjonowanie-matek-naukowcow-w-obszarze-zycia-rodzinnego-i-zawodowego.html> [10.01.2017].

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ A. Titkow, D. Duch-Krzystoszek, B. Budrowska, *Nieodpłatna praca kobiet. Mity, realia, perspektywy*, Warszawa 2004, p. 65.

¹⁷ B. Budrowska, *Macierzyństwo: instytucja totalna?*, [in:] *Od kobiety do mężczyzny i z powrotem. Rozważania o płci w kulturze*, ed. J. Brach-Czaina, Białystok 1997, p. 297.

¹⁸ M. Wąsowski, *Zadbane, wykształcone, pracują, wychowują dzieci i są wściekle*. "Newsweek": "Polskie matki sfrustrowane i wypalone", <http://natemat.pl/103645,zadbane-wykształcone-pracuja-wychowuja-dzieci-i-sa-wściekle-newsweek-polskie-matki-sfrustrowane-i-wypalone> [10.04.2017].

The reports concerning the role of a modern woman-mother show the ideal of a mother: “an ideal mother is perfect on many levels of life, and reconciliation often contradictory issues gives her happiness, which is the determinant of the discussed idea” [the so-called “superwoman”¹⁹]²⁰. A child is a priority for her, but it does not mean that a woman loses herself in maternity and neglects her other roles; on the contrary, because of her integrity and commitment she is able to mediate between the family and professional life. That ideal is not always feasible. Women point to the feeling of fatigue, impatience, the overburden of role, depression²¹. According to the report “Maternity every day”, mothers are tired of the seriousness of the role of a mother, for which they are often held accountable²².

Modern women adopt different strategies of their careers’ development, which is a result of the difficulty to reconcile work and motherhood. The first group of women is that in which they postpone the so-called “domestic” period (even up to 40 years old). They are convinced that the earned position will help in accessing the labour market again. The women that decide to have a baby before entering the labour market belong to the second group. Their strategy is based on starting a family rather early, raising children and being still “young enough” to find a job. The third group is comprised of women that try to be professionally involved to the maximum, and according to them a child is not an obstacle; these women work even during their maternity leave. Women of another group are those that retire from work for the benefit of motherhood. They often declare that “later” they may return to the labour market, although in reality, they do not include such a return in their future plans. The last group are the women that did not, and do not plan their professional life (they did not and do not have a job), and the birth of a child frees them from thinking about the future for a while²³.

3. Specification of a scientific work

Research and a teaching job at the university, beside teaching assignments with students, requires a scientific research and publishing its results (in ranked scientific journals)²⁴, delivering papers at conferences (best if international). It is suggested for an employee to realize research projects (national as well as international). Additionally, an academic employee makes a number of organisational activities, sits on various boards and teams. An academic has to be available for students during office hours and duties.

¹⁹ The term “superwoman” refers to the stereotype of a woman who is fulfilled with being a loving and responsible mother, who is a good wife, and does not forget about her own needs at the same time; she is often employed. Cf. *Spoleczna rola matki – wyzwania wspolczesnego macierzyństwa. Raport z badania 2015*, <https://rops-katowice.pl/dopobrania/2015.07.31-raport.pdf> [13.04.2017], p. 181.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² *Raport z badania “Z macierzyństwem na co dzień” na potrzeby programu AXA “Wspieramy mamy”*, https://axa.pl/fileadmin/produkty/centrum_klienta/aktualnosci/z_macierzyństwem_na_co_dzien.pdf [21.03.2017], p. 58.

²³ Cf. W. Duda, *Role społeczne kobiet...*, op. cit., p. 128.

²⁴ *Kariera na uczelni jako nauczyciel akademicki*, <https://www.careers.uni.wroc.pl/media/uploads/karieraakadem.pdf> [12.03.2017].

An academic, due to the fact that it is a position which people working at a university are hired for, is a part of the group of academics defined as “a specialist engaged in conceptual work and creating new knowledge, products, services, methods and systems, also managing new research projects related to the implementation of these tasks”²⁵.

An academic has usually few classes with students²⁶, which is why he / she has quite a lot of time for scientific work. There could hardly be a better myth. Teaching is just a top of the mountain. What is beneficial is that scientific articles or papers for a conference may be prepared anywhere. There are also no deadlines. It is often an academic himself / herself that manages his / her time after classes. The internet improves communication; freedom is apparent, though. Scientific work takes time and an appropriate approach and motivation. Measurement of the results is extremely difficult. Repeatedly this work requires an almost 24-hour engagement (e.g. project realisation). One can also work at home. It frequently leads to disturbances in leading the family life; it is also difficult to separate the work sphere from the other spheres in life²⁷. Work then pervades the family life and is not regulated by any time shifts, e.g., evening work, night work, work during the weekends.

The character of a scientific work is based on the fact that it does not close within the timeframe, but often influences one’s commonness, the way of thinking. In the case of women-scientists, their scientific career is prolonged as a result of maternity (and parental) leaves. It is also important that the simultaneous attempt of reconciliation between scientific work and raising a child / children causes a woman to lose sleep. On the other hand, the profession of researcher, which requires a constant acquisition and furthering of knowledge, through a flexible form of work may give an opportunity for reconciliation between work and raising a child, e.g., in a situation where one of the parents must stay longer at work (such a situation has become more common recently)²⁸. The character of a scientific work has interfered with family life multiple times, resulting in relationships breakdown²⁹.

At this point, it is important to mention an existing stereotype referring to the professional career, because it is usually perceived as requiring many sacrifices and withdrawal from family life. The stereotype of a scientist 100% devoted to their work still functions. It is a model that in any way does not accept a position and experience of women that want to

²⁵ Further in the dictionary, there is an instantiation that PhD students conducting research and development studies, research scientists, academics, and technologists with third degree education employed at the universities, researchers and others with third degree education employed in research and development in other units conducting research and development studies. *Pojęcia stosowane w statystyce publicznej*, <https://stat.gov.pl/metainformacje/slownik-pojec/pojecia-stosowane-w-statystyce-publicznej/341,pojciec.html> [10.03.2017].

²⁶ Annual numbers of hours for an academic amounts from 120–240 hours, Dz.U. z dnia 15 listopada 2016 r., <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20160001842/O/D20161842.pdf> [12.03.2017].

²⁷ M. Grochalska, *Work-Life Balance a kariera naukowa kobiet: bilans szans i zagrożeń*, [in:] *Uniwersyteckie gry...*, op. cit., p. 79–81.

²⁸ D. Jedlikowska, *Gender gap w przestrzeni akademickiej. Trajektorie karier naukowych kobiet zarządzających szkolnictwem wyższym*, [in:] *Uniwersyteckie gry...*, op. cit., p. 50–51.

²⁹ *Uniwersyteckie gry...*, op. cit., p. 5.

keep the balance between their job at a university and their families³⁰. Mother-Scientists are faced with a difficult task to remove this stereotype.

4. Women-scientists' maternity – opportunities and obstacles

U. Beck writes about the difficulties of reconciliation between work and family life, where he points at the conflict between the professional and the family role of women. He considers this conflict to be an ongoing challenge between maternity and work, between one's own life and the life for others³¹. It is particularly visible among women-scientists who decide to opt for a profession that requires a constant development, while still raising children. Attempts to reconcile the work sphere and the family sphere is often walking a fine line for those women, resulting in being snowed under responsibilities.

According to M. Strykowska, we can distinguish between a few barriers that women have to face: social-cultural, organisational and psychological. The first kind of barrier refers to the stereotypes that are linked to sex, which leads to describing certain professions as "female professions" – that is, these professions that reflect the perception of femininity of a certain society. Organisational barriers are those, which have an impact on women's operating in a workplace, e.g., such phenomena as "glass ceiling", "sticky floor", "glass wall", and "glass escalator" effects³². The third kind are those barriers which are faced only by women: attributing one's success to external factors, and one's failures to internal factors, internal resistance causing fear of success, low self-esteem³³.

It is essential to present the dimension of the woman-scientist conflict:

1. Time dimension – lack of time for conducting studies, physical and psychological exhaustion linked to raising a child, limited time for a scientific work caused by the responsibilities associated with having a child / children.
2. Financial dimension – increased financial needs linked to an additional family member, abandonment of scientific research for the benefit of educational work.
3. Emotional dimension – stress connected to the attempt to reconcile professional duties with household chores; frustration resulting from the role of mother overlapping in time with the role of a developing scientist; lack of time for creating a bond with a child, the pain of separation from a child.

In such a situation, a question should be raised whether Mother-Scientists perceive having a baby and being a mother as a loss and a restraint in a professional career, or as

³⁰ *MaMa na uczelni i tata też*, http://www.nauka.gov.pl/g2/oryginal/2015_12/9de563efac1050f4ef791dd86db065f1.pdf [15.12.2016].

³¹ U. Beck, *Spółczesność ryzyka: W drodze do innej nowoczesności*, translated by B. Baran, Warszawa 2004, p. 164.

³² M. Strykowska, *Zmiana stereotypu w sferze pracy zawodowej kobiet*, [in:] *Męskość-kobiecość w perspektywie indywidualnej i kulturowej*, ed. J. Miluska, P. Boski, Warszawa 1999, p. 227; *Szklany sufit...*, op. cit., p. 9–10.

³³ L. Willan-Horla, "Miotanie się między powinnościami", *czyli jak wykształcone kobiety starają się łączyć sferę zawodową i rodzinną*, [in:] *Uniwersyteckie gry...*, op. cit., p. 61.

an opportunity for a further development?³⁴ Modern Mother-Scientists are willing to work, and their working life brings them a lot of fascinating elements. Simultaneously, those women suffer from mother guilt, a perpetual conflict between responsibilities, and a sense of insecurity concerning neglecting their child, exhaustion, because they do not give themselves the permission to rest. It is connected with an existing ideal of a so-called “total maternity” in our culture³⁵. Young mothers fear that intellectual and time investment in work may negatively affect their relationships with children; however, it is linking those two spheres that gives those women a feeling of fulfilment³⁶. This phenomenon is proven by A. Titkow’s studies that show that educated women notice the possibility of linking their professional and family life more often, and they do not fully approve of the traditional roles in a family³⁷.

A. Domaradzka points out that the responsibilities associated with having a baby and looking after it are the cause of a reduced mobility of women in scientific fields³⁸. Having a child, especially more than one, is a factor of delay of a scientific career. It is particularly visible during the process of writing a dissertation, or immediately after³⁹. What is particularly unfriendly in terms of work for the surveyed women are low wages. For young mothers, their superior’s approach toward maternity is particularly important⁴⁰. Mother-Scientists see the central point of the conflict in the difficulty concerning the inability of separation between the scientific work and family life. One of the women examined by L. Willan-Horla working at a university, holding a doctoral degree says that “when I want to separate these two spheres – when I’m with my children, I am really with them, and when I’m at work, I am at work and I don’t think about my children”⁴¹.

Conclusions

To determine without ambiguity whether maternity is an obstacle in a professional career is not easy. Relationships within a marriage/partnership should be taken into account, as they determine the pace of the professional development of women. The studies among women working at universities conducted by D. Jedlikowska show that having more time due to leading a single life does not translate into faster scientific career development. What is more, not having a family does not equate to a woman’s happiness; it is hardly so.

³⁴ Cf. *Kobieta naukowiec po urodzeniu dziecka*, <https://www.deon.pl/inteligentne-zycie/firma-praca-i-kariera/art,30,kobieta-naukowiec-po-urodzeniu-dziecka.html> [20.10.2016].

³⁵ D. Jedlikowska, *Gender gap...*, op. cit., p. 50.

³⁶ L. Willan-Horla, “*Miotanie się...*”, op. cit., p. 72; D. Jedlikowska, *Gender gap...*, op. cit., p. 50.

³⁷ A. Titkow, *Tożsamość polskich kobiet*, Warszawa 2007, p. 162–169.

³⁸ Cf. *Kobieta naukowiec...*, op. cit.

³⁹ J. Piotrowska, *Konferencja “Płeć w nauce – przeszkoda czy atut? Kariery naukowe a życie prywatne”*, <http://warszawa.ngo.pl/wiadomosc/550641.html> [10.12.2016].

⁴⁰ Cf. *Kobieta naukowiec...*, op. cit.

⁴¹ L. Willan-Horla, “*Miotanie się...*”, op. cit., p. 65.

Some women state that it is the family that motivates them to develop their scientific career⁴². The help of the family (e.g. the possibility of leaving a child in the care of its grandmother) and an active engagement of the partner / husband in the family life favours connecting motherhood with a professional career⁴³.

A campaign “Mama na uczelni” (Eng. “Mum at University”), which was under the patronage of Ministry of Science and Higher Education, conducted a few years ago accounts for the importance of the issue of reconciliation between a research-teaching work and motherhood. Among its postulates were such issues as the support of daily life, adjusting the university space to the needs of young parents, creating company nurseries and kindergartens, popularisation of pro-parenthood attitudes⁴⁴. Another initiative of that type was another edition of the government programme “Maluch na uczelni” (Eng. “Baby at University”)⁴⁵; despite all this, the number of universities that created any support for parents in terms of childcare (nursery/kindergarten) is not optimistic. According to the data of the departmental programme, 11 universities took part in “Maluch Plus” (Eng. “Baby plus”) edition 2017 with module 3 (targeting universities)⁴⁶. It is worth noting that a scientific environment is a place where “all views and trends observed on the labour market are intensified”. It is a place reluctant to change, characterised by the aversion to any grass-roots initiatives, which results directly in a lack of improvement of the young mothers’ position on a scientific labour market⁴⁷.

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⁴² D. Jedlikowska, *Gender gap...*, op. cit., p. 52. This research was conducted in Kraków.

⁴³ L. Willan-Horla, “Miotanie się...”, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴⁴ *Rusza kampania “MaMa na uczelni”*, <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/aktualnosci-ministerstwo/rusza-kampania-mama-na-uczelni,archiwum,1.html> [20.11.2016].

⁴⁵ The programme “Maluch na uczelni” has been taking place since 2011. The principles of the programme were elaborated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Ministry of Science and Higher Education: *11 milionów na żłobki na uczelniach*, <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/aktualnosci-ministerstwo/11-milionow-na-zlobki-na-uczelniach.html> [11.03.2017].

⁴⁶ *Wyniki konkursu “Maluch plus” – edycja 2017*, <https://www.mpips.gov.pl/wsparcie-dla-rodzin-z-dziecmi/opieka-nad-dzieckiem-w-wieku-do-lat-trzech/resortowy-pogran-maluch-plus/rok-2017/wyniki-konkursu-maluch-plus---edycja-2017/> [10.10.2017]. Universities were located in the territory of the following voivodeships: dolnośląskie (1), kujawsko-pomorskie (1), lubelskie (2), małopolskie (3), mazowieckie (2), pomorskie (1), wielkopolskie (1).

⁴⁷ See *Kobieta naukowiec...*, op. cit.

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Monika Lewicka

Maternity and scientific career – a good team? Mother-Scientist at universities

The article takes the issue of Mother-Scientists at universities. Special attention was focused around the possibility of conflict of roles (work-family life and family life-professional work). Social roles were presented by contemporary women. Addressed are issues relating to the specifics of scientific work. In the article it was decided to try to show the opportunities and barriers to accompanying Mother-Scientists.

Keywords: maternity, scientific career, mother, mother-scientists, social role.

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę matek-naukowców na uczelniach wyższych. Szczególna uwaga skupiona została wokół możliwości pojawienia się konfliktu ról (praca zawodowa- życie rodzinne i życie rodzinne-praca zawodowa). Zaprezentowane zostały role społeczne współczesnych kobiet. Poruszone zostały kwestie odnoszące się do specyfiki pracy naukowej. W artykule podjęto się próby ukazania możliwości i barier towarzyszącym matkom-naukowcom.

Słowa kluczowe: macierzyństwo, kariera naukowa, matka, matka-naukowiec, role społeczne.

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