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Cultural Differences and Their Importance in Ideas about the Vision of Marriage and Family in Polish and Ukrainian Societies

Introduction

With the COVID-19 epidemic on one hand and the Russian aggression towards Ukraine on the other, the year 2022 was a particular time in which we experienced extraordinary circumstances. The coincidence of these two events constitutes a special period which definitely leads to a different look in regard to many important aspects of human life. In extraordinary circumstances, people can significantly change their value system, worldview, life goals, relationships, as well as opinions and life decisions concerning various issues, including marriage and family.

The attitudes to and perception of reality are highly determined not only by experienced circumstances but also by the culture of a specific society or community.¹ The prevailing value system and the im-

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¹ Anthony Giddens, *Socjologia. Wydanie nowe* [Sociology. New edition], translated by Olga Siara, Alina Szulżycka, Paweł Tomanek (Warszawa: PWN, 2005), 47.



diate influence of the given environment play an important role in the perception of the meaning of human relationships, setting life goals, and the vision of one's future. Polish and Ukrainian societies share many similarities but also exhibit some differences too. In a way, they share history, culture, and a neighboring geographical position, however, they also differ in their state-forming processes, and the pace of their respective social changes or cultural transformations.² The paths of these two countries were already different before democracy was recovered in their systems. The Polish state has witnessed a transformation from socialism to democracy, whereas Ukraine being a Soviet Republic had to construct their state system virtually from scratch. Ukraine won independence on the 24th of August 1991.³ This is the point at which the Declaration of Independence was adopted. From the management of the former totalitarian state, which was the Soviet Union, autonomous Ukraine was transformed into a democratic state. Ukraine inherited a specific political system from the previous one, which caused difficulties in adapting to the new democratic order.⁴ The state has redefined its history and culture and the associated national identity right from its beginning, almost from the very basic foundations. It continues to rebuild its new system of national values and tradition and creates its heroes. The newly created society is developed on the foundation of the basic group unit of society which is the fami-

² Tomasz Stryjek, Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin, Kamila Zacharuk, *Ukraińcy o historii, kulturze i stosunkach polsko-ukraińskich* [Ukrainians on history, culture and Polish-Ukrainian relations] (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2017), 10.

³ Jarosław Hrycak, *Historia Ukrainy: 1772-1999. Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu* [History of Ukraine: 1772-1999. The birth of a modern nation], translated by Katarzyna Kotyńska (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2000), 316.

⁴ Katarzyna Jędraszczyk, Orest Krasiwski, Aleksander Bezludny, *Spółeczeństwo i kultura Ukrainy. Ćwierćwiecze przemian (1991-2016)* [The society and culture of Ukraine. A quarter of a century of change (1991-2016)]. *Gnieźnieńskie prace humanistyczne, Tom XIV* (Gniezno: IKEU im. AM w Poznaniu, 2016), vol. 14.

ly. It is the family unit that can be seen as a vessel of tradition, history, culture, and the value system of Ukrainian society. The worldview of young Ukrainian people is formed on this basis. This group constitutes a kind of cultural filter as to which values should be adopted from other societies and which of them should be rejected.

The formation of this process was different in Poland, where society is more open to the culture of the West. After the real socialism era and the former cutting off of Poland from the culture of Western Europe, this filter can be thought of as more of a kind of leaky sieve. Sociologists have emphasized that Polish people often unquestioningly adopted the lifestyle of Western European countries.⁵ Polish society has become more susceptible to the influence of the globalization processes. The consequence is the observed increasing process of individualism and consumerism. Moreover, worldview pluralism and the process of secularization entail changes in the perception of the family.⁶ All those changes are of great impact on the life and functioning of the family unit as well as on the perception of it in the future by young people. The observed social evolutions are in correlation with the cultural ones. Together with the standards that were characteristic of former generations, the current principles, rules, and norms concerning the actual functioning of the family are becoming less obvious or taken for granted.⁷

⁵ Leon Dyczewski, *Rodzina twórcą i przekazicielem kultury* [The family is the creator and transmitter of culture] (Lublin: TN KUL, 2003), 19.

⁶ Włodzimierz Dłubacz, "Rodzina w życiu człowieka" [The family in human life], in *Współczesna rodzina w dobie przemian społeczno-kulturowych* [The contemporary family in the time of social-cultural changes], wyd. Bogdan Więckiewicz, Marek Klimek (Lublin: KUL, 2012), 206.

⁷ Karl Pillemer, *Rozłam w rodzinie. Jak uzdrowić relacje z bliskimi* [Fault lines: Fractured families and how to mend them], translated by: Agnieszka Kasprzyk (Kraków: UJ, 2022), 74.

Due to the greater mobility of contemporary European communities, including the Polish and Ukrainian ones, many young people now live far from their next of kin. Their relationships with their families have changed. Also, the influence of the family of origin on the choices which most govern life goals has decreased. In Ukrainian society, the family is more influenced by tradition, while Polish society has a postmodern culture, created as an outcome of the affirmation of globalization and modernization of society.⁸ First, it was COVID-19 that affected the changes in the functioning of the family. On one hand, this was related to the increased amount of time spent together, which was caused by the periodical lockdown of preschools, schools, and many workplaces. On the other hand, the drastic change concerning free time and more frequently joint time staying at home gave rise to conflicts within families.

Other factors that significantly affected the change in the functioning of the family were the direct war activities in Ukraine and the potential threat of war in Poland. All these events could be of considerable impact on the perception of marriage and family by the youth in the research. For this reason, the basic research problem concerned the perception of marriage and the family unit by the students of Ukrainian and Polish universities in this exceptional time frame. Are there any significant differences between them in that field? This research is a kind of comparative study on how in the face of the war and COVID-19 young people from both countries see the basic social institution and the differences and similarities between them.

Sociological research among Polish and Ukrainian students was conducted from 26th June until 26th July 2022. The study was conducted employing a questionnaire prepared in Forms and then sent to the students. The research was carried out among the Ukrainian students at the University of Lviv, while in Poland questions were asked

⁸ Zbigniew Bokszański, *Indywidualizm a zmiana społeczna* [Individualism and social change] (Warszawa: PWN, 2007), 7.

to the students at the Pedagogical University in Krakow. The sociological study questionnaire was developed during a diploma seminar from 2022.⁹ It was delivered to 62 students from Poland and 52 students from Ukraine. Two-thirds of the subjects came from cities, with one-third of the group coming from rural areas. This proportion was similar among the Ukrainian and Polish students. Regarding the study ages, the biggest group among Polish students were those aged 21-23 (51.6%), while in Ukraine the biggest representation of the students were aged 18-20 (75%). The differences may stem from the fact that the Ukrainian youth start university studies at the age of 17, while in Poland it is usually at 19. It should be noted that the largest group of students (both Polish and Ukrainian) who participated in the research were between the ages of 18 and 23; more often they were women, and the majority of subjects came from urban areas.

This is not a large research sample; therefore, these results cannot be representative of all students. However, they allow us to show at least partial conclusions in regard to students' perceptions of the future of marriage and family in these exceptional situations, on one hand related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and on the other hand in times of military operations in Ukraine. These are quite special situations, since they are associated with a threat to life and high uncertainty of the future, especially in regard to entering into lasting relationships.

Family in the plans of Polish and Ukrainian students in the light of own sociological research

The importance of the family unit for human life is emphasized by both sociologists and philosophers. Both draw attention to the importance of the institution of marriage and family. In both fields, one can

⁹ The research was conducted in 2022 by Valeriia Olenych, a student.

note many similarities in the understanding of these two basic social groups. Włodzimierz Dłubacz, a contemporary philosopher, refers to Aristotle and his statement that man is by nature a social animal. For this reason, it is only natural that people group into various communities to meet their needs and achieve various goals. First of all, the basic community is the family, on which life is based. Family is a social good and it is present in every culture.¹⁰ Imelda Chłodna perceives family as a community of life and love in which the processes that take place are the upbringing and shaping of personal models, a place where mutual trust is developed and also where participants form their humanity.¹¹ For sociologists, the family is also a basic group unit of society. Zbigniew Tyszka wrote that family is inseparably associated with society and culture. However, individual societies may shape and modify the forms of family life.¹²

The closely similar histories of Poland and Ukraine have brought about a situation in which we can talk about cultural universality, meaning similar norms, standards, and features in the two states.¹³ Certainly, family values can be spoken about in this case. The students from both countries were asked whether they would like to start a family in the future. The responses of the students were very similar in this regard; 90.3% of Polish students and 90.4% of Ukrainian students responded affirmatively. The opposite opinion was expressed by 8.2% of the students at the Pedagogical University and 5.3% at the University of Lviv

¹⁰ Włodzimierz Dłubacz, "Człowiek w rodzinie" [Man in the family], In *Człowiek w Kulturze* [Man in Culture] 12 (1999), 118.

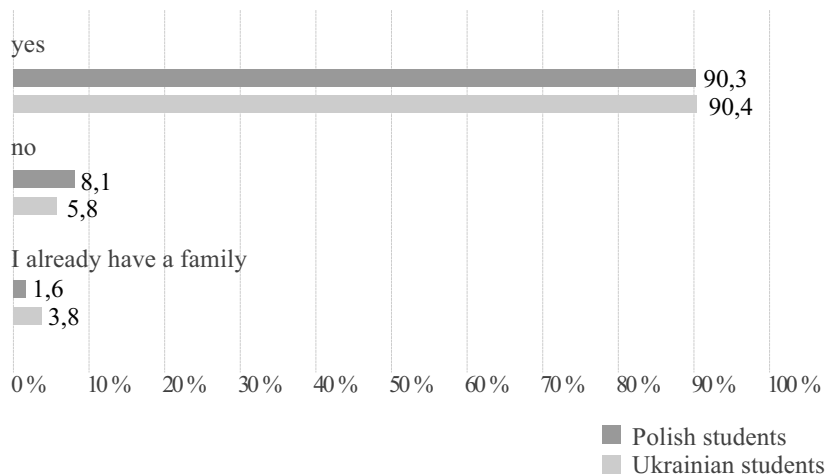
¹¹ Imelda Chłodna, "Autorytet rodziny – dobro czy przeżytek?" [The authority of the family - good or obsolete?] In *Człowiek w Kulturze* [Man in Culture] 22 (2011/2012), 147.

¹² Zbigniew Tyszka, *Socjologia rodziny* [Sociology of the family] (Warszawa: PWN, 1976), 54.

¹³ Antonia Kłoskowska, *Socjologia kultury* [Sociology of the culture] (Warszawa: PWN, 2007), 36.

(Chart 1). As is reflected by the data, the participants in the research demonstrate a high acceptance of starting a family in the future.

CHART 1: Would you like to start a family?



This is the case even though today the postmodern culture, often associated with individualism, is prevailing. It is characterized by a person's focus mostly on their own benefits and personal satisfaction. For this reason, committing or not to relationships is often calculated by young people. Young people, if they decide to start a family, usually do it on a rational basis. This freedom of choice is also related to the increased liberalization concerning the versatility of forms of the marital and family life. Contemporary individualism is understood as emancipation from traditional relationships including family-related ones.¹⁴ Today, the pressure towards a necessity to start a family is also

¹⁴ Zbigniew Bokszański, *Indywidualizm a zmiana społeczna* [Individualism and social change] (Warszawa: PWN, 2007), 77.

declining. Single life is no longer pejorative in its meaning, and it can also be a kind of fashionable and trendy lifestyle. The priority in individualism is self-fulfillment, professional success, and an interesting way of spending free time.

Family and children in particular may put constraints on those plans, to a considerable extent. For this reason, it seems interesting to find out the answers to the question of why the students in the study want to start their own family and whether the answers to this issue are essentially different between the Polish and Ukrainian students.

The obtained data shows that we can observe some differences concerning the purpose of starting a family (Chart 2).

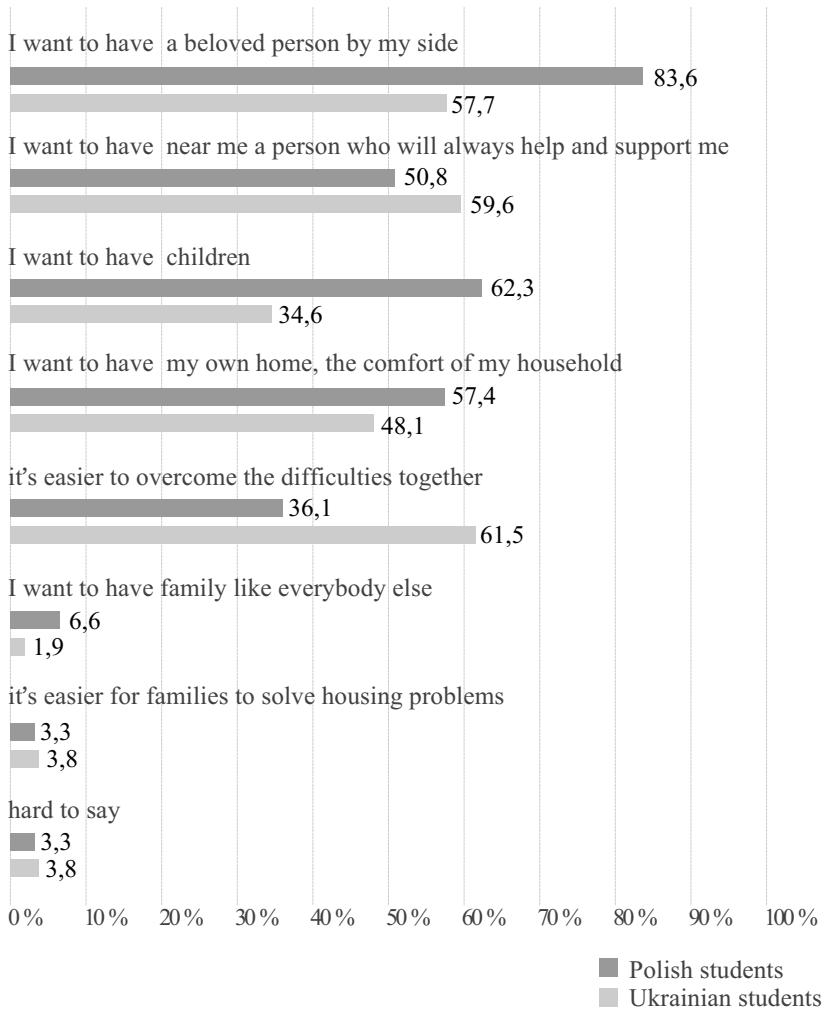
The main purpose of starting a family for the Ukrainian students was the argument that it is easier to overcome difficulties together and to have the company of a person who will help and support you (59.6%), as well as to have somebody whom you love by your side (57.7%). For the Polish students on the other hand, starting a family was most often associated with having somebody you love by your side (83.6%), then the need to have children (62.3%), followed by the desire to have a home and associated comfort, as well as having a person who will always help and support you. The natural need of a human being is to be with somebody close to you, from whom you can get some emotional support and good advice or whom you can count on in particularly difficult moments. Certainly, a husband or wife can be such a close person, as a special type of bond is formed between spouses.¹⁵

All students were also asked what are the most frequent reasons that make it impossible to get married. Only small statistical differences in replies have been noted in this case. For the Ukrainian students, the major reason that prevents the starting of a family is that they would not

¹⁵ Leon Dyczewski, *Więź między pokoleniami w rodzinie* [A bond between generations in a family] (Lublin: TN KUL, 2002), 11.

be able to financially support a family (48.1%). Then, similar proportions (32.7% each) were shared by the fear of making the wrong choice and the fact that it was too early to think about it. On the other hand,

CHART 2: The purpose of starting a family



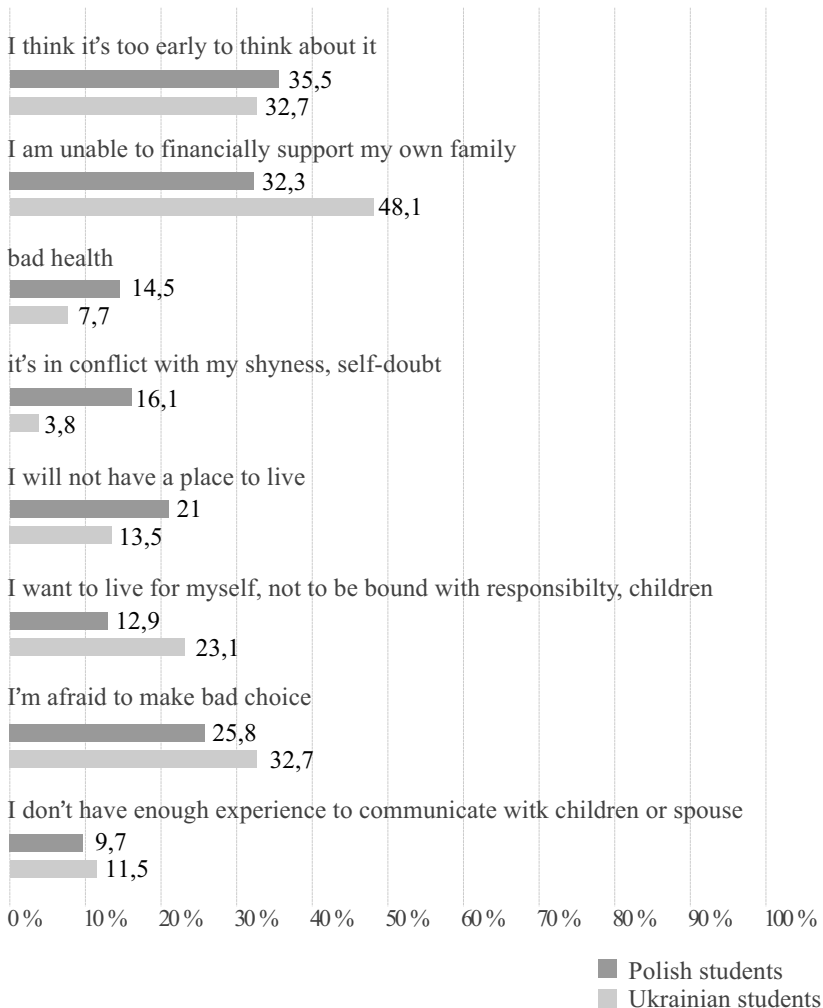
Polish students felt most frequently that it was too early to think about it (35.5%). Those who gave a reason also expressed the concern that they would not be able to support their own family financially, and the fear of making the wrong choice (Chart 3). Those differences can be associated with the economic situation as well as the military activity in Ukraine. Wartime considerably reprioritizes life goals and, predominantly, is associated with high uncertainty within study, work, and immigration decisions, but most of all, it is related to existential anxiety. Destroyed workplaces, schools, and infrastructure, and hence the loss of many workplaces, constitute a significant problem for Ukrainian society. This is the reason why it seems that the Ukrainian students who have experienced war consider financial issues as the reason preventing them from getting married to a larger extent than the Polish students do.

Usually, the natural result of starting a family is having a child. Nevertheless, today—in the predominant culture of consumerism and individualism—it is not always as prevalent as it used to be. We can observe the breakdown of an increasing number of marriages resulting in a reduced rate of childbirth in families.¹⁶ An increasing number of married couples postpone the decision of having a child or decide not to have any offspring whatsoever. Today hardly anybody takes it for granted that once you get married, you are going to have a baby at some point. For this reason, it seems to be justified to ask a question about the plans to have a baby in the future. Upon extrapolating results from the obtained answers, the desire to have children in the future is expressed more often by the Ukrainian students (88.5%) than the Polish ones (74.2%) (Chart 4). Seventeen (17.7) percent of the Polish students have no plans to have children, in comparison to only 5.8% of the Ukrainian respondents. It must be stated that generally most of the youth in the research have children included in their plans. Such opin-

¹⁶ *Rocznik demograficzny 2021* [Demographic yearbook of Poland 2021] (Warszawa: GUS, 2021), 81.

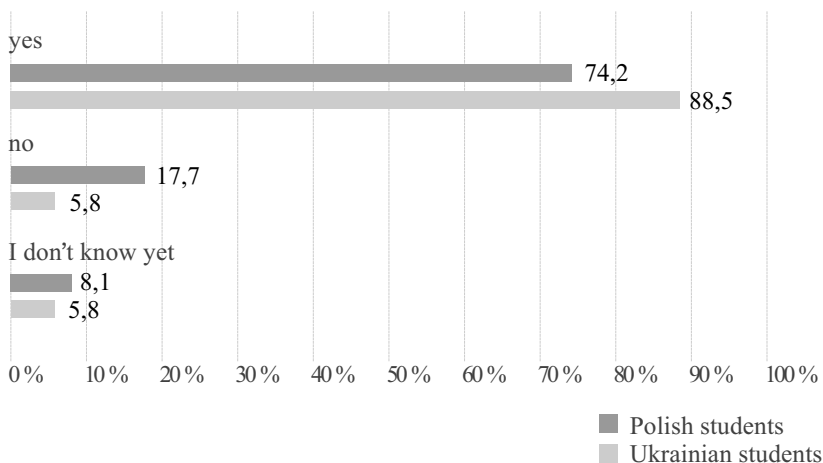
ions can come as a surprise as the birth rate in both countries is one of the lowest in Europe. It is worth considering whether in this case there is perhaps a discrepancy between the respondents' declarations and the implementation of those goals in reality. It is also interesting that the

CHART 3: Reasons preventing from starting a family



Ukrainian students, despite a higher threat by the current situation, are more frequently pronatalist in their approach than the Polish students.

CHART 4: Willingness to have children in future



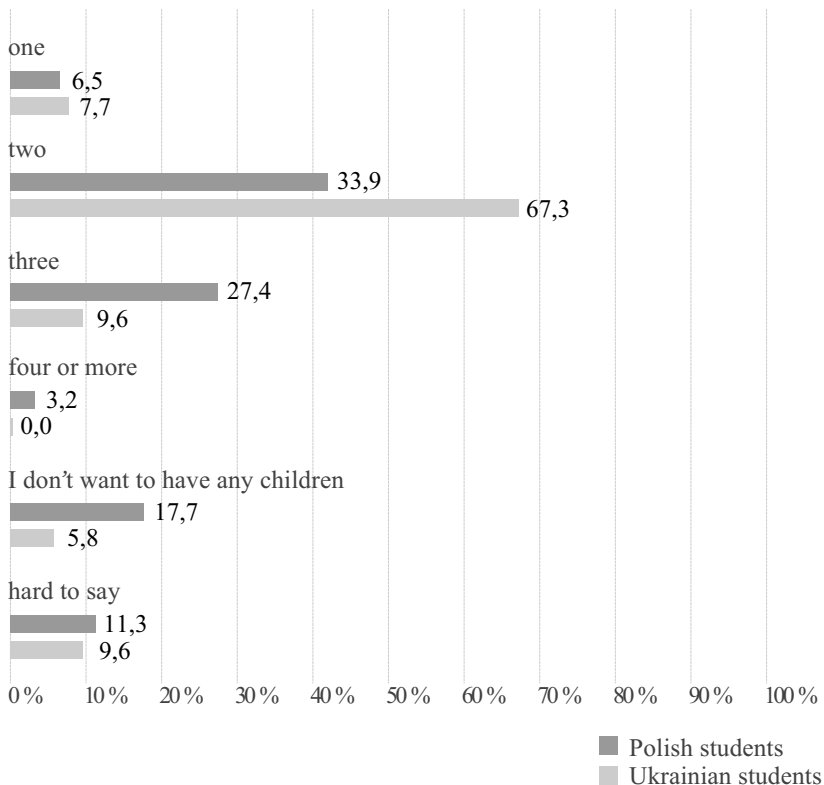
Today, young people—if they decide to have children—do so at a much older age than their parents did. This is caused by numerous factors. One of them is the predominant postmodernist culture which chiefly promotes the fulfillment of self, individual goals, and one's own life plans. The observed individualization is associated first of all with loosening social boundaries as well as the change of the hitherto obvious norms and values. The modern man most often creates relationships that are purposeful and rational, and that are directed to individual achievements.¹⁷ For this reason, having children, taking care of

¹⁷ Janusz Mariański, *Sekularyzacja i desekularyzacja w nowoczesnym świecie* [Secularization and desecularization in the modern world] (Lublin: KUL, 2006), 109.

them and the time devoted to that may make those plans difficult to execute, or postponed in time.

The youth covered by the research were also asked how many children they would like to have in the future. Students at both universities most often replied that they would like to have two children (Chart 5). This was the opinion of 67.3 percent of Ukrainian students and 33.9 percent of the Polish ones. On the other hand, Polish young people (27.4%) want to have three children much more frequently than the Ukrainian students (8.8%). It seems interesting that Polish students

CHART 5: Number of children preferred in the future



desire to have children less than Ukrainian students do, but if they declare that they want to have children, then they want to have more of them. This situation can be interpreted through the prism of the situation associated with the military threat and the linked feeling of economic security. In this regard, the situation in Poland is more stable. The Polish market provides greater possibilities for finding a job (the unemployment rate is one of the lowest in Europe¹⁸) and in addition to that, the economic development and the overall sense of security support the decision to have more children.

The age at which young people want to have their first child affects the number of children in a family. Most often, Polish students want to have children between 25 and 30 years of age (59.7%), while Ukrainian students to the same extent (40.4%) before the age of 25 and between 25 and 30 years of age. Among the students at the Pedagogical University, the same percentage of respondents (8.1% each) plan to have children both before the age of 25 and between the ages of 30 and 35.

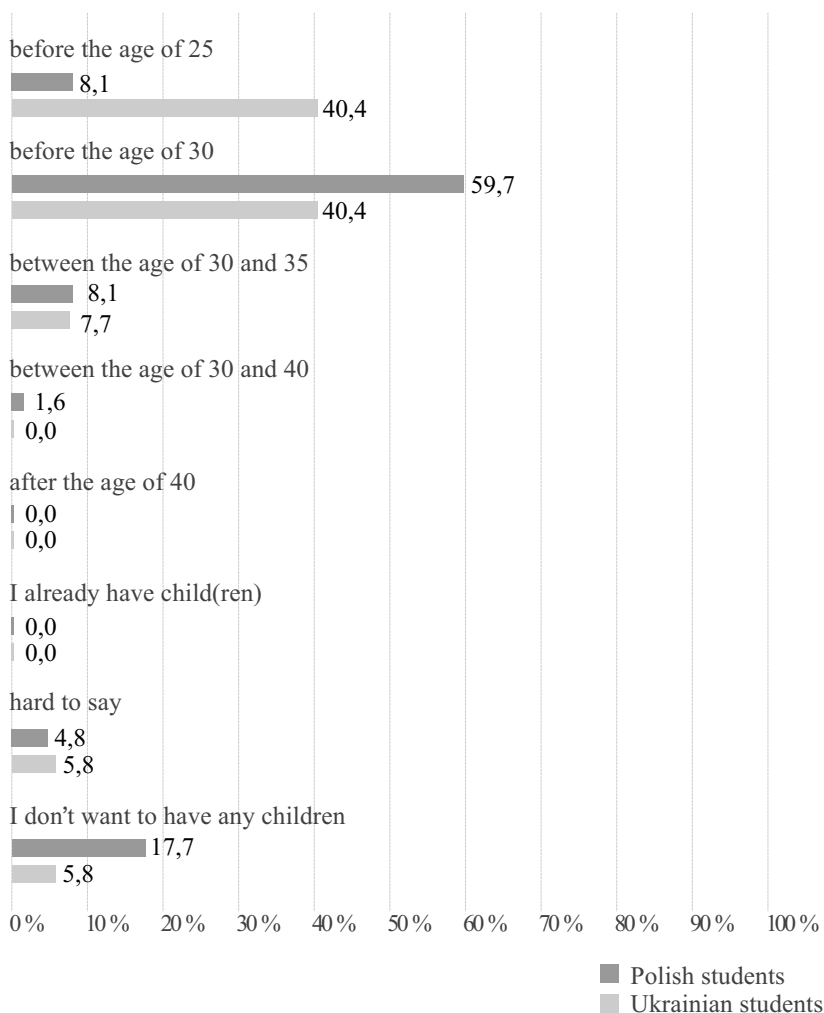
These answers may demonstrate changes in the way young people think about having children. This may result from the influence of Western culture on the subject of perceiving marriage, family, and children. Changes regarding the preferred family model, such as a reduction of its size, are implemented faster in Poland than in Ukraine. The value of the child itself also changes.¹⁹ In Poland, the consumer culture

¹⁸ “Unemployment by sex and age—monthly data”, Eurostat, last update: 02/12/2022, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/UNE_RT_M__custom_3761903/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=e8fdfad7-74a2-4074-99f1-d92cb0583cf5.

¹⁹ Bogdan Więckiewicz, “Znaczenie dziecka w rodzinie w opinii studentów dziennikarstwa uczelni warszawskich” [The importance of a child in a family in the opinion of students of journalism at Warsaw universities], in *Współczesna rodzina w dobie przemian społeczno-kulturowych* [The contemporary family in the time of social-cultural changes] (Lublin: KUL, 2012), 11.

has caused changes in the perception of the importance of various communities, including the family. With increasing frequency people are inclined towards the fulfillment of their own needs, often those out-

CHART 6: Age at which Polish and Ukrainian students want to have children



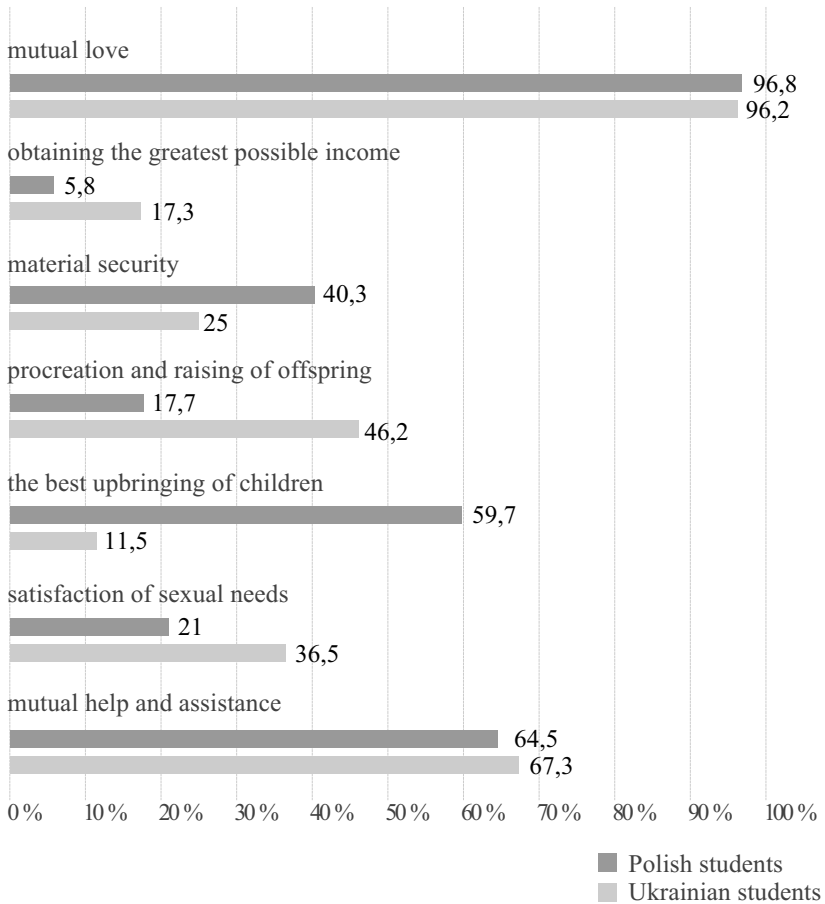
side the family. This is the reason why they first want to get a good education, graduate, find a job, achieve financial stability, and only then do they think about starting a family and having a baby. Ukrainian students seem to value the family and its meaning in the overall purpose of life to a higher extent at a younger age. They perceive the family as a community that can provide a young person with the feeling of stability and safety.

Together with the processes of cultural changes, the transformation may also affect the reasons for which young people want to get married. A few decades ago, a natural thing was that marriage was mainly for having and raising children.²⁰ This is not so evident anymore today. The purposes of marriage may vary, from the desire to spend time together, to the indulgence of passions, and multiplying income, but also—just as before—cooperative raising of children that gives the greatest satisfaction to the parents. Undoubtedly, the media outlets that promote specific cultural models have an enormous impact on the attitude toward the purpose of marriage. This mainly happens through TV and newspapers, but also, to the largest extent for young people today, through social media. The decisions of youth regarding the purpose of marriage are also affected by their family of origin, however today it seems that its influence is much lower than it used to be in the past.²¹ One must not neglect the importance of the prevailing culture in the country concerned. Hence the students of the Krakow and Lviv universities were asked about the purpose of marriage that was most important for them.

²⁰ Lucjan Kocik, *Wzory małżeństwa i rodziny. Od tradycyjnej jednorodności do współczesnych skrajności* [Patterns of marriage and family. From traditional homogeneity to contemporary extremes] (Kraków: KTE, 2002), 137.

²¹ Leon Dyczewski, *Więź między pokoleniami w rodzinie* [A bond between generations in a family] (Lublin: TN KUL, 2002), 13.

CHART 7: The most important purpose of marriage



To nearly the same extent, both groups said it was mainly mutual love (Chart 7). The second place of the marriage priorities for the Lviv students was taken by mutual help (67.3%), followed by having and raising children (46.2%). Likewise, Polish students further prioritized mutual help (64.5%) and then the best upbringing for children (57.9%). Material security was also an important marriage goal for the

students at both universities, however to a slightly lower degree. Concerning the purpose of marriage, we can observe similarities in the answers of all the students, although in slightly different proportions. Nevertheless, the biggest difference in the responses was that for the Polish students, the best possible raising of children is of a high priority, while for the Ukrainian students having and raising children is much more important. Undoubtedly, love is the top priority in marriage for students from both countries. Within contemporary culture, it is also the chief basis for a relationship.²² The respondents also regard mutual help as a very important purpose of marriage. For many, life in the community is connected by bringing support and help to each other, especially in difficult moments of life.

Whoever decides to get married has their image of a perfect spouse. They imagine the features that should be inherent in their future husband or wife. These features may change with age. At first, they may be an unattainable ideal or perfection, but often become more rational later on. At a younger age, the dominance is with features associated with physical attractiveness, while later other characteristics start to prevail, like personality or intellectual traits. What are the most important features of the future spouse for the students covered by the study? For Polish students, the most important thing was that the person was responsible, while for the Ukrainian ones, it was trustworthiness that mattered most. Subsequently, for both groups, the most important thing was that the future husband or wife was protective and understanding. Then, for the Polish students, their partner needed not to overuse alcohol, while the Ukrainian students valued sexual satisfaction. Further down was independence and a non-conflicting nature.

²² Giddens, *Socjologia*, 375.

Nowadays, we live in times of fast social and cultural changes. Forms and styles of life are transforming, as well as the system of family structure and values.²³ Individualism causes people, also those in relationships, to more and more frequently lean towards the fulfilment of their own goals and satisfaction with life. Married life demands numerous compromises or even sacrifices. In the new dominant culture, when unsatisfied in a relationship, an individual is increasingly likely to give up attempts at negotiations or repairing the relationship. If a conflict occurs, they decide to quit the relationship. What was the opinion of the Polish and Ukrainian students about the stability of marriage?

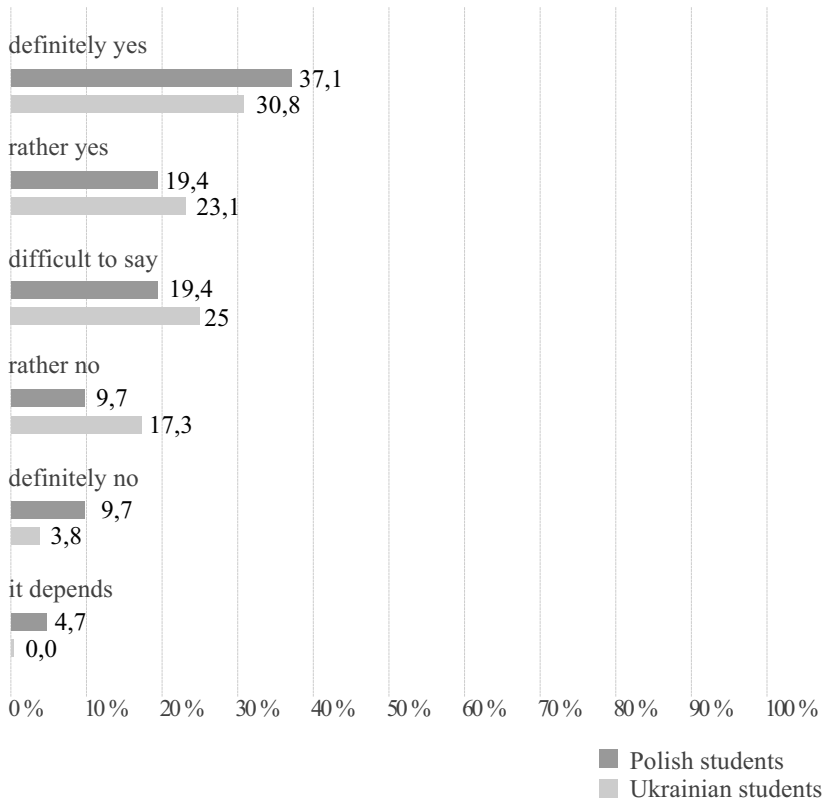
As is evident from the studies, half of all the respondents believed that marriage should be indissoluble. That was more often the opinion of the Pedagogical University students compared to their Ukrainian peers (Chart 8). The Ukrainian students believed more often that marriage could be dissolved. A significant proportion of the students both from Poland and Ukraine were not able to decide about marital indissolubility. This was the belief of every 5th Polish student (19.4%) and every fourth student from Ukraine (25.0%). The dominating permissiveness concerning marital morality is associated with the increase in acceptance of divorces. They are more and more common in the modernized world.²⁴ It seems that some of the students are also affected by these processes, hence the acceptance of the dissolubility of marriage.

Family members fulfill certain specified roles in the family. Some functions are served by the children, others by the parents or grandparents. Performing the family roles depends on the prevailing culture

²³ Aldona Żurek, *Rodzinnność i nierodzinnność w polskim społeczeństwie* [Family and non-family in Polish society], in *Współczesna rodzina w dobie przemian społeczno-kulturowych* [The contemporary family in the time of social-cultural changes (Lublin: KUL, 2012), 120.

²⁴ Anna Kwak, *Rodzina w dobie przemian. Małżeństwo i kohabitacja* [A family in times of change. Marriage and cohabitation] (Warszawa: WA "Żak", 2005), 112.

CHART 8: Do you think marriage should be inseparable?



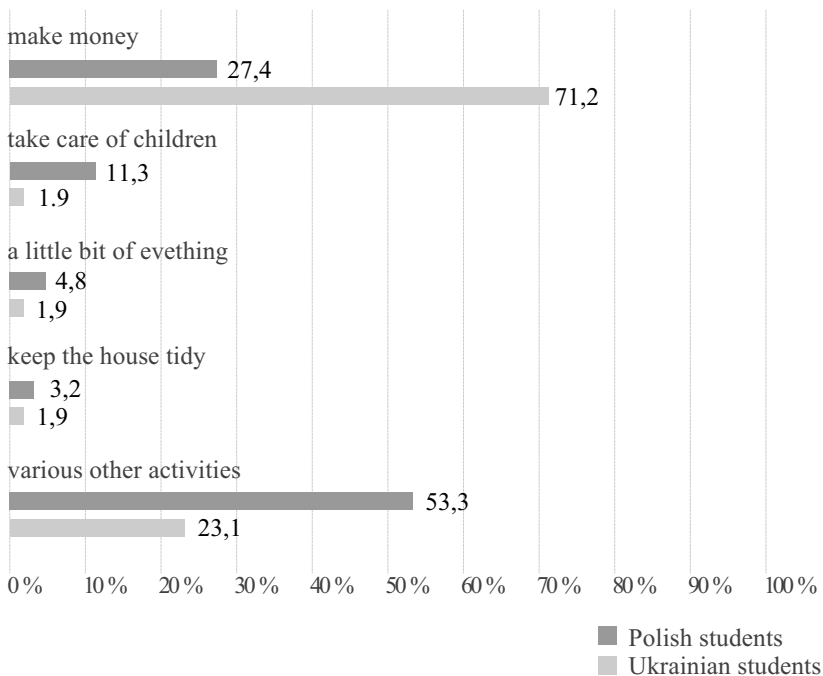
of the society concerned.²⁵ On this account, the roles of spouses may be perceived differently among the Ukrainian and Polish students. Therefore, the respondents were asked a question about the roles of the husband and wife in their future relationship.

As it is evident from the obtained data, the basic role of a husband for all the students is mainly earning money (Chart 9). However, that

²⁵ Franciszek Adamski, *Rodzina. Wymiar społeczno-kulturowy* [Family. Socio-cultural dimension], (Kraków: UJ, 2002), 39.

statement was much more frequent from the Ukrainian students than the Polish students. The biggest differentiation concerns the performing of the role associated with taking care of a child. Although the Polish students believed it to be an important role of a husband, immediately after providing for the family, the Ukrainian students do not see the husband in this role at all. Similarly, in the case of keeping the house tidy, Polish students saw it as the role of the husband more often than Ukrainian students did. More than half of all the responding students answered that the husband should fulfill many other activities which included, as they mentioned: “being a mentor for the children”, “supporting”, “collaborating”, “being a male role model”, “being a model husband and friend”, “taking care of the children to the same

CHART 9: Role that should be taken by husband in the relationship

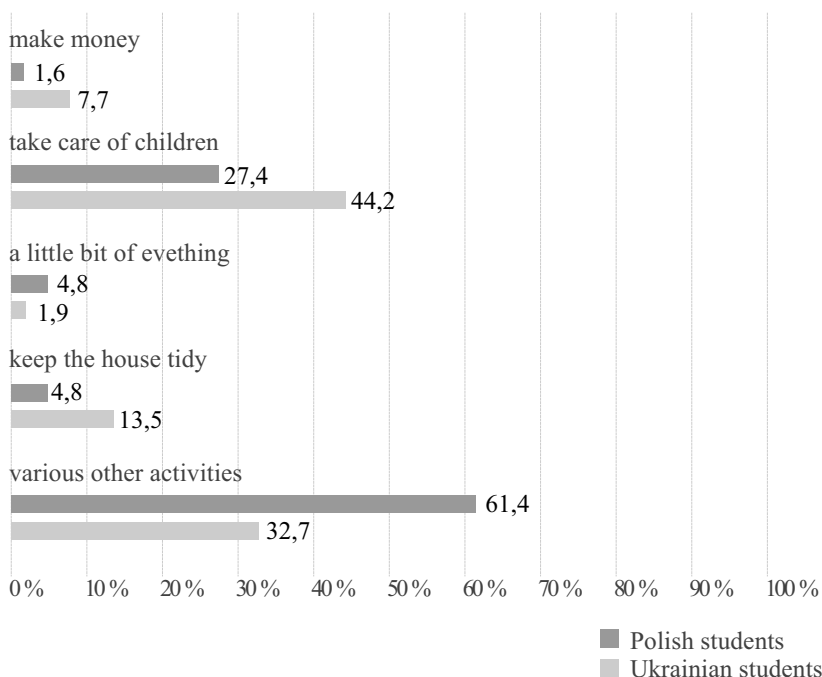


extent as the wife”, “spend time with the family”, “support the wife in all aspects”, “just be there and support wife in everyday duties”, “should love his family”, “it depends on the family as each person is different and nothing should be imposed on anybody”, “because not every man is domineering and wants to dictate the rules”, “to take care of the relationships within the family”, “be a partner first of all”, “a person who is loving and understanding for the wife and the children”.

And what role, according to the surveyed students, should the wife play in a future relationship?

According to the students participating in the study, the role of the wife in marriage is primarily taking care of the children (Chart 10). This is stated more often by Ukrainian students (44.2%) than Polish ones (27.4%). Next, the wife’s role in marriage for Ukrainian students

CHART 10: Role that should be taken by wife in the relationship



is to keep the house tidy, while for Polish students to earn money and to a much lesser extent to keep the house tidy. Among the various other duties of a wife, the respondents included such roles as “being responsible for the family”, “taking care of the children and the husband”, “taking care of the children to the same extent as the husband does and developing professionally”, “sharing responsibilities with the husband and work”, “full cooperation with the husband at every level of life”, “everyone should determine it for themselves”, “just be there and give support”, “the division of roles does not depend on gender”, “she should also support the husband in all aspects”, “not limit him”, “fulfill her role at home and professionally”, “the same as the husband”, “except for the emphasis on earning money”, “whatever we both agree”. Nowadays, women/wives fulfill more and more roles in social life. They undertake activities in many professions and take managerial positions in various organizations; at many universities female students outnumber the male community. The commonly promoted individualization and self-fulfillment in social and personal life concern nearly equally men and women.²⁶ For this reason, the answers, in particular given by the Polish students, indicate that a woman/wife can undertake many various activities (61.4%) rather than only taking care of the children. Based on the data obtained, a conclusion can be drawn that the impact of the Western culture associated with women’s emancipation affects Poland to a larger degree than Ukraine.

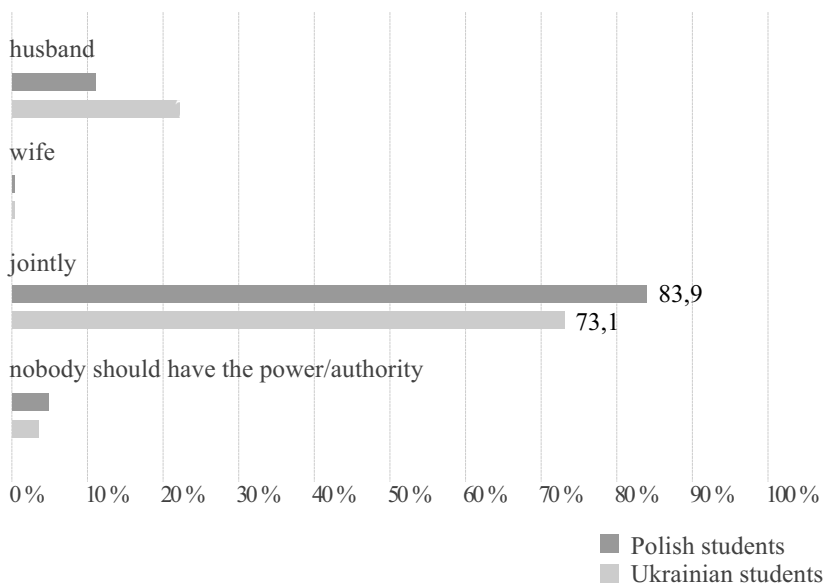
The role taken in a family is associated with exercising authority within it. The obtained data indicates that for students at both universities, the authority within the family should be shared (Chart 11.) However, this claim was more often made by Polish students (83.9%)

²⁶ Bogdan Więckiewicz, Magdalena Łuka, *Przemiany pozycji kobiet i mężczyzn w życiu rodzinnym i zawodowym* [Changes in the position of women and men in family and professional life], in *Godność, praca, globalizacja* [Dignity, work, globalization] (Stalowa Wola: Sztafeta, 2014), 50.

than by Ukrainian ones (73.1%). Nearly every fourth student from Lviv University believed that the authority in the family should be primarily held by the husband. This view was shared by only every 10th student at the Pedagogical University in Krakow. The characteristic feature is that none of the students, regardless of the country, believed that this authority should be solely exercised by the wife.

The obtained data concludes that the culture of egalitarianism and feminism that is currently prevailing in Europe affects the perception of marriage more for Polish students than for Ukrainian students.²⁷ It is associated with the woman's endeavour to abandon the former roles that were characteristic of a woman, wife, and mother. For this reason,

CHART 11: Exercising authority in the family according to the students



²⁷ Paweł Skrzydlewski, *Człowiek – wiara – rodzina* [Man—faith—family] (Gdańsk: WSSE, 2022), 211.

to an increasing extent, women abandon their former family roles that are assimilated to an increasing degree by men, which is illustrated for example not only by the greater involvement of husbands and fathers in the caregiving and raising of a child, but also in the household chores and preparation of meals. The need for authority in a family is something natural and important both for the husband and for the wife. However, properly exercised authority consists of the appropriate distribution of competencies and responsibilities of both spouses.²⁸

The research conducted among Polish and Ukrainian students has an exceptional dimension to it. This results from the circumstances that are associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the military operations carried out in the territory of Ukraine. These types of special situations often reprioritize our perception of many important aspects of human life. Nevertheless, in this case, even in an exceptional situation that particularly concerns the Ukrainian students, the basic group unit of society which the family has been for centuries continues to stand for very important values. The similarities among the students from both countries concerning how they see the family unit show that family is very important for both groups. Almost to the same extent, students from Poland (90.3%) and Ukraine (90.4%) would like to start a family in the future. However, some differences can be noticed in the perception of this basic group unit of society. Noteworthy, in the face of war, is that the Ukrainian students wanted to get married to a higher degree than the Polish students did. For the Polish students, the main objective for starting a family was to have a beloved person by their side, while the Ukrainian students stated that it is easier to overcome various difficulties in life together. The most frequent reasons for which young people

²⁷ Skrzydlewski, *Człowiek – wiara – rodzina*, 211.

²⁸ Teresa Kukołowicz, *Rodzina wychowuje* [The family brings up], Stalowa Wola: OWFU, 2001), 114.

would not decide to start a family were the Ukrainian students, a lack of financial support and for the Polish students, being too young in age.

Students from Ukraine wanted to have children to a higher degree than students from Poland did. Both groups thought most often about having two children, and Poles planned for three children much more frequently than the Ukrainians. The greatest variation in the answers among the respondents was related to the age at which they want to get married. Ukrainian students would most likely decide to get married between the ages of 18 and 25, i.e., relatively earlier considering the contemporary cultural and moral realities, while Polish students would prefer to marry much later, between 26 and 30 years of age. The differences between the student groups in the performance of the life duties of a husband and wife in the family also relate to the delegation of the parental roles. For Ukrainian students, the primary role of the husband is to earn money. This role was perceived slightly differently by the Polish students for whom admittedly earning money to support the family was also the most important, although to a lower degree than for the Ukrainian peers, but taking care of children is also important. The students from both countries are differentiated by their perception of the role of the husband and wife in the family. The Ukrainian youth more often than the Polish youth believe that the wife should mainly concentrate on bringing up children while a much lower percentage of Polish students believe this.

The results of the sociological research may signify that the culture associated with the family tradition is still strong among the Ukrainian youth. On the other hand, in Polish society, a profound change in the scope of perception of what a family unit is can be noticed. Although the family continues to stand for an important value, its traditional perception is subject to some modification. This does not mean that the institution as a whole is losing its importance, but that it is continuing albeit in a slightly changed form. On the other hand, among the Ukrainian students, it is noteworthy that the respondents were slightly younger than

the Polish students, and still they more often planned that their future would be in a marital union. This kind of relationship is most often perceived as an inseparable one. Nevertheless, these opinions were more often expressed by Polish rather than Ukrainian students. The sociological study conducted among the students of two universities (Polish and Ukrainian) is not representative of all the students, however, it can constitute at least a partial picture of the perception of the institution of marriage and family by this group of young people, together with all the similarities and differences. The research can give rise to a further, more comprehensive comparative study of these two countries.



Cultural Differences and Their Importance
in Ideas about the Vision of Marriage and Family
in Polish and Ukrainian Societies

SUMMARY

This paper presents the sociological research carried out among Polish and Ukrainian students concerning the importance of family within their life. The purpose of the article is to demonstrate the differences and similarities in the perception of this fundamental group unit of society. The research was conducted at a unique time, as it was during the ongoing period where Ukraine has been a country at war, in addition to the epidemic outbreak of COVID-19. It was assumed that these special circumstances as well as the cultural differences would influence the perception of marriage and family. In a threatening situation, a person can change their former value system, priorities, and the most important life goals. In addition, the observed social and cultural changes that are taking place in both countries—albeit not at the same time and to the same extent—affect the way young people see their vision of the world, and in particular in what family model they would like to spend their future, and also whether they think about starting a family at all.

Keywords: students, marriage, family, culture, Poles, Polish, Ukrainian, COVID-19

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