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Between Relative Deprivation and Gratification: A Study in the Gals for Gals' Sense of Reproductive Security¹

Abstract: The study examines the political thought of the pro-choice Dziewuchy Dziewuchom (Gals for Gals) movement, which was active in Poland in 2016-2018. The main goal of the analysis was to determine how the sense that one's needs were satisfied was changing during the political activity of the Gals and to what extent these changes depended on the external stimuli provided by Polish Parliament working on two bills to tighten the anti-abortion law. The research issues were resolved using qualitative source analysis, relational content analysis and the dyad of the theoretical categories of relative deprivation (RD) and gratification (RG). The study shows that the Gals for Gals movement created an internally coherent picture of their situation. However, relative deprivation and gratification were manifested only immediately after the movement was established and on its first anniversary. The manifestations did not depend on external stimuli provided by the successive stages of the legislative processes. The manifestations of deprivation served the purpose of discursive self-legitimation of the movement, and of gratification expressed organizational success. These types of attitudes emerged during the second stage, that is after the rejection of the first bill at the second reading, when the Gals discursively self-relegitimated the movement and expressed a sense of organizational success and satisfaction of the need for social recognition. This means that the Gals were not satisfied with achieving the goals of the movement, and the efforts to neutralize relative deprivation did not motivate their political activity.

Key words: protest movement, pro-choice movement, contentious politics, *Dziewuchy Dziewuchom* (Gals for Gals), political conflict, relative deprivation theory

Introduction

When on April 1, 2016, the Polish media published the news about a bill restricting the right to abortion, a group of activists launched a Facebook group, *Dziewuchy Dziewuchom* (Gals for Gals). It was a form of protest against the tightening of antiabortion provisions stipulated in the Law of January 7, 1993 on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Fetus and Conditions Permitting Pregnancy Termination. The group also aimed to create a platform for the exchange of opinions (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016c), and brought together people who believed that every woman had the right to choose when it came to abortion. During the first twenty-four hours of its existence, the group was joined by 30,000 users, a few days later there were already 100,000 (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016c). At that time, the political activity of pro-choice activists began to fulfill the distinctive characteristics of a protest movement (Edwards, 2014,

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p. 4; Jasper, 2014). This means that the Gals movement became a form of conscious, collective and organized actions undertaken to stop social change, which in this case involved preventing a blanket ban on abortion planned in Poland. These were not singular initiatives, but they continued for some time, during which the movement participants were involved in a conflict with their political opponent, i.e. representatives of the legislative and executive bodies. The former collaborated in a systematic and organized manner, developed a common collective identity and used various forms of protest to achieve their goals.

Although the history of the group began on Facebook, the main tool for the distribution and redistribution of political thought used by the movement participants to build a common identity was the official website of Gals for Gals. Social media, especially Facebook, played an auxiliary role in disseminating ideas and served as a means of social communication facilitating the organization of demonstrations, strikes and other acts of contentious politics. Although the last entry was posted on the website on April 12, 2018, the termination of its activity began much earlier and was not related to the implementation of the goals that inspired the formation of the movement.

Over the period between the mass mobilization and demobilization, two very similar bills were submitted to Polish Parliament, which provided for the introduction of a blanket ban on abortion. The first bill was rejected at the second reading (Korolczuk, 2016), and the second one was sent to parliamentary committees for further work after the first reading in January 2018 (Sejm RP, 2018; Wprost, 2018). This meant that the bill which the movement participants rejected was at such a stage of the legislative process that it could still be adopted. Thus, the reason which inspired the formation of a collective political entity and its contentious activity had not been fully neutralized then.

In April 2018, Agata Maciejewska, who had created the movement's name, registered it as a trademark in the Patent Office of the Republic of Poland (MK, 2018). Such commercialization aroused criticism from social activists, especially feminists, and led to internal divisions within the movement. The regional groups using the name were given forty-eight hours to change their names on Facebook. The activists for whom the name was part of a common identity could no longer use it. Facebook administrators removed the accounts, groups and pages of the local branches which unlawfully used the name Gals for Gals. By this token, the movement lost its most valuable resources, namely contact lists and information distribution channels. At the same time, the level of support for the Gals movement, measured by the number of likes on Facebook, dropped from 100,000 to 41,000 in the period from April 2016 to April 2018 (Jacobsson, Korolczuk, 2017). This means that, starting in April 2018, the level of activity of movement participants began to decline, the official website was not updated, and the Facebook group turned into an opinion-forming medium focused on commenting on current affairs from Poland and around the world.

Finally, the statements uttered by the founders of the Gals movement demonstrated discrepancies at the level of manifestation of their self-identification. Sometimes they claimed that they had founded and co-created a social movement (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2017), other times they argued that the Gals was not a movement (Maciejewska, 2018; PSz, 2018), but only a group on Facebook, an opinion exchange forum, or a discussion platform (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016c). At the beginning of the initiative,

the founders called themselves the Gals' Nursery (Pl. *Matecznik Dziewuch*), later they gave up this name (Mw/tr, 2016). Despite reservations about the status of the collective political entity, the pro-choice activists shaped their collective identity on the basis of the political thought created and disseminated by the founders. These ideas triggered mass mobilization, the organization of contentious actions, and the way the activists thought about their own political roles and reproductive rights.

Abandoning the official website before the goals were fully achieved, registering the name, closing the information exchange channels and self-identification discrepancies all undoubtedly contributed to the demobilization of the movement. While these were deliberate actions, their motivation remains unclear. The goals of the Nursery were also unclear which, albeit never explicitly verbalized, were among the factors motivating the mass mobilization.

The studies of the Gals movement to date have focused on describing its history, political activities (Bielinska-Kowalewska, 2017), declared goals (Wierzcholska, 2018), structure (Polanska, 2017), forms of protest employed (Korolczuk, 2016), posters and slogans which carried political demands (Kiełbiewska, 2018) and relationships between the Gals and other political entities (Beaty, 2017). There have also been attempts to compare this initiative with other new social movements (Kaletzky, McGlazer, 2018) that emerged in Europe and the United States at the time of rising from the great financial crisis which peaked in 2008–2009. Although all these studies have described the activity of the movement and presented it against a broad historical, economic, political, social and cultural backdrop, they have not addressed the emergence of collective awareness, which is significant for a collective entity as a participant of contentious politics. This article aims to examine the motivations of the Gals movement's founders manifested in the claims about the needs either having been fulfilled or not. Therefore, this paper contributes to the literature on the subject of constructing the Gals' collective identity.

Methodological and theoretical tenets

The study proposed herein does not rely on a paradigm but on ontological, epistemological and methodological pragmatism (Rak, 2018, p. 8). Nevertheless, it applies a grid of theoretical categories derived from the relative deprivation and relative gratification theory to define the study's methodological and theoretical tenets, as well as to conduct analysis (Smith, Pettigrew, 2015). If the perceived *status quo* is undesirable, relative deprivation (RD) occurs. If it is perceived as desirable, we are dealing with relative gratification (RG). In other words, relative deprivation consists of a negative discrepancy between the expectations expressed by an individual or collective subject in respect of the surrounding reality and its perceived state, which is not congruent with these expectations. The level of relative deprivation is determined by how big the discrepancy between the current state and the state desired in terms of any reference is. This is not an absolute, but relative level, because it depends on individually designed references or comparisons of states. The higher the level of discrepancy between the perceived states (the current and the expected one) where the actor experiences deprivation, the higher

the level of their discontent with the current social situation (Posern-Zielińska, 1975). The natural responses of actors who experience deprivation is to try to neutralize it. The phenomenon of relative gratification is inverse to relative deprivation (LeBlanc, Beaton, Walker, 2015; Brush, 1996). In this case, however, the comparison of the current state with the one desired in terms of reference leads to the actor identifying the discrepancy which generates a sense of contentment in them (Anier, Guimond, & Dambrun, 2016; Feather, 2015). The higher the level of the discrepancy between the projected states where the actor experiences gratification, the higher the level of their contentment with the current social situation (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, Mielke, 1999). The natural reaction of actors who experience relative gratification is to express a sense of justice and honesty, and pursue to maintain them.

The following research problems were formulated in order to achieve the research goal: how did the configurations of RD and RG change at the time of the mass mobilization of the Gals? To what extent did those changes depend on the external stimuli of the Parliament working on the bills on the tightening of antiabortion laws? Importantly, the analysis here is focused on the discursive manifestations of RD and RG, which means that it seeks to explore the level of the movement's awareness, and not its institutional level.

Even though this is a qualitative study, working hypotheses based on the achievements of the relative deprivation and relative gratification theories are presented (Webber, 2007; Gurney, Tierney, 1982; Corning, 2000) alongside a preliminary empirical analysis of random entries posted by the Nursery on the movement's website. On the one hand, the hypotheses are sufficiently general not to impose the interpretation of secondary sources, but on the other one, sufficiently detailed to determine the direction of analysis. It is presumed that the configurations of RD and RG were likely to feature mass mobilization being directly followed by a high level of RD which served the purpose of discursive legitimation of this grassroots initiative. Over time, the manifestation of discrepancies between the desired status quo and perceived political situations became routinized. After the first bill was rejected at the second reading, RD could have been replaced by RG generated by the sense of successful achievement of the goal which had triggered the foundation of the movement. The sense of justice experienced probably mobilized the Nursery to repeat the communication strategy based on the expression of RD. It was reproduced when the values of the movement were threatened, namely after the first and second bill were submitted and before their readings in Parliament. After the bills were rejected or sent to parliamentary committees, RG was expressed due to the sense of contentment that the goals had been achieved.

The research problem will be addressed by conducting a qualitative analysis of written sources, namely of the official website of the Gals. The website was chosen due to the Nursery assigning a special status to this website in the process of communication with movement members. The website was the primary source and vehicle of the Gals' political thought. The study encompasses materials found in all the sections and subsections of the website from April 1, 2016 to April 12, 2018, that is throughout the entire period of mass mobilization. The data was collected by means of relational content analysis, which is coherent with the above-indicated method. This type of

analysis makes it possible to identify and interpret relationships between the semantic structures that built the Gals' discursive perceived states. Additionally, it facilitates the determination of the meanings produced by specific ways of grouping semantic structures that create projections of social reality. The dyad of the antinomian theoretical categories of RD and RG will serve as an analytical tool to distinguish, describe and compare the existing political situations perceived by the Nursery that differed from expectations and predictions. The manifestations of RD and RG fulfill the distinctive characteristics of their ideal types when they constitute discursive constructions of the current states and states compared with the current ones and built on the basis of reference created for this purpose.

The study of the Gals' discourse

According to the criterion of external stimuli, namely the stages of legislative processes initiated by the submission of two civic bills to amend the Law of January 7, 1993 on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Fetus and Conditions Permitting Pregnancy Termination (Sejm RP, 2016; 2018), the period of political activity of the movement was divided into six stages; the RD and RG configurations in each of these stages were analyzed separately. The first stage spans the period from April 1, 2016 to April 18, 2016, that is from the mass mobilization of the Gals until the day before the submission of the first bill. The second stage lasted from April 19, 2016 to September 23, 2016, that is the submission of the first bill and the first reading respectively. The third stage began the day after the bill was referred to the Social Policy and Family Committee, the Justice and Human Rights Committee and the Health Committee, and ended on the day of the second reading, thereby lasting from September 24, 2016 to October 6, 2016. The fourth stage falls between October 7, 2016 and November 29, 2017, or the day after the rejection of the first bill at the second reading and the day before the submission of the second bill. The submission of this bill on November 30, 2017 and its first reading on January 10, 2018, marked the beginning and end of the fifth stage respectively. The final, sixth stage began the day after the bill was referred to the Social Policy and Family Committee, with the recommendation to consult the Justice and Human Rights Committee, on January 11, 2018, and ended with the last entry posted on the official website of the Gals, that is the demobilization of the movement on April 12, 2018.

The first period was marked by RD aimed at the discursive self-legitimation of the movement. Objection to the existing political reality formed the basis for justifying the existence and political activity of the Gals. The Nursery employed twenty manifestations of RD. The objections were directed against (1) amending the Law of January 7, 1993 on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Fetus and Conditions Permitting Pregnancy Termination in such a way that it would impose a blanket ban on abortion, (2) ignoring the voice of the Gals in designing a law which concerned them, (3) the hypocrisy of the authorities who, under the guise of protecting life, were threatening the lives of mothers and children to the same extent, (4) denying pregnant women the medical care guaranteed by the law, (5) tightening of the law in such a way that further

restricted women's access to help at a time when they should be under special protection, (6) ignoring the real problems of single mothers and problems of poor and sick women, (7) no guaranteed safety during childbirth and when raising children, (8) the creation of a state where women were threatened, ordered and punished, (9) intimidating doctors with imprisonment for carrying out prenatal tests, (10) investigation of the nature of a miscarriage by prosecutors, (11) living in fear of pregnancy, (12) living in fear of losing health and life, (13) violation of basic human rights in Poland, a democratic state, (14) the sense of having no control over one's own life, (15) lack of choice (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016c; 2016g), (16) no right to decide about oneself, (17) no possibility of legal termination of pregnancy in safe conditions without risk to health or life, which women enjoyed prior to 1993 (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016e), (18) restriction of personal freedom of women (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016g), (19) no sexual education (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016b) and (20) introducing a law the Gals called "barbarian" (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016e; 2016j). While varied in terms of their subject matter, all these manifestations formed a coherent image of political reality that the movement members did not approve of.

In the first stage of the movement, the above-mentioned RD occurred in configurations with RG. The Nursery expressed their contentment four times by (1) stating that, during the first twenty-four hours of its functioning, the group attracted 30,000 female members and their number exceeded 100,000 users a few days later which – according to the Gals – was a record increase in interest in Polish social media; (2) indicating that the Gals for Gals movement became an internet phenomenon, a discussion platform and a virtual meeting space for women from all over the country (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016c), (3) drawing the attention of foreign media and politicians to a potential threat to the freedom, health and lives of Polish women (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016a), (4) stating that, for the first time in twenty-three years, a demonstration organized in front of the parliament building to protest against the planned abortion ban attracted thousands of people, and not a group of 150–200 friends, as was the case before. These plans were considered "inhuman" and "ignorant" (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016d). All the types of RG in this period were an expression of contentment with the organizational success, gaining social acceptance and support.

There were no RD and RG in the second and third stages of the movement. This was the first period when the Nursery's activity was routinized, even though the movement had failed to achieve its goals and the reasons for the discrepancy between the current and expected political situation had not yet been neutralized. The largest number of RD types coupled with their highest intensity did not occur immediately after the mass mobilization, but during the period from the day after the rejection of the first bill at the second reading to the day before the submission of the second bill. In the fourth stage of the Gals' activity, the following RD types occurred: (1) depriving women of the right to choose and decide about their health and life, (2) lack of funds to increase the effectiveness and extend the range of the Gals' activities and to mobilize other women to act (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016i), (3) the presence of a rape culture (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016f), (4) depriving most women of their autonomous right to consciously control their fertility, (5) limited access to contraceptives and emergency contraception, (6) lack of access to knowledge and professional

counseling, (7) lack of respect in gynecological offices, (8) limiting access to modern reproductive and prenatal medicine, (9) limiting access to modern in vitro treatment of infertility, (10) limiting access to knowledge and "counseling free from religious ideology," (11) failure to comply with the obligations arising from the Law on Family Planning, (12) no real socialization of women in a difficult health situation, and their families, (13) no efforts regarding the quality of women's life, (14) increased spending on "measures to kill people," (15) no efforts to limit premature deaths and possible miscarriages, (16) the status of abortion as illegal, dangerous and frequent, (17) imposing the obligation to give birth to and baptize the fetus regardless of its condition, (18) contempt and disregard for the fate, health, and lives of women, children and fetuses, (19) breaching the applicable law granting the right to decide whether a child will be born and baptized, (20) limiting the right to abortion, also in the cases regulated and permitted by applicable law, (21) since 1993, the loss of health and life by pregnant girls and women, including those who have been raped or are sick, due to non-compliance with the applicable law and denying them appropriate, decent medical care, (22) saving the women's lives and health only as a last resort, (23) lack of protection of children against rape and pregnancy, (24) lack of a policy ensuring people with disabilities participation in social life, and (25) too much influence of the Church on family policy (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016h). There were thus twenty-five RD types. Their contents were consistent with the manifestations of discontent with the current political situation that appeared in the first period of mass mobilization. They served the purpose of the movement's discursive self-legitimation.

In the fourth phase, six types of RG occurred in a configuration with RD: (1) regaining strength and solidarity by women (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2016h), (2) contrary to predictions, creating a nationwide social movement composed of nearly fifty regional groups, (3) creating a Gals for Gals Facebook group, which attracted 100,000 users, (4) gaining the support of Polish and foreign celebrities, (5) receiving a Federka (a prize for women's activism awarded by the Feder organization which had operated for 25 years) which, according to the Nursery, was awarded relatively shortly after the movement was founded, namely after seven months, (6) nominating Barbara Ewa Baran (one of the founders of the movement) for the Jan Weichert Award of the Polish Business Roundtable for social activism which, according to the Nursery again, was a relatively quick recognition (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2017). As in the first stage of the Gals' activity, the Nursery expressed contentment with the organizational success of the initiative. The sense of justice was additionally boosted by the social recognition confirmed by the Federka award for women's activism and the nomination for the Jan Wejchert Award of the Polish Business Roundtable for social activism. It is worth noting that the fourth stage was the period of the greatest number of manifestations and types of RD and RG compared to the remaining stages of mass mobilization.

In the fifth and sixth, i.e. the last stages of the Gals' activity, neither RD nor RG occurred (see Table 1). Although the goals of the movement had not been fully achieved, and the second bill was still being debated in parliamentary committees, the Nursery was no longer active in terms of the creation, destruction, protection, cessation of protection or dissemination of the political thought that was essential for the collective identity of the Gals.

Table 1
Configurations of RD and RG in the Gals' discourse in the successive stages
of the movement's operation

Stage of the Gals' operation	Number of RD types	Number of RG types
1. April 1, 2016–April 18, 2016	20	4
2. April 19, 2016–September 23, 2016	0	0
3. September 24, 2016–October 6, 2016	0	0
4. October 7, 2016–November 29, 2017	25	6
5. November 30, 2017–January 10, 2018	0	0
6. January 11, 2018–April 12, 2018	0	0

Source: The author's elaboration.

Conclusion

Relative deprivation and relative gratification did not occur systematically during the subsequent stages of the protest movement's political activity. Although fully coherent throughout the entire period of the Gals' activity, discursive manifestations of the sense of reproductive security were therefore not used consistently. They only appeared in two stages. During the first period, from mass mobilization to the day before the first bill was submitted, the Nursery used twenty discursive manifestations of RD (83.33 per cent) and four of RG (16.67 per cent). The next period marked by these types of attitudes started on the day after the rejection of the first bill at the second reading and ended on the day before the submission of the second bill. This was also the period in which RD was configured with RG in such a way that the former dominated. In the fourth stage, manifestations of RD numbered twenty-five (80.65 per cent) and RG – six (19.35 gratifications). This means that while the overall number and types of manifestations of both types of attitudes rose, a slight decrease in the intensity of RD was accompanied by a slight increase in the intensity of RG.

The Nursery no longer manifested RD and RG in the period when the fundamental values of the movements' participants were threatened, i.e. from the submission of the first bill to its first reading, and from the day following its referral to parliamentary committees until the second reading. Similarly, in the last two stages of the Gals' operations, that is from the submission of the second bill to its first reading, and from the referral to parliamentary committees for further work to the last entry posted on the official website of the Gals respectively, the Nursery did not acknowledge any discrepancy between expected and current states. After the first anti-abortion bill was rejected at the second reading, RD was not replaced by RG. There were no manifestations of a sense of success, that is the achievement of the goal that sparked the movement's emergence, and the neutralization of RD. The stages of the legislative process which constituted the natural external stimuli for changes in the political activity of the movement were not taken into account when creating and disseminating the political thought about women's reproductive safety. When the movement succeeded in terms of achieving its goals the manifestations of RD and RG were not reconfigured.

Mass mobilization was followed by high intensity of RD, which served the goal of discursive legitimation of the grassroots initiative. The website administrators justified

the need to unite women who do not agree to be deprived of their human rights and to non-compliance with family planning law. Over time, the manifestation of discrepancies between the perceived and expected political situations was routinized. This routinization took place relatively quickly, namely after the submission of the first bill which embodied the values that the Gals opposed. It occurred immediately after the first expressions of RG.

The organizational successes, such as the rapid growth and high level of support for the Gals' group on Facebook, attracting women from all over Poland to the internet forum, getting the interest of foreign media and politicians in the movement, and the organization of demonstrations against the actions of legislative and executive bodies which attracted more participants than before, became a desirable substitute for achieving the goals the movement declared, and the Nursery found it all satisfactory.

The manifestations of RG that emerged in the fourth stage of the movement strength-ened the image of the organizational success created during the first stage. The Nursery emphasized that the Gals allowed women to regain the ability to organize themselves, initiate political activity, and they created a nationwide social movement composed of nearly fifty regional groups, a Gals for Gals Facebook group, which attracted 100,000 users and won the support of Polish and foreign celebrities. In addition, the website administrators expressed a high level of contentment with having received the *Federka* award for women's activism and the nomination for the Jan Wejchert Award of the Polish Business Roundtable for social activism. The configuration of these types of RG demonstrates that there was a need to form an association in the name of common values and to gain social recognition in the form of rewards for public activism. The fact that the course of legislative processes failed to be indicated when expressing RG shows organizational immaturity and points to the marginalization of official goals.

The discourse created by the Nursery did not feature any specific proposals or drafts of possible changes in the law that would be consistent in terms of values with the expectations consistently presented in the discursive structures of RD. This passivity evidences a low degree of commitment to the pursuit of needs, and at the same time creating ostensible discrepancies between the current and expected states.

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Między relatywną deprywacją a gratyfikacją: studium poczucia bezpieczeństwa reprodukcyjnego Dziewuch

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem badania jest myśl polityczna ruchu pro-choice Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, który działał w latach 2016–2018 w Polsce. Główny cel analizy to ustalenie jak zmieniało się poczucie zaspokojenia potrzeb w czasie aktywności politycznej Dziewuch oraz w jakim stopniu zmiany te były uzależnione od bodźców zewnętrznych w postaci prac w Sejmie RP nad dwoma projektami ustaw o zaostrzeniu przepisów antyaborcyjnych. Do rozwiązania problemów badawczych wykorzystano jakościową analizę źródeł, relacyjną analizę zawartości oraz diadę kategorii teoretycznych relatywnych deprywacji i gratyfikacji. Badanie pokazuje, że Dziewuchy stworzyły wewnętrznie spójny obraz swojej sytuacji. Manifestacje względnych deprywacji i gratyfikacji wystąpiły jednak tylko bezpośrednio po powstaniu ruchu i podczas pierwszej rocznicy działalności. Nie były one uzależnione od bodźców zewnętrznych w postaci etapów procesów legislacyjnych. Deprywacje służyły do dyskursywnej autolegitymizacji

ruchu, a gratyfikacje do manifestacji sukcesu organizacyjnego. Podczas drugiego okresu, gdy wystąpiły te typy postaw, czyli po odrzuceniu pierwszego projektu w drugim czytaniu, Dziewuchy dyskursywnie autorelegitymizowały ruch oraz dawały wyraz poczucia sukcesu organizacyjnego i zaspokojenia potrzeby uznania społecznego. Oznacza to, że realizacja celów ruchu nie przynosiła Dziewuchom satysfakcji, a dążenie do neutralizacji względnych deprywacji nie stanowiło motywacji aktywności politycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: ruch protestu, ruch pro-choice, kontestacja polityczna, Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, konflikt polityczny, teoria względnych deprywacji