



***Multiple Ideologies in The Media
Construction of Women in Politics: A Case
Study of Gender Parity Debate in Poland***

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Abstract

This paper problematizes the notion of the dominant ideology by analyzing multiple ideological positions related to female political representation in Poland in the 2009 Internet-mediated debate over the implementation of gender parity legislation. Instead of taking for granted the notion of a singular dominant ideology that legitimizes the interests of elites, the study verifies a claim that in late-modern societies public discourse is increasingly characterized by articulations of multiple, even conflicting ideologies. Some ideological positions become prominent by virtue of being discursively reproduced in rhetorically appealing ways. The study focuses on generic frames, terms of address, and rhetorical figures as salient textual features of the argumentation in the debate. On this basis, it is shown that such ideological infractions as reformatory feminism, idealism, collectivism, liberalism and progressivism are evidenced in the pro-parity discourse, while post-feminism, paternalism, matriarchalism, American individualism and conservatism are reproduced by anti-parity campaigners.

Keywords: ideology, political discourse, mediated debate, gender parity

1. Introduction

In Cultural and Media Studies the notion of ideology, especially when conceived of as a tool of hegemony, is instrumental to many types of critical research. In accordance with neo-Gramscian approaches, the so-called 'hegemonic ideology', understood as the universalization of elite interests as the interests of the whole society, is claimed to be subtly but pervasively reproduced in the society's public sphere, popular culture and mass media (Storey 1994). In discourse studies, particularly Critical Discourse Analysis, ideology has been theorized (van Dijk 1998), operationalized (Fairclough 1989; Wodak 1989; Chilton 2004), and analyzed from various perspectives and on diverse samples of textual material, usually involving a critique of the discursive practices that naturalize the unfair dominant representations. Despite longstanding doubts as to the precise meaning and scope of the 'dominant ideology' (Abercrombie, Hill and Hill 1980), the term generally refers to capitalist and patriarchal assumptions behind the 'proper' way of functioning of Western societies. Yet, in the postindustrial, decentralized, multicultural and mediatized contemporary democracies, the notion of the 'dominant ideology' seems to be losing its edge as an analytic tool, especially

when we move away from institutionalized political doctrines to the domain of specific social ideas – such as the issue of women’s participation in politics.

This paper aims to problematize the notion of the ‘dominant ideology’ by analyzing the multiple, complex and conflicting ideological positions instantiated in the Internet-mediated discourses that have emerged in the recent debate over reforming the Polish election ordinance. This citizen-initiated reform is not particularly radical and envisions equal quota of male and female candidates on the voting ballots for the Polish Parliament and other regulatory and oversight bodies (not necessarily resulting in the equal number of male and female delegates). Given one of the lowest percentages of women in politics (14-20% against European averages of 30-50%) on the one hand, and Poles’ deeply critical attitude towards the country’s political elites on the other, the gender parity project has generated ferment in the media (especially on talk radio and internet forums devoted to women’s affairs). Interestingly, the debate by no means reflects the usual ‘dominant patriarchal’ vs. ‘subordinate feminist’ opposition, but rather involves a range of ideological infractions traceable in the discourses constructing the notion of female involvement in politics. These multiple ideologies will be the ultimate interpretative focus of this CDA-informed study of salient linguistic patterns and rhetorical devices sampled from two oppositional Internet outlets devoted to the gender parity debate.

2. Redefining Ideology in Late Modernity

The term ‘ideology’ is associated with such academic disciplines as philosophy, political science and social studies, where it has long been surrounded by controversy. In addition, it has gained pejorative associations because it used to refer to political doctrines or systems of beliefs that were often perceived as morally wrong (e.g. fascism, communism or apartheid). In popular understanding, ideology is often conceived of as what ‘others’ have: ‘whether brutal and oppressive or merely selfish – [it is] an unthinking, rigid, irrational adherence to an over-determined system or policy [that] defies common sense’ (Decker 2004: 3). As a result, when the notion of ideology was first introduced to discourse studies, its meaning was contested and the precise aims of the proposed ‘ideologically oriented analyses of discourse’ were relatively vague (Hawkes 2003).

In order to revisit the multifaceted nature of the concept of ideology, it is useful to turn to Terry Eagleton’s classical book *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991), in which he proposes a range of perspectives for the understanding of ideology: from the most general to the most specific one. The broadest conception of ideology identifies it as a domain of culture and defines as ‘the general material processes of production of ideas, beliefs, and values in social life’ that are encapsulated by ‘the whole complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society’ (1991: 46). Although such definition is politically neutral and operates in the realm of sociological description, it has yet to be translated into a comprehensive apparatus of categories and methods that would be helpful to specify and analyze the abovementioned practices and processes. A slightly less general meaning of ideology refers to ‘ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and

experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class' (1991: 47). This definition, in turn, would necessitate delimiting the notion of a 'significant' social group and its distinguishing properties, as well as relating its symbolic practices to its socio-historical position. Yet another definition of ideology proposed by Eagleton draws on the relations and conflicts between social groups (or classes) and is concerned with the production of rhetorical effects for political purposes to prove and legitimate the interests of one social group in the face of competing interests. This perspective, with its emphasis on the pluralistic nature of society and with a focus on rhetorical aspects of ideological competition, seems most relevant to the purposes of the present work.

Yet, Eagleton maintains that, at an even more restricted level, ideology can mean the 'promotion and legitimation of particular interests' (1991: 48) as exercised *only* by the dominant social group. This formulation is further refined into another conception in which 'ideology signifies ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by means of distortion and dissimulation' (1991: 49). Finally, the author distinguishes one more meaning of ideology which emphasizes false or deceptive beliefs, but attributes them not to the clashing interests of various social groups, but to the material structure of the society as a whole. These definitions presuppose the existence of a 'dominant class' whose privileged material interests are being ideologically and institutionally justified. This claim is increasingly difficult to uphold in late-modern societies consisting of various 'interest groups' for which not only class but also race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, descent or religion may become ideologically constitutive. Indeed, contemporary politics of democratic societies seems to increasingly rely on the multiplicity of public spheres, thus constituting a pluralistic world 'where the recognition of difference is imperative' and where discursive practices involve 'voicing difference [...] and a search [...] for alliances across difference – for a voice that does not suppress difference in the name of essential identities' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 6). This illustrates the way in which the 'dominant ideology' seems to be gradually blurred and superseded by a polyphony of various ideological articulations.

As ideology is often defined in the context of the theory of hegemony, it is worth revisiting and problematizing this conception as well. In order to account for the culture-related mechanisms of legitimizing asymmetrical power relations, the notion of 'hegemony', developed by Antonio Gramsci, has been applied by cultural theorists and analysts. For Gramsci (1971), hegemony refers to all the cultural practices through which those in power exercise their 'leadership' in a society in which, despite the unequal and often exploitative conditions of existence, there is a high degree of consensus and stability. In this theory it is no longer of that importance that the elite tends to control the repressive state forces and own the means of production; what matters is the fact that it dominates the civil institutions which impose the elite's values, beliefs and representations – its ideology – on the remaining groups (Gramsci 1971: 106). In practice, hegemony involves various symbolic processes for constant winning of consent of non-elites to the system, often in the form of discursive practices that naturalize the elite ideology as common sense. According to Gramsci, social conflicts, should they arise, can be contained by 'negotiations and modifications', thus all resistant activities that challenge the

'dominant ideology' in capitalist societies tend to be restricted to the symbolic sphere of culture and do not usually lead to significant changes in their economic or political systems (1971: 108-110). However, in late-modern societies, public sphere(s) and, increasingly, popular culture contain more and more flexible arenas, which allow incorporating elements of consciousness and displaying discursive practices of 'the subordinated' (Storey 1994). That is why in the last decades the theory of hegemony has taken a 'linguistic turn', which inspired studies that pertain to ideological expression, negotiation or change as pursued by various communities of practice and alternative subcultures (Milner and Browitt 2002).

As shown above, the precise delineation of the 'dominant ideology' in late-modern pluralist societies is increasingly difficult. In addition, with postmodern theory's rejection of grand historical narratives, universal values, political totalities and the possibility of objective knowledge, all social fixities, including the 'dominant ideology' are likely to be treated with suspicion. The main criticism of this concept is that, due to the possibilities of articulation of multiple competing ideologies, late-modern societies do not possess a monolithic, institutionalized ideology any longer. For some it even means that 'late capitalism operates largely without ideology' with fragmented sets of ideas and diffuse value systems (Abercrombie, Hill and Hill 1980: 165). As the broadened and mediatized public sphere provides opportunities for articulation of competing beliefs and ideas, the notion of the 'dominant ideology' seems indeed problematic. As a result, with the rise of the media, particularly the Internet, as a reservoir of ideological alternatives, there are unprecedented possibilities of ideological 'resistance', or, at least, of redefining Western cultural hegemony.

And yet in many media studies, the notion of ideological dominance of the elite is often still taken for granted, while its late-modern mechanisms are never elucidated precisely. This is not to claim that hegemony no longer applies and that elite interests do not become universalized as the interests of the whole society. On the contrary, certain ideologies, e.g. neo-liberalism or globalization, are subtly but pervasively reproduced in popular culture and disseminated through the mass media, as demonstrated by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) for example. Indeed, certain ideologies may have been naturalized to the extent they became 'common sense' of the society. Some ideologies may well be dominant in the sense they are implicit, unacknowledged and applied automatically. In fact the more widespread and the more unreflectively used an ideological position is, the more likely it is that it represents (or rather conceals) some hegemonic interests. As a result, there is constant need for critical attention to discursive practices that may reproduce such ideologies in the media.

3. Discourse and the 'Production' of Ideologies

It is assumed in this paper that, for the sake of empirical analysis, ideologies should not be treated as pre-existing constructs, which are simply 'expressed' in discourse. Since some ideologies are naturalized and applied without critical awareness, it can be claimed that discourse, as evident linguistic and social practice, is constitutive of ideologies. It means that discourse

‘constructs’ the objects, identities and social relations it represents (cf. Fairclough 1989). As a result, linguistic devices and textual arrangements which are deployed to talk/write about social reality may well be ideologically patterned. For example, detailed linguistic analysis reveals that globalization (which in itself is congenial to rich countries and biased against poorer nations, and which is particularly favorable to multinational companies) tends to be represented in contemporary public discourse as a natural, inevitable and even positive process, which governments, workers and consumers have to accept (Cameron 2001: 123). This amounts to the idea that ideology research should be data-driven (bottom-up) rather than theory-driven (top-down).

In this study we reject the idea that the notion of a singular ‘dominant ideology’ that legitimizes the interests of one elite group should be taken for granted and as such used as a framework for analytic research. To claim so, one would first need to illustrate how such ‘dominant ideology’ is reproduced without major contradictions in public discourses. Instead, the approach taken here favors the idea that in late-modern societies, more often than not, there are multiple, often competing, ideologies which are being articulated in the public sphere. Some of them may become more prominent than others by being relentlessly repeated or by being presented in rhetorically appealing ways that make them appear as ‘common sense’. This approach also stresses the fact that ideologies are ‘produced’ rather than ‘expressed’ in discourse. For example, instead of claiming that there is an extant ideology called feminism and that it is represented in public discourse in certain ways, we first look at samples of mediated public texts about women and identify discursive patterns, rhetorical devices and salient language choices which contribute to the articulation and legitimization of a particular ideological position that could later be labeled, at the stage of interpretation and generalization, as feminism. Moreover, one text can contain discursive manifestations of a few ideological positions, which may cohere and complement each other, but which may also happen to compete with each other (cf. Fairclough’s (1989) notion of interdiscursivity). In brief, analytic attention should be paid not only to the set of themes, arguments or propositions ‘constructing’ women’s issues, but mainly to textual and linguistic arrangements that make certain ideological positions salient and persistent (cf. Weatherall 2002).

4. Polish Gender Parity Debate

The aim of this part is to identify patterns and combinations of linguistic/textual/rhetorical devices used strategically for the articulation of particular ideological positions with respect to the role of women in politics in Internet-mediated political discourse devoted to the debate over the gender parity legislative initiative in Poland. This citizen-initiated reform envisions equal quota of male and female candidates on the voting ballots for the Polish Parliament and some other regulatory and oversight bodies. The corpus of linguistic material subject to this qualitative analysis consists of articles, brochures or press releases publicized at the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010 by the main sponsor of the initiative, Kongres Kobiet (The Congress of Women), at their website www.stowarzyszeniekongreskobiet.pl

(approximately 2080 words) and a matching sample of online materials (posted by a less formal but still authoritative anti-parity group), which have been made available on the website called, perhaps slightly misleadingly, www.parytety.pl (approximately 1930 words). For the sake of clarity of the subsequent analysis, the following identification abbreviations will be used: KK – Kongres Kobiet (the Congress of Women) – to denote gender parity proponents, and AP – Antyparytety (anti-parity) – to denote gender parity opponents.

As stated above, ideologies are treated as emergent properties of discourse. It seems obvious that, although both samples will share orientation towards persuasion and will be saturated with rhetorical devices, they will differ radically in the articulated ideological positions. Thus, the KK sample is bound to involve ideologies favoring female engagement in politics to legitimize gender parity legislation, while AP will criticize such ideas and try to discredit the gender parity initiative drawing on contrary ideologies. The materials were originally published in Polish, but for the sake of this analysis they have been translated into English preserving salient textual and rhetorical choices. The study follows the typical CDA analytic procedure (Fairclough 1989). It starts with the description of the textual data (i.e. salient linguistic and rhetorical devices) in section 4.1, which is followed by the interpretation of the gender parity debate in terms of discursive practice (i.e. salient ideologies of women in politics), together with the explanation of its consequences for social practice in the context of the Polish public sphere in section 4.2.

4.1 Description

This part of the study is devoted to the description, as well as comparison, of salient linguistic and rhetorical devices identified in the abovementioned samples of texts involved in the gender parity debate. The analysis will entail three textual strategies. Firstly, the main generic frames will be examined, as these tend to structure the way readers interpret the following text. Then, the main ways of addressing the reader will be compared in order to illustrate how the texts ‘construct’ their implied/model readers both pragmatically and ideologically. Thirdly, a survey of pervasive rhetorical figures will be conducted, because of the persuasive potential of the texts in the debate.

4.1.1 Generic Frames

Both sides of the gender parity debate can be claimed to attempt to frame the reading of the posted materials by the way their texts are entitled and structured by genre. For example, KK’s home page announcement ‘Gender parity project ready for legislation’ harks back to the typical frame of a *press release* headline, which leads one to surmise that the announcement is more likely to be an objective report on the legislative project rather than a propagating text. Indeed, the style of the whole announcement closely resembles the style adopted in many journalistic reports that tend to focus on facts (i.e. who did what, when, where and how), to name and quote sources, and apparently to refrain from commentary. And yet, the only voices quoted or represented in the article are those of the representatives of KK and all the facts selected for the report are characteristically favorable to the gender parity initiative, e.g.: ‘The gender parity project has met with interest on the

part of both politicians and leaders of the Church. It has unwavering support of Polish President Lech Kaczyński and the leader of SLD party Grzegorz Napieralski' (para. 6). To reinforce the impression of credibility of this 'report', KK is consistently referred to in the third person, e.g.: 'KK predicts...', 'KK has initiated...', or 'KK tries to convince...'. The generic frame of the press release works here to diminish the propagandistic flair of the announcement and to increase the perception of objectivity and integrity in the presentation of the pro-parity arguments.

Another generic frame used by KK is that of an *instruction brochure* or *manual*, as for example in the text entitled 'Why do we need gender parity and how to defend it?' (*NB* the presupposition embedded in the title). Apart from explaining the idea behind KK's gender parity initiative, this text educates prospective agitators how to respond to common criticisms directed against it. The text is built around a dialogic interchange (i.e. 'they say... vs. we say...') displayed in different type fonts and separated by empty lines. This is what classical rhetoric recognizes as a stage in argumentative exposition called *refutatio*: the refutation of prospective opponents' counter-arguments. The refutations tend to be concise and logically constructed, but not devoid of evaluations, e.g.: 'They tell you: *Why do women need power, they are better than men anyway?* This sentimental formula is a sign of hypocrisy, which uses an insincere compliment to mask contempt for and neglect of women' (emphasis in original, para. 9).

In yet another generic frame, KK's text 'What's it like in other countries?', despite its relatively informally phrased title, stylistically approximates the conventions of an *academic report*. Here, pieces of specific information, such as precise dates, figures, numbers and statistics pertaining to female representation in politics in some carefully selected European countries are included to illustrate the advantages of gender parity. With its attention to detail, relatively formal register and instances of legal jargon (e.g.: 'municipal elections', 'public sector', 'quota regulations'), the text appears to be simply describing the current political *status quo* in Europe, rather than to be promoting a political initiative. In fact, the application of stylistic features characteristic of scientific discourse in promotional materials has been an effective and commonly used rhetorical strategy.

By contrast to KK, AP's texts explicitly indicate which genres they conform to rhetorically (and ideologically). For example, AP's main page features the text entitled 'Anti-parity decalogue', which, not surprisingly, is a list of ten elaborated points – exhortations against the gender parity initiative. This generic frame, which clearly alludes to the *Ten Biblical Commandments*, carries the overtones of moral authority typical of religious discourse and appropriates some elements of its style to the political context, e.g.: 'Say NO when someone, in the name of egalitarianism, tries to make the gender difference the main principle of the social system' (para. 7). The characteristic features of preaching style, such as eloquent parables, metaphor-saturated phraseology and emphatic syntax reinforce the potential impression of imminence, validity and righteousness of AP's arguments against the gender parity initiative.

In the *open letter* entitled 'We do not want gender parity', AP publicizes the views of a group of female academics, journalists and entrepreneurs who are

strongly against the parity legislation (*NB* a fairly long list of names, titles and professions/positions of the underwriters of the letter has been excluded from the corpus). The letter's authors rally against the gender parity initiative by resorting to constitutional, historical and cultural arguments, statistical data, as well as personal opinions and sheer speculations to prove how this project will most likely worsen the situation of Polish women rather than improve it, e.g.: 'Instead of spending budget money on yet another institution researching and assessing the situation of women, let us pressure the government for more real pro-family solutions' (para. 17). They also criticize KK for claiming to speak on behalf of all Polish women, e.g.: 'We suggest that the Congress of Women should take into consideration the opinions of women who think differently and it should not try to cure or re-educate them (that is, us)' (para. 22). On the whole, this text's genre-derived persuasive effect is predicated on the appeal to the authority of the undersigned elite women and their apparent thoughtful consideration of pros and (most of all) cons of the project.

In conclusion, it can be observed that the two samples employ a range of different generic frames, from KK's press release, instruction brochure and academic report to AP's 'decatalogue' and open letter. These frames will, in turn, determine the salient linguistic properties of the studied texts: from KK's rhetoric of apparent objectivity, scientific evidentiality or educational instructiveness (which is in fact agitation), to AP's religion-derived moralizing and authority-based persuasion.

4.1.2 Addressing the Reader

All texts, and particularly persuasive ones, bear linguistic markers that project the image of the intended/model reader. The way a text constructs its target audience can be traced at all levels of textual composition, from minute lexical choices to the overall stylistic conventions of the text. This, according to Halliday (1985), is how particular texts naturally instantiate the ever-present *interpersonal* metafunction inherent in verbal communication, but also how their authors can increase the persuasive potential of their texts by aligning their means of expression with the needs and expectations of the prospective recipients (which is an important aspect of political discourse). In the research material of the present study, two texts could be classified as primarily *subject-oriented* (i.e. KK's 'Gender parity project ready for legislation' and 'What's it like in other countries?'), as their aim is to present the issue of gender parity as a pertinent political project, one text (AP's 'We do not want gender parity') can be claimed to be primarily *sender-oriented*, since it is devoted to the views of a group of elite female professionals who represent the anti-parity position, and two texts (KK's 'Why do we need gender parity and how to defend it?' and AP's 'Anti-parity decatalogue') can be categorized as specifically *reader-oriented*, and thus they will be of special interests to us as far as linguistic devices of addressing the reader are concerned.

In the last two abovementioned texts, the intended reader is primarily constructed linguistically as a woman. This is evident in the use of inflectional verbal endings indicative of feminine gender, according to the grammatical system of the Polish language, as well as in the use of predominantly feminine nouns and pronouns (e.g.: 'A statistical Pole has 1.3 children. Even if *she* chooses to devote a few years to being a *mother* – and that's *her* decision – *she*

still has a few decades left for other activities'. KK, para. 11, emphasis mine). However, what is even more striking in these two texts is the fact that the (female) reader is very often addressed directly with second person singular pronoun 'you' (which is relatively rare in standard Polish political discourse, which opts for third person address forms for the sake of politeness). For example, 'you' is constitutive of KK's line of refutation: 'They tell *you*: Gender parity is an artificial measure, which will not function well. This is not true: quotas have been functioning in politics for a long time'. (para. 7, emphasis mine), or used in the appellative function by AP: '*You* can object when someone forces *you* to forget about the cultural heritage of *your* nation in the name of modernity'. (para. 8, emphasis mine). Also, the campaigners frequently resort to the unmitigated imperatives as the way of argumentative exposition, e.g.: 'Say NO to the idea that only women can represent women' (AP, para. 5); 'Do NOT allow for easy imitation of other countries' solutions' (AP, para. 8); 'Consider other possibilities' (AP, para. 9); 'Do NOT let others tell you that you are breaking female solidarity' (AP, para. 10, all emphases in original). It can be claimed that such forms of address increase the degree of personalization in a communicative encounter. This helps position each prospective reader as an active and politically involved person, who is made personally responsible for promoting/defeating the parity initiative. Such recurring direct appeal to the readers' individual motivations and actions may result in entrenching their feelings of affiliation with a particular political position.

Reader-oriented argumentation in both the texts that propagate and the ones that aim to disqualify the parity initiative is enhanced by frequent references to the same values and ideals. These values are often expressed via abstract nouns that encapsulate positive qualities and are strongly postulated to be prioritized in Polish political and social life. These are mainly 'justice', 'competence', 'equality', or 'solidarity'. Notwithstanding this apparent discursive similarity, it becomes evident, particularly in such a comparative analysis as ours, that KK and AP implicitly conceptualize these qualities in different ways. For example, while the former understand 'social justice' as equal political representation of both sexes, the latter see it as anyone's unrestricted opportunity to engage in politics, no matter which sex they are. Moreover, it can be noted that some values invoked in AP texts, particularly in its 'decatalogue', border on the semantic field of ethics rather than politics. Nevertheless, the reader, when confronted with such ambiguous 'glittering generalities' (words denoting culturally cherished ideals), is likely to react positively to the value-laden argumentation, without considering if he/she accepts the particular definition presupposed by the propagandists. All in all, who would not agree that 'equality' or 'justice' are worth fighting for?

As regards other linguistic choices that are used to engage the reader both cognitively and emotionally, it is worth mentioning that in all studied texts the choice of register, and particularly lexis, is typical of fairly cultivated argumentation. Despite being emotional and evaluative at times, the texts do not stretch the boundaries of political correctness and are not in any way vulgar or extremist. Arguably, this strategy is aimed at not alienating the undecided readers who might happen to be visiting the websites, as well as not offending the general male audience with overt accusations of sexism or discrimination that women in Poland have been faced with. All these linguistic

devices, together with a penchant for positively valued, yet ambiguous lexical items, repetitive argumentative schemata, and clearly laid-out (e.g. dialogic) exposition are designed to appeal to a potentially wide readership and to position the receivers as prospective (and active) sympathizers of whichever political stance.

4.1.3 Rhetorical Figures

As is the case with many persuasive texts in mass-mediated political discourse, the material in both samples of the present study exemplifies a high degree of saturation with various rhetorical figures, of which only the most pervasive will be presented below.

First of all, there are numerous examples of *repetition* of various lexical and syntactic elements. The constant recurrence of such keywords as ‘parity’, ‘discrimination’, or ‘equality’ helps focus readers’ attention on specific ideas in these mostly lengthy texts and allows for the so-called step-by-step argumentation, which has been proved to be most effective in the case of undecided or uninterested voters (cf. Tokarz 2007: 88). This is because in the Internet-mediated communication the main aim is to reach various recipients and not to ‘preach to the converted’. Also, as illustrated above, repetition is strategically applied at the level of text composition (cf. KK’s refutation of counter-arguments, AP’s ‘decatalogue’), as well as at the level of individual sentences, e.g.: KK: ‘The more women in politics, the less rivalry, ambition and quarrel’ (para. 8); AP: ‘You are entitled to objections; you are entitled to clear promotion criteria...’ (para. 2). In such cases, the ensuing syntactic parallelisms intensify the persuasive effect: they neatly encapsulate the key arguments and they are likely to be better remembered.

Another classic rhetorical device is that of *antithesis* – also a common propagandistic trick to simplify issues and represent ideological debates in terms of ‘either... or...’ alternatives. For example, in AP’s ‘decatalogue’ the gender parity initiative is portrayed as a triumph of ‘quantity’ over ‘quality’, ‘parity’ over ‘competence’, ‘collectivity’ over ‘individuality’, and ‘ideology’ over ‘reality’ (para. 1-3). Meanwhile, KK’s argumentation in ‘Why do we need gender parity and how to defend it?’ is often based by juxtaposing the disadvantages of the male-dominated political government with one in which women would play a more active role (e.g.: ‘[Were there more women in the Parliament] money would not go to Euro 2012, but to social programs’. para. 3; ‘The current system discriminates women by denying equality. Quotas, by contrast, are an effective tool of introducing equality’. para. 4; ‘Women always used to be the objects of political decision-making, now they should be the subjects’. para. 12).

Enumerations tend to reinforce the persuasive effect by creating the impression of the existence of magnitude of examples that testify to the validity of an argument. KK’s article ‘What’s it like in other countries?’ employs this device to list the countries that have already introduced some legal form of facilitating women’s access to politics. Lists also appear in individual paragraphs and sentences, e.g.: AP: ‘One’s career must not depend on one’s sex, age, looks, connections, family relations or affluence. What counts is only skills, education, experience and talent’. (para. 2). Indeed, the

fact that AP's 'decatalogue' reads so elaborated is mainly due to the authors' penchant for frequent listings.

To colour their argumentation the authors do not shy away from asking *rhetorical questions*. For example, AP in 'We do not want gender parity' questions the initiative in the following way: 'Is parity based on the assumption that there are equal numbers of men and women everywhere? Parity means that in some places women will have to be included and in some other places they will have to be excluded without concern for their competence, experience and legacy. What for?' (para. 5). Eloquence tends to be added to argumentative exposition by applying *word puns*, *proverbs*, *punch lines*, *slogans* and *exclamatory clauses*, all of which can be located in the research material. Such devices imbue the argumentation with wit and humor and ensure both emotional and cognitive engagement of the reader. Rhetorically, both KK's and AP's texts display a high density of such figures, still it is AP authors that rely on them more heavily, as their texts are mainly oriented towards discrediting the opponents by arising doubt and anxiety around the gender parity initiative. KK, after all, must also inform the readers about the details of the initiative and present the main reasons why it should be embraced.

4.2 Interpretation and Explanation

The above analysis, particularly the quotations used for exemplification, reveal that treating the Polish gender parity debate as an ideological clash between feminist (KK) and patriarchal (AP) discourse would be a gross oversimplification. Despite the fact that the studied samples are relatively small, there is a range of ideological positions reproduced in the two discourses. These would sometimes, but not always, be opposing political ideologies (e.g. KK's progressivism vs. AP's conservatism, KK's collectivism vs. AP's individualism). In fact, a range of ideological infractions seems to be employed strategically in these lines of argumentation to enhance the pro- or anti-parity stance (e.g. professionalism, liberalism or paternalism).

4.2.1 Ideologies in Pro-parity Discourse

The Congress of Women (KK) can be said to be advancing a broad *feminist* agenda, as it aims to bring about social change by introducing the gender parity principle to various political institutions in Poland. Yet, it is not a radical but reformist type of feminism, which does not aim to expose stark instances of discrimination and sexism in the Polish social context (e.g. unequal pay, higher unemployment, worse retirement options, poorer career opportunities, a 'glass ceiling' in management and administration, a shortage of child daycare facilities that forces mothers into domesticity). The reformatory drive is fairly evident in the linguistic choice of rather non-alienating terms of address and politically correct formulation of arguments.

According to KK, and in tune with the postulates of *feminist cultural politics*, the public sphere should be maximally inclusive of human diversity and heterogeneity of social structures, although the term 'structure' perhaps does not reflect the assumed flexibility of experiences and interests of individual subjects and lower-level communities. Feminist cultural politics emphasizes the liberatory potential of including the 'female experience' into political

projects. According to KK, women politicians are less likely to participate in adversarial political activities promoted by men; instead their politics is likely to be predominantly community-centered, personalized and quotidian. In this vein, the above analysis of thematic and rhetorical aspects of KK's discourse confirms the orientation towards the community and its everyday problems, with personalized perspective and commonsensical argumentation.

Yet at times, KK's line of argumentation also relies on abstract information and generalizations concerning women within the public sphere rather than the average 'woman-in-the-street'. In fact, KK claims that general improvement in women's welfare can be instigated by ensuring larger female representations in governing bodies. This position is fairly *idealistic*, as there is no guarantee that having more women in Polish politics will mean ending all discriminatory practices in Poland. Arguably, by invoking certain cherished values, citing optimistic statistical data, or cleverly refuting counterarguments out of hand, the sponsors of the gender parity project hope to generate enthusiasm for their initiative in the larger public.

In a similar manner, the KK campaigners adhere to an ideology of *collectivism*, according to which women should act in solidarity and agreement, which is particularly evident in the ways of constructing the intended reader and in the way of appealing to common values, which 'everyone' should identify with. A frequent use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' presupposes a common identity that trumps individual differences. It is a device that not only helps build the perception of KK's organized leadership but also projects the sense of commonality of purpose in the society at large. Likewise, the choice of certain 'glittering generalities' in the exposition, such as 'equality for all' or 'social justice', makes KK's line of argumentation hard to question.

In their choice of arguments KK also invoke the ideals of *Western European liberalism*, according to which no social group should be disadvantaged and all citizens' rights should be recognized by the state. The assumption here is that social transformation, as well as changes in the Polish mentality with regard to traditional perceptions of women's roles, can be imposed from above, by legal solutions and/or government incentives. The fact that KK's argumentation is frequently underpinned by comparisons with and references to Western European countries in which the project of female empowerment is further advanced is characteristic of this ideological position.

By implying that social change is natural and emancipation cannot be stopped, KK naturalize the ideology of *progressivism* with respect to women's growing political ambitions. They construct a typical Polish woman as a future-oriented professional who is not afraid to face new challenges if only she were allowed into political institutions. This is necessarily a one-sided view of Polish women, although various forms of social activism have been quite popular in Poland. In addition, female emancipation is often constructed in fairly objective terms – as an inevitable fact of social life – mainly with KK's choice of objectifying generic frames of press release, instruction brochure or academic report, as well as with its data-driven argumentation. The rhetorical devices used for such exposition make the gender parity initiative seem a potentially unproblematic and amoral issue – the equal number of men and women in politics seems like a natural consequence of civilizational

advancement and does not need to be evaluated for its ethical implications. By extension, those who disagree with such ideological 'logic' of KK discourse can be projected as exponents of either ignorance, or misogyny, or reactionary nostalgia.

4.2.2 Ideologies in Anti-parity Discourse

Anti-parity (AP) Internet-based campaign is a direct response to KK's gender parity project and is aimed at discrediting it. Hence, it is interesting to explore the multiple ideologies that are called upon in AP's argumentation against the new legislation. Surprisingly enough, AP discourse can also be said to draw argumentation from *feminist* theory. Indeed some feminists claim that protective laws, such as affirmative action and gender parity, contribute to the naturalization of discourses of 'women as victims', projecting them as historically disadvantaged and in need of protection.

By the same token, AP campaigners seem to project adherence to an ideology that could be called *post-feminist*. Post-feminism is a set of beliefs characteristic of postindustrial societies in which gender equality is taken for granted because of the seemingly empowered status of women in popular culture. Post-feminists have replaced a struggle for women's rights with a genderless concern for human rights and seem to have disposed of the notions of ideology or hegemony as applicable categories in the description of contemporary gender relations. For example, they opt for the terms 'parent' and 'parents', instead of 'mother' and 'father' in reference to child-care to falsely imply that children's upbringing in Poland is an equally shared effort taken by both parents, while in fact the majority of the household duties still fall on women.

Importantly, AP's position cannot be said to endorse patriarchy in any way, as this would mean defending a system in which women are condemned to certain underprivileged social roles. Nevertheless, there are some intimations of *paternalism* in AP's discourse. This is an ideology which legitimizes a state in which women are offered security and protection by men in exchange for certain domestic services. Paternalism is also used to instill a sense of pride of being a wife and a mother, which is still a part of traditional upbringing of girls in Poland. AP seem to refer to it by claiming that being a child bearer (and thus a housekeeper) is a woman's primary role and a 'choice' she should be proud of making, while the (male-dominated) government's task is to introduce measures to make it easier for her. AP's negative evaluation of the current government's family policy indicates that this 'ideal' state has not yet been achieved. In yet another historical vein, AP seems to hark back to the Polish *matriarchal* tradition, with its related to an influential Mother-Pole stereotype. In this ideology it is women who are obliged to relinquish their personal aspirations and forego their individual talents in order to devote their whole efforts to caring for children and, particularly, instilling in them the love and respect for the family, the country and the religion. This is confirmed mainly in AP's 'decatalogue', which takes advantage of traditional format, genre and style to foreground the feelings of pride and patriotism.

In contrast to KK's collectivism and liberalism, AP seems to favor individualism. The AP campaigners stress and repeat that it is individual

competence, not the parity rule, which should decide who takes up important political positions. In praising self-reliance, hard work and perseverance in achieving elite status, AP's ideological discourse reproduces *American individualism* with its central notion of a self-made woman. It also ridicules KK's 'ill-conceived' notion of social justice and their drive to remedy the discrimination of women by making it compulsory for women to participate in activities they would never choose to do themselves. By saturating their argumentation with antitheses and paradoxes, AP is intent on exposing the harm the gender parity project would do in undermining the position of those women who have struggled to achieve the high status they enjoy now. In this, AP's argumentation draws from *Thatcherist feminism*, which obliterates the notion of gender disadvantage by claiming that 'if an individual were good enough, he or she would necessarily succeed' (Lewis 2002: 205).

By trying to discredit the gender parity legislation, as well as KK's claim to represent the interests of underprivileged Polish women, AP seems to join in with *conservatives* and traditionalists. In addition, they employ the rhetoric characteristic of religious discourse and frequently refer to traditional values and moral guidelines, which, as they claim, should always be considered when introducing any radical social reform in Poland. As already mentioned, in contrast to KK's cosmopolitan progressivism, AP strongly relies on *nationalist* sentiments. According to AP, in the Polish tradition there is no need for female professional involvement in 'dirty' politics. It blames KK for breaking this tradition and 'forcing' women into accepting a duty they do not desire and a profession they feel awkward at or even disgusted by. AP also vilifies its ideological opponents for not recognizing the local ideological centers: the household, the family, the workplace as the first contexts in which women's welfare should be ensured. The main criticism is that by focusing on installing more elite women in governing bodies, KK will exhaust the Polish society's interest in bringing real change to the situation of average women. AP warns that if gender parity is achieved, the society will not tolerate other initiatives aimed at eradicating discrimination. This type of speculative anxiety-mongering is one of AP's main discursive strategies to discredit the parity initiative.

4.3 Gender Parity Legislation

As is the case with any citizen-sponsored initiative in Poland, the promoters of the gender parity legislative proposal were required to collect at least 100 000 signatures to submit it to the Polish Parliament for consideration. They managed to collect over 150 000 by 21 December 2009, but the project was tabled for several months, due to rather conservative-oriented presidential campaign in May and June 2010 and upcoming local and parliamentary elections. As the public debate continued and the arguments of both proponents and opponents of gender parity were considered valid, in November 2010 the parity project was amended by the Polish Parliament to a 35% quota system, which guarantees women (and men) at least 35% of places on the ballots. The newly elected President, Bronisław Komorowski, signed the bill on 31 January 2011, but some leaders of women's associations, including the representatives of the Congress of Women (KK) expressed their intention to campaign for ensuring equal representation in the future.

5. Conclusion

It is obvious that being female does not have to lead to shared identity or to having one dominant ideology with respect to women's welfare, their social roles, or the degree of their participation in political life. The above analysis – the description of linguistic, textual and rhetorical devices in online debate about gender parity which informed the interpretation and explanation of its reproduced ideologies – has shown the mustering of a variety of ideological positions constructing the issue of women politicians. Despite relatively restricted samples of the analytic material, several ideological infractions could be identified. Reformatory feminism with its cultural politics, as well as idealism, collectivism, liberalism and progressivism are evidenced in the pro-parity discourse (KK), while post-feminism, paternalism, matriarchalism, American individualism and conservatism/nationalism 'emerge' from anti-parity (AP) texts. Needless to say, a more extensive analysis might reveal still more ideologies employed in the discourses involved in the Polish gender-parity debate.

What is also striking, despite their rhetorical and ideological differences, both pro- and anti-parity discourses have been demonstrated to strive for the naturalization of their positions with the way they linguistically construct their ideologies as common sense. They also either explicitly or implicitly aim to discredit the ideological 'logics' of the opposition's discourse. Yet, it would be inappropriate to claim that in this debate there are just two text-constructed ideological 'opposites', e.g. the dominant patriarchal tradition and a challenging feminist position. We have hoped to problematize the notion of the 'dominant ideology' in the context of late-modern public debates and show how a multiplicity of ideologies can be seen interacting in a given political discourse, especially if it is produced for persuasive purposes. Finally, we aimed to illustrate that ideology is not a static, pre-constructed concept, but a discursive process of constructing the model reader, of developing a coherent and convincing narrative, of articulating a political position that would be rhetorically salient in the midst of polyphony of other ideological voices. In this respect, the classic neo-Gramscian notion of 'dominant ideology' surfacing in hegemonic culture seems of restricted applicability in late-modern public sphere, which is marked for its ideological plurality and Internet-mediated accessibility.

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