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"Girls to the Girls' Room, Boys to the Boys' Room". The Visible and Invisible Pedagogy in Pre-School Education from the Perspective of Basil Bernstein

Abstract

The author, wanting to identify means of socializing girls and boys for performing specific gender roles within pre-school education, conducted research using the direct observation method in one of the groups of five-year-olds in a public kindergarten in a city of 40,000. Using Basil Bernstein's theory of visible and invisible pedagogy, she recognized in what teachers' activities one of the types of this pedagogy is revealed and how it affects the process of socialization of children to take specific roles due to gender. The teacher who used visible pedagogy clearly showed the children where the boys' and girls' "places" were, whereas teacher 2, using invisible pedagogy, did not interfere with the children's individual choices regarding playing and types of toys.

Keywords: gender, pre-school education, socialization, pedagogy, Basil Bernstein.

Introduction

Becoming a woman or a man occurs in the course of social processes, which is caused by the existence of certain gender related discourses. This under-

standing of gender is derived from a perspective based on social constructivism (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2002, p. 41). This perspective is evident in this article, in which I analyze the ways in which children are socialized in pre-school education to *be* a little girl and a little boy, and thus to *become* a girl and boy, and subsequently a woman and a men.

Since the early 2000s, phenomena have been recognized in Poland in which school is a space in which socialization training in femininity and masculinity takes place (Chomczyńska-Rubacha, 2004; 2006; 2007; Pankowska 2005; Kopciewicz 2007; 2012; Kopciewicz & Zierkiewicz, 2009). In order to verify whether this academic theory permeates into practical educational activities[1], I decided to carry out a study aimed at recognizing the ways in which girls and boys are socialized into performing specific roles due to their gender within the framework of pre-school education. The research question that I answer is which pedagogy, visible or invisible, manifests itself in the actions taken by female teachers and what relevance this has for the gendered experiences of children in this pre-school group.

Gender

Gender is "an individual's socially and culturally constructed identification that one has with a particular gender role, associated with certain patterns of femininity and masculinity prevalent in society" (Olechnicki & Załęcki, 1997, p. 154). Gender is considered to be formed between the ages of three and six (Olechnicki & Załęcki, 1997, p. 154). A child correctly indicates a person's gender above the age of 3, and the concept of gender constancy appears between 4 and 7 years of age. Before that, gender is understood by the child more as a physical feature. The concept of gender identification is formed around the age of 5–6, and correct identification with gender appears at the age of 6 (Mandal, 2003, p. 35).

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[1] Objections of some researchers are known, such as H. Giroux (2006), or H. Zinn (2011), that academic theory, described in a specific language, is often addressed to a narrow circle of scholars, thus not contributing to changes in educational practice.

Gender roles are "socially defined, specific sets of expectations, rights and responsibilities assigned to individuals referred to as male (boy) or female (girl), depending on the recognized patterns of femininity and masculinity existing in a given society" (Olechnicki & Zalęcki, 1997, p. 179). A child born into a particular culture and wishing to become a member of that culture constructs his or her identity through categories produced by that culture (e.g. male – female) (Mandal, 2004, p. 29). Gender roles are something different from stereotypes. A lot of research has already been carried out on gender stereotypes, and most of it points to warmth, empathy, gentleness, subordination (Miluska, 2011, p. 18) or passivity, as well as caring, resourcefulness, diligence, responsibility (Bajkowski, 2010, pp. 94–95) as a stereotype of femininity. Interestingly, these stereotypes seem to have remained constant for many years[2]. It may not fit individual women (or girls), but it is treated as a standard by which the behavior of others is assessed even if it does not comply with its underlying assumption (Mandal, 2000, p. 25). As for the stereotype of masculinity, it includes such qualities as independence, activeness, competence, ease of decision-making, reliability, self-confidence, not submitting to pressure, a sense of leadership (Deaux & Lewis, 1983; 1984, after: Gawor & Mandal, 2007) as well as dominance, rivalry, focus on success, clout, arrogance, self-confidence (Kuczyńska, 1992, after: Gawor & Mandal, 2007).

Simone de Beauvoir wrote about "women raised by women in a world of women" (de Beauvoir, 2020, p. 317), who, due to the said socialization "circle", rarely manage to live a full life, be a human being in full (de Beauvoir, 2020, p. 768). One may be tempted to paraphrase de Beauvoir's words by noting that men who are raised by men to be men may also experience disadvantages due to this closed circle, from which it is impossible for them to break free and because of labeling them as "real men". Men are taught to behave in a "masculine", emotionless, aloof manner, which is often related to the lack of access to these emotions by themselves (Dobrołowicz, 2010, p. 48).

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[2] See also: Deaux, & Lewis, 1983; 1984; Kuczyńska, 1992; Kwiatkowska, 1999; Mandal, 2004.

Kindergarten as a socialization space

It is not only the family environment that has a socialization character to perform certain gender related roles[3]. Education is also endowed with such socializing potential, the nature of which is not gender-neutral (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2011, p. 39).

Mariola Chomczyńska-Rubacha named the commencement of children schooling "gender-related training" (2006, p. 4), whereas Lucyna Kopciewicz pointed to the presence of symbolic violence in schools, where the stereotypical model of the "good girl" is promoted: obedient, not drawing attention to herself with her outfit or appearance (Kopciewicz, 2003). However, taking into account the data cited in the previous section, according to which by the age of 6 a child's correct identification with gender appears, it may be so that situations even from before the start of school may be equally significant. I am referring here to such messages as: "Who has seen a girl get so dirty?", "Your behavior is boyish!" – to a girl, whereas to a boy: "What a brave man you are!", "You whine like a woman, be a man" (Pankowska, 2005, pp. 76–77). It is during the pre-school period that children develop an understanding of whether they are a girl or a boy, and as a result, they should behave, play, dress, and talk as it is expected from their gender.

However, the requirements for children are not only expressed verbally and explicitly, in the form of sentences that we can hear, write down, repeat. Gender messages are also part of the "hidden program", i.e. what the school (but also the kindergarten "does (instills, teaches, gives) to the young people attending it, even though this 'something' has not been planned at all" (Janowski, 1995, p. 50; Meighan, 1993, pp. 71–84). One of the elements of the hidden program is the pre-school space organized in a certain, specific way.

Sociologists of education point out how important it is to organize the educational space, which also has an upbringing function. Although Roland Meighan wrote that "space speaks" (1993, p. 85), but I think that the statement "space upbrings/educates" will not be a big misuse, since space represents different fields of experience for different groups of people. For chil-

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[3] On the family as a place of socialization into gender roles, see Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2004; 2013.

dren attending kindergarten, for example, it is experiencing the actions of the teacher (Meighan, 1993, p. 85).

Visible and invisible pedagogy according to Basil Bernstein

Basil Bernstein defined pedagogy as "a legitimized set of practices through which culture is transmitted in educational institutions. In the process of transmission, new forms of knowledge and behavior of the socialized are developed or existing forms are developed" (Bielecka-Prus, 2010, p. 358). The code is the principle that regulates this symbolic process of culture transmission.

In explaining what invisible pedagogy is in Bernsteinian terms, I will begin by pointing out that the concept of invisible pedagogy stems directly from the theory of codes, although I do not have space here to fully develop this theory[4]. I will only point out that Bernstein distinguished two main types of codes: the code of collection and the code of integration, and he also linked educational practices to them: visible and invisible pedagogy. This model is used, among other things, to analyze educational institutions, with particular focus on their socialization potential, and it allows for the implementation of research that seeks answers to the question of how school knowledge is generated, distributed, shared[5] and how its transmission takes place: the pace, order and rules of assessment (Bielecka-Prus, 2007, p. 253).

The collection code, in short, regulates the process of knowledge transmission in kindergarten: the structure of the curriculum, the pre-school space, which is particularly important in the context of this research, pedagogy (visible) and assessment. The code of integration also deals with regulating the process of knowledge transmission in kindergarten, but in addition to the factors mentioned above, it regulates invisible pedagogy instead of visible pedagogy (Bielecka-Prus, 2010, p. 357). This code is responsible for the second type of school curriculum, which, created in accordance with it,

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[4] See more: Bielecka-Prus, 2007; 2010; Bernstein, 1975.

[5] Bernstein, when describing this model, used it to refer to school, however, I, due to the nature of the research being conducted, will refer the model to kindergarten, which, like school, is an educational institution.

is not rigidly divided by boundaries between the content of subjects. Assimilation of certain blocks of knowledge is not important for this type, but focusing this knowledge around a certain thought, an idea. The change from a collection code into an integration code leads to "a change in what counts as possession of knowledge, its legitimate transmission and realization, and a change in the organizational context of the institution. At the level of the institution's culture, the boundaries between categories keeping them 'pure' are blurred, resulting in an interpenetration of categories" (Bernstein, 1975, p. 104). The teacher here is not characterized by an imposing attitude, requiring the child only to assimilate a certain block of knowledge. He enables the children to think independently, support their theses with arguments, draw conclusions, and think critically (Bernstein, 1990a, p. 66).

Within the framework of visible pedagogy, there are strict criteria that the acquirer is expected to take over (Bernstein, 1990a, p. 66). It is the teacher who knows what the correct answer to a question should be, and who explains to the child what he or she has done wrong, that is, contrary to the teacher's expectations. There is also a clearly defined system of punishments and rewards to influence the child's behavior, as well as strictly established boundaries that organize space, time, actions and acts of communication. The teacher, as the one with authority, ensures that these are not violated, so the teacher here is the guardian of the rules (Bernstein, 1990a). The content and rules are only communicated by the teacher and cannot be critically evaluated or analyzed by the children. The teacher in this case is given authority and power, and submission and subordination are given to the child. The skills that a child should possess at a certain stage, at a certain age, such as reading or counting, are also specified (Bernstein, 1996b, p. 74). So, there is no room for individualism here, but each student should fit into a certain pattern, including the one defined by his or her age and gender, which constitute important characteristics that determine the child's position in relation to other children. To the criteria of age and gender are matched to the student's practical training, rights and duties are adjusted to the criteria of age and gender (Bernstein, 1990b).

Within the framework of invisible pedagogy, lesser emphasis is placed on the acquisition of specific skills, and as a result, this pedagogy cannot be

measured according to quantitative methods, and criteria for evaluating this pedagogy are numerous and not clearly defined. Here, the teacher evaluates the child taking into account the child's mental readiness, which the teacher observes during the child's free/casual activity (Bielecka-Prus, 2010, p. 199). Invisible pedagogy stands in opposition to visible pedagogy, the existence of which was already evident in the Middle Ages thanks to, inter alia, a strong division between what is called mental labor and what was considered physical labor (Bielecka-Prus, 2010, p. 226). Bernstein emphasized that a significant role in shaping this pedagogy was played by women, who "transformed the care of the child into a scientific activity" (Bernstein, 1990a, p. 95).

In invisible pedagogy children, pupils play the crucial role. In this model the teacher does not assume the attitude of a superior over subordinates under his care, so the child has a greater sense of independence and decision-making. Hierarchy here is implicit, not predetermined and imposed. The way in which the educational curriculum is implemented is also implicit, resulting in an unhurried pace of child's work. This is because the child does not have to conform to any determinants of developmental norms – they are not known to him/her. Nor is it known to the child what a girl and what a boy should be like. The teacher pays attention to the child's individual developmental stage and readiness. The role of the teacher is important in that he must mobilize the child to stay busy, to "do something". "Being busy" makes the child, so to speak, to break away from the teacher (Bernstein, 1990a, p. 78) and to "develop" on its own. Bernstein emphasizes the vital importance of play in the development of the child – who acquires new skills in activities he/she is free to perform. It is not controlled or directed by anyone. This allows the child to develop a unique way of doing things (Bernstein, 1990a, p. 80). In this model the educated child is free from expectations. While acting freely, the child decides for himself/herself what kind of social relations he/she undertakes and what they are like – this triggers the child's development in this field (Bernstein, 1990a, p. 80).

Such upbringing, consistent with the assumptions of invisible pedagogy, makes it possible to notice the pupil's natural, unique qualities (Bernstein, 1990a, p. 83).

Research method

Direct observation constituted the chosen research method. This method falls within the tradition of ethnographic research. This method is used when one wants to get to know a certain social group in depth, remaining in the position of a visitor. This is done by blending into the field, but not into the culture, through observation and documentation of observed phenomena. The techniques used, in addition to taking notes on an ongoing basis, include the ability to ask questions and conduct interviews from the position of a visitor (Ciesielska et al., 2012, pp. 50–52).

Researchers note that ethnographic research is moving towards studies that highlight the lives of an individual or a narrow group of people, while moving away from attempts to describe a complex culture or analyze a complete picture of a given institution (Angrossino, 2009, p. 146; Holmes & Marcus, 2009, p. 650).

My goal was to observe phenomena in natural settings, to catch a glimpse at the behavior of teachers, to observe verbal and nonverbal messages to children, as well as children's reactions to teachers' behaviors. In addition, I intended to pay attention to the elements of the room decor and also try to unmask the elements of the "hidden program"[6]. I want to note at this point that due to the fact that the research was conducted in a group of children, moreover they were five-year-olds, it was difficult to remain only in the position of an observer. The children themselves initiated conversations, approached me, asked questions, and wanted to play with me. It is very difficult not to establish a relationship with a five-year-old and ignore him/her; anyway, there was no need to do that. As a result, in the text there are numerous examples of my interaction with the children, but I believe that although this was a factor that to a certain extent interfered with the conduct of the research, I managed to carry out the research accurately and in accordance with the assumptions of the method.

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[6] Observational research in the kindergarten was conducted by, among others, Małgorzata Falkiewicz-Szult. The purpose of this research was to discover manifestations of symbolic violence in pre-school education differentiated by content (2007).

The course of the research

I conducted the research in the period from October 12, 2022, to February 4, 2023, in one of the public kindergartens in a Polish city with a forty thousand population. My intention was to conduct research using the direct observation method in one of the pre-school education groups, where I would obtain consent for such research from the director of the facility. A group of five-year-olds was assigned to me by the director of the facility.

The female teachers supervising this group also consented to my research. I spent the first days in the company of teacher 1. After having conducted observations with teacher 1, I wanted to observe and analyze how the same group of children and the space are "managed" by teacher 2.

During the research, I kept notes on my mobile phone, having informed the teachers in advance about it. All statements of the teachers, assistant ladies or children written in quotation marks constitute literal quotes of their statements, not my interpretation. The children's names have been changed.

Results

The fact that pre-school education is feminized[7] when it comes to staff will not be a revelation, but I think that attention should be drawn to it. Children in pre-school education are accompanied mainly by women – teachers, principals, assistants, speech therapists, psychologists – if the child requires therapeutic care. The only man they can meet in the kindergarten is the maintenance man, also known as the "handyman". By observing women in stereotypically feminine professions and men in stereotypically masculine professions, children are also subject to the socialization process to perform specific professional roles due to their gender. Through observation, they

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[7] Education is, according to Lucyna Kopciewicz, a women's professional sphere. The generic nature of education is also visible in its organizational structure. Early school education, which is integrated, was called by Kopciewicz the women's stage of education because there is one teacher, and she is usually a woman. However, the higher the level of education, the greater the division into teachers, men and women. Kopciewicz calls this stage of education the male stage. A similar division can be applied to knowledge disciplines: humanities subjects are taught by women, but science and technical subjects are taught by men (2003).

learn that there is a division into women's and men's occupations. Observation of adult women and men performing their occupations is strengthened in pre-school education with additional elements which I describe in this part of the article. While I was conducting my research, the poster below was hung in the room, in a place where children could see it:

Photo 1. A poster "getting to know the professions" hung in the room where I conducted the research.

Sources: The author's photo.

The nomenclature of the profession into male and female was distinguished only in one case: "actor/actress". However, it is easy to notice that professions such as scientist, IT specialist, firefighter, footballer, judge, pilot or physiotherapist are not only written in the masculine form, but also depict men performing these professions in the photo. We will not read here that there may be both male and female professions such as: scientist [in Polish masculine form is *naukowiec* and feminine is *naukowczyni*), IT specialist (*informatyk/informatyczka*) firefighter (*strażak/strażaczka*), etc. However, feminine forms can be found in the case of a nurse, teacher, pharmacist, beautician

34

and policewoman, but in this case, we will not find corresponding masculine forms. Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz believes that "women, precisely because they are defined by two roles they have to fulfill and because they accept such an understanding of their social function, are often excluded from the possibility of realizing their own aspirations, dreams and ambitions related to professional activity. The same society that assigns women the necessary roles to fulfill and labels them as 'dissenters' for accepting these roles and playing them in accordance with the norm excludes women and marginalizes their importance in such an important area for human development as professional work" (2013, p. 15). The example of this poster[8] shows how strongly we differentiate women and men in our society and that we teach our children the same from an early age. So does Ala know that she can become she pilot or a she miner, and Jasiu that he can be a he beautician or a he pharmacist. Through such clear divisions, we tell our children from an early age that they can choose stereotypically feminine or stereotypically masculine professions. Do we then guarantee them, as adults, the right to freedom and equality enshrined in children's rights[9]? I believe not, because freedom is also freedom of choice, and this example shows that this freedom is limited to gender-related patterns. Moreover, girls and boys are not treated equally, as can be seen in the poster with the professions they are taught about.

Space as an element of a hidden program

The kindergarten building in which I conducted my research was built at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s as a residential building. In 1947, the building was adapted into a kindergarten[10].

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[8] I must note at this point that I was not present at the educational classes conducted on this topic, which I regret.

[9] As we can read on the website of the Polish Ombudsman for Children: "Two principles derive from dignity: freedom and equality, which are the basis of all human rights. Freedom means that a person […] has free will, can make decisions independently and consciously take responsibility for them (a child learns this during puberty). Equality means that every child has the same rights and is to be treated equally by all without any discrimination". (The Polish Ombudsman for Children, n.d.)

[10] This data comes from historical materials which, due to the promise of anonymity, I will not quote here.

Therefore, the layout of the room where I conducted observations resembled an apartment, which I illustrated in Figure 1.
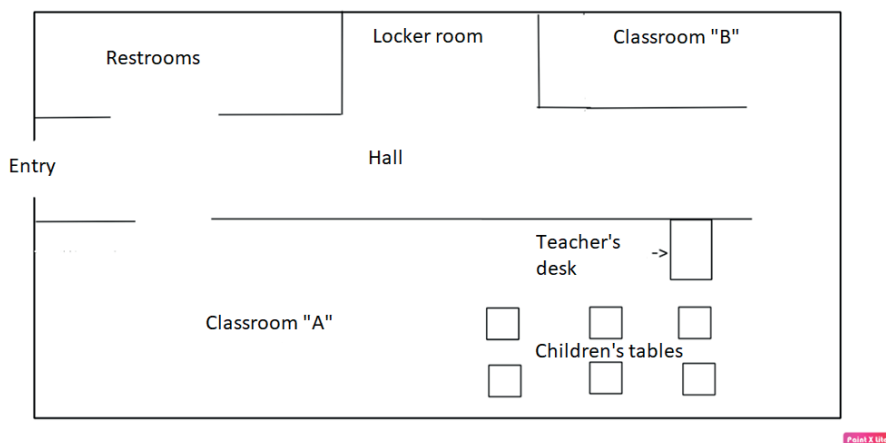

Figure 1. Layout of the rooms in the kindergarten where the research was conducted.

Source: Own elaboration.

"Classroom A" is the room where all children activities take place – in this room they eat all their meals, educational activities also take place, it is here that children draw, paint and play games. "Classroom B"[11] is smaller, and it is a separate playroom. It is also a place, where a child can rest and calm down, and where a "naughty" child is taken to calm down[12].

Socialization process – Teacher 1

When I came for the research on the first day, the teacher informed me in the first minutes of my stay in the classroom, without any prior questions on my

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[11] In more modern kindergarten buildings architects are aware that kindergarten space where the child not only learns, acquires new skills, but also communicates with others, plays, rests, takes care of the common space.

[12] Projects are developed, thru which teachers can learn, acquire competence to use, appropriate arrangement of kindergarten space, such for example the NOVIGADO project (n.d.).

part, that the group was difficult because "most of the group are boys" and that "if there are more girls, it is better... although girls have their own world".

I noticed that teacher 1 addresses the boys in a firm and decisive manner, often with a raised voice (which is not unusual given the level of noise in such a large group of children). An example that indicates a certain tone of her statement may be the situation when, during classes, one of the boys does not want to stick a sticker with a drawing of a vegetable on his t-shirt, and this is the task for the whole group. The boy cries and gets angry because he does not want anything stuck on his favorite t-shirt. The teacher turns to him, almost shouting: "Will you stop behaving so vulgarly?!". The behavior of a male child when he expresses his emotions, such as sadness, anger, dissatisfaction caused by reluctance to stick something on his t-shirt (if we were told to stick something on our favorite t-shirt, would we all want to do it without any objection?) is therefore named by the teacher as vulgar behavior. Although in the same situation none of the girls showed such emotions but never during my observations did teacher 1 address any of the girls in the same way, but she did very often towards boys. When teacher 1 tried to establish contact with me, she expressed an opinion about one of the children in the group, for example about one of the girls: "She is so polite, but she also makes trouble with the boys". She said it as if by way of contrast, that the girl is polite, quiet, calm, cheerful, smiling, but sometimes she behaves like a boy, that is, she makes trouble. And by "troublemaking", I believe, she calls loud, expansive behavior, perhaps running or jumping? Boys are allowed to behave like this, but it still seems inappropriate for girls.

Due to the fact that the one day when I conducted the research was Teacher's Day, the children had free play time instead of educational activities. So the teacher would announce that it was time for the children to play freely, saying: "Girls, do you want to play in that room?" the girls answer in chorus: "Yes, yes", so I asked: "And what is there?", she replied: "There are strollers for girls, dolls...". Kacper, one of the boys, comes up. The teacher laughs: "Well, yes, Kacper also wants to go (laughter)! Well, yes, Kacper, you're the one who's going to cook there (laughter)!". The teacher's assistant laughs as if something funny has happened and says: "Kacper, there will be some serious cooking in the pots, won't there?". Other boys come in and say that they also want to go to the room called "the girls' room" by teacher 1. The teacher says:

"No, you can't go there! There are toys for girls there". So, you can see here a strong division into "a girls' room" and "a boys' room" as well as "girls' toys" and "boys' toys", which proves that this teacher applies visible pedagogy. She is the one who knows where the girls' and where the boys' place is, and what the girls and what the boys should play with. In addition, the division into two rooms – one for girls and one for boys – is evidence of creating an artificial division of the world – girls' and boys' world. The children are artificially separated; they have no chance to cooperate, exchange experience and get to know one another.

So here I am standing in the middle, between the girls' room and the boys' room, that is, behind the teacher's desk (see Figure 1), who feels obliged to explain to me how things work: "The girls have one stroller, but somehow these girls share it. You know, I once had a boy, who pushed a stroller [while saying that makes a gesture, which I interpret as puzzlement]. I told his mother that he was pushing a stroller. And the mother said that she was expecting a baby, but she hadn't told him yet". A boy playing with a stroller is such an unusual thing, which in this teacher's mind should raise concern, since she saw the need to inform the boy's mother about the incident.

I am in "room B" (Figure 1), called the "girls' room" by the teacher. Kacper is playing with a doll that looks like a baby. He plays that his baby is crying. He carries the doll just as you carry an infant, saying to his toy: "fall asleep baby, fall asleep". He cradles the doll held in his arms and gives it a bottle to drink. He goes to a girl and says: "mommy, the baby doesn't want to fall asleep". However, the girl seems to be preoccupied with something else and does not engage in the play initiated by Kacper. By creating a division into the "boys' room" and the one "for girls", the boys who are constructing and driving cars cannot see that their friend is taking care of the toy "baby" because they are separated by rooms.

The children are playing in two rooms: the boys separately and all the girls and two boys in the "girls" room. One of the boys, Tomek, is sitting in the girls' room. He looks around and does not quite know what to do with himself. I encourage him to go inside and ask him what he would like to do. After all, it is a "girls' room", so Tomek is shy as if he did not know what he is supposed to do in this room, with all these "girly" things around. He looks towards the doll and at Kacper playing with it. He looks as if wondering

whether he can, whether he should. I then ask him if he would like to push the stroller with the doll. He nods with a smile on his face, walks over to the stroller, and starts playing. Kacper keeps on taking care of his baby, he says: "because it looks as if the baby wants to eat something... she has a band-aid, because she cut herself... shush! The baby is sleeping". He is very caring, considerate, and has many ideas on how to respond to the baby's needs made up by him. The boys in the "boys' room" are playing with cars, building tracks only to destroy after a while.

The teacher strikes up a conversation with me and I tell her that one girl speaks excellent English, "Yes? and which one?" – she asks, surprised. I tell her that the girl speaks better English than Polish. Teacher 1 says, waving her hand: "she is specific". I do not think she is specific; she just speaks English at home. Perhaps the teacher considered her silent, reserved, as she put it at the beginning of the conversation with me, she thought that "just like a girl, she has her own world".

On the occasion of the Teacher's Day, one girl is selected to give a flower to the Principal. Teacher 1 praises the girl: "show me your dress! Well, how elegant!" So, the girl is praised for her appearance, but I have not heard her being praised for certain skills, which could occur, for example, when the girl leads the children in a single file to the tables for a meal.

In the course of a casual conversation with the children about boys' day, the phrase "Boys' day is a crazy person's day, I guess" is uttered by teacher 1. Perhaps it was meant to be a joke, however, numerous times this teacher made statements that mocked and ridiculed boys.

Another day, when it is time for free play, teacher 1 addresses the entire group: "The girls can go to that room and the boys [stay – note from the author] here". Once again, we can see how the teacher, using her authority for this purpose, divides the children's world in this group into two parts. The same boy from a few days earlier goes with the girls to the "girls' room", but this time without a word of comment from the teacher. Another boy also expresses desire to go to the girls' room, but the teacher replies that "there are many toys here and you can play here". While saying these words, she writes something in the class register, does not look at her "interlocutor", and seems to ignore him.

I stand in the passage between the "girls' room" and the "boys' room" (see Figure 1) so as to observe both rooms at the same time. One of the boys, Marek, who is in the "boys' room", looks into the "girls' room" and smiles sheepishly. It seems that he wants to enter this "girls' world" that is closed and inaccessible to him. The teacher does not comment – she neither encourages nor discourages him from entering the room. Marek's behavior expresses uncertainty, indecisiveness; he is not sure whether he can go "there" or not.

In the "girls' room", apart from dolls, a stroller and a cradle, there are books, a kitchen, kitchen utensils, pink Lego blocks, a little table and a small couch for the children, a poster about emotions hangs on the wall, and also information when the children in this group celebrate their birthdays. Children located in the "girls' room" proceed to play family. A boy plays pretending his friend is mom and he is dad. I think children may have such natural urge to organize such games for themselves, regardless of gender.

One of the boys says to me: "and boys also play with girls!". So, he already seems to understand that there are two worlds – the world of girls and the world of boys.

Encouraged by me, Marek begins to play with the doll, opening and closing her eyes, plays with the doll house, pushes the stroller around the girls' room, the doll falls out of the stroller and falls on her head, the boy says "oops", and after a moment shyly cradles the doll in the cradle, looks at me and says: "this is how you cradle".

One of the girls says that she is going to "that room" (having in mind room "A") – which means that she does not accept the nomenclature of teacher 1.

The boys have a much bigger mess in their room, on their carpet. One of the boys asks: "miss, can I go into that room?", teacher 1 replies: "No, there is enough here". After a while, two more boys approach and ask whether they can enter room "B". The teacher again replies, without looking at them: "No, you can't". The boy stands in the doorway and looks, finally the teacher says: "Okay, you can go play [pause] but be polite". Another boy asks: "Excuse me Ms., and when do I get in there?", the teacher replies: "Now you are here". It seems that deciding on which boy can enter the "girls' room" depends only on the mood of the teacher at a given moment. On one occasion she allows someone to enter on the other she does not. Teacher 1 comments on the behavior of one of the boys: "As handsome as he is, he should also be polite", the

assistant lady adds: "when he was in the toddlers, he was such a cutie". Therefore, in the teacher's opinion, physical traits seem to be identical with mental traits.

When, after another comment from teacher 1, supported by non-verbal messages from the assistant lady about "strange" behavior of boys, manifested by playing with dolls or in the kitchen, I reply that these boys will be partners of women one day and it would be nice if they took their child for a walk or cooked lunch; the teacher and the assistant laugh and comment with a sigh: "husbands".

The teacher decides to play board games; she gives the boys games, and ends up playing with only the boys, without encouraging anyone else to play. One of the girls comes up and asks: "Can I play with you?", the teacher replies: "Not now, now we are playing".

Socialization process – Teacher 2

When play time comes, teacher 2 announces: "now you can play". She does not divide the group into girls and boys. These words alone at the beginning of the game show the differences between the visible pedagogy used by teacher 1 and the invisible pedagogy used by teacher 2. Children in the presence of teacher 2 are much more relaxed, they sing while playing, talk freely, there is no constant tension as in the presence of teacher 1. It is only now that I notice how oppressive the actions of teacher 1 are, how much constant judging, labeling and correcting there is in them. In the presence of teacher 2, children can choose their own games and do it in such a way that the girls draw at the tables and the boy's construct. Later, the boys also join in drawing. There is not a single person here that would artificially create divisions and hierarchies, as in the case of visible pedagogy used by teacher 1.

Instead of constantly raising her voice, like teacher 1, teacher 2 uses some techniques that distract the children from playing and draw their attention to the fact that they are making noise. For instance, teacher 2 says: "Attention! The suns are shining". At this point, all the children raise their hands in the air and move their palms. The teacher explains, "Isn't it nice when you don't shout? See how nice it is... from such noise we will all get a headache". Here we are dealing with invisible pedagogy in its pure form. The teacher achieved

the effect she wanted: the children lowered the tone of play, but she did it in a way that was invisible to them. What happened here was the opposite of visible pedagogy, which in the case of teacher 2 manifested itself by having the children stand facing the wall "as punishment" and constantly silencing them by shouting.

If there is no demonstration of visible pedagogy, it turns out that girls play with cars, boys build and no one emphasizes "boyish" and "girlish" behavior, which at the same time makes all the children talk together, exchange comments. And they do this because they can play together – the room referred to by teacher 1 as the "girls' room" is excluded from the children's play because there are balloons from the carnival ball. No division of the rooms results in fewer communication barriers between the children.

One of the boys addresses a girl with the following words: "you can play with my house (made of Lego blocks – note from the author)". They talk about playing together. Two other boys are having an argument – they are free to resolve their issues, because the teacher does not interfere in their conflict – after all, nothing dangerous is happening. The teacher's attitude and the work that she performs in accordance with the principles of invisible pedagogy give space for the development of social qualities, including conflict resolution.

Furthermore, I noticed that the boys encourage the girls to play together. Anna drives a car around Wojtek, and he does not object, does not make any remarks that she is playing with something she should not. The children, out of their own initiative, do not seem to strive to play with the girls' toys, the girls do not insist on going "to the girls' room", which, as it turns out while they are with teacher 2 – is simply not there. The behavior of teacher 1 resulted in creating artificial divisions between boys and girls. In case of teacher 2 girls are not artificially separated from puzzles, jigsaws or educational games which have their place in room A. Girls and boys play together and it is natural for them, none of them show any discomfort because of this joint play.

The behavior of teacher 1 created constant tension, not only in terms of the atmosphere, but also tension between what is girlish and what is boyish – she was the author of this division, as characterized by visible pedagogy. It turns out, moreover, that two female teachers, who have the same space to

manage, manage it in a totally different way[13]. Teacher 2 in her statements applies the division into "at tables" and "on the carpet" and does not use the terms "for boys" and "for girls".

Despite high awareness of Teacher 2, she is stuck in old, well known socially familiar patterns, which is reflected in her words: "A group of only boys is a problem. If we want to do some dances, present ourselves […] then there are no girls". Girls, as it seems, "serve" in pre-school education to present themselves, to please the eyes, and it is also recognized that each and every girl sings and dances. The issue whether she likes it or not is probably of little importance here – after all, she is a girl. A boy does not have to like performing, does not have to know how to do it – after all, he is a boy. But a girl – she dances and sings. Although, as we know, artistic skills or predispositions for singing or dancing are not related to biological sex.

When play time comes, Teacher 2 says that the children can play in the "small room". Both boys and girls are happy that there are no carnival balloons in the small room. The teacher asks: "Who feels like going to the other room?" The children raise their hands, and the teacher chooses those who can move to the smaller room. There is no gender division – the teacher selects children at random and says that they will swap later, "and the rest of the children can play here". She points to the larger room – she does not call it the boys' room.

As you can see, in the work of Teacher 1, there is no reflection of the fact that the message "room for girls and for boys" results in artificial division and is harmful. In the presence of Teacher 2, 4 boys and 2 girls are playing in the small room. The girls and one of the boys are playing with dolls, and the other one was playing with a fire truck. However, no comments, judgments or ridicule are heard from the teacher, as was done by Teacher 1. The boys' playing with the doll is quite clumsy: one shows the other the doll and they laugh, then they throw it and laugh that it fell down. The teacher intervenes, saying

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[13] Michel Foucault said that there are no intrinsically oppressive places: "If one was to search for places where freedom is effectively practiced, and there certainly are such places, one would find that this happened not so much because of the nature of the laws that prevail there, but because of the practice of freedom […]. I think architecture can achieve positive effects, which it does when the liberating intentions of architects meet the practice of people exercising their freedom" (Kusiak & Świątkowska, 2013).

that this is no way to play with a doll. The boys change the game only to re-turn to it after a while and throw the doll off the shelves.

The teacher points out to the boy who plays with the car in the small room, explaining that there is not enough space in the small room: she draws his attention to the size of the room, not to its supposed purpose. She says: "We drive cars in the other room because it's bigger" (and not because it is for boys).

Boys in the small room play roles, one of them is sick, two of them take care of him. Another of the boys plays with a roller; no one ridicules, points at them or makes assessments. In such discourse, the issue of room is not rel-evant anymore. The children simply play with their toys in whichever room is available to them based on the number of children.

Teacher 2 encourages the boys to change the room where they play saying: "If anyone hasn't been to this room yet, you can go, it's free". The children in these small and large rooms swap: 2 boys now enter there, one of them plays with a stroller. Again, you can see the difference in the two Teachers' peda-gogies: Teacher 2 does not ridicule, assess, label, attempt to explain to herself and me why a boy displays such behavior as playing with a stroller. The boys play with a pink blanket and a stroller. One of the boy's cooks in the kitchen. I then notice that "girls' games", as Teacher 1 referred to them, are more in-dividualistic, the child communicates less with others. Children don't get the idea that you can cook together – they cook alone.

Despite this, such an activity as cooking is not commented – there is no signal from this Teacher that this is "negative" behavior. The girls do not strive to play together. When cleaning time comes and the boys do not want to get involved, but Anna cleans up eagerly, then Teacher 2 says that Anna has cleaned up enough and the boys are to take over the cleaning.

Summary of research results

It is not only the teachers' words and gestures that have a socializing effect. The space used in a certain way also has such effect. Teacher 1, using visible pedagogy, uses firm, decisive words spoken in the direction of the children, especially boys. She seems to have a certain belief that boys are "by nature" vulgar and disruptive, and girls are "by nature" polite. The presence of girls in

the kindergarten is often "decorative" in nature, this is especially true for performances and holiday celebrations.

Teacher 1, by applying visible pedagogy divides the world into "feminine" and "masculine" and is both the author and creator of this division. She mocks and ridicules boys who exhibit behavior that is, according to her, "unmanly". Teacher 1 uses her power to divide the world in this way.

Teacher 2 does not comment on the children's play activities in terms of their gender, as Teacher 1 does. By applying invisible pedagogy, Teacher 2 does not create divisions between "masculine" and "feminine", which makes children play in all sorts of spontaneous ways. Both girls have the opportunity to play with cars and boys with dolls. This is made possible by the use of invisible pedagogy, specifically by the lack of any reaction in such situations, or perhaps by reacting with silence. This lack of reaction creates another great opportunity for children: interaction between children regardless of gender. In visible pedagogy used by Teacher 1, girls played and talked with girls, and boys with boys. In the case of invisible pedagogy, children of two different genders cooperate with one another, enter into relationships. After all, we need this ability throughout life.

Conclusions for educational practice

The data obtained during the observation enabled me to draw some conclusions for educational practice. First of all, the lack of reliable and thorough education of pre-school and early school education teachers (especially those with many years of work experience) in the scope of gender stereotypes and the consequences of following them, can lead to continuous and unreflective sustaining of gender stereotypes. A teacher is a person who not only has some didactic knowledge and can apply it in practice, but also psychological knowledge – in the scope of supporting children in their psychological development. Teachers' lack of awareness in this regard can lead to hindered development of children, especially when it comes to their pursuit of certain gender roles.

The second statement I would like to make is the creation of a reliable program for equal pre-school education which could be introduced into the curriculum for public kindergartens. It is absolutely not about dressing up

boys as girls and girls as boys or sticking hairpins to boys[14], but, e.g. about giving equal Santa gifts to girls and boys[15]. Persistently live opinions and sustaining in their education that certain behaviors are acceptable only for boys and others only for girls can lead to raising a generation of boys cut off from their emotions – unable to express anger or sadness (because, it is vulgar) and girls – passive, submissive, quiet (having their own world).

The conducted research may provide a reason to formulate further questions. An interesting issue might be to conduct research with children from this group in order to verify whether they see any differences, and if so, what are the differences between the behaviors of the two teachers they are with. Another idea for continuing this research could be conducting biographical interviews with teachers, seeking answers to the question on factors that determined their method of work.

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[14] This accusation was used not only by conservative circles, but also by the Polish Academy of Sciences [PAN] for the program of equal pre-school education created in 2014, whose introduction, in my opinion, should have been preceded by educating teachers to understand what gender stereotypes are and what the consequences of applying them to children may be. (Program "rownościowe przedszkole" z 2014 roku [The "Equality Kindergarten" Programme from 2014]) (My goal here is not to assess it, but only to point out that an attempt to create such a program has already been made).

[15] I wrote about giving hairpins to girls and flashlights to boys for Boy's Day and the possible consequences of this in my doctoral dissertation (C. Szczepaniak, Pedagogies of womanhood in the Polish discourse in women's press, Wrocław: DSW Publishing House, in print).

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