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ABSTRACT: Social work in Poland and in the United States shares the values of human dignity and self-determination, but there are often value conflicts in terms of how various groups experience social roles and social expectations. This paper explores the use of multiple lenses to understand the past and current conditions for LGBT+ people in Poland. An international, university-level collaboration uses a framework of "invisible groups" to highlight the needs of those who are on the margins of society and whose human and individual rights are suppressed. The article reviews the results of a recently published on-line survey of LGBT+ populations and their views of their experiences in Polish society to illustrate their "invisibility" and the need for advocacy from the international social work community.
KEYWORDS: gender, sexual minorities, human rights, collaboration, culture

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Social work, in Poland and in the United States, shares the values of human dignity and self-determination, but there are often value conflicts in terms of how ideas about social roles and social expectations are expressed in both countries. This paper explores the use of an international social work lens to examine social work values related to the ideas of human rights and gender issues in Polish culture as a teaching tool as part of an international social work experience between Poland and the United

States.

Since 2012, a university exchange program has provided the platform for cooperation between social work students and faculty from Poland and from the United States to explore the ways society recognizes and provides for marginalized groups and to examine similarities and differences in the cultural, religious, and societal norms that guide policies and practices for re-integration as well as restorative services. The course provides opportunities for discussion and analysis of the policies and practices addressing social justice and human dignity. Titled *Invisible Groups in a New Poland*, the course focuses on the fact that some populations are invisible to others because they do not participate fully in the social, economic, and/or civic life of the society (Whitzman, 2010; Romaniuk, 2019). One of the goals of the course is to explain the "invisibility" of a particular group and then to discuss ways to create "visibility" and change. The course provides two full day didactic sessions for students in the US and a full week of classes, field experiences, cultural events and presentations. The week-long immersion experience is housed at the Polish university within a mid-sized city in western Poland. American and Polish social work students learn about the dimensions and characteristics of social problems such as homelessness, physical and mental disabilities, and substance abuse in their home countries prior to the experience in Poland. In Poland, the class meets with Polish faculty, social work students, community practitioners and civic leaders to discuss similarities and differences in how invisible groups are defined and addressed as well as to compare national, regional and local policies across the two countries. Students visit a variety of social agencies and governmental entities to talk directly with community leaders. The course has established strong collaborative ties between faculty leaders, as evidenced by the use of video lectures and ZOOM course meetings in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled the travel study experience two days before departing to Poland. The international collaborative process has resulted in several visiting faculty appointments for Polish faculty at the US university and for annual lectures and invited lectures for the US faculty at Polish professional conferences and workshops as well as a variety of collaborative scholarship products (Kotlarska-Michalska et al. 2019; Vincent et al. 2020). Researchers from different groups studying the effects of hegemonic traditions (Romaniuk et al. 2021), social movements (Baranowski, 2013), and human rights in Poland (McMahon & Niparko, 2022) worked together to develop a common perspective on understanding recent changes in Polish society (Baranowski, 2023).

While the initial offerings of the course used the examples of homelessness, mental/physical disabilities and substance use disorders, our experiences and discussions with students made it clear that we should include gender issues into the course. Poland is experiencing rapid social change in terms of women's rights and sexual minorities; at the same time, the political and social divides over abortion and LGBTQ+ rights are deepening in the United States. In addition to the lenses of international social work and culture we added a gender/sexual minority lens to our work in international social work education. We illustrate the ways the topic of the "invisibility" of sexual minority groups in Poland has been approached over the past several years. Through these lenses, we viewed the experiences of LGBT+ populations in Poland and

the values and ethical principles of human dignity and self-determination.

DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONAL LENS FOR SOCIAL WORK

One of the first tasks was to develop a common base of core values and professional ethics. The National Association of Social Workers defines the profession and offers a set of core values and ethical principles (National Association of Social Workers, 2021). We used the International Federation of Social Workers' Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principals to define the profession of social work and to set forth guiding values (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). In our development of a shared international lens, we adopt the IFSW's definition of global social work and the ethical principles embedded in this definition:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.

While the scope of social interventions and social work practice is recognized by both Polish and American social workers, there are differences in social work roles between the two countries. There are many similarities between Polish and US social work, but the presence of the discipline of social pedagogy in Poland requires discussion and clarification, as explained in the paper by Odrowąż-Coates and Szostakowska (2021). In the US, direct practice roles are common among social work practitioners, while in Poland, the direct practice roles are often the work of psychologists. Macro practice is the more common scope of practice among Polish social workers; however, both American and Polish social workers are familiar with advocacy and policy practice.

DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONAL LENS FOR CULTURE AND GENDER EXPRESSIONS

Actions on behalf of other persons always are conditioned by social and cultural expectations. This is true for individual behaviors as well as for institutionalized social work. Socio-cultural context defines what is acceptable and what kind of actions are not welcome by the community. After establishing the lens for international social work, we develop the lens for culture and gender expressions, drawing on the theory of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2003).

In his theory of cultural dimensions, Geert Hofstede described six of them: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, longtime orientation and indulgence. Some of those dimensions seem to play an important role in the context of this text; therefore, it is worth a closer look at masculinity, individualism, and dis-

tance to power. As masculine, Hofstede describes countries in which human actions are mainly motivated by "competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner / best in field—a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organizational life". To the contrary, a low score (feminine) reflects other values most important in a given culture: caring for others and quality of life based on individual choices of people, who decide themselves what they want to do in life in order to be happy, rather than successful. Those two elements, of course, may correspond with each other but in feminine countries, the emphasize is on doing what one likes to do. Feminine countries have a much higher level of social acceptance for undertaking various social roles regardless of a persons' gender. In masculine cultures such acceptance is low; in these communities, individuals are expected to undertake roles traditionally connected with gender, and there is no flexibility in the ranges of choices. Feminine countries are much more liberal in this respect and citizens there are expected to follow their own ways to happiness; these countries are not so much linked with gender and individuals are much more likely to determine and use their own competencies and preferences. Masculine societies are much more restrictive, even oppressive. They limit choices and self-expression using strong social control. They do not accept breaking social rules even if they are informal. Cultural differences in this respect sometimes are very significant.

The graph in Figure 1. illustrates the differences and similarities in cultural dimensions between Poland and United States:
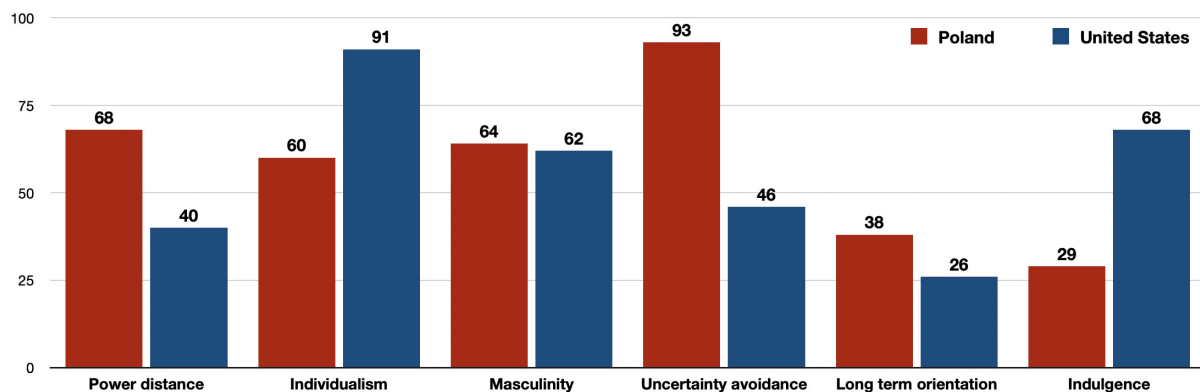

Figure 1. Comparison of Poland and the USA according to the 6 dimensions

Source: Based on https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/

Poland scores 64 on the masculinity dimension and the United States 62, so both countries are defined as masculine. However, there is another dimension which broadens the context. This second dimension is individualism. And here the scores for both countries are significantly different and they define how individuals behave in both cultures. Polish individualism is much weaker than American, and, according to Hofstede, one may notice a specific contradiction in Polish culture "although highly Individualist, the Polish need a hierarchy. This combination (high score on Power Distance and high score on Individualism) creates a specific 'tension' in this culture, which makes the relationship so delicate but intense and fruitful once you manage it."

(*https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/*) In the United States scores are different; there is a low score on Power Distance (40) in combination with one of the most Individualist (91) cultures in the world. This combination is characterized by undertaking individual choices, rather than hidden forms of social control and a high level of liberty and acceptance for individual choices, in spite of definitions arising from gender.

In the context of cultural differences presented above, it seems obvious that both Poland and the United States differ in approaches to the social roles chosen also by non-heteronormative persons. In Poland it is much more difficult for non-heteronormative persons to participate in public life and in public spheres according to their own choices (Chowaniec et al. 2021; Lis, 2008). Even the level of self-expression and lifestyle preferences are much more restrictive in Poland than in the United States. Non-heteronormative persons who wish to act as social workers providing help meet obstacles to overcome, not only from an institutional perspective, but also from the perspective of clients, who are used to performance traditionally prescribed to gender. There is also a big challenge for persons who are non-heteronormative and who are clients of social work in Poland. Their needs, preferences, and limitations are not typically recognized by systemic help provided by institutional social work. In both cases non-heteronormative persons form types of "invisible groups" which require increased public discussion and advocacy.

DEVELOPING A HISTORICAL LENS ON GENDER/SEXUAL MINORITIES IN POLAND

Given the sweeping changes in government and the economic systems in Poland since the 1989 transformation, both Polish and American students require a historical lens through which to view current issues of "invisibility" for gender/sexual minority populations in Poland. In Poland, a "normative" stance does not exist to describe the psychological, social, and political situation of sexual minorities. During the communist period, for many different reasons, there were no official minorities in Poland. All members of national or ethnic minorities were constrained in their cultural expression due to the atrocities of the Second World War and the postwar migrations. There were resentments and a lack of trust among many cultural groups in Poland toward the state and toward other groups. The official propaganda describing Poles as equals and living happily with their Soviet friends constrained any discussions that could resolve the tension among people of different groups. The communist government manipulated and exploited those tensions when convenient, for example, blaming West Germany (i.e. Germans) for political isolation or the Jews, in 1968, for political and economic calamity (Łodziński, 2012).

Any social group distinguished by particular national or ethnic characteristics or because of different beliefs or norms was considered as suspicious or unfriendly to the ruling communist party. Obviously, the most powerful entity with teachings not congruent with the governing party was the Roman Catholic Church. Communist leaders never ended their fight against Church influence on Polish society. However,

surprisingly, communist ideals, to the extent they can be identified, were not far from Catholic teachings. For example, communists valued family and they did not approve of divorce among their dignitaries. Although women were encouraged to find employment, traditional gender roles remained. There were expectations that some jobs were "more masculine", while others were more appropriate for women. For example, men could be managers and engineers whereas women were encouraged to be teachers and nurses.

Everything different from the Communist value system was considered untrustworthy or even dangerous. There was always the fear that Poles might adopt Western trends, such as "big beat" and hippie culture; these were signs of decadence and social pathology. Among examples of social pathology, official propaganda listed unemployment, drug abuse, prostitution, and sexual deviations. There was no official information about homosexuality as anything other than a social deviation. There was no place in the social sphere for LGBT+ people. Homosexuals were discriminated against, as in the most famous action known as "Operation Hyacinth" in the 1980s, when many people were arrested in an effort to create criminal records for all gays in Poland (Chetaille, 2011; Kliszczyński, 2019/2020).

To understand the situation of LGBT+ people in Poland today, it is important to recognize the environment in which present politicians learned their worldview. Until 1989 Poland was a hegemonic state that used the power of law against all people living in opposition to the way of life dictated by Communist teachings. And although the Catholic Church was in opposition to the Communists, their social and cultural teachings were not much different: neither God nor the Communists liked homosexuals.

During their famous "Round Table" negotiations in 1989, the Communists gave away their power to their "known" enemies, the Catholic Church. Although the new government was elected in a quasi-democratic election, it was the Church that made the transition possible. Since that time, each new Polish government defers to the Church. These debt payments can be of different types, taking the form of new controls on a woman's right to an abortion, offers of land or money or other concessions, such as measures to implement governmental and/or Church control of sexual education or discrimination of sexual minorities (Szelewa, 2016).

The situation of LGBT+ people improved when Poland joined the European Union in 2004. This was the consequence of the agreement to follow the legal system and norms common to all EU members. However, this improvement did not last long, as very quickly there was a backlash from elected and Church officials. Many outward manifestations of the existence of the LGBT+ population in the public sphere were attacked and condemned (Majka-Rostek, 2011; Ayoub & Chetaile, 2020). At the end of the 2010's, a Catholic bishop deemed LGBT+ people "a rainbow plague" worse than Communism. Using the vague and dehumanizing term of "LGBT ideology", Church leaders and political leaders on the right participated in a campaign to convince municipal officials to declare their townships and cities zones "free of LGBT ideology" (Chowaniec et al., 2021).

DEVELOPING A GENDER LENS FOR GENDER/ MINORITIES IN POLAND TODAY

The recent history of "gender ideology" and the LGBT+ struggles for equal rights in Poland has been well documented (Graff, 2014; Kochanowski, 2014; Konopka et al., 2020). Most of these articles were published before COVID-19 started. However, there has been recent interest in the existence of "LGBT-free zones" in Poland and the role of local and international activism in denouncing the actions of Polish officials (Godzisz & Mole, 2023; Ploszka, 2023; McMahon & Niparko, 2022). In the present paper we have illustrated our own social work experiences concerning different gender and sexual orientation groups in Poland. We describe two issues – women's addiction treatment and sexual minority stress. Common to both are issues of sex and gender-topics that are still taboo in Polish social and cultural life.

During the week of residence in Poland, American and Polish students visit various community organizations. Translators accompany the group to facilitate discussions between students, faculty, community leaders, and, in some situations, clients and participants of the organization. Students talk with Polish residents about the acceptability and/or stigma associated with LGBT+ groups and about women who receive treatment for alcohol and drug addiction. The foundation of shared values and open communication facilitates these conversations and allows for students to struggle to understand the perspective of the other as well as to clarify their own understanding (Kotlarska-Michalska et al., 2019).

Addiction Treatment for Women: Women in addiction treatment continue to carry stigma in the United States, but the quality of the stigma differs in Poland in ways associated with cultural traditions and social norms for Polish women (Motyka et al., 2022). There is a tradition of strong collaboration in developing modern addiction treatment in Poland based on evidence-based practices advanced in the United States. At the beginning, this work included the application of the Minnesota model and the development of the 12-Step fellowship in Poland (Romaniuk, 2019). It is not surprising that the majority of women's problems in addiction treatment are connected to their gender roles in Polish society. The traditional role in Poland is that of a mother who sacrifices her life for the good of her family. Unfortunately, for many women in addiction treatment, her life history often starts with either stress or trauma due to sexual objectification and abuse. Traumatized, the woman may respond with shame and powerlessness that hinders development. Unfortunately, such women may not look for specialized help but simply try to feel better using alcohol or drugs. When they are not able to fulfill their responsibilities of a wife and mother, their shame and harsh self-criticism deepens. Searching for a solution to their problems, women may discover excitement through gambling, shopping, and safe sex online. Such excitement may eventually lead to behavioral addiction. And again, their perceived shame and stigma keeps their struggles invisible and deepens the societal stigma.

To discuss high-quality addiction treatment for women, we use multiple perspectives to address the challenges addicted women experience in a conservative Polish society. Through workshops and lectures, our international collaborations have pro-

vided training to Polish professionals (e.g. Farkas, 2019) about the pervasiveness of trauma and trauma symptoms among addicted women. Because trauma and its association with sex and gender roles is often at the root of their problems, women need to be empowered to talk about their experiences without shame and address all the struggles they suffer. Using the lens of gender and gender roles, the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism becomes more visible and understood as health issue rather than a character defect.

American social workers and their students can validate women's needs in addiction treatment and recognize the significance of the social and political context of constraints on women's rights in Poland (Bucholc, 2022). Recent demonstrations against the abortion law show that women in Poland have reached a new level of self-realization on deciding their role in society. While the situation in the United States can be similar in terms of increased shame related to addiction and limited access to abortion, the cultural context in Poland creates higher barriers to services and policy initiatives (Motyka et al., 2022).

Sexual minority stress: It is not surprising that women's protests against the abortion law have been connected to the LGBT+ movement. Both groups protest the same oppressive power of conservative government and the Catholic Church (McMahon & Niparko, 2022; Azis & Azarine, 2023). To further develop the gender lens for use in the course, we discussed the situation of LGBT+ people in Poland with three people involved in studying and teaching gender issues in Poland (JK and GM) and a Board Director of Lambda Warszawa (KK). Jacek Kochanowski, a professor at Warsaw University, emphasized the focus on the invisibility of LGBT+ people in Poland. Kochanowski, who has written on the concept of masculine hegemony in Polish society, highlighted those hegemonic forces of the government and the Church as part of the reasons LGBT+ people do not readily disclose their situations or seek services. He noted the obvious power differential between the well-organized governmental and religious institutions and the LGBT+ communities. He called for this mismatch of power to be recognized and addressed by the global community, not just by Poles in Poland. In the interview, he focused on this need for "visibility", especially in the times of COVID-19 quarantines, because problems such as abuse and victimization of vulnerable persons (women and LGBT+ people) become worse behind closed doors. For Kochanowski, one of the most important steps forward is for the international community to know more about the problems in Poland and to bring heightened awareness to these issues (personal communication, Jacek Kochanowski, April 27, 2022). Anthropologist and human rights activist Gabriela Małusecka, mentioned the overwhelming pressures of day to day life for LGBT+ people, so much so, that, if able, LGBT+ persons travel to places like Berlin for self-expression and relaxation that is not available in the Polish culture (personal communication, Gabriela Małusecka, April 23, 2022).

To bring more understanding to LGBT+ people in Poland, we talked with Krzysztof Kliszczyński, sociologist and Board Director of Lambda Warszawa. We also studied the Report of Campaign Against Homophobia (Kampania Przeciw Homofobii, Lambda Warszawa, 2021), which includes the most recent data concerning LGBT+ people in Poland. Kliszczyński echoed the importance of making visible the invisibility of the

characteristics and lives of LGBT+ people in Poland, since the topics of sex and gender are too often taboo in Polish society (personal communication, Krzysztof Kliszczyński, April 25, 2022).

The Report of Campaign Against Homophobia and Lambda Warszawa (2021) was made on the basis of an online survey that invited LGBT+ people to share their information and experiences. Data were collected from 22,883 people from the LGBT+ population, including people defining themselves as asexual. The time of data collection was from 2019 to 2021, which facilitated obtaining information in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Often, the authors of the report compared the data obtained with those received in previous years, so they could report trends and effects of specific political events on people's well-being. There were several categories concerning coming out, family and significant relationships, forms of experienced discrimination and abuse, hate crimes, mental health and minority stress, homelessness, LGBT+ youth, and conversion therapies. Additionally, various of social and political involvement were examined. We analyzed the results of the report and discussed their significance with Kliszczyński, the Board Director of Lambda Warszawa.

In this article we present data from the report that we found informative concerning the social situation of LGBT+ people in Poland, in an effort, following Kochanowski's ideas, to make the issues of the population visible. In general, it was established that the social situation of LGBT+ people in larger cities is much easier than in small cities and villages. Coming out to at least one person happens in 67% of families in big cities and only 53% in villages. Usually the people who are aware of somebody's non-heteronormativity are mothers and sisters, and they are most often accepting it. In 17% of coming out cases, it was not the choice of LGBT+ person to reveal their sexual/gender identity.

Compared to previous years, more of those recently surveyed (about 90%) are interested in a formal relationship whereas short term relationships are becoming less frequent. More people are interested in the adoption of children (37%). Most people are interested in legal formal relationships that are impossible in Poland, but only 4% of participants said that they formalized their relationship abroad in countries that accept same sex marriages. The survey also documented that people living with partners have a much higher quality of life and fewer mental health problems.

Discrimination and abuse are the most common problem in the lives of the non-heteronormative population. Almost all those surveyed (98%) experienced different forms of microaggression. There was an association between the frequency of experiencing microaggression and the level of life satisfaction and symptoms of depression. Generally, any contact with public and authority figures is associated with fear of discrimination. 53% of people surveyed said that they were treated worse after their identity was revealed. People often do not offer information about their non-heteronormative status at work (25%), at a health service (76%), or to public service professionals (88%).

The most damaging for the mental health of LGBT+ people are various forms of abuse and violence. The report includes discussion of different types of cyber abuse and their effects on life satisfaction. In general, 68% of people surveyed reported various types of abuse; the most frequent was verbal abuse in public places. More than

half of those surveyed experienced hate crimes (crimes motivated by prejudice against LGBT+ people). Verbal and physical abuse was not reported to police as people do not trust this public institution. Instances of physical attacks of those who identify as LGBT+ by police during public demonstrations are very well known. The most profound effects of discrimination are depression and suicide among affected people. The number of people reporting suicidal ideation has increased in recent years and reached 55% of all those participating in the present study. The report discusses the association between the openly anti-LGBT+ rhetoric of public authorities and the increase in the number of people with symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation. Those surveyed found the most helpful protection against discrimination among friends of common understanding.

Most survey participants (above 90%) acknowledged a leftist political orientation. On the whole, the LGBT+ community became more politically involved, possibly as the result of the increasingly demeaning rhetoric of the government and Catholic Church authorities. There has been an increase in involvement in political events and a decrease in the acceptance of the official government policies. There has also been a decrease in the acceptance of the role of the Catholic Church in the life of society. About 75% acknowledged a decline in their interest in religion. People from the LGBT+ community more often participated in democratic elections than the general public.

Besides problems with mental health due to discrimination against non-heteronormative people, there is a significant problem with social exclusion that may lead to homelessness. About 10% of the LGBT+ population had to leave their home and 17% ran away from home after revealing their sexual/gender status. The most affected by homelessness are transgender people; 25% of them experienced at least one episode of being houseless. Those most often thrown out from their homes are women.

LGBT+ youth are in a much more vulnerable position than adults. They have much less financial and human capital to support themselves through life's struggles. There is minimal positive information in public education, especially in sexual education, concerning sexual minorities. Only about 15-20% of students are aware of special institutions or programs that support them and protect against abuse and violence. Most of these programs are part of civil society institutions and are not a part of public instruction. About 75% of teenagers feel isolated and often experience suicidal ideation. This number is much higher than for adults.

Although the therapeutic community as a whole acknowledges that so called "conversion therapies" are detrimental to mental health, about 20% of gay people are still offered such help. Other subgroups of those surveyed reported such interventions less often. The most frequent referrals to conversion therapy were offered by religious organizations.

Concerning transgender people, the biggest group among them are non-binary people (47%). The number of trans-women and trans-men is similar (27%). The numbers of people who were interested in medical surgery to match gender identity depended on financial resources and is rather a measure of the reality of such procedures under Polish conditions. Only a small number of trans-persons tried to change their names legally (9% tried and only 5% changed their names). However, these numbers

are higher than in previous years. More than 58% of trans-people used psychotherapy or psychological support. The medical care of trans-people is inadequate. The understanding of the specificity of the needs of trans-people is very low. 20% of people reported that their transgender status was questioned by medical staff. The absence of safe public toilets leads to a situation that 57% of trans-people are not able to use them.

The results of the survey document the impact of the anti-LGBT politics of the Polish government which aim not only to arrest the development of the social acceptance of sexual minorities but, primarily, to minimize the human rights of a significant part of society. Many researchers concerned with human rights in Poland recognize that the hegemonic character of Polish traditions allows conservative and religious forces to discriminate against women and the LGBT+ population and any other group that is forced to become invisible as an act of self-preservation (McMahon & Niparko, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The use of multiple lenses to examine differences and similarities between two countries presents challenges of development and continuity. In the case of Poland, the recent conservative slant of the national government as well as the conservative policies of the Roman Catholic Church have created a hostile environment for non-heteronormative persons, violating the human rights and individual freedoms for these groups. The continued effects of COVID-19 on health-care and the ongoing war in Ukraine puts additional stressors on marginalized groups, especially those not endorsed by those in power (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). One of the purposes of international social work is to enhance well-being, and there are ample reasons to focus on the situations of the invisible group of LGBT+ people in Poland. The multiple lens approach highlights comparisons between the Polish situation and the impending changes in American policies toward women's reproductive rights regarding abortion access. Diaz's (2022) comments on the "Don't Say Gay" legislation in Florida and Day's reporting on the restrictions on health care for trans-youth in Texas provide additional examples. This type of effort in international social work presents a model for advocacy and social justice to benefit "invisible" groups and to foster a more inclusive and equitable global society.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Jarosław R. Romaniuk, PhD, LISW-S, LICDC, is a researcher and educator. Currently, he works as a full-time lecturer at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. From 2004 to 2015, he worked as a social worker at the Louis Stokes Cleveland Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. He also worked as a neuroscientist at the School of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University. His experience at the VA has led him to participate in national VA committees and the National Association of Social Workers in Ohio. He was also involved locally as a Board member of The Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County (2010-2017).

Hanna Mamzer is a professor of sociology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Professor Mamzer is an active advocate for cultural understanding in today's society. Her international collaborations include theories of human-animal interactions, advocacy for animal rights and the awareness of the commodification of animal life. She is the author and editor of numerous publications and is a sought-after public speaker and lecturer on human-animal interactions. She was a scholar in residence at the Mandel School in 2015 and again in 2020 before the pandemic.