

Perception of parental attitudes in homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual individuals

Marcin Kwiatkowski

SUMMARY:

Aim. The aim of the study was to analyse the perception of paternal and maternal attitudes in homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual groups.

Methods. The study involved the Parental Attitude Scale developed by Plopa. The project included 177 participants; specifically, the sample comprised 39 homosexual, 15 bisexual and 31 heterosexual women, and 56 homosexual, 5 bisexual and 31 heterosexual men.

Results. The study showed significant differences between homosexual and heterosexual women in their perceptions of maternal attitudes in terms of the Over-protective Attitude Scale ($p=0.029$), and between heterosexual and bisexual women in terms of the Autonomy Attitude Scale ($p=0.036$), the Over-protective Attitude Scale ($p=0.004$) and the Over-demanding Attitude Scale ($p=0.007$). There were no significant differences in the perception of maternal attitudes between homosexual and heterosexual men. The study showed significant differences in the perception of paternal attitudes in terms of the Inconsequential Attitude Scale between homosexual and bisexual women ($p=0.023$) and between heterosexual and bisexual women ($p=0.035$). There were no significant differences in the perception of paternal attitudes between homosexual and heterosexual women and between homosexual and heterosexual men.

sexuality/ maternal behaviour/ paternal behaviour

INTRODUCTION

The family environment is, for the majority of people, the primary and fundamental influence on the psyche. Therefore, scientists exploring the phenomenon of homosexuality often treat the family environment as its substratum [1]. According to theories of social learning, the development of sexual identity is explained in the same way as most conditioned behaviour. In these terms, individual sexual identity is based on conditioning mechanisms as well as cognitive processes [2]. Furthermore, in the framework of this approach,

the development of sexual identity is also determined by socio-cultural factors. These factors are described as models of gender roles (both male and female) developed by a certain culture. The models themselves are understood as “all of the characteristics, behaviour and tasks typical or representative of one or other sex” [3, p.34]. Social and cultural standards play a key role here. In societies where women have a low social status and where marriage and virginity are valued, female homosexuality seems to be ignored. Furthermore, male homosexuality and sexual acts between boys and older men seem to be partially accepted, whereas open homosexuality is rejected totally [4].

In terms of social determinants of sexual identity, the role played by family environment has two categories. The first includes

Marcin Kwiatkowski: Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Mersey Care NHS, United Kingdom. Correspondence address: Marcin Kwiatkowski, Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Mersey Care NHS, United Kingdom. E-mail: marcinkwiatkowski@op.pl

This research has not been supported by any grant.

parental characteristics (masculinity and femininity) and the behaviours that are connected with them; the second includes the pattern (assimilated by the parents) of being a boy or a girl, in terms of both behaviour and appearance. The first set of influences has an effect on the child via a process of social learning, through the mechanisms of imitation, modelling and identification; the second influences the child through social reinforcement. The parents are the first model and the source of social roles for their children, and provide the basis for achieving characteristics typical for their gender in that particular culture or society. The young individual, living in that society, experiences many opportunities to observe male and female models, and therefore has many chances to learn and assimilate their social roles. However, not every model has the same influence on the young individual. The strength of the model's influence depends on its prestige, the model's power and individual's ability to perceive this, and on the individual's perception of similarity between the observer and the model [2, 3]. Furthermore, social reinforcements play an important role in terms of the individual's level of involvement in this behaviour.

One of the criteria for similarity is gender. Therefore, a child generally prefers to imitate models of its own gender. Although all children learn behaviours that are characteristic for both genders, they show more interest and a bigger involvement in behaviours that are characteristic for their own gender. In later stages of life, the individual interacts more often with his or her peers, and they become the models for behaviour [2]. The child's surroundings may sometimes provide insufficient sources of information about models of gender roles. This happens when one of the models, for either the male or female gender, is lacking, or when the models are very similar and there are not enough differences between them. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that children from incomplete families present a smaller differentiation in terms of behaviour associated with gender than do children from full families. This limited knowledge of gender roles may be the result of a poor variety of gender role models presented by parents, which

makes it difficult for the child to discern gender and family roles.

Problems associated with difficulties in accurate designation of gender roles might be connected with clear tendencies towards transformation from traditional gender roles to models based on the parental partnership [2, 3, 5]. A natural consequence of this process is the stereotyping of gender. Stereotypes determine and have a massive influence on an individual's way of thinking about men and women. Young children learn about female and male stereotypes, according to which the woman should be devout, chaste and dedicated to her husband, whereas the man should reject all female occupations and interests, be success orientated, shouldn't show any emotions, and should demonstrate aggression and assertiveness [5, 6]. Current changes in family structure are very evident in some countries in Western Europe, although in Poland they are not so evident yet. In Eastern Europe the nuclear family is disintegrating. The belief that the main duty of women is to bring up children appears to be disappearing. There are families with inverted roles, where fathers look after the children and mothers work and provide for the home [1].

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Although there is a large body of recent literature about homosexuality, there are fewer studies regarding the perception of parental attitudes in individuals with different sexual orientations. Most of the studies regarding this subject were carried out in the past, when homosexuality was treated as a pathology, and often the research was related to moral issues.

This study aimed to explore the perception of parental attitudes in the context of the sexual orientation of the participants, and also in the context of changes in the family in terms of character and structure and parental roles. The study aimed also to fill the gap in the literature, created in the space of the last few years. In connection with these issues, the study will investigate the following question:

Does the perception of the attitudes of their own parents differentiate between homo-, bi- and heterosexual individuals?

PARTICIPANTS

Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary. Information about the study was presented on widely available web pages and internet forums, as well as on web pages aimed at Polish sexual minorities. Interested individuals could download a prepared set of questionnaires from the web pages, or, after earlier contact, could obtain them via e-mail and then return them to the indicated e-mail address. During the study no index of refusal of participate in the study was noted. The study sample comprised the group of 177 participants, of which 85 were women and 92 were men. The participants' sexual orientation was defined according to their own evaluation of their sexual preferences on the Heterosexual–Homosexual Kinsey Scale [7], as well as their own direct declaration in a demographic questionnaire.

The results were analysed according to the direct declaration of participants' sexual orientation in the demographic questionnaire. According to the declarations, three groups were classified: homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual. The analysis of the data refers to men and women separately. However, because of the non-representative quantity of men in the bisexual group the analyses described below do not refer to bisexual men.

The inclusion criterion was the participant's answer regarding sexual orientation. The group of heterosexual women consisted of 31 participants (average age $M=26.32$, $SD=6.14$), the bisexual group involved 15 women (average age $M=25.67$, $SD=9.74$), and the homosexual group consisted of 39 women (average age $M=27.56$, $SD=7.11$). The men's groups consisted of 31 heterosexual men (average age $M=30.13$, $SD=10.67$), 56 homosexual men (average age $M=25.41$, $SD=6.36$) and 5 bisexual men (average age $M=32.40$, $SD=14.54$).

The distribution of the sizes of the different groups and the averages and standard deviations regarding the age of the participants are presented in Tab. 1.

The next demographic characteristic to be analysed was the participants' level of education. The distribution of men's and women's levels of education in the context of their sexual orientation is presented in Tab. 2.

The data presented in Tab. 2 suggest that among heterosexual men, most had completed a Master's degree (51.6%) or secondary level qualifications (35.5%). Among homosexual men, 41.1% had achieved a Master's degree men, while 37.5% of the participants had reached the secondary level of education. In the group of heterosexual women, most had reached the Master's level of education (58.1%), 29% had reached the secondary level - and 12.9% had completed a Bachelor's degree. The results showed that 46.7% of the bisexual women had reached the secondary level of education, while 33.3% had achieved a Master's degree. Among homosexual women, 48.7% had gained a Master's degree –and 35.9% had reached the secondary level of education.

The results presented in Tab. 3 indicate that most of the mothers of heterosexual men had reached the secondary level of education (38.7%), with the next most common category being a Master's degree (32.2%). The categories for primary level education and vocational training both accounted for 6.5% of the mothers of heterosexual men. Among homosexual men, the primary and vocational levels of education represented 7.1% and 25% of the mothers respectively. The secondary level of education represented 28.6%, 12.5% had Bachelor's degrees, and 26.8% had reached the Master's level of education.

The group of mothers of heterosexual women was dominated by those with Master's degrees (31.3%), with 25% reaching the secondary level of education and 21.8% achieving vocational training. The categories relating to Bachelor's degrees and the primary level of education both accounted for 9.4% of the group.

Table 1. Distribution of group sizes, age averages and standard deviations.

	Heterosexual group			Bisexual group			Homosexual group		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Women	31	26.32	6.14	15	25.67	9.74	39	27.56	7.11
Men	31	30.13	10.67	5	32.40	14.54	56	25.41	6.36

Table 2. Distribution of education level for the women's and men's groups.

Education	Men		Women		
	HT	HM	HT	B	HM
Primary	0%	0%	0%	6.7%	2.6%
Vocational	3.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Secondary level	35.5%	37.5%	29.0%	46.7%	35.9%
Bachelor's degree	6.5%	19.6%	12.9%	0.0%	12.8%
Master's degree	51.6%	41.1%	58.1%	33.3%	48.7%
Other	3.2%	1.8%	0.0%	13.3%	0%

Table 3. Distribution of parents' level of education.

Education	Mother					
	Men		Women			
	HT	HM	HT	B	HM	
Primary	6.5%	7.1%	9.4%	6.7%	5.1%	
Vocational	6.5%	25%	21.8%	6.7%	20.5%	
Secondary level	38.7%	28.6%	25%	53.3%	33.3%	
Bachelor's degree	16.1%	12.5%	9.4%	6.7%	12.8%	
Master's degree	32.2%	26.8%	31.3%	26.6%	28.2%	
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Education	Father					
	Primary	6.5%	9%	0%	0%	0%
	Vocational	16.1%	21.4%	31.3%	33.3%	28.2%
	Secondary level	32.2%	33.9%	34.3%	33.3%	30.7%
	Bachelor's degree	3.25%	12.5%	0%	0%	7.7%
	Master's degree	38.7%	23.2%	31.3%	33.3%	30.7%
	Other	3.25%	0%	0%	0%	2.6%

Table 4. Distribution of place of residence.

Place of residence	Men		Women		
	HT	HM	HT	B	HM
Village	3.2%	3.6%	6.5%	0%	0%
Town – up to 50 thousand	29.0%	8.9%	12.9%	13.3%	15.4%
Town – up to 100 thousand	9.7%	17.9%	9.7%	6.7%	15.4%
Town – up to 500 thousand	3.2%	23.2%	6.5%	13.3%	23.1%
Town – over 500 thousand	54.8%	46.4%	64.5%	66.7%	46.2%

Among homosexual women, most of their mothers had achieved the secondary level of education (33.3%) or Master’s degrees (28.2%). 53.3% of the mothers of bisexual women had reached the secondary level of education, while 26.6% had achieved a Master’s degree.

Among the fathers of the heterosexual men, the largest category was those who had achieved a Master’s degree (38.7%), while 32.2% had reached the secondary level of education. Among the fathers of the homosexual men, the secondary level of education was dominant (accounting for 33.9% of the group), and the Master’s level accounted for 23.2%. 21.4% had achieved vocational training, 12.5% had undertaken a Bachelor’s degree and 9% had achieved the primary level of education. Among the fathers of bisexual women, 33.3% had achieved vocational training, the secondary level of education or a Master’s degree. The group of fathers of the homosexual women was dominated by the secondary and Master’s levels of education, with 30.7% achieving in both categories. Finally, the vocational level of training accounted for 28.2% in this group.

Table 4. Distribution of place of residence.

The results presented in Tab. 4 indicate that 54.8% of the heterosexual men and 46.4% of the homosexual men lived in towns with over 500 thousand citizens. 3.2% of the heterosexual men and 23.2% of the homosexual men lived in towns with up to 500 thousand citizens. The lowest percentage of heterosexual men lived in villages (3.2%); the figure is similar for homosexual men (3.6%). The highest percentages of lesbians lived in towns with over 500 thousand citizens (46.2%) and in towns with up to 500 thousand of citizen (23.1%). The biggest percentage of bisexual women (66.7%) lived in towns containing over 500 thousand citizens.

According to the results presented in Tab. 5, 32.3% of the heterosexual men and 14.5% of the homosexual men were the only child in their family. The same was also true for 9.6% of the heterosexual women, 40% of the bisexual women and 12.8% of the homosexual women. 42% of the heterosexual men and 45.5% of the homosexual men had one brother or sister, and among the women 58% of the heterosexuals, 53.3% of the bisexuals and 64.1% of the homosexuals had one brother or sister. 16.1% of the heterosexual men and 30.9% of the homosexual men had two siblings; among the women’s groups, 25.8% of the heterosexual women, 6.7% of the bisexuals and 20.5% of the lesbians had two siblings. Tab. 6 (next page).

The results presented in Tab. 6 indicate that 32.3% of the heterosexual men were born as a first child, whereas among homosexual men the figure is 41.8%. In the women’s groups, 48.4% of the heterosexual women, 13.3% of the bisexuals and 35.9% of the homosexual women were born as a first child. 29% of the heterosexual men and 27.3% of the homosexual men were born as a second child, while among the women, 32.3% of the heterosexuals, 46.7% of the bisexuals and 46.2% of the homosexual women were born as a second child. 3.2% of the heterosexual men and 2.6% of the homosexual women were born as a third child; 14.6% of the homosexual men and 9.6% of the heterosexual women were also born as a third child. Tab. 7 (next page).

30.9% of the homosexual men had an older sister, whereas among heterosexual men the same figure was 22.6%. 29% of the heterosexual women also had an older sister, as did 40% of the bisexual women and 10.3% of the lesbians. Among the lesbians, however, the most common category was the women who

Table 5. Number of siblings

Number of siblings		Men		Women		
		HT	HM	HT	B	HM
0	%	32.3%	14.5%	9.6%	40%	12.8%
1	%	42%	45.5%	58%	53.3%	64.1%
2	%	16.1%	30.9%	25.8%	6.7%	20.5%
3	%	3.2%	5.5%	6.5%	0%	2.6%
4	%	6.4%	3.6%	0%	0%	0%

Table 6. Birth order

Birth order		Men		Women		
		HT	HM	HT	B	HM
Only one child	%	32.3%	14.5%	9.6%	40%	12.8%
1	%	32.3%	41.8%	48.4%	13.3%	35.9%
2	%	29%	27.3%	32.3%	46.7%	46.2%
3	%	3.2%	14.6%	9.6%	0%	2.6%
4	%	3.2%	1.8%	0%	0%	2.6%
5	%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
6	%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 7. The number and gender of siblings.

Siblings	Men		Women		
	HT	HM	HT	B	HM
Older sister	22.6%	30.9%	29%	40%	10.3%
Older brother	16.1%	21.8%	22.6%	6.7%	41%
Younger sister	22.6%	29.1%	25.8%	0%	28.2%
Younger brother	32.3%	30.9%	41.9%	9.4%	17.9%

Table 8. Parental attitudes presented by mothers as perceived by women.

Mother	Group	Women	
		M	SD
Acceptance – rejection Attitudes	HM	5.90	2.59
	B	5.00	2.62
	HT	5.87	2.39
Autonomy Attitude	HM	6.31	2.94
	B	4.87	2.23
	HT	6.33	2.11
Over-protective Attitude	HM	4.79	2.46
	B	5.60	2.20
	HT	3.53	2.15
Over-demanding Attitude	HM	4.28	3.13
	B	5.40	2.72
	HT	3.27	2.20
Inconsequential Attitude	HM	4.92	2.37
	B	5.93	2.43
	HT	4.70	2.04

had an older brother; this accounted for 41% of this group. 16.1% of the heterosexual men and 21.8% of the homosexual men also had an older brother. Among bisexual women, 6.7% women had an older brother. 22.6% of the heterosexual men and 29.1% of the homosexual men had a younger sister; in the women's groups, 25.8% of the heterosexual women and 28.2% of the lesbians had a younger sister. 32.3% of the heterosexual men and 30.9% of the homosexual men had a younger brother; for the women, 41.9% of the heterosexual women, 9.4% of the bisexuals and 17.9% of the lesbians had a younger brother.

METHODS

To analyse the perception of parental attitudes, this study used the Parental Attitude Scale developed by M. Plopa [8]. The scale includes two subtests; the first refers to the mother, and the second to the father. Both subtests include seventy-five items referring to children's perceptions of their parents' attitudes towards them. The scale gives five possibilities for answering questions: true (P), quite true (RP), difficult to decide (?), quite false (RN)

and false (N). These answers are respectively scored as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. Both subtests include the following sub-scales:

- 1) Acceptance – rejection Attitudes
- 2) Autonomy Attitude
- 3) Over-protective Attitude
- 4) Over-demanding Attitude
- 5) Inconsequential Attitude

The reliability of the scale was tested by estimating the stability coefficient. The range of stability coefficients for the "My mother" scale is $r=0.081-0.918$, whereas for the "My father" scale the range of coefficients is $r=0.791-0.910$. This means that the scale's stability is high, allowing researchers to have high levels of trust in the results of the questionnaire, which have been shown not to be influenced by random changes. The theoretical accuracy analysis of the Parental Attitude Scale provides support for its usefulness as a tool for psychological research [8].

THE RESULTS

The results presented in Tab. 8 and 9 indicate statistically significant differences between ho-

Table 9. Comparison between women's groups in terms of their perceptions of their mothers' attitudes towards them.

Mother	Women					
	HM versus B		HM versus HT		HT versus B	
	t	p	t	p	t	p
Acceptance – rejection Attitudes	1.14	0.261	0.05	0.960	-1.11	0.273
Autonomy Attitude	1.71	0.092	-0.04	0.968	-2.16	0.036
Over-protective Attitude	-1.11	0.273	2.23	0.029	3.02	0.004
Over-demanding Attitude	-1.22	0.229	1.51	0.135	2.84	0.007
Inconsequential Attitude	-1.39	0.169	0.41	0.682	1.79	0.080

mosexual and heterosexual women in terms of their perceptions of their mothers' Over-protective Attitude ($p=0.029$), and between heterosexual and bisexual women for the following scales: Autonomy Attitude ($p=0.036$); Over-protective Attitude ($p=0.004$); and Over-demanding Attitude ($p=0.007$). Homosexual women more often perceived their mothers to be more protective ($M=4.79$; $SD=2.46$) than did

heterosexual women ($M=3.53$; $SD=2.15$). Bisexual women more often perceived their mothers to be more protective ($M=5.60$; $SD=2.20$) and more demanding ($M=5.40$; $SD=2.72$) than did heterosexual women, who perceived their mothers to be less protective ($M=3.53$; $SD=2.15$) and less demanding ($M=3.27$; $SD=2.20$). The mothers of heterosexual women, in their daughters' opinion, were characterised more

often by high autonomy ($M=6.33$; $SD=2.11$) than were the mothers of bisexual women ($M=4.87$; $SD=2.23$).

Tab. 10 and 11 reveal some statistically significant differences in the perception of paternal attitudes. The data suggest that there are

Table 10. Parental attitudes presented by fathers as perceived by women.

Father	Group	Women	
		M	SD
Acceptance – rejection Attitudes	HM	6.47	2.32
	B	5.87	1.96
	HT	6.20	2.33
Autonomy Attitude	HM	6.47	1.93
	B	6.07	2.49
	HT	5.90	1.94
Over-protective Attitude	HM	4.22	2.09
	B	4.93	2.34
	HT	4.40	2.22
Over-demanding Attitude	HM	4.33	2.31
	B	5.47	2.20
	HT	4.40	1.99
Inconsequential Attitude	HM	4.89	1.95
	B	6.27	1.79
	HT	4.97	1.94

Table 11. Comparison between women's groups in terms of their perception of their fathers' attitudes towards them.

Father	Women					
	HM versus B		HM versus HT		HT versus B	
	t	p	t	p	t	p
Acceptance – rejection Attitudes	0.89	0.380	0.47	0.637	-0.48	0.636
Autonomy Attitude	0.63	0.534	1.20	0.236	0.25	0.806
Over-protective Attitude	-1.07	0.290	-0.33	0.739	0.75	0.460
Over-demanding Attitude	-1.62	0.112	-0.12	0.901	1.64	0.109
Inconsequential Attitude	-2.35	0.023	-0.16	0.872	2.17	0.035

statistically significant differences along the Inconsequential Attitude scale ($p=0.023$) between homosexual and bisexual women, and along the same scale ($p=0.035$) between heterosexual and bisexual women. There were no statistically significant differences between homosexual and heterosexual women in their perception of paternal attitudes along any of the other scales. The fathers of the bisexual women were perceived more often to be inconsequential ($M=6.27$; $SD=1.79$) than were the fathers of

the homosexual women ($M=4.89$; $SD=1.95$) or those of the heterosexual women ($M=4.97$; $SD=1.94$).

The results presented in Tab. 12 do not indicate any statistically significant differences between the different groups of men in terms of their perceptions of maternal attitudes.

The data presented in Tab. 13 do not indicate any significant differences in the perception of paternal attitudes among the different groups of men.

Table 12. Parental attitudes presented by mothers as perceived by men

Mother	Group	Men			
		M	SD	t	p
Acceptance – rejection Attitudes	HM	5.43	1.95	-0.92	0.358
	HT	5.87	2.43		
Autonomy Attitude	HM	6.00	2.27	-0.25	0.802
	HT	6.13	2.29		
Over-protective Attitude	HM	4.31	2.73	-0.28	0.779
	HT	4.48	2.54		
Over-demanding Attitude	HM	4.37	2.60	0.08	0.934
	HT	4.32	2.48		
Inconsequential Attitude	HM	5.28	2.05	1.10	0.275
	HT	4.74	2.35		

Table 13. Comparison between the men’s groups in terms of their perception of their fathers’ attitudes towards them

Father	Group	Men			
		M	SD	t	p
Acceptance – rejection Attitudes	HM	5.62	2.12	-0.78	0.439
	HT	6.00	2.02		
Autonomy Attitude	HM	5.98	2.02	-0.76	0.447
	HT	6.33	1.78		
Over-protective Attitude	HM	3.85	1.87	-0.58	0.562
	HT	4.11	2.01		
Over-demanding Attitude	HM	4.60	2.20	-0.89	0.375
	HT	5.07	2.37		
Inconsequential Attitude	HM	5.46	2.00	0.49	0.623
	HT	5.22	2.12		

The results presented in Tab. 14 (*next page*) did not indicate any significant differences between the heterosexual individuals and the homosexual individuals in terms of their perceptions of maternal attitudes.

The results presented in Tab. 15 (*next page*) did not indicate any significant differences between the homosexual individuals and the heterosexual individuals in terms of their perceptions of paternal attitudes.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that in comparison with heterosexual women, homosexual women more often perceived their mothers as being

over-protective, experiencing difficulties with the realisation that their daughters are getting older and they should change their maternal attitudes towards them accordingly. The mothers of homosexual women might also have difficulties with accepting their daughters’ attempts to become more independent, and may be unhappy about these attempts. This attitude might often be a cause of emotional separation between the mothers and their daughters, who are exercising their natural drive to become independent.

Furthermore, the mothers of bisexual women were more often perceived by their daughters to show a more protective attitude in comparison with the mothers of heterosexual women; they were also perceived as being more de-

Table 14. Differences between the homosexual and heterosexual groups in terms of their perception of maternal attitudes

Mother	Homosexual men and women		Heterosexual men and women	
	t	p	t	p
Acceptance–rejection Attitudes	1.00	0.319	-0.01	0.994
Autonomy Attitude	0.57	0.571	0.36	0.718
Over-protective Attitude	0.87	0.386	-1.58	0.120
Over-demanding Attitude	-0.15	0.882	-1.76	0.084
Inconsequential Attitude	-0.77	0.442	-0.07	0.941

Table 15. Differences between the homosexual and heterosexual groups in terms of their perception of paternal attitudes.

Father	Homosexual men and women		Heterosexual men and women	
	t	p	t	p
Acceptance–rejection Attitudes	1.79	0.076	0.34	0.731
Autonomy Attitude	1.14	0.257	-0.88	0.384
Over-protective Attitude	0.88	0.379	0.51	0.610
Over-demanding Attitude	-0.54	0.590	-1.17	0.249
Inconsequential Attitude	-1.33	0.187	-0.48	0.636

manding towards their daughters. The mothers of bisexual women were also perceived as more rigorous about enforcing rules and directives created by them. This demanding attitude is characterised by the imposition of their own strict opinions without taking account of their child's preferences or abilities. Parents who display this attitude accept only the activities which are accepted and desired by themselves, and all the child's attempts at independence and initiative are criticised and negated by the parents [8].

The mothers of the heterosexual women, in comparison with the mothers of the bisexual women, were perceived by their daughters as giving them the right to autonomy and allowing them the right to privacy and secrets. These mothers gave their children the freedom to make their own decisions, but at the same time they were ready to help them or to advise. The Autonomy Attitude is characteristic of parents who don't force their children to accept their own beliefs and convictions, who give them the right to have their own independent opinions, and who accept and understand their children's need to build and maintain friendly relationships with others.

In relation to the relationships between lesbian women and their parents, Kenyon's research [6] suggested that these relationships

were much worse in comparison with heterosexual women. In his research, 76.4% of heterosexual women described their contact with their mother as very good or good, while only 51.2% of lesbians did so. Meanwhile, 15.4% of the homosexual women described their maternal contact as bad or very bad, while only 0.8% of the heterosexual women did so. 38.2% of the lesbians and 68.3% of the heterosexual women described their contact with their father as good or very good, whereas 21.9% of the lesbians and 5.7% of the heterosexual women described this contact as bad or very bad. Furthermore, the analysis of lesbians' and heterosexual women's childhoods revealed many differences in relation to the sexual aspects of life in family homes. The incidence of rejection attitudes towards sexuality in lesbians' family homes was higher than for heterosexual women, and the main source of knowledge about sexuality for lesbians was mostly their girlfriends. Moreover, homosexual women perceived their childhood as less happy than did heterosexual women [6].

Kenyon [9] suggested that the majority of homosexual women had poor relationships with their mothers. Siegelman [10] stated that lesbians perceived their mothers as less warm and loving and more demanding than did heterosexual women; at the same time, however, he

did not report any differences along the rejection, inconsequential or protective attitudes. Kenyon's study [9] also suggested that lesbians had poor relationships with their fathers. Bene [11] stated that lesbians experienced fear of their fathers more often in comparison with heterosexual women, and at the same time they perceived their fathers as weaker and less competent than did heterosexual women.

This study did not find any differences regarding the perceptions of paternal attitudes between the homosexual and heterosexual groups. The fathers of bisexual women, in comparison with the fathers of lesbian and heterosexual women, were more often described as unstable and inconsequential. Their attitudes were volatile and dependent on their mood. The fathers' behaviour was perceived by their daughters as nervous, unstable and unpredictable. The results did not indicate any differences in the perception of maternal and paternal attitudes between heterosexual and homosexual men.

Westwood's study [6] indicated that a relatively high number of homosexual men lost their fathers or both parents during childhood as a consequence of death or divorce. According to Westwood's data, 12% of homosexual men were living in incomplete families before they achieved twelve years of age, and 21% did not have any men at home. 40% of the homosexual men taking part in Westwood's study reported that relationships between their parents weren't good and may even have been hostile, but 50% of them described these relationships as appropriate, and reported that their parents were present during the time of their youth. Westwood analysed also the influence of domination of one of the parents on the child's psychosexual development. In connection with his results, 57% homosexual men described their mother as a dominant person in the family while 29% of homosexual men indicated father as a dominant person at home; 14% of homosexual participants weren't able to indicate who was dominant at home. Westwood also analysed the relationship between homosexual men and their fathers during childhood. According to Westwood's results, 15% of the homosexual men reported that they didn't have any feelings to-

wards their fathers, neither positive nor negative; 38% described their fathers as unsatisfactory, 15% described them as good, and 28% definitely preferred their mothers [6].

Bieber's study [5] suggested that in comparison with heterosexual men, the mothers of homosexual men were characterised by favouring one of their children over others, and commonly this favoured child was the homosexual son. On the other hand, the fathers of heterosexual men favoured their heterosexual sons. Based on this research, Bieber hypothesised that in the aetiology of homosexuality, the close and protective relationship between mother and son is not more important than poor or nonexistent relationships between sons and fathers [5]. Homosexuals were commonly the only child or the youngest child, which may explain the overprotective maternal attitude [5]. Bieber also reported that 69% of the mothers of homosexual men were over-binding towards their sons, whereas among the mothers of heterosexual sons the corresponding percentage was 32% [5].

Bene's study [12] indicated that the majority of homosexual men reported poor or bad relationships with their fathers, and their relationships with their mothers weren't characterised by overprotective attitudes or strong attachment.

Aardweg's study [1] indicated that among a group of 120 homosexual men, only two or three individuals reported positive relationships between them and their fathers. In the majority of situations the father wasn't interested in his son, wasn't involved in his son's life, and didn't follow his interests [1].

The results of this study significantly differ from other published research related to the phenomenon of homosexuality. The differences are noticeable in terms of the perception of parental attitudes among men – in contrast to existing studies, insensitive or hostile relationships between homosexual sons and their fathers or overprotective and possessive relationships between homosexual sons and their mothers were not found in this research.

It might be that these results are connected with the changes in family structure discussed above, which are characterised by higher levels of tolerance in terms of family and social

roles. It might be that the results relating to parental attitudes towards their homosexual children may in reality be related to the parents' reactions (and in consequence their attitudes) towards the homosexual behaviour of their children, which is in conflict with the general and socially acceptable roles and norms related to their particular gender.

One of the advantages of this study is to be found in the methods used, which allowed us to carry out a scientific and fair exploration of the phenomenon of homosexuality. However, the results of the study require further verification based on a bigger research group.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1) Homosexual women perceived their mothers to be overprotective more often than did heterosexual women.
- 2) Bisexual women perceived their mothers the protective and demanding more often than did heterosexual women.
- 3) The mothers of heterosexual women were perceived by their daughters to be characterised by the Autonomy Attitude more often than were the mothers of bisexual women.
- 4) The fathers of bisexual women were perceived to be inconsequential in relation to their daughters more often than the fathers of heterosexual or homosexual women.

REFERENCES

1. Pilecka B. Psychospołeczny kontekst homoseksualizmu. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Radamsa; 1999.
2. Brannon L. Psychologia rodzaju. Gdańsk: GWP; 2002.
3. Harwas-Napierała B. Rozwój tożsamości płciowej dzieci i młodzieży. *Prob. Rodz.* 1999; 2–3: 33–38.
4. West D.J. Homosexuality and lesbianism. *Brit. J. Psychiat.* 1983; 143: 221–226.
5. Boczkowski K. Homoseksualizm. Warszawa: PZWL; 1988.
6. Lew-Starowicz Z., Lew-Starowicz M. Homoseksualizm. Warszawa: PZWL; 1999.
7. Kinsey AC, Pomeroy WB, Martin CE, i Gebhard PH. Sexual behaviour in the human female. Philadelphia: W.B. Sanders; 1953.
8. Płopa M. Skala Postaw Rodzicielskich. *Psychol. Wychow.* 1987; 5: 552–566.
9. Kenyon FE. Studies in female homosexuality. Social and psychiatric aspects. *Brit. J. Psychiat.* 1968; 114: 1337–1350.
10. Siegelman M. Parental background of homosexual and heterosexual women. *Brit. J. Psychiat.* 1974; 124: 14–21.
11. Bene E. On the genesis of female homosexuality. *Brit. J. Psychiat.* 1965; 111: 815–821.
12. Bene E. On the genesis of male homosexuality: an attempt at clarifying the role of the parents. *Brit. J. Psychiat.* 1965; 111: 803–813.