

Transformations of Female and Male Models in Post-mining Communities



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Abstract This text focuses on the transformations taking place in the lives of coal-mining community inhabitants with respect to the (re)conceptualization of male and female social roles and of normative femininity and masculinity models. In order to discern and trace changes in gender identities and practices, I examine the situation in the industrialized province of Silesia in Poland after the 1989 shift from communism to democracy and capitalism. Comprising the specific dataset used here in is the research findings of the SPHERE project because one of the dimensions analyzed thereby was precisely the shifts in feminine and masculine identities within Polish communities most affected by mine closures. Delving deeper into the analysis, I reconstruct the previous gender habitus and compare it to the contemporary one. The (re)defining is embodied in the everyday micro-practices of men and women which illustrate how the previous framework is no longer operational under the new social circumstances. There is potential for individual self-location in the newly shaping gender habitus in response to objective, external forces which used to determine location.

Especially key are references to the societal restructuring process which is accompanying the transformations, and the eco-feminist critique of petro-culture and the androcentrism of the idea of environment and development.

Introduction

Femininity and masculinity are, in effect, identity projects changing over time and organizing the lives of individuals and social groups. Key in these projects are the manifested psychophysical features, behavioral patterns, and gender role scenarios. This is one of the fundamental forms of human social identification and a basis for

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social stratification; it is also a cultural response¹ to differences between bodies in the reproductive sense (Connell, 2009, p. 31). Still, social changes occurring in communities turn seemingly stable female and male patterns into the subject of negotiations and give rise to changes in social structures. However, the visibility and cultural permanence of these processes may vary, depending upon the “practicality” of a denaturalization of gender categories.

Social research on femininity and masculinity shows that, on the one hand, male domination and androcentrism are cornerstones of gender order (Bourdieu, 2001; Kelly, 1997, p. 113; Plumwood, 1997, pp. 337–338). As Kelly observed (1997, p. 112):

Men’s domination of women is deep and systematic, and it is accepted around the world by most men and many women as “natural”, as something that somehow cannot be changed. But the norms of human behavior do change. Because the oppression of women is so deeply embedded in our societies and our psyches, it continues to be invisible, even to those who are working to overcome other forms of injustice.

On the other hand, attention is paid to the diversity of gender concepts (both between categories and within each gender category) as well as to the intersectionality of gender categories with those of race, sexual orientation, class, etc. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hultman & Pulé, 2018; Christensen and Jensen 2019).

The potentiality for various gender representations and practical embodiments of gender structure lie in cultural resources. Yet when individuals and groups are affected by dramatic and dynamic events—be these political, economic, or social, natural disasters or pandemics—there is a confrontation with unfamiliar habitus experiences. Such experiences, unmediated by cultural practices, unveil the inadequacies of a gender logic deprived of its power to organize reality. Ultimately, it is men and women themselves (from their subjective perspective) who select where they will be situated on the trajectory of their lives.

Comments on Methodology and Theory

In order to trace the process by which femininity and masculinity are negotiated, I will analyze the individual experiences of women and men who reside in heavily industrialized, working-class communities shaken by the restructuration of the regional/local economy and the social milieu. Forced by macrosocial processes, transformations in life models were inevitable. Likewise, the normative and axiological framework was stretched, subsequently changing the concepts of both gender roles and feminine vis-à-vis masculine patterns.

¹This entails differences not only between ethnic cultures, but also within any single community over the course of its history and development.

Serving as the empirical database are the results of the SPHERE project—*Space, place and the historical and contemporary articulations of regional, national and European identities through work and community in areas undergoing economic restructuring and regeneration* (7 PR UE, 2008–2011).² The research conducted between 2008 and 2011 was focused on issues of social and cultural identity change under the conditions of a multidimensional transformation. More precisely, the main goal was the identification of the social references—such as consumption, gender, age, ethnic, national, or European affiliation—for a reoriented life trajectory. The investigation focused on the transition from the old, “masculine” to the new, significantly “feminized” labor as well as from the old and more stable to the new and more flexible forms of employment (Wódcz et al. 2012, pp. 17–39).

More precisely, I will analyze that part of the research that pertains to the restructuring of the Silesian Voivodship. This is significant and relevant for this chapter which explores fundamental dimensions of that experience: (1) what are the new social roles of men and women; and (2) what are the normative and axiological justifications for the changes taking place in the gender habitus?

One method for collecting the empirical material was the in-depth interview (IDI).³ This was dictated by a need to extract (1) a practical understanding of selected aspects of the actions undertaken by women and men, and (2) the perceptions and assessments of the changes they experienced. Analysis of the IDI transcripts facilitated the reconstruction of the ways by which their reality is created, and its origin is explained. In statements made by the respondents, I was looking for things that were specifically individual, but which, through repetition, formed a collective structure for subjectivities. I sought out what was shared in common, what kept recurring in the stories about the transformation of the cultural landscape in these coal-mining communities, and what has affected the essence of femininity and masculinity across all the social fields. A breakdown of similarities and differences permitted garnering of the categories and typologies surfacing from the statements of the respondents themselves, inhabitants of the (post)mining communities in Silesia.⁴

²This project represents a collaboration by representatives from several academic centers: Middle East Technical University (METU) Turkey (coordinator); Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University; *Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung* (IAB) Germany; Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) Spain; and the Department of Contemporary Culture Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Silesia in Katowice Poland.

³In total, 12 IDIs were conducted with women and 12 with men; there was also one focus group interview with women, one with men, and one with activists from the miners’ trade unions.

⁴Firsthand citations in this chapter are taken directly from the project interviews, maintaining the original syntax. The letters in brackets represent gender (K = woman, M = man) and respondent place of origin (B = Będzin, Ksawera district; R = Ruda Śląska, Kaufhaus district) while Roman numerals (1–12) represent subsequent respondents. The letter F indicates a focus group interview response.

Reconstructed Femininity

The coal miner employment profile in the local communities chiefly pertains to men. Thus, the connection with the mining culture of the women was mediated through their household and neighborly practices. Those working women who were employed in the mining industry were an invisible minority, excluded from the heroic myth bestowing high prestige and financial benefits to the miners working underground. A region focused on mining-related industry left women with little chance for advancement (Macintyre 2011, pp. 21–23). The dominant pattern of femininity emphasized the role of a wife and mother as the cornerstones of identity. Moreover, early marriage and childbearing excluded women from gaining an education at a level higher than the minimum required by law. Formal education could not serve as an *illusio* in the gender habitus: the only stakes a woman had in the game was the status of a wife, a housewife, and a mother.

The above described was what constituted “traditional” femininity in the regional culture “before,” “when the mines were running”; this was a femininity primarily or exclusively reproducing the family and household order. To put it bluntly, “The dame was to the home” [K_7_R]. As one respondent elaborated, “Generally, the miners’ wives stayed at home. That was the typical miner family. (...) it was precisely like that, that the wife was at home, raised the children, you know. Cooking, washing, cleaning—she just took care of that and the husband took care of earning money” [K_8_B].

If, for some reason, one woman was absent from home, another one replaced her to fulfill the assigned female roles: “When a woman went to work, well then, someone cooked dinner and took care of the children. There was the grandma (...). Responsibility for the children, the family and so on, (...) all of this fell on the woman” [M_6_R]. In another case, “When mama was sick, the aunts did the laundry” [K_8_B]. Mutual support of women in running a household and caring for children was based not only on intrafamily relations. Neighborly relations were also a fundamental extension of the familial ones: “That’s the way it was that, when a neighbor had something urgent to take care of and had to leave home, then she brought her ready soup and put it on our stove—and my mom, cooking for herself, was also watching that soup for her (...). When three or four kids from the neighborhood came home with me, it’d never be that my mother gave me something and the kids just stood and stared. All of them got something. Whatever there was, each of them would get” [M_2_B].

The neighbors helped each other in childcare, shopping, and cooking; meals, news, and advice were shared. The women supported each other in the everyday hustle and bustle but also spent free time together: “When we had time in the evening, we’d go down by the walls, there we’d be talking (...) about knitting, cooking or children” [K_7_R].

The pattern of femininity—anchored in the role of a wife and mother who is economically dependent upon a man as the head of the family—enjoyed acceptance in the mining communities. As one respondent explained, “At that time, the salary of

a miner was five times higher than the salary of a nurse; now it is only twice as high. So when we were a newly married couple, those salaries were much higher and my women friends, the wives of miners, not all of them worked” [K_11_R].

Furthermore, the social policy of the state reinforced devotion to family life and running a household. When parental leave benefit was introduced in 1981, pregnant women or women planning pregnancy looked for a job in the local factories in order to be entitled to three-year parental leave with financial benefits after each childbirth (in 1988, 95% of the entitled women received such benefits). “I was pregnant with my son and I got a job in the steel mill because they were talking about these childrearing benefits. . . . When I was accepted, I managed to work the [minimum] four months [until childbirth]” [K_7_R]. Hence the status of a worker facilitated the execution of traditional maternal and marital functions while also contributing financially to the household budget. However, as children grew up and entitlements to these benefits were lost, some women formally withdrew from the labor market. Professionally passive, supported solely by their husbands, they returned to running the household and taking care of family members. The difference was that the family’s living standard and financial situation were determined only by the man’s job. The normativity of such choices and decisions by women, especially in the mining environment, was supported not only by the local ethos but also by the financial security guaranteed by law: the so-called “widow’s pension” in case of a spouse’s death.

Still, those women whose family budget was too low to permit income reduction did return to work after their maternity leave. Such a choice, however, was not standard and required some socially convincing justification:

My mum worked all alone to support the eight of us. And she—a woman—went as a sixteen-year-old to work in [a mine]. She worked hard there, sixteen years old, had a son and then she had to bring us all up. And every year there was a new child. And my dad never worked in socialist Poland, not a single month. So it wasn’t that now the times are like that—it was like that before, too, only little was said about it. Because that was shameful. A woman, when she came to work in a mine, she would never admit she has a LAZYBONES husband who does not work. (. . .) She would be quiet as a mouse. She would never admit: my husband is a drunkard or something like that. He works like me, but we have so many kids, so we need to earn some [more] money, right? [K_F_R].

Modified Traditional Femininity

The concept of development created by the neoliberal state policy in the 1990s began to place the social, institutional responsibility of the state for the economic and social safety of its citizens above the norm. Implementing the American vision of a self-regulating market and self-directed individuals led not only to the economic decline of working-class communities but also undermined the axiological order (Lahiri-Dutt 2011, p. 2). An economic model rooted in the neoliberal paradigm was supposed to result in growth and development generated by the mechanisms of an auto-optimizing market. Opposed to any form of interventionism and blind to

gender, it, on the one hand, marginalized women on the labor market, depriving them of institutional support in the caretaking of dependents; on the other hand, it unified women, positioning them within androcentric worker patterns (Macintyre 2011, p. 23).

Traditional femininity turned out to be contradictory to this new order and, according to Salleh (2018, p. 29), no alternatives which would recognize gender habitus differences has been found. More particularly:

Women's monthly fertility cycle, the tiring symbiosis of pregnancy, the wrench of childbirth, and the pleasure of suckling an infant, these things already ground women's consciousness in the knowledge of being coterminous with Nature. However tacit or unconscious this identity may be for many women, bruised by derogatory patriarchal attitudes to motherhood, including modern male-identified feminist ones, it is nevertheless "a fact of life." The deep ecology movement, by using the generic term Man, simultaneously presupposes the difference between the sexes in an uncritical way, and yet overlooks the significance of this difference. It overlooks the point that if women's lived experiences were recognized as meaningful and were given legitimation in our culture, it could provide an immediate "living" social basis for the alternative consciousness (Salleh 2018, p. 26).

This contradiction has deepened the logic of the gender order dominant in traditional mining communities: the household reproduction of women and the labor production of men. Social qualifications, competences, and resources (i.e., the cultural capital) situated women and men in different positions in confrontations with the employment market. Moreover, not only was there a painful loss of objective reality (e.g., the mine as "bedrock," "our whole world", etc.), but also a clash with a normative and axiological chaos which questioned the heretofore dominant female and male patterns in this milieu. As I mention elsewhere in this volume, the restructuring discourse so focused on the mining industry emphasized the priority of men in the fight for jobs—referring once more to the traditional roles of the breadwinner and head of household. At the same time, the neoliberal ideas about the economy simultaneously disowned those outside the labor market and those who did not manifest sufficient agency in performing work roles. This was the case of the professionally passive women.

Taking care of dependent family members, running a household, the traditional set of marital and parental functions so fundamental for the traditional femininity project—all of that has begun to lose its significance when confronted with neoliberal femininity which is oriented toward the effective (i.e., bestowing money and prestige) securing of employment. The traditional femininity dominant in mining communities was losing normative ground, becoming more and more marginal over time. Nonetheless, this did not mean the exclusion of all that had structured the traditional femininity from the project for modern femininity, but it did mean the inclusion of gainful employment as a condition for female normativity. Obviously, this process did not pertain solely to women from the mining communities, but it was particularly severe there due to a relatively great work passivity among women and a relatively low (compared to other regions in Poland) education level.

The very process of moving femininity into this "new" direction introduced (apart from the traditional affiliation of being a wife/mother) the necessity of independent

status achievement: the social position attributed via one's husband no longer sufficed. As late as the 1980s, women in Poland defined their prestige through being the "wife of the director" (*dyrektorowa*), "wife of the manager" (*kierownikowa*) (Reszke 1984), or simply the wife of a miner. By the 1990s, however, a woman's career status, along with the income she contributed to the household budget, was increasingly gaining importance.

Yet what professional position could women reach, if their gender habitus was shaped by the objective living conditions of a traditional mining community? As one respondent noted, "Initiative can be seized when you are educated and when you have achieved something in your life. Because these women mainly had only a primary education or didn't finish any form of secondary education. These were precisely the marriages in which women married very early—eighteen years old!" [K_8_B]. Later, during the transformation, "at the age of forty, they suddenly started looking for a job" [K_11_R]. As unskilled labor, these women had to take low-paid service jobs, applying such resources as cooking, caretaking, or cleaning skills—the routine set of tasks performed in their own household and neighborhood community. However, it was hard for them to compete with unskilled male laborers or with the better-educated young females entering the labor market: "When you reach a certain age, no one will hire you for a job (. . .) especially if you don't have any professional experience. (. . .) It would be better if you had 40 years of experience, were 20 years old and had very long legs" [K_8_B]. The women of Silesia had to leave the framework of traditional femininity and needed to enter the labor market due to the fact that the men—heretofore the sole breadwinners and heads of household—had lost their jobs.

Modern Femininity

Traditional femininity had been founded on perpetuated, routine strategies acquired in a once stable (now threatened) working-class environment. But the postcommunist socio-economic restructuring had deprived that model of a disposition toward practical actions and the possibility of regulating social placement. Traditional femininity was no longer effective; its organizational capital had been depleted. A society disciplined by a free-market economy and the paradigm of self-directed, androcentric individuals triggered processes requiring new dispositions and new cultural capital resources. Adaptation to an impossible world unmediated by practices encompassed several areas of social life: education, employment, the family, etc.

Growing daughters were motivated to commence a profession-oriented education, more likely to guarantee a well-paid job. Girls from mining families began to undertake an education in trade schools regarded as "unfeminine." One man commented, "Everyone here thought that it was a strange choice by those girls, that they joined such a class. I don't know how they'll be directed further now because *Kompania Węglowa* later offers a job after graduating from such a school

and grants scholarships with the idea that one could immediately start working” [M_9_B]. Women began admitting that paid work is a necessity stemming not only from financial reasons but also from a need to have a sense of control over their own lives and financial security: A respondent pondered, “Life can change. (...) Let’s assume that I wouldn’t work my whole life—but what about my retirement pension? And what if my husband leaves me? Or some accident will happen. (...) So I have to think about how to provide for my old age” [K_8_B]. At the same time, women began to also criticize traditional femininity for its dependence and passivity. For example, “When I think that there were women who did not have to work—they ran a household and looked after the children while the husband was at work—it seems like a fairy tale to me. After all, you can always find some job, no? In a sense, they were choosing what was easy, no? Once that was just the attitude—Eh, who cares! My husband will support me and I will do everything for him” [K_3_R].

This traditional aspect of the gender habitus that oriented a female’s entire energy and activity toward collective self-confirmation of dedication and devotion to the family was also criticized because “a woman should also have a life outside of work and the family (...), simply have something just for herself” [K_8_B]. Indeed, “such sitting at home is not the whole world if someone wants to develop and broaden horizons” [K_3_R].

In the eyes of the interviewees, however, the traditional and modern projects of femininity do not differ in their boundary-making (i.e., demarcating “inappropriate” gender activity) in the family sphere. On the one hand, we deal here with postponed marriage and motherhood, the normalization of divorce, the democratization of familial relations, more partnership models in which household duties are shared, etc. On the other hand, with reference to the effects of social changes, our respondents’ commonsense wisdom (rooted in the discourse of nature and the natural) legitimizes the reproduction of “women’s work.” The woman is perceived as the keystone of the family and the *sine qua non* for its existence. This is so obvious that it cannot be questioned. The only element which could be negotiated is something that threatens the “proper” social position of women thus perceived. One such disturbance in the “domestication” of females is an excessive, overly intense and stressful, time-consuming professional career: “Women work too much and there is no time because the fathers also work, there is no time for the children, for the family. We really want to be modern, but nature delineates certain unbending laws” [K_3_R].

Reconstructed Masculinity

Tracing the political debates of conservatives and the PR strategies of coal companies, Cara Daggett has indicated a convergence in gender and mining discourse. On the one hand, those discourses utilize the traditional paradigm of masculinity; on the other hand, they legitimize political and economic power over natural resources (ultimately, social and cultural resources, too). Obviously, in various social contexts, this parallel variously manifests itself in ways specific to the local environment.

In post-WWII Poland, political discourse (i.e., socialist propaganda) positioned miners as national heroes in the symbolic universe. That bestowed political subjectivity upon this group of workers and rendered the entire mining industry a symbol of the energy self-sufficiency and the economic development of the country. The metaphorical, material, and social engineering cornerstones of the “petroculture” shaped political, economic, professional, and gender relations (Daggett 2018, p. 27). Petro-masculinity and mining were connected by a technical, affective, ideological, and financial relationship—and all this together ossified the patriarchal order (Daggett 2018, p. 28).

After 1989, traditional masculinity has presented a challenge for subsequent governments replacing the centrally-planned economy with neoliberal doctrine. However, for men employed in the mining enterprises, the transformation did not mean sharing the fate of workers from other economic sectors (e.g., unemployment, outsourcing, etc.) It was political arguments and a fear of destabilizing the whole social system that kept this sector under more control. Yet this contradictory institutional protection and support for the mining industry, strayed from the neoliberal paradigm and legitimized the discourse of hypermasculinity. We must remember that the first years of the transformation in Poland witnessed backlashes: open interference by the Roman Catholic Church in political life, communist resentments, and the questioning of all socialist states, egalitarian ideas (implemented to various degrees with various effects) regarding women. Hypermasculinity—as a reaction to a perceived threat and destabilization of traditional masculinity (Daggett 2018, p. 33) has been built in opposition to femininity. That masculinity constituted an “ideological legitimization of the subordination of women by men” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832); the systemic misogynistic tactics organize and enforce the norms of patriarchal governments (Daggett 2018, p. 43). Instead of an icon of the PRL’s (*Polska Republika Ludowa*, Polish People’s Republic) propaganda of success, the miner has become the guardian of a sanctified family—the sole breadwinner and guarantor of the economic security of his wife and children.

Traditional Masculinity

This ideological decorum legitimized a male habitus anchored in career employment as a rudiment of gender normativity⁵ and the most available job in the mining communities was the one offered by the local mine. The (male) identity project obligatory for the workers employed at the mine ensured self-affirmation of masculinity; that project also situated those workers within a collective subject—the male

⁵Before 1989, men without fulltime employment (confirmed by an employer’s stamp in one’s ID card) were subject to constant harassment from the police. Furthermore, being connected to an institution determined access to regulated services and rationed goods in an era of market deficits.

collective. Moreover, “It was generational, first the grandfather, then father, and finally the son” [K_7_R]. Maturing boys ended their education in the vocational mining school and, as its graduates (also often recommended by relatives and neighbors), they would thus take a job in a mine. As one male interviewee recalled, “I can say that I started from the basics just like any miner—various simple tasks, belt cleaning—then I completed some courses. Later I was transferred to the [mine] wall, then I completed a course to be an operator and then a combine operator. And so step by step, it’s all lasted about 15 years” [M_5_B].

Along with formal employment the men were becoming not only part of a crew, but also of mining culture with its rites of passage, patriarchal structure, collective solidarity, and male comradeship (or friendship): “After work everyone was getting together, but these were rather men’s type of get togethers—some beer or something stronger” [M_11_B]. “Well, women were not allowed, you know when (. . .) Beer, a lot of booze is pouring, some fun, pork knuckle. . .” [M_1_R]. The miners also entered into a realm that offered privileges of the trade such as institutional housing, entertainment, and vacations. Therefore, a mining identity also meant the functioning of the same men in several social fields as a consequence of their work status.

Their very career, focused on the accumulation of heavy-industry capital, was doubly exploitative. On the one hand, the carnal *hexis* was oppressed: miners were exposed to detrimental working conditions. Working in low oxygen, dim artificial light, and hot and cold drafts bears a destructive impact on the miners:

“You have to work in humidity, in water, in hot temperatures” [M_2_R]. “It’s enough that you start working at 2 pm, you go down and don’t see the sun. Later you come up and it’s night, well, you might have the sun for a couple of hours. It’s harmful work, just being in such air, in that atmosphere where oxygen is at the minimum that a human being can bear” [M_6_B].

Yet the perils of working underground—“rock bursts, gas leaks or gas explosions” [M_6_B]—were inscribed in traditional masculinity. Taking such a risk, facing fear of your own life and health, and managing a limited sense of control paradoxically shaped masculinity, evoking stereotypical associations with courage as well as mental and physical resilience. On the other hand, this masculinity—instrumentalizing the body, emotions, and kinetic energy—rendered the carnal *hexis* a tool in the exploitation of natural resources. The slow self-destruction of the men—hidden under the founding myth of the mining (working-class) ethos—also legitimized destructive practices toward the whole of the natural environment, toward the “subdued” Earth.

This entanglement of traditional masculinity in the project of Enlightenment rationality was augmented by the segregation of the men from the household field. Traditional masculinity was making use of economic and symbolic power; the unpaid work in the household was reserved for traditional femininity. One man observed how, “when I returned home and my wife started the laundry, I was leaving the house to drink beer or to my pigeons” [M_3_R]. A woman noticed a similar pattern: “My father never helped my mother with the housework (. . .). Even when my mother was seriously ill, he wouldn’t go to the linen press. I had to go although I

was a little kid and carrying all that was very hard” [K_4_R]. This habitus of masculinity, dominant before the economic restructuring of the region, excluded everything that was connected with traditional femininity from dispositions and practices. This cultural misogyny reproduced masculinity as an antinomy to femininity and created distance with reference to gender-ambiguous social fields: “Every guy, you too, has to know how to drill the holes in a wall, repair a car, those basic things (. . .). If God permits and I’ll have a son, I’m going to try to teach him not to be a wimp” [M_1_R].

Modified Traditional Masculinity

Despite opposition by the miners, the slow closing of the mines has become a new reality. This process has taken on various dynamics and scale, but it has, above all, shattered a sense of security and stability that miners have built upon a faith in the political agency of their trade unions and protests as well as their own knowledge of local coal deposits and the technical standards of the mines. “Well, sure, people were unhappy with this situation because everyone had counted on that he has seniority and just has to add into that retirement pension” [M_2_B].

Traditional masculinity was threatened. Fixed, routine strategies for action-taking ceased to be effective while modifications of the habitus structures were not always subjectively possible. Access to career jobs was no longer a certainty and unemployment became the greatest danger. Laid off from liquidated mines, in accordance with gender logic, the miners simply moved to other mining installations. That, however, involved the necessity of leaving one’s local milieu; it also required mobility as well as an openness to new relations and experiences. For instance, “Somewhere there, at a different mine, but far away and you have to learn everything, and that isn’t so easy (. . .) When you work in one place for 15 years, you know all roads. But when you for to another [mine], you have to learn everything anew, all the ways in and out, know how to act” [M_2_B].

Yet relocation of miners to other mines also meant a need to vacate positions held by men who were already entitled to retirement benefits or at least preretirement leaves. A consequence in the mining labor market was the letting go of men in the prime of their life (40 year-olds) who now had to face a career deactivation and thus a redefinition of their masculinity. Friendships and neighborly ties were broken and the communal nature of the local community was diminished. A collectivistic orientation was slowly being replaced by an individualistic one; a post-Fordian economy formulated expectations that were impossible to fulfill under the dispositions which constituted traditional masculinity.

The pressures of internally-directed self-development, individual agency, and (sounding like a bon mot) the slogan that “every man carves his own fate” [M_1_R], channeled a search for a normative masculinity in the resources and directives which were the most effective in a free-market economy. The miners were encouraged by relatively substantial “golden parachutes” to definitively quit

their career, leave the mines completely, and enter the open employment market. But, “They gave people a laughable 50 thousand złoty (. . .). People who had never had more than 10 thousand in hand (. . .) thought they had won the lottery. Right away he was buying a new car, a fur coats for his wife, computers and bikes for the kids. And soon, bit by bit they had to pawn everything (. . .). More than one splurged on women, alcohol, drugs, taxis, brothels (. . .). There are lots of them. Some of them tried their luck at business, but most of them have failed. And so they hurt these people” [M_1_R].

Modern Masculinity

Those who remained in the mining industry (resisting the pressures of the post-Fordian economy and the restructuring politics) have become participants in a transformation of the work ethos and a shaping of new guidelines and resources for masculinity. Technology had increased the professional requirements (hence the increased number of individuals with a university degree), but it had also liberated masculinity from the forced, destructive exploitation of the carnal *hexis*: “The pickaxe, spade—those were the miner’s tools. Today it’s a machine, today a longwall coal-cutter moves, cuts, and loads at the same time” [M_4_B]. Intentional and responsible management with respect for the value of human life and health have become more important in the organization of labor: “Everything now has changed, now you think (...). People think about themselves, their work and safety. Everyone wants to come home” [M_2_R]. The earlier sense of a working-class community, collective work, and crew solidarity have been replaced by individualism, competition, and self-reliance. Work as a source of income has become more significant, whereas different social functions of this kind of work have become peripheral: “I have certain pay, I have a permanent job, payday always on the same date, and steady working hours. Not unsteady, so that you work from 6 am to 6 pm or maybe until 8 pm” [M_1_R].

Modern masculinity has rendered the *habitus* boundaries more flexible not only in the work field but also in that of the home. Expectations in the latter field have shed their previously sharp preclusion of masculinity. The segregation of men from domestic life has been softened as their involvement is redirected from the masculine activities at work toward family life: “Nowadays, everyone has his own home and own family. People don’t meet so often after work, don’t go out for a beer because everyone drives to work, so people meet less often (...).” [M_9_R]. Modern masculinity leaves symbolic and economic power behind while entering into the gender logic valuing (co)responsibility for caretaking of family members (e.g., children or disabled adults). More to the point, the majority of tasks and functions at home have cast off gender distinctions, such as “cooking, window washing, and housecleaning” [K_3_R].

Summary

The reflections drawn from this research study do not comprise an exhaustive description of the action strategies which are modifying the structures of the gender habitus. Neither is this a comprehensive analysis of the increased effectiveness of the new male and female habitus in a dynamically changing reality. The text at hand serves as a starting point—an attempt to sort and categorize the subjective, but recurring experiences of the inhabitants of specific post-mining communities at a specific point in time. Under the conditions of a restructuring of the economic system and labor market, the essence of femininity and masculinity is changing in this region. The (re)defining is embodied in the everyday micro-practices of men and women which illustrate how the previous framework is no longer operational under the new social circumstances. There is potential for individual self-location in the newly shaping gender habitus in response to objective, external forces which used to determine location.

With all of the above taken under consideration, we can draw three primary conclusions. In the first order, reproduction of the femininity and masculinity habitus that was founded upon the traditional paradigm now faces resistance as the work field transforms and evolves toward a post-Fordian economy. In turn, modern femininity and masculinity are influenced by economic and cultural capital and are negotiating an exchange value. The conversion of gender habitus affords access to economic capital because it allows monetary earnings under the new socio-economic circumstances within the new social structures. The value of education as cultural capital is changing and thus, too, is the education field. Moreover, a “new” value manifests itself in the household field in the form of relationships and guidelines deprived of gender distinctions. Therefore, out of the whole cultural universe of gender possibilities, it is modern femininity and masculinity which possess the operating capital that enables effective actions today.

Secondly, various aspects in the actions performed by women and men (or, more broadly, social practices and their justifications) have not annulled the androcentric principles of a gender order. Yet those power of those principles to shape a gender logic has become more diversified. A symbolic, negative factor has meant a separation of women from men (Bourdieu 2001, p. 111), but this is characteristic of the traditional or the modified traditional femininity and masculinity habitus. In the latter, modified version, femininity is indeed represented in the field of labor, but, in the post-working-class milieu, women are gainfully employed in the areas traditionally associated with family and household duties (e.g., gastronomy, cleaning, care-taking, nursing, education, etc.). furthermore, such employment is justified is primarily as counteracting an economic decline of the family.

Thirdly and finally, economic and cultural inequality also take place within femininity as a gender category. This pertains to both the traditional as well as modern habitus in the fields of work and education (Bourdieu 2001, p. 112). Articulation of a habitus will depend (among other things) upon age, education, fertility, etc. Still, the changing, altered, or reconstructed variants of masculinity and

femininity all coexist as both potential and real options offered by the local cultural world.

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