The woman’s optimal age for procreation ranges between 26–30, however the age of 21–25 may be still defined as suitable. The least advantageous is the age below 20, as well as over 40. Women who, under the age of 18, become pregnant and/or give birth to a child are considered as adolescent mothers. A few subgroups are to be mentioned as follows:

- a very young mother – under the age of 16;
- an older teen mother – since the age of 16;
- a lonely teenage mother having no support from family or partner;
- a teenage mother having the support and assistance of the partner and/or family.

Although the age range within which the woman is fertile refers to 15–49 years of age, it is to mention that in developed countries, 9 out of 10 children are born to mothers aged 20–30. Gaining profession, getting a higher education diploma, and eventually having good work are all the goals which are ahead of matrimonial and reproductive decisions. For these reasons, in many countries, the phenomenon of pregnancy in adolescent age is rare. Women give birth to fewer children and late in life. Young women’s pregnancy draws the attention of governments and societies of different countries for medical, socio-economic and legal reasons. A number

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of studies have focused on finding the determinants and consequences of early motherhood. It was found that teen pregnancy correlates with: loss of a parent, especially as a result of divorce or separation; the lack of a strong bond between mother and daughter, no contact with father; the neglected, disadvantaged socially and economically background, including abuse of nicotine, alcohol and drugs; low rating of life chances and prospects to finish school and find a good job; low self-esteem, inability to plan for the future; inability of spending free time in a creative way; changing standards of morality, increasing sexual freedom and low culture of sexual behaviors.

The consequences of teen pregnancies are:

– delayed education, the necessity of taking low-paid jobs, living in poverty, long-term dependency on benefits, transferring the model of life to their children;
– living under the same roof with parents and be dependent on their financial aid;
– occasional marriage;
– young men-fathers rarely take care of their children.

Maternal bond is one of the most complex relationships. There are three of its dimensions: biological, mental and social. The researchers also point to possible deviations in the formation of motherhood:

– Excessive, emotional overcaring mothering (possessive, submissive or perfect mothers);
– Emotional distance in the mother–child relation. The consequence is motherhood affected by coldness and negligent care. The emotional distance may be manifested by a narcissism of the mother – the case of narcissistic mothers, which is the cause of excessive rigor, or even hostility towards the child, characterized by emotional abandonment and aggression used against him/her.

A good contact with the mother during childhood and adolescence is an important foundation for the sensitivity and delicacy of emotional relationships for both boys and girls.

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7 J. Augustyn, Wychowanie seksualne w rodzinie i w szkole, Kraków 1999, p. 25.
Today, the lives of many families focus primarily on the economic sphere. Forced by the economic situation or their own choice – women work professionally. It is obvious that a woman who works is not able to give her children as much time as non-working woman. However, modern women, despite so many responsibilities and still too little help from their husbands, do not give up the leading role of the mother.

Polish research shows that there is still a small number of fathers, who participate in an effort to protect the child’s health. Only 36 percent of respondents undertook the care of the child during his/her illness. In almost half of the surveyed families the father, neither helped with homework nor frequented the meetings with the class teacher. Some of them said that they had never seen fathers at all. To mothers more often than fathers, young people turn to talk about such matters as sex education, school, religion, friends or the so-called “health problems”. Fathers mark their presence in explaining the political issues or the implementation of career plans.

Four-fifths of respondents are satisfied with the time that their mothers devoted to them and only one third of those taking part in the survey experience satisfaction in spending time with their fathers. Research studies conducted presently worldwide show that young fathers increasingly engage their involvement in family work, doing household chores as well as childcare, they can often be found in medical clinics during the compulsory child’s vaccination. It refers especially to African Americans who are more active at home than white or Hispanic fathers.

In recent years, with the growing number of divorces and single-parent families, the problem of absent father has returned with a new sense. In the countries where the divorce rate is the highest, the situation has become a subject of public discussions. Some people use even the phrase “the dad’s death”. In societies where the divorce rate is high, the problem is not just the absence of fathers but the decline of

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fatherhood, which can be crucial, as many children are growing up today without
authority to which they could turn to in need. Single-parent families do not form a homogeneous group in certain important respects, among which one can indicate: death of a parent, divorce or separation, childbearing by an unmarried woman outside of marriage. However, the concept of single parenthood is, in the collective consciousness, attributed mostly to women who are raising children alone.

Considering the phenomenon of single parenting it is important to distinguish between the situation of women for whom single motherhood was a conscious choice and the one of abandoned mothers. In the first case we are dealing mostly with women over the age of 30, with higher education, active in the labor market, financially independent, having better housing conditions, living without a partner, coming from a family of intellectuals, living in big cities. In the second case there are mostly teenagers, from small towns, poorly educated, coming from low-income working families and single-parent families, who are beneficiaries of social welfare. For many of these women, the pregnancy was unplanned, accidental and mostly undesirable.

In order to ensure the proper development of a child both parental roles, male and female, are needed. The attitudes of parents, which can be defined as “a tendency to behave in a specific way in relation to the child”, have important psychosocial implications for children and family relations. Appropriate attitudes include: accepting the children for who they are; working with the children and being actively engaged with them (parents interested not only in children's games and fun but also encouraging them to take part in parents' activities and home life); giving the children reasonable freedom, appropriate for their age; recognizing children's rights in a family environment as equal without overestimating and underestimating their role. If the child receives all this from the parents, they feel safe and secure, they are confident and trusting their parents as well as open to people.

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Parents can also demonstrate inappropriate attitudes towards their child. They express themselves by: reluctance and distance to the child (avoidance); rejection of the child, lack of interest in their problems; putting excessive demands, rigorous enforcement of the do’s and don’ts; overprotectiveness, too big and unnecessary concern.

Research made by Maria Janukowicz shows that young people dream of the family model in which a loving and devoted mother and industrious and caring father will keep balance between work and family life and have more time for each other and for their children. According to 78.3 percent of young respondents, their homes in the future will be different from those in which they are reared; the family members will live with each other, not next to each other.

Material and method

The study was conducted in 2012–2013 among 80 women with a child / children aged at least 10, residing in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie province. The study was based on the original questionnaire invented by the author of the report. The questions addressed to respondents included among others: frequency and content of conversations with the child, care and education activities in which fathers took an active part, parental attitudes, the use of rewards and punishments.

The structure of the population

An important independent variable in the study was the age of first time mothers. The respondents were divided into two groups: the first group included mothers who had their first child as teenagers – 40 women. The second group also counted 40 women, however these respondents gave birth to their first baby over the age of 25.

In the first group of respondents 3 women graduated from higher education institutions, 22 were high school graduates, 13 women completed vocational education, 2 mothers had a primary school education. 26 respondents live in Toruń, Włocławek and Bydgoszcz, 12 – in cities with a population of 50 thousand people or less and 2 in the surrounding villages. 5 women have only one child, 28 – two,

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17 M. Ziemska, op. cit., p. 57–60.
5 respondents have three children, and 2 are mothers of four. 30 women work, 10 are unemployed.

In the second group, 26 women have higher education diplomas, 10 were secondary education graduates, 3 completed vocational schools, 1 had a primary school education. 18 respondents are residents of cities of over 100 thousand, 19 live in the surrounding towns, and 3 – in the villages. 4 women have one child, 23 – two, 8 are mothers of three and 5 have four children. 33 women work, 4 are unemployed, and 3 get a disability support pension.

Conclusions from the study

1. Marriage requires sacrifice from both spouses on behalf of one another as well as concern, consideration and time dedicated to the other person. In carrying out functions of family and marriage spouses have to be mature, not only biologically but above all mentally and socially. Husband and wife should also support each other, take responsibility for themselves, their partner and the baby. An important factor in determining the success of a marriage and subsequently fulfilling the parental roles includes, among others, marriage age and the level of education of newlyweds. In the group of teenage mothers, 7 of them concluded a marriage at the age of 16–17, with the consent of the Court of Protection, while being still students in vocational schools or high schools. Other respondents in this group got married at the age of 18–19; only 9 had completed post-primary school education and then found some work, 19 women continued education and worked at the same time, 5 were students of secondary school of general education (entirely dependent on their parents). 15 respondents got married first, and only later became pregnant and had a baby, the other 18 women were forced into marriage. Only 3 of the whole tested group of women decided to pursue graduate studies and had their degree.

In the second group of tested women they all got married at the age of 23–33, none of them was a student on their wedding day; 25 worked, 5 were granted unemployment benefit. Only in the case of five respondents pregnancy forced them into marriage. Others underlined the importance of feeling of love as the main reason of making decision about marriage.

2. 20 marriages of teenage mothers ended in divorce. In the second group, this problem relates to only 8 marriages: 3 ended in divorce, 5 – in separation.
3. Nonage or teenage time may hinder the adoption of the role of mother, arouse a sense of danger, anxiety or helplessness. 3 women had a baby at the age of 16 (before getting married), 4 – at the age of 17, 16 – at the age of 18, and 17 – at the age of 19. In the second group, 28 respondents became first time mothers at the age of 29–30, 7 – at the age of 32–33, 5 were over 35 years of age. The majority of the surveyed women in this group decided to postpone procreation plans because of the following reasons: desire for self-fulfillment and career development (18 women – mostly residents of Bydgoszcz), fear of job loss – 7, improving professional qualifications – 5 (courses, higher studies). Others declared that the main reason for the first birth at over 30 years of age was a late marriage (4) and problems with pregnancy (6).

4. In the families of the respondents, regardless of the reasons for marriage or the age of first birth of the child, there was a patriarchal form of family in which the most common household chores as well as childcare duties were done by women. Only 18 respondents (9 in each group) said that their husbands helped them with household duties (performing minor repair work). The tested could count on the help of their mothers – 22 answers. The women included in the first group of respondents (18) declared that they were supported by their own mothers as, for example, they could not cook. On the other hand, the respondents in the second group (4) said that their mothers helped them out around the house because they had no time to perform domestic duties. In most cases, women themselves nurtured their children, cared for them or got engaged in their education, having hardly any help from husbands. Every second teenage mother and every fifth one of older age benefited from the advice and assistance for mothers. Fathers’ activities generally was limited to going for walks with children (27 cases) or taking part in parents’ meetings (16 cases, 13 of which concerned the husbands of respondents from the second group). Noteworthy is the fact that 9 men, mostly of younger age (6) changed diapers for their children. None of the fathers prepared meals nor had regular well-child visits with the child’s doctor. The reasons for the lack of care, or minimal assistance with childcare from the husbands are rooted in the system of education in the early childhood and youth. A badly-organized family life, overprotective mothers and grandmothers keeping the child out of the problems and responsibilities of everyday family life, constant criticism of the father’s behavior meant that some men did not have the desire to help or they were even unable to help. On the other
hand, as emphasized the questioned women, from the very beginning of married life they took control over everyday household activities, doing everything, even the tiniest household chores, for their spouses. In both study groups, wives were more often helped in the care of a child by their partners who achieved higher educational status and were residents of the cities with population over one hundred thousand inhabitants.

5. The conversation and dialogue in the family are one of the basic mechanisms of maintaining stability in the family life. The study shows that in the case of the majority of respondents the process of communication with the child was not disturbed and went on smoothly. Among teenage mothers, only two youngest did not talk with their children (rejecting attitude). 19 respondents in this group declared that they talked to their offspring every day, for at least one hour, discussing mainly school issues – successes and failures. Most of them (23) said however that during such discussions they do not treat the child (regardless of his age) as a partner; they just limited them to asking questions and waiting for answers. In the case of older mothers’ families, as many as 10 women do not have time to talk with their child (avoidant attitude of mothers focused on their professional career), 10 mothers talk to their children on average for half an hour, usually during the meals. Other respondents stated that they always found time to talk with children and treat them as partners, allowing them to express freely their personal opinion.

6. More than half of women in both groups said that their children (regardless of sex) most often turned to them for help with solving school or health problems while fathers were asked to help with financial matters.

7. There are differences in the answers of the respondents as for the application of punishment. Teenage mothers more often than the women in the second group used corporal punishment on their children (12 to 2) and less frequently they adopted the system of “do’s and don’ts” (10 to 21).

8. Half of the respondents in both groups reward their children with sweets or gifts (depending on the age of the child), one third – praise their children to give them positive feedback.

9. Mothers of the second group much more often set the household responsibilities to their children as well as controlled their everyday duties: cleaning their room, washing their own clothes, taking care of animals (30). However, 13 respondents claimed that children should only deal with learning and school education. As for mothers of the first group, their children mainly had to tidy up their room (10 responses) or go on errands (8 responses).
10. The young age of the parents and the circumstances of entering into marriage (marriage forced by pregnancy) are not conducive to the proper manifestation of parental attitudes:

- Women who got married and gave first birth at the age of 16–17 were dominated by an attitude of rejection (4) and overprotection (2), only one respondent manifested the right attitude;
- Women whose mothering age at first birth was 18–19 but became pregnant before marriage often manifested avoidant attitude (9) or overprotecting one (5). Only 2 of the tested presented the right attitude;
- Women who became first birth mothers at the age of 18–19 but at least a year after the wedding most often manifested the proper attitude (10) or were overdemanding (3 of them took higher studies after the birth of their child);
- Young fathers (18–19 years old) manifested an excessively demanding attitude (15 responses), especially towards their sons, and avoidant (12);
- Among women in the second group, 18 manifested the right attitude, 12 were excessively demanding, 5 – avoidant or overprotecting (4 of them had problems with becoming pregnant or carrying the babies to full term in the past). Only one mother’s attitude was definitely rejecting (she did not wish to become pregnant and her husband left her before the birth of the child);
- Women after divorce more often showed an overprotecting attitude. These mothers declared that by such an attitude they wanted to reward their fatherless children;
- The examined mothers whose dominant attitude was the rejection of the child (5) explained most often their behavior (dislike to the child, frigidity) by the fact of unintended pregnancy. They claimed that the child had ruined their lives, had thwarted their plans, including their education, professional development as well as the ways of spending free time;
- An excessively demanding attitude was characteristic of mothers with higher education, sacrificing the family life for a career. The motherhood of the women who were focused on their own ambitions has been deformed due to excessive concentration on their own professional development;
- On the other hand, the appropriate attitudes prevailed among women accepting work and family life, feeling happy in marriage, who had their first child, at least a year after the wedding.
The overall conclusion is that mothers who gave birth to their first child between 16 and 19 years of age often:

– were less educated, brought up a child alone, their income for home maintenance was lower compared to mothers aged 25–35;
– established their own family because of unintended pregnancy or birth of a child;
– came from neglected, deprived environment in which the abuse of alcohol should be noted;
– were from single-parent families;
– did not care about raising the level of education;
– were not mature enough to fulfill the marital and parental roles;
– in the first years of marriage were financially dependent on the generational families;
– relied upon their mothers’ assistance in performing household chores as well as in the child’s upbringing;
– used corporal punishment of children;
– presented the wrong attitude: avoidant and overprotecting.

Living with family shapes the human ideas not only about the relationship between spouses, parents and children but about the implementation of marital and parental roles as well. Many transfers occur in an unconscious, automatic way. Observation of marriage of parents, family atmosphere in which children and adolescents grow up, are for adolescent family relationship patterns. Many young people watching certain behaviors or some situations which cause family conflicts and then the ways to resolve them appreciate such experiences positively and want to apply them to their families. However, there are others who see negative aspects of their family lifestyle, therefore they do not intend to follow this path in the future, rejecting it definitely.

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Streszczenie

Najważniejszym elementem w pełnieniu roli matki jest odpowiedzialność, opiekunność i dominacja. To matka jest podstawowym czynnikiem rozwoju uczuciowego dziecka. Wszelkie jej przeżycia, radości i niepokoje przenoszą się na nie. Od natężenia matczynej miłości zależy przyszła uczciwość dziecka. Celem artykułu jest ukazanie różnic w wypełnianiu ról małżeńsko-rodzicielskich przez kobiety, które urodziły dziecko jako nastolatki, od tych, które urodziły w wieku dojrzałym (29–38 lat). Brak dojrzałości psychicznej i społecznej u nastolatka utrudniał im przyjęcie roli matki, wzbudzał poczucie niepokoju i bezradności. Większość z nich z powodu niskiego poziomu wykształcenia, braku kwalifikacji zawodowych była uzależniona finansowo od rodzin generacyjnych. Częściej też od kobiet dojrzałych korzystały z pomocy matek w wykonywaniu podstawowych prac domowych oraz w opiece i wychowaniu dzieci.

Słowa kluczowe: matka, wiek, małżeństwo, rodzicielstwo, dziecko
Summary

The most important elements in fulfilling the role of the mother are responsibility, maternal protectiveness but also her domination over the child. The mother is the first important person in the emotional and social development of a child. All her experiences, joys and anxieties have a strong impact on their world and mother’s love and its intensity can affect their future lives. The purpose of this article is to show the differences in the performance of marital and parenting roles by women who gave birth as teenagers and those who became mothers in their adulthood (29–38 years old). Mental, emotional and social immaturity of a teenager made it difficult for them to accept the role of mother, aroused a sense of anxiety and helplessness. Most of them, due to the low level of education and lack of professional qualifications were dependent financially on their generational families. They also, more often than mature women, benefited from the help of mothers with basic household chores, the care and upbringing of children.

Key words: mother, age, marriage, parenthood, child