

Feminist Anthropology in Poland

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Presentation plan

In Poland, the anthropology of gender and sexuality constitutes a vivid branch of the discipline. In this paper, I show the development of studies on gender and sexuality within the field of cultural anthropology in Poland.

In the first part, I present the contribution of women to the history of ethnology and cultural anthropology in the country. I argue that in Poland, differently from, for instance, the United Kingdom, women played an important role in the foundation of the discipline. I also point to traditional social engagement of Polish ethnology. These specific conditions have contributed to the development of contemporary gender and sexuality studies in Polish cultural anthropology.

In the second part, I depict the development of the gender perspective in Polish anthropology since the late 1990s and I discuss contemporary trends in the Polish anthropology of gender and sexuality.

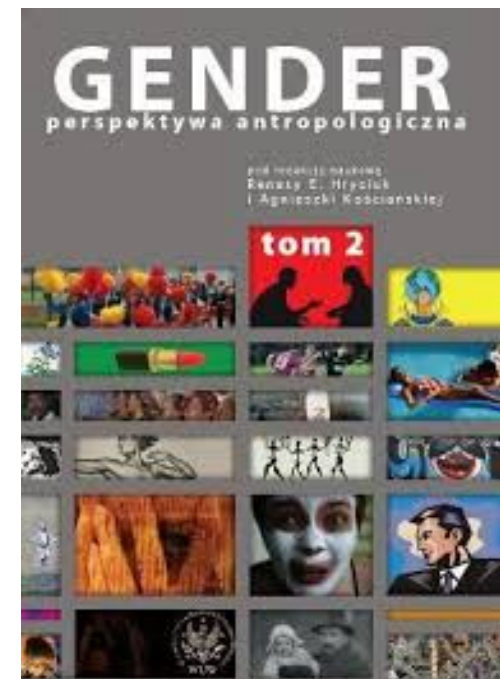
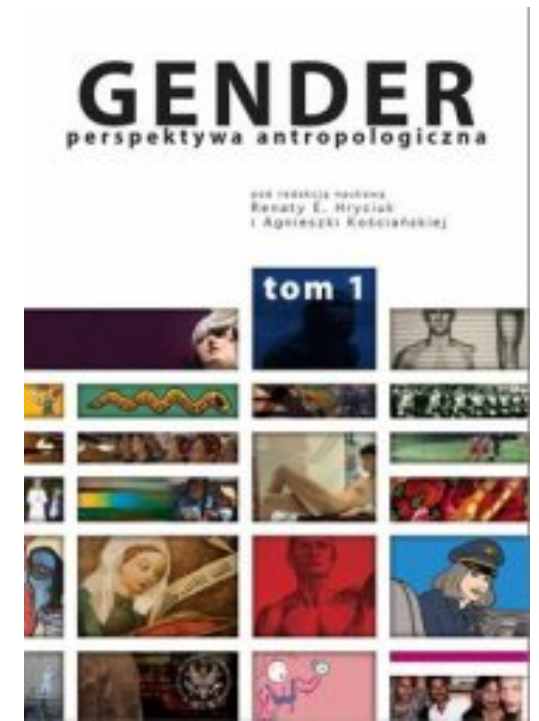
History

The Warsaw ethnology department was founded by Professor Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay Ehrenkretz Jędrzejewiczowa in 1935. The work of the founder was taken up and continued by her successors. Women were among them: Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, the author of a book, well-known in Poland, on the development of Polish ethnology and ethnography (1948), Anna Zadrożyńska, a researcher of customs, or Zofia Sokolewicz, the head of the department from 1973 until 1999. Other departments also had a strong female presence, for instance the ethnology department in Łódź was intellectually formed by Professors Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska, the author of *Spółeczność wiejska* (The Peasant Community, 1948), an ethnographic monograph written in the 1930s and discussing in detail fieldwork relations including the issue of social engagement of the ethnographer (a key issue for feminist anthropology) and Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska, the author of the first book on ethnographic methods in Polish (1971).

This does not mean that all these female professors had a particular interest in gender issues. Nevertheless, the contemporary vibrant development of gender studies in Polish ethnology and cultural anthropology could not have been possible without the support that female professors gave to the younger generation of researchers and their long-standing interest in various issues related to women, gender and sexuality.

Transnational links

Since the 1990s, the wider anthropological audience in Poland also has had a chance to learn a lot about the development of studies on gender and sexuality in Western European, North American, but also in Indian anthropology. That was possible through Polish scholars' publications discussing these achievements (Baer 1997) as well as through translations. In 2007, Renata Hryciuk and I edited and published a two-volume collection of translations of texts concerning the anthropology of gender and sexuality.



Anthropology today

The Polish anthropology of gender and sexuality draws on the international development of feminist and queer anthropology as well as on local, socially engaged fieldwork. It is a lively field of research, which deals with contemporary issues at the centre of public debate.

Topics (anthropology at home):

Reproductive rights (abortion, IVF)

LGBTQ experience and rights

Construction of sexuality

Sexual Violence

“Gender ideology”

For overview see: A. Koscianska, M Radkowska-Walkowicz, 2019, “Feminist Anthropologists Meet the Ideology of Gender”, in *Twilight Zone Anthropology: A Voice from Poland*, ed. Michał Buchowski. Canon Pyon: Sean Kingston Publishing.

Major Publication (in English)

- Baer, Monika (2009) 'Let them hear us!' The politics of same-sex transgression. In H. Donnan and F. Macgowan (eds.), *Contemporary Transgressive Sex: Subversion and Control in Erotic Encounters*, pp. 131-50. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Chełstowska, Agata (2011) Stigmatisation and commercialisation of abortion services in Poland: turning sin into gold. *Reproductive Health Matters* 19 (37): 98-106.
- Dębińska, Maria (2020) Diagnosing transsexualism, diagnosing society: the blurred genres of Polish sexology in the 1970s and 1980s. In T. Basiuk and J. Burszta, *Queers in State Socialism: Cruising 1970s Poland*. Routledge, p. 59-73.
- Grabowska, Magdalena (2012) Bringing the Second World In: Conservative Revolution(s), Socialist Legacies, and Transnational Silences in the Trajectories of Polish Feminism, *Signs*, 37 (2): 385–411.
- Hall, Dorota (2013). Religion and psychology in the age of emotional capitalism. *Social Compass* 60:174-88.
- Hall, Dorota (2020) Shifting Silences: Changes in Living Religion and Homosexuality in Poland between 1970s and 2010s. *Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 6(3):33-52.
- Renata E. Hryciuk, Elżbieta Korolczuk (2017) In the Name of Family and Nation: Framing Fathers' Activism in Poland. In *Rebellious Parents. Parental Movements in Central-Eastern Europe and Russia*, (eds) Katalin Fabian, Elżbieta Korolczuk, Indiana University Press.
- Renata E. Hryciuk (2017) On the Disappearing Mother. Political Motherhood, Citizenship and Neoliberalism in Poland. In *Civil Society Revisited. Lessons from Poland*, (eds) Kerstin Jacobsson, Elżbieta Korolczuk, Oxford, Berghahn Books.
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- Kościańska, Agnieszka (2021) *Gender, Pleasure, and Violence: The Construction of Expert Knowledge of Sexuality in Poland*. Indiana U Press.
- Radkowska-Walkowicz, Magdalena (2012) The creation of 'monsters': the discourse of opposition to in vitro fertilization in Poland. *Reproductive Health Matters* 20(40):30-7.
- Radkowska-Walkowicz, Magdalena (2014). Frozen children and despairing embryos in the 'new' postcommunist state: debate on IVF in the context of Poland's transition. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21(4):399-414.



Thank you!

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