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CRACOW STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Abstract. This paper concerns family, in particular its essence, functioning and the basic assumptions of functioning in the opinion of contemporary young people. These issues are not sufficiently represented in research papers, but it is worth looking at them in a general manner, which is done here. The purpose of this essay is to present issues raised by Cracow youths concerning the contemporary family and its functioning. It is not easy to answer this question due to social, mental and economic changes affecting the shape and functioning of modern families. The research material used for this analysis comes from the surveys conducted in late May and early June 2020 among university students from Cracow.

Keywords: family; youth; trust in family; opinion about family.

INTRODUCTION

The problems of family life have long been embedded into the canon of social sciences—in particular sociology and pedagogy—all looking at the family and its functioning in terms of socialisation and functioning. There are plenty of elaborations on what constitutes a family, especially its alternative forms and in regards to the sexual preferences of modern people including changes within the scope of the functions of the individual family members. Family issues are of immense interest to social researchers, but the simplest research is lacking, trust or family relations or perception of by a contemporary young person (e.g. a student), who, due to young age, frequently deliberates on the choice of life path, future social and family roles.

The purpose of this paper is to draw our attention to opinions of the Cracow youths concerning families and their functioning. The main question here is:

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What are the opinions of students of Cracow universities on the contemporary family and their preferences regarding its functioning? It is not easy to answer this due to the social, mental and economic changes which are relevant to the form and functioning of modern families. The research material used for this analysis comes from the surveys conducted at the end of May and beginning of June 2021 among Cracow students. The surveys were carried out in the pandemic period, which also might have affected the perception of the family and its functions.

1. THE CONCEPT OF THE RESEARCH

The family as a basic social unit is an institution that has been known to people for a long time, because in the family the human being can live, develop, explore the world and give life (Szczepański, 1965, p. 162). In sociology, the family is treated as a “social group composed of directly related people, where adults provide care and take responsibility for their offspring and each other, on the basis of family and blood ties” (Szast, 2017, p. 540). A family fulfils a number of functions: procreative, economic, caring, socialising, stratificational, integrative (Adamski, 2009, pp. 50-66). It is undergoing a series of transformations, from the traditional three-generation family to the contemporary (nuclear) family, to the more modern, alternative forms of marital and family life – this also includes the variants of single parenthood, cohabitation unions, same-sex families, visiting families, DINKS, LAT or friendship communes (Szlendak, 2012, p. 457). Single parenthood is a dilemma related to the parenthood and fatherhood. Due to various factors, in Poland we encounter families that are permanently incomplete due to a parent’s death, divorce, separation or biological incompleteness. Another instance is the families that are incomplete temporarily, due to a long-term stay of one of the parents outside the place of residence of the family (Danielewicz, 2006, p. 7). The pace of changes in the modern world makes today’s fathers and mothers face chaos and turbulence within their familial roles, creating the sense of being lost in one’s own life (Więclawska, 2009, p. 301). Mariola Bieńko focused on the most significant designations of modern spouses, i.e., gender, sex, and love as the basic dimensions affecting the differentiation, variability as well as fluidity of the relationship known as marriage (Bieńko, 2012, pp. 61-86). In marriage as an economic as well as political institution centered on affection, all areas should be taken into account. Indeed, Aldona Żurek writes on the subject of the deficits of marriages in

Poland, dating back to the mid-1980s, analysing the factors explaining specific deficits, such as the shifting roles of spouses, the increased significance of women's development along with the importance of the institution of marriage itself (Żurek, 2010, p. 94). The representation of the modern family is shifting, since unfamiliar types of relationships are emerging, roughly comparable in functioning to traditional relationships, such as marriage as well as family. Relationships among adults, among children, as well as among parents with children are altering. In addition, the parental function is varying, which is increasingly implemented outside the family, moreover the manner it is conducted depends on the individual preferences of parents through a variety of community life patterns (Gizicka, 2016, pp. 11-12). In fact, the change in the perception of family roles as well as the understanding was fascinatingly termed by Iwona Taranowicz as deinstitutionalization or new institutionalization in the family (Taranowicz, 2016, p. 30). Nowadays, the father is not merely the family's breadwinner, but also a responsible individual, sharing with the mother the duties of upbringing, education on the basis of integrity. He is an active, participating individual, not a decorative or disciplining one (Kwak, 2012, p. 31).

According to a 2015 study (Social Diagnosis), the value system of Poles is relatively stable. However, it is worth noting the significant increase in the importance of friends (more than double the percentage of indications compared to 2000). The importance of education has likewise increased compared to the 1990s, although both friends as well as education still appear to be undervalued principles in the light of real impact on quality of life. The rapid increase in Poles' prosperity is likewise reflected in a decline in the frequency of indications money as one of the three cardinal values (down 10 percentage points from 2000). The importance of God (providence) is declining as well, which corresponds to a decline in the frequency of religious practice and prayer. As in all previous years, health is frequently indicated as a value (64.1%), followed by a successful marriage (a slight decline in the number of indications), children (also a decline in the number of indications, which began as early as 2011) as well as work; the least frequently indicated values are freedom and liberty, strong character, education and kindness, and respect from the environment (Czapiński, 2015, p. 272). On the other hand, the author's research carried out in 2020, on a sample of 820 people from Cracow (non-representative research), I established that family was a highly respected value by respondents: 93.6% (Szast, 2021, p. 89).

Nevertheless, according to a 2019 study by the Public Opinion Research Center, family happiness consistently ranks first among the most important values Poles follow in their daily lives (80%). According to this research, 87% of respondents believed that a person desires a family to be fully happy. Only about one in nine respondents (11%) think it is probable to live just as happily without a family. The belief in the family as a precondition for happiness is currently expressed even marginally more often than six years ago (an increase of 2 percentage points), however still less often than in 2008 (a difference of 5 points) (Boguszewski, 2021, p. 3). An interesting study in this regard was carried out by Piotr T. Nowakowski, Bogdan Więckiewicz and Łukasz Szwejka in 2021. According to the authors, the modern family is egalitarian in nature, otherwise known as democratic with features of partnership not merely between husband and wife, but between parents and children as well, who often participate in establishing key decisions (Szwejka, Więckiewicz, Nowakowski, 2021, p. 34). According to the study of the aforementioned authors, people living alone are characterized by a higher probability of meaninglessness ($p < 0.05$). The occurrence of strong correlations of variables was noted, in homes with positive relations between children and parents, where the probability of an anomie decreases. The situation of the absence of anomie was similar for those living in formalized relationships as well as those not formalized in the context of single people. Single people (singles) are characterized by a higher incidence of anomie. According to this research, the motives for living alone are the lack of a potential candidate in the environment (44.9%) of the respondents, while living alone is more convenient for 51.1% (Szwejka, Więckiewicz, Nowakowski, 2021, p. 102).

The data used in this paper comes from the research performed in spring (May-June) 2021 among Cracow students. Due to the pandemic, the research was online-based. The surveys were conducted by means of an online questionnaire of CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviews) (Mider, 2013, p. 210). The surveyed population does not meet the criteria of representativeness (Sulek, 2015, p. 14), the research has been performed by means of a purposive sample, thus a non-random scheme of its selection (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, 2001, p. 198), therefore the results are not generalised to the entire student community in Poland. The shortcoming of the article is certainly the unrepresentative nature of the sample of the research conducted; however, the data obtained sheds valuable light on the cognitive value of research in this area.

Two variables should be mentioned when shortly characterising the surveyed: gender and age. The number of female respondents was greater (585, 57.7%)

than male participants (427, 42.3%). Most of the respondents were aged 20 (20.2%), 9.5% of them were 19 years old 17.6% were 22, 15.8% were 23, 14.9% were 21, 8.9% were 24, 4.7% were 25, and 8.2% were 26. The missing data is represented by a small percentage of 0.2%. The collated research material has been obtained from the university youth, hence the age range of the respondents of 19–26.

2. EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis was started from the respondents' answers to the survey question: "In your opinion, should parents have a say in the selection of your partner?" The answers to this survey question are presented in Table 1 which shows that three-quarters of the respondents believe that parents should not interfere with the respondents' choice of a future life partner. At this point attention should be drawn to the variable of gender, for which the Pearson's chi-square amounted to .003, thus indicating a correlation between the gender of the respondents and their answers within the scope of the survey question posed. Men are more likely than women to consult their choice of a life partner with their parents.

Table 1. The likelihood of parents' influence on the choice of the respondents' life partner

		Gender		Total
		Woman	Man	
Yes	Number	19	33	52
	%	3.3%	7.8%	5.2%
No	Number	451	324	775
	%	77.2%	76.2%	76.8%
Hard to say	Number	114	68	182
	%	19.5%	16%	18%
Total	Number	584	425	1009
	%	100%	100%	100%

Nearly half of the participants believe that one can get married without an official engagement—interestingly enough, in this case affirmative answers came from women. The opposite opinion was expressed by only 21.9% of

the surveyed and depending on the situation, this view is supported by nearly one-third of the respondents. Thus, it is evident that the preferences of the youth surveyed with regard to the traditional marriage and the promise of the marriage are undergoing changes as it is admissible to get married without engagement and quite admissible to eradicate the traditional form of promising the marriage (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of the answer to the question:
Can one get married without an official period of engagement?

		Gender		Total
		Woman	Man	
Yes	Number	290	186	476
	%	49.7%	43.8%	47.2%
No	Number	120	101	221
	%	20.5%	23.8%	21.9%
It depends	Number	174	138	312
	%	29.8%	32.5%	30.9%
Total	Number	584	425	1009
	%	100%	100%	100%

The respondents' opinions on the preferred form of marriage are interesting. To the survey question: if you wanted to get married in the future would it be...? The highest percentage of the respondents (67.8%) answered that they would prefer a church wedding, which means of course the concordat form of getting married. The second place is taken by the civil form of solemnising marriage (17.8%). Low rates of the surveyed do not need legalisation of their emotional relationship, as well as few people who do not know yet which form they would choose. In the case of selecting the form of getting married, a significant statistical dependency is noticed with regard to the gender of the surveyed; the Pearson's chi-square was .000.

Table 3. The respondents' preferred form of legalisation of the emotional relationship

	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
Civil wedding	20.9%	13.6%	17.8%
Church wedding	66.3%	69.9%	67.8%
I don't need marriage, I want to live with my partner without formalising our relationship	2.7%	3.1%	2.9%
I don't plan to marry	4.8%	3.5%	4.3%
I don't know	5.3%	9.9%	7.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Most of the respondents (86%, as the combined “yes” and “probably yes” answers) believe in love for life, usually called “till death do us part” (Table 4). Less than 10% of the surveyed have not expressed their opinion on this matter, with 6.6% of the respondent not believing in love until the end of life.

Table 4. Faith in love until the end of life

	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
Yes	63%	57.4%	60.6%
Probably yes	24.1%	27.1%	25.4%
I don't have an opinion	5.5%	10.1%	7.4%
Probably not	4.5%	4%	4.3%
No	2.9%	1.4%	2.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Material values are a difficult subject, just like politics or religion; they raise significant controversies among their adversaries. However, it is worth asking the respondents whether they would base their views on getting married (or entering into marriage) on financial conditions (the survey question: “Is material income important for you in the case of making a decision on engagement or marriage?”).

It is an interesting issue. It has been present with humanity for all time, especially in the context of making valid life decisions. The respondents believe that material values are important for them in regards to making decision on engagement and marriage—60.1%. The opposite opinion was expressed by a mere 30.7% of the surveyed, with less than 10% of students not giving a specific answer. Table 5 presents a breakdown of the answers to this question.

Table 5. Material values and the decision to marry
in the opinions of the surveyed

	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
Definitely yes	17.6%	27.5%	21.8%
Probably yes	40.2%	35.9%	38.3%
I don't have an opinion	8.7%	9.9%	9.2%
Probably not	22.9%	19%	21.3%
Definitely no	10.6%	7.7%	9.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Which features of marriage are important to the respondents and to what extent? The distribution of the answers to this question is presented in Table 6 from which it is evident that love and faithfulness are the most important (92.1%), followed by support in difficult times (78.3%), Pearson's chi-square for the variable of gender is .000. The respondents also value mutual care (44.6%), appreciation and praising of the other person's efforts (42.7%), as well as spending free time together (37.6%), and taking care of children together (37%). Joint undertaking of household duties is supported by one-third of the respondents, with a slightly lower number of the surveyed believing that having children is important (merely 18%), with even fewer valuing having a well-paid job and earning a good income—5.1%.

Table 6. Attributes of marriage in the opinion of the respondents

Appreciate, praise efforts			
	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
No	59.1%	54.8%	57.3%
Yes	40.9%	45.2%	42.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Love, being faithful			
No	7.4%	8.7%	7.9%
Yes	92.6%	91.3%	92.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Have children together			
No	84.8%	78.2%	82%
Yes	15.2%	21.8%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Take care of each other			
No	54.9%	56.2%	55.4%
Yes	45.1%	43.8%	44.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Support in difficult times			
No	17.1%	28.1%	21.7%
Yes	82.9%	71.9%	78.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Spend free time together			
No	60.7%	64.6%	62.4%
Yes	39.3%	35.4%	37.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Do household duties together			
No	60%	71%	64.6%
Yes	40%	29%	35.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Earn a lot of money			
No	94%	96%	94.9%
Yes	6%	4%	5.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Take care of children together			
No	56.9%	71.4%	63%
Yes	43.1%	28.6%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%

The surveyed students participating in the project were most concerned about cheating in marriage (64.2% of the respondents), then lack of love, burnout and the death of love (58.0%), with lack of mutual help in third place (50.9%). On the other hand, the lowest ranking fears are an unfulfilling sexual life (16.9%), financial problems (22.6%) and sating one's lust (23.4%) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents' concerns in marriage

	Gender		
	Woman	Man	Total
Sating lust			
No	75.2%	78.5%	76.6%
Yes	24.8%	21.5%	23.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Mutual help			
No	46.7%	52.5%	49.1%
Yes	53.3%	47.5%	50.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Arguments			
No	65%	59%	64.4%
Yes	35%	41%	35.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Cheating			
No	35%	36.8%	35.8%
Yes	65%	63.2%	64.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Boredom			
No	58.1%	68.9%	62.6%
Yes	41.9%	31.1%	37.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Unfulfilling sexual life			
No	80.9%	86.2%	83.1%
Yes	19.1%	13.8%	16.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Lack of love			
No	41.5%	42.6%	42%
Yes	58.5%	57.4%	58%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Financial problems			
No	74.4%	81.5%	77.4%
Yes	25.6%	18.5%	22.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

According to the majority of the surveyed (69.7%) marriage, or contracting marriage constitutes the fulfilment of the engagement. Engagement is the stage preceding marriage, as a stage that prepares the spouses not so much to formalise an emotional relationship, but to play family and marital roles, in which they discuss the basic assumptions of the functioning of the family, common needs and plans for the future. Nearly 20% of the respondents were not clear on this issue, and 11.8% did not think that marriage is the fulfilment of engagement. Table 8 presents a breakdown of the answers.

Table 8. Marriage as fulfilment of engagement as assessed by the respondents

	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
I strongly disagree	5.7%	6.4%	6%
I rather disagree	6.5%	4.7%	5.8%
None of the above	17.8%	19.5%	18.5%
I agree	48.5%	49.5%	48.9%
I strongly agree	21.5%	19.9%	20.8%
	100%	100%	100%

Marital property separation is a subject causing significant controversies. Support for the protection of the property rights of the individual family members was expressed by 39.4% of the respondents. Nearly the same group (40.5%) did not provide their opinion on that matter, while an opposite opinion—objection to the separation of the marital property—was recorded from only 20.1% of the respondents (Table 9).

Table 9. Marital property agreement and marriage according to the respondents

	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
Yes	40.2%	38.4%	39.4%
No	18%	23%	20.1%
Hard to say	41.8%	38.6%	40.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Should marriage be common and allowed to anybody, regardless of their sexual preferences? The distribution of the answers to the question is presented in Table 10, from which it follows that the respondents' attitude to the subject is ambivalent. The undecided constituted 17.9%, with women prevailing. It is also women who appear more definite about allowing common access to getting married in Poland.

Table 10. Common access to marriage in the opinion of the surveyed

	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
I strongly disagree	13.5%	31.9%	21.3%
I rather disagree	15.6%	23.4%	18.9%
None of the above	18.5%	17.1%	17.9%
I agree	25.3%	15.2%	21.1%
I strongly agree	27.1%	12.4%	20.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

An obstacle to getting married can be the couple's disabilities, especially intellectual disabilities. The respondents were asked to express their opinion in this regard. It appears that a large percentage of people did not define their opinion on this matter (29.2%), and for 27.9% of respondents, engagement and then marriage with a disabled person would not be a problem. Disability is a barrier for 42.9% of the respondents (Table 11).

Table 11. Obstacles resulting from marrying a person with disability, according to the respondents

	Gender		Total
	Woman	Man	
I strongly disagree	8.6%	7.6%	8.2%
I rather disagree	19.1%	20.5%	19.7%
None of the above	28.7%	30%	29.2%
I agree	35.6%	33.8%	34.9%
I strongly agree	7.9%	8.1%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

CONCLUSIONS

The transformations of the family are the subject of numerous scientific dissertations as well as works of students due to the fact that it affects the sphere of every person's life. Arising problems are monitored and studied by various research centers as well. Generally, issues are examined in a specific time frame. The family is a lens through which the dynamics of social life changes, and the local and global social problems are best seen. Taking into account the conception and operation of a segment of research in the field of family issues among young people studying at Cracow universities, several conclusions can be drawn. The most significant is that the respondents believe in love and fidelity; the second conclusion concerns the awareness of the respondents in terms of own preferences as well as comprehensible expression of opinions in this regard—this is evidenced by the small percentage of people who consider complicated to determine own opinion whether love to death is rational. In case the decision is determined to formally establish a family, the concordat form is preferred, slightly fewer people prefer the secular (civil) form, along with a relatively low percentage of respondents abandon the formal union. In view of the common opinions about the durability of marriage, the crisis of the family and the reluctance to marry, it is clearly visible that the respondents (students) see sense in starting a family and legalising emotional relationships. The answers “I don't know”, “none of the above” to some questions may turn out to be the most interesting in this case, because people aged 19-25 face life decisions and taking actions that define their needs and preferences. A small percentage of undecided people may indicate awareness, maturity and a realistic approach to their needs. Low percentages of people avoiding answers indicate their determination and an awareness of their needs, rights and family preferences. The family-related subjects are intimate in nature.

The research shows that three-quarters of young people giving answers do not approve of consulting the choice of their partner with their parents—this is where a specific independence and individualisation of the life of a modern young person becomes apparent, especially a person studying and functioning in a large city, such as in this case in Cracow. What the respondents' value the least are the categories of high earnings, bringing up and having children together, and most such attributes of romantic relationships such as attentiveness, faithfulness, responsibility for each other or an appreciation of the other party's efforts. Material issues are for most respondents more important in the case of making the decision to enter an emotional relationship and the

subsequent legalisation of that relationship rather than while it already lasts. During the relationship, after its legalisation, the respondents would rather focus on each other than focus their energy on acquiring material resources. The concerns of the respondents mainly regard aspects of the psychology of their relationships, the strength of love, perseverance and loyalty, while financial or sexual problems are the least worrying. This may result from the conscious sexual selection of partners. This may be due to the greater awareness of requirements of the respondents, the implementation of own strategy of conduct.

The highest percentage of the respondents believe that entering into marriage (a wedding) is the crowning of engagement. They would unquestionably make a decision regarding the separation of property, which additionally confirms the belief in the awareness of rights and obligations and a maturity of decisions in the field of self-determination and independence. The responses obtained may indicate that the surveyed students value formal marriage, the conclusion of which can lay the foundation for the further development as well as maturation of their mutual affection—marriage is not just “paper”.

There are also differences in the scope of the answers given depending on the gender of the respondents—some questions evidenced this. The analysis, perhaps excessively informal, can make a valuable contribution in terms of identifying respondents’ views concerning family as well as marriage. In other words, it will shed valuable light in the context of nationwide surveys. Taking into account the opinions of respondents as well as the rich literature on the subject, it can be concluded that the modern family, also referred to as post-postmodern, will continue to acquire the form of a nuclear family—parents of both sexes along with children with the characteristics of modernist and postmodern families (Elkind, 1994, p. 209).

Is it the courage of women, or is it a new trend of expressing one’s opinions initiated by various social circles? Men have been recently, in a way, “lying low”, and it is women who have been taking the initiative and become more decisive and dominant.

The respondents participating in the research are afraid of disability and establishing permanent relationships with people struggling with various health problems. It is noteworthy that many people do not see this as a problem, and many people are undecided—they may change their opinion as a result of life experiences or reflections. The research has confirmed, although in an unrepresentative and fragmented manner, that the youths participating in the survey rely on family relationships, family ties, but based on feeling, honesty, dedication, and full affiliation based on awareness and maturity.

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OPINIE KRAKOWSKICH STUDENTÓW
W ZAKRESIE RODZINY I MAŁŻEŃSTWA

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł traktuje o rodzinie, zwłaszcza jej istocie, funkcjonowaniu i podstawowych założeniach funkcjonowania w opinii współczesnych młodych ludzi. Problematyka ta jest dostatecznie reprezentowana w pracach badawczych, ale warto spojrzeć na nią niejako ogólnie – co niniejszy krótki artykuł umożliwia. Celem publikacji jest zatem zwrócenie uwagi Czytelnika na kwestie opinii młodzieży krakowskiej odnośnie do rodzin i ich funkcjonowania. Pytanie główne artykułu brzmi: jakie są opinie respondentów, studentów krakowskich uczelni, na temat współczesnej rodziny i preferencje w zakresie jej funkcjonowania? Odpowiedź na tak postawione pytanie nie jest łatwa z uwagi na przemiany społeczno-mentalno-gospodarcze, które nie pozostają bez znaczenia dla kształtu i działania współczesnych rodzin. Materiał badawczy użyty do analizy pochodzi z badań realizowanych na przełomie maja i czerwca 2020 roku wśród krakowskich studentów.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina; młodzież; więzi rodzinne; opinie na temat rodzin.