

## SOCIOLOGY

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# Universally Accessible Sport in Polish Society's Lifestyle: The Causes of Change

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### Abstract

**Aim.** This paper aims to diagnose the revival of universally accessible sport in Poland and the place sport holds in the lifestyles of Polish society. In particular, the paper seeks to identify the causes of the revival, that is, show where the causes should be searched for and name the factors and determinants that have played the dominant role in changes studied in this paper.

**Methods.** In order to reach the goal formulated above, the author has used the most popular theories of lifestyle and the findings of research conducted by Andrzej Sicinski, a Polish sociologist whose dissertations on lifestyle are widely esteemed by the research community. Additionally, this paper employs the extremely important sociological theories of structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism.

**Results.** Analyses performed in the rational order and employing a wide range of empirical data reveal two groups of factors that have played a fundamental role in the revival of universally accessible sport among the Polish public as well as in the related changes in Polish people's lifestyles. One group are factors resulting from the changing social structure (education, affluence, employment structure, etc.), while factors in the other group stem from cultural changes (dominant ideals, behavioural patterns, social control, cultural pressure, etc.).

**Discussion and Conclusion.** The above changes in the cultural sphere have had more and less indirect influence on the public's attitudes towards sporting activities. This is to say that culture is a socialization factor that prompts individuals and communities to internalize sporting lifestyles. The acceptance of such lifestyles meets with positive sanctions and symbolic rewards, whereas individuals and communities that reject such lifestyles expose themselves to negative sanctions and symbolic retributions which are often just as unbearable as financial penalties.

### Introduction

Looking at Polish society's lifestyle in the recent years, analysing numerous academic studies and browsing through various statistical data on participation in universally accessible sport, we realize that a revolutionary change has taken place in people's attitudes to sport as an area of social life. Putting it more mildly, what we have seen is a revival of participation in different forms of universally accessible sport. We have turned from outsiders to a society where 60-70 percent of the population say they systematically or occasionally take part in universally accessible sports. This was confirmed by the findings of a survey conducted in 2013 by the CBOS polling centre on a random sample of 904 adult Polish

citizens. A total of 66 percent of respondents to the survey, entitled *Aktywność fizyczna Polaków* (The Physical Activity of Poles), said they “engaged in sports or physical exercises in the past 12 months”. Forty percent of respondents were physically active on a regular basis and 26 percent did so sporadically. The most popular forms of recreation (in the survey also referred to as sports, types of physical activity and physical exercises) were cycling (51 percent of respondents), swimming (28 percent), running and jogging (18 percent) and hiking (16 percent). Men (69 percent) were more likely to go in for sports than women (63 percent) and residents of urban areas (72 percent) more were more active in this respect than rural population (56 percent). When the respondents were classified by social and professional

groups, sport was most popular among pupils and students (95 percent, with physical education classes taken into account), managerial staff, specialists and people with higher education (88 percent). Almost three quarters of respondents (70 percent) engaged in sporting activities to become or stay healthy, 61 percent did so for pleasure, 47 percent to just feel better and “relieve stress and stay in good shape,” 34 percent to spend their free time with family and friends and 24 percent to have a better figure [*Aktywność fizyczna Polaków* 2013].

Until not so long ago, Poland was behind most European Union member states in terms of sporting and pro-health activities that the Polish public engaged in. This is no longer so and Polish people have caught up considerably with countries that have for years led the way in this respect. This state of affairs is extremely advantageous for both individual people and the entire society. However, researchers into social affairs are not satisfied with just diagnosing changes, even such dynamic and valuable changes, but they try to determine the cause of the change and detect the regularities that triggered such transformations.

A majority of the Polish public are unaware what has led to the current state of affairs and as they try to identify the causes, they think of the central and local governments whose formal responsibilities include the development of physical culture in our country. To some Poles, the reason behind the growing significance of sport is the higher number of compulsory physical education classes on all levels of the schooling system. Others believe the reasons include Poland's effective organization of sport, good performance of our athletes at major sporting events and the well-functioning mass culture that ensures common access to sports news. Some also attribute the present situation to the steadily improving legislation, including the law on sports, as well as over 3,000 “Orlik” football pitches that have been built for local communities, in addition to football stadiums constructed especially for the Euro 2012 European football championships, indoor arenas built for the 2014 Volleyball World Championship, hundreds of kilometres of new bicycle trails, thousands of gyms and fitness clubs and the most prestigious sporting events held in Poland (Euro 2012, Volleyball World Championship, Volleyball World League finals). All the measures and events listed above certainly played a major role in “getting the Polish public started” and brought sports into the lifestyles of Polish people.

## Material and methods

However, our interests concern other domains, where we believe we can find the factors that have most contributed to the transformation studied in this paper. We point our attention, then, to society, social culture and changes that have occurred within society and culture. Here is

where we shall search for the factors and determinants behind the revived interest in sporting activity. We will use theories of lifestyle whose typological criteria are factors that are external to individuals and communities. Rather than endogenous, these factors are totally exogenous to sport and include affluence, education, place of residence, occupation, optimism, cultural models, rationalism and so on. In other words, as we examine the presence of different kinds of universally accessible sport in the evolving lifestyles of Poles, we shall try to identify the causative factors in the altered structure of Polish society on the one hand and the (post-) modern nature of culture on the other.

Aiming to solve the research problem formulated above, we will outline and then use selected theories of lifestyle. We will be also aided by the most popular sociological theories of structural functionalism (Merton, Davis, Moore, Parsons) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, Rose, Turner), the latter theory being part of a broader tradition of interpretative, thoughtful sociology [Halas 1998: 353-357].

## A description of the terms “sport” and “lifestyle”

Due to the fact that sport is not a uniform domain of culture, but it assumes many forms and has a variety of functions, it is hard to give an explicit interpretation of sport. Sports are as a form of entertainment when people who practise them focus on relaxation, enjoyment and pleasant kinetic sensations and want to express themselves through sport. Competitive sport, in turn, is focused on bodily perfection, fitness and technical performance with ethical standards observed. Furthermore, there is professional sport, seen as a kind of labour aimed at attaining pragmatic and mercantile results. The main outcome of this concept of sport is a product – a sporting spectacle that is purchased by vast groups of consumers (sport fans) either directly (at stadiums, arenas, etc.) or, more frequently, via mass culture (the press, radio and television) [Krawczyk 2002: 112-114].

In this paper, we will refrain from trying to describe and dissect sport in all of its variations and mindsets. Instead, we will concentrate our attention on sport as a social and cultural phenomenon with recreational and entertainment qualities and sport as a component of a community's life, entwined in complex systems of existential, social and symbolic dependencies. We will focus on sport as an activity that is, or should be, pursued by lots of people in every human community regardless of social class, sex, age, education, affluence, place of residence and access to power. This paper concentrates on universally accessible sport, sport for all, mass sport, health-oriented sport, recreational sport and simple physical recreation activities.

Now that we have decided what variations of sport will not concern us here and what kind of sport we will be discussing instead, let us now try to characterize the concept of lifestyle. In social sciences, sociology in particular, lifestyle is an important descriptive, analytical and explanative term. Sociological literature often uses the more general term “style,” which A. L. Kroeber understands as a distinctive trait that refers to form and manner rather than substance and content [Kroeber 1963].

The notion of lifestyle did not emerge in social sciences until less than 50 years ago and social scientists often use related concepts such as “everyday life,” “way of life,” “custom” and “ethos”. Sociological literature provides many examples of all of these concepts being used interchangeably. In her fundamental book entitled *Etos rycerski i jego odmiany* (The Ethos of Chivalry and Its Variants), M. Ossowska defines ethos as the lifestyle of a community [Ossowska 1973: 7]. Similarly, N. Elias uses the term “custom” and the broad meaning he attributes to it overlaps with the concept of lifestyle [Elias 2010].

According to A. Siciński, an outstanding expert in this field, the concept of lifestyle refers to daily routines, the motivation behind the routines and the manner in which people use different objects. A lifestyle is a set of day-to-day behaviours of individuals and communities, behaviours that are distinctive in terms of form and manner. Under this definition, a lifestyle comprises behaviours and the motivation behind them as well as the functions of things that are the objectives, the results or the means of the behaviours [Siciński 2002: 137-140]. The notion of lifestyle is commonly used as a research category to help researchers describe the distinctive features of the everyday lives of different communities. Authors come up with numerous lifestyle typologies that can be roughly divided into behavioural typologies (pertaining to immediate reality) and humanistic, thoughtful typologies where primary significance is given to theoretical and hermeneutical constructs. Literary sources provide examples of holistic typologies that encompass social life in its entirety, as well as typologies that are limited to specific spheres of social life (work, culture, entertainment, sport, etc.) [Palska 2000: 335-359].

Sociological literature features many typologies and classifications of lifestyles, based on different kinds of criteria. Some of the most noteworthy criteria include e.g. social location of style, behaviours and motivation behind them, external determinants (economics, schooling, urbanization, occupation, etc.), the correlates of certain social categories (gender, age, profession, etc.), lifestyle functions (conformism, innovation, ritualism, withdrawal and protest) [Merton 1982], differences between conscious choices people make on a daily basis (*homologies*) and combinations of two and more criteria in different configurations [Ludtke 1989].

## Social determinants of a sporting lifestyle

Sport as a component of lifestyle was studied many years ago by Zbigniew Krawczyk, who noticed that most theoreticians on quality of life believed that economic and cultural development and the higher standard of living that came with it did not automatically guarantee better quality of life. Economic and cultural development can degrade both the somatic (physical culture) and spiritual sphere of a human being, because technologization can eliminate physical activity and labour that used to be natural. The urge to satisfy one’s material needs (in conformity with the logic of modern society) may curb people’s possibilities to satisfy their social and symbolic needs, including needs that belong in the domain of physical culture [Krawczyk 1983: 296-310]. Without trying to substantiate this assertion in greater detail, we shall assume – adopting a clearly different perspective in our analysis – that the distinctive structure of modern society, high quality of life, well-educated public and so on, all have a beneficial effect on active sports consumption and increase the significance of sporting lifestyles.

The Polish public is a modern society in the final development stage, gravitating towards becoming a post-modern society. This is to say that Poland meets criteria which are distinctive to communities of this kind, such as: mechanised production, growing demand for qualified employees, growing importance of science, declining significance of religion, extensive urbanisation, prevalence of rational thinking and so on. At the same time, societies like these are dominated by consumerism, hedonism and information technology which pervades all areas of life. Employees in such societies migrate from the production sector to the services sector and individuals and communities are also exposed to greater risks [Szczepanski 1992]. When seen that way, Poland has all the distinctive features of a Western society. And yet, Poland is still different in that it once experienced a totalitarian system called socialism, that is, it has gone a road that no society in the West has ever had to go [Bennett, Savage, Silva 2010].

The Polish society still differs in many respects from so-called Western societies, but it has been rapidly eliminating differences that occurred through history. It has been doing so at a rate like no other country has attained. This progress is a huge source of motivation, as it not only helps to systematically bridge development gaps, but it gives power to further modernization. Compared to other countries in the European Union, Poland is a leader in terms of the proportion of people with higher education. In 2012, people with a university degree accounted for 36 percent of European Union citizens aged 30-34, whereas in Poland, the proportion was 39 percent, which was above the European average. It is noteworthy that 25 years ago, the figure in Poland was below 10 percent [*Wyższe wykształcenie Polaków na tle*

*Unii Europejskiej – statystyki 2013*]. Education is a key factor in life expectancy, which is particularly evident in the male population. Men with primary education have a life expectancy of 67 years, while those with university-level education live 80 years on average. For example, well-educated male residents of the Wilanów district of Warsaw have a life expectancy of over 82 years, which means they can look forward to a longer life than men in Sweden and Switzerland. Men with poorer education who live the Praga Południe district of Warsaw have a life expectancy of only 69 years, which is 13 years less [Statistica... 2015].

The next factor that affects participation in sport is the affluence of Polish people, which is statistically higher than in the past [Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland 2012]. The gross domestic product (GDP) per head, one of the most common indicators used to measure the affluence of a given country's population, had doubled in Poland between 1989 and 2012. At present, Poland is the fourth least wealthy society in the European Union, but at the same time, it is the only post-communist country to have achieved such GDP growth [Eurostat: *Polski PKB na głowę czwarty od końca w UE 2014*]. The aforementioned factors, especially the high proportion of people with higher education, have led to a greater importance of rational thinking, a distinctive feature of research and academic communities.

Participation in sport is also largely influenced by place of residence and a lot depends on whether people live in cities or rural areas. Access to sports facilities is more difficult for people who live in villages, rural residents have worse education, are less affluent and their health is poorer than that of city dwellers. Villagers follow different cultural models and rural living is backward as such. The proportion of rural and urban population changed radically in Poland in the past decades as a high percentage of villagers migrated to cities. In 1921, over 75 percent of society lived in rural areas, while in 2010, the figure had declined to just above 38 percent [*Polska. Wybrane dane statystyczne 2010*]. The altered rural-urban proportions have encouraged a larger part of the Polish public to engage in models of physical activity that are typical of city dwellers who manifest greater activity with regards to participation in sport. What is more, urban models of participation in sport have been rapidly spreading to small towns and rural areas. This is evidenced by a national online survey conducted on a random-purposive sample of over 67,000 runners. The survey showed that in 2014, most novice runners, including women, came from small towns and villages [*Polska Biega. Raport – Narodowy Spis Biegaczy 2014*].

One extremely important trend that has affected the Polish public's participation in universally accessible sport is that vast groups of blue-collar workers have been migrating to the white-collar sector. What has been emerging in the process is a new kind of society,

described as a post-industrial, information, consumerist or knowledge-based society [Giddens 2006: 394-441]. In a knowledge-based economy, a majority of people with jobs are not involved in producing and distributing material goods and what they do instead is design, work out development strategies and deal with the marketing, distribution and providing of services. The consequence of this is that most of the public are white-collar workers and, quite naturally, they feel an urge to spend their spare time in an active form, which includes participation in sport. At the other extreme is the shrinking group of blue-collar workers who regard passive forms of relaxation, ones that do not require any physical effort whatsoever, as the best way of spending their free time. In other words, changes in the structure of employment stimulate interest and participation in sport [*Uczestnictwo Polaków w sporcie i rekreacji ruchowej w 2012*].

Polish citizens' participation in sport is also affected by the accumulated factor known as quality of life. According to the *Economist Intelligence Unit* weekly magazine, quality of life is assessed with the following parameters and measures: material well-being, health, political stability and security, family life, community life, climate and geography, job security, political freedom and gender equality. For example, a quality of life survey which the Millward Brown SA company conducted between October and December 2013 on a random, representative sample of 7,200 Warsaw residents, showed that depending on the above indicators, between 50 and around 70 percent respondents were satisfied with the quality of their lives. This high proportion not only testifies to changes that have taken place in Warsaw, but it is also a circumstance that prompts people to practise sports [Halicki 2014].

The above observation is corroborated in an earlier survey conducted by Janusz Czapinski and Tomasz Panek as part of a project called *Diagnoza społeczna 2013* (Social Diagnosis 2013). A total of 26,000 Polish people took part in the survey and the findings indicate that Polish people are increasingly optimistic, which is a systematic process. Over 80 percent of respondents to the survey said they were satisfied with their lives. According to Czapinski, this is "a most uplifting" situation. These findings are confirmed on a quarterly basis in Eurobarometer surveys in which Poles consistently come across as the most optimistic society in the European Union [Czapinski, Panek 2013].

Another study, published in the Bertelsmann Foundation's report on social justice, shows that Poland ranks 16th in terms of social justice, which is slightly below the European average (this league table is topped by Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands). At the same time, however, when it comes social justice Poland has been the fastest improving country in Europe. In 2008, we came in last in the standings, whereas now we are in the middle of the league table. No other country in our

region has advanced so fast, which is particularly evident in the decrease of poverty risk. In the past seven years, poverty risk in Poland declined from 33 to 25 percent. We are the leaders in our region in terms of access to education. The social background of Polish pupils does not hinder education and as far as social standing is concerned, Poland has the highest social mobility of all countries in the European Union. The Bertelsmann Foundation's report also finds that the internal division of the European Union into the wealthy and stable North and the struggling South continues to deepen. In the report, Poland is classified as part of the wealthy and stable North [Wielinski, Matusiak 2014: 16-17].

As a result of the social phenomena and processes listed above, a growing part of the Polish public are becoming increasingly aware of the need to take part in sport. A higher number of people are also involved in sport-related social practice, as evidenced by the findings of empirical research [*Uczestnictwo Polaków w sporcie i rekreacji ruchowej w 2012*], as well as everyday observations of social life in Poland. One cannot remain oblivious to the great many of Poles who ride bicycles, roller-skate, jog in parks and other green areas, play football on local pitches, carry skiing and windsurfing equipment on the roofs of their cars and so on. It is also evident that more and more people have been attending all kinds of picnics, festivals and other sporting and recreational events [*Wyjazdy na wypoczynek 2008*]. A good example of this new situation are numerous running events which have been extremely popular with the public recently. The Warsaw Marathon in 2013 had a record number of around 10,000 participants and a record number of viewers turned up to cheer for the contestants.

Turnout has markedly increased at nearly all open running events. This is particularly true about marathons (e.g. the marathon in Cracow was completed by 4,415 contestants in 2013 and 1,360 in 2008, the marathon in Poznan by 5,678 in 2013 and 2,640 in 2008, the marathon in Debno by 2,074 in 2014 and only 713 in 2008). Running events on shorter distances are becoming increasingly popular as well. For example, 11,149 people finished a half-marathon in Warsaw in 2014, as compared to 2,371 in 2008. A total of 31,688 runners took part in the spring marathon in Warsaw in 2014 [MaratonyPolskie.pl. 2014]. The growing interest among potential participants leads to brand new events. The Running Festival in Krynica in 2013 drew 8,000 runners, as compared to just 4,000 the year before [Tycner 2014]. A total of 6,000 skiers raced in 2014 in Poland's most prestigious cross-country skiing event called Bieg Piastów, while in 1976, only 531 people had taken part 531 [Meka 2014: 182].

None of that means, however, that participation in sport is commonplace in Poland. It definitely is not, nor does it live up to the expectations. Participation in sport

is more universal in modern societies in Europe and beyond. This is particularly true about countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and so on. That is because those countries are better developed and civilised, or putting it more precisely, people in those countries are wealthier, better educated and more deeply aware of the need to engage in sports. Social life is also better organised in those countries and the population has better access to sports facilities [Dimitrov *et al.* 2006].

### Cultural determinants of a sporting lifestyle

In the section above, we discussed social determinants that have helped change the Polish public's participation in universally accessible sport by turning sporting activities into a prominent part of Polish people's lifestyles. Now let us turn to cultural variables which on the one hand are first produced by society and then become attractive cultural models, while on the other hand, they turn into forces that prompt people to behave in ways that are expected and accepted by their social environment. Austrian psychologist and neurologist Sigmund Freud noticed this in the past. Freud considered culture to be an instrument used to enslave people and a way to limit their capacity to satisfy their natural drives.

Let us, then, point our attention to the elements of culture that have been just as important in encouraging Polish people to embrace sporting lifestyles. To begin with, such elements include dominant ideals, values, norms and behaviour patterns which often stem from tradition and customs. Great sport journalist Tomasz Hopfer was the first public figure in Poland to use television and other mass-media means to start extensive efforts aimed at promoting jogging and running among Poles. In Hopfer's days, a majority of the public regarded jogging as something unreasonably extravagant, a whim and failure to conform with a fixed cultural order. Sometimes jogging was even treated as a deviation. Joggers were sometimes mocked and insulted and shown gestures with a clearly disapproving and scornful meaning. Those who treated joggers like "freaks" went even as far as to set dogs on them<sup>1</sup>.

The Polish society is distinctive for its strong attachment to the traditional system of Catholic norms and values where the faithful are encouraged to cultivate spiritual and intellectual values at the expense of physical development, fitness and health. This tradition is barely present anymore in the teachings of the Church as such, but it is still there in the consciousness and attitudes of a

<sup>1</sup> Polish Football Association (PZPN) president Michal Listkiewicz told the Orange Sport television channel that in the past, people who jogged to stay in shape had been treated as "freaks" by a large part of the public.

considerable part of Catholics, especially those with poor education and those who live in rural areas. The problem is that many members of the Church hierarchy and many lay Catholics refuse to open their minds to modern teachings that follow the Second Vatican Council (Second Vatican Council: 1962-65), especially the teachings of John Paul II, who laid the theological and philosophical foundations for the modern, Catholic concept of sport [Dziubinski 2008: 143-200; Dziubinski 2014a, 2015].

Culture in Poland, including sports culture, has been going through changes on many levels. Over the past decade, significant changes have taken place in terms of how the values of physical culture are accepted by the public. In the past, in the days of Jozef Pilsudski and then in the days of socialist rule, Poland attributed fundamental importance to the utilitarian values of sports. The primary objective was to prepare citizens for becoming reliable workers and defenders of the country. When it comes to work, fitness nowadays is no longer as important as it used to be, because physical labour only constitutes a fraction of Polish people's professional activity. The defence capabilities of Poland do not, in turn, solely depend on the physical shape of soldiers, but on access to cutting-edge information technology and competence in using the technology during conflicts [Dziubinski 2014: 74-80].

Empirical studies show that contemporary Poles are fond of aesthetic, hedonistic and agonistic values [Urych 2010] and are keen to pursue the values by engaging in sporting activity. They want to make sure that their bodies look good and conform with the latest aesthetic trends, they seek pleasure in being physically active and they like to experience positive emotions that are bound with sporting competition. Contemporary participants in sport feel a distinctive urge to seek extreme excitement in sport which, accordingly, is provided by sports referred to as "extreme" or "adrenaline-driven". People who practise such sports like to say "no risk, no fun" but this is not some arbitrary risk in cultural terms, because these people expose themselves to actual risks. To them, climbing a cliff with protection is pleasant, but the real fun is to climb without any protection equipment so that the slightest wrong move could cause the climber to fall off the cliff and die. The urge to expose oneself to extreme risks and the constant pursuit of new and more powerful sensations which, according to participants in extreme sports, are also more pleasant, are distinctive features of post-modern societies. Such societies are founded on sophisticated consumption that can never be satisfied, and on an endless quest for escalating excitement. "The post-modern body", Zygmunt Bauman writes, "is above all a recipient of sensations. It consumes sensations and digests them". "When fitness is so defined, then to keep the body fit is to feel excited at the sight of stimuli and feel happy about consuming them. Physical fitness is less about the feats that the body can accomplish than

it is about the profundity of sensations experienced as the feats are being accomplished. It is all about the sensations and these should be fascinating, astonishing, enthralling and rapturous" [Bauman 1995: 90-91]. In the case of most members of the modern society, "there is no demand for the biceps for workers and soldiers", for bodies subjected to exercise and strict discipline. Instead, the demand is there for bodies which are fit in terms of being ready to receive sensual stimuli, to feel delight and unforgettable sensations bound with physical and other activities, and to experience pleasure of other kind [Bejin 1985: 211].

Similar trends are also found in societies which are better developed than Polish society, but in those countries such values are pursued by many more people than in Poland. That is because those societies have had a longer tradition of cultivating sporting values and they have for longer been dominated by rational ideals that attribute high significance to attractive physical appearance, kinetic pleasures and positive emotions. All of these have been rooted more deeply in the consciousness and attitudes of citizens in those countries than in Poland, and for a longer time. In a way, the organisation of culture in western societies forces the public to take part in sport. Failure to conform sets off social control and those who are not involved in any sport encounter informal negative sanctions from society, such as bewilderment, derision, cutting remarks and so on. In other words, participation in sport is a cultural norm, whereas failure to participate is regarded as a divergence from the norm and fixed order, or even as deviation.

In our Polish society, culture is beginning to have an increasingly pro-sport effect and participants in sport are more frequently gratified with symbolic rewards such as respect, recognition and social prestige. Sport consumption in Poland is starting to elevate people's value and signify affiliation with upper social classes [Dziubinski 2013: 27-47]. Participation in sports is not interpreted exclusively in the context of benefits such as good health and fitness, but above all in symbolic categories. Research into consumption was pioneered by, among others, Max Weber, who asserted that rather a means to an end, consumption in a modern society was the purpose of the lives of individuals and communities [Weber 1984]. T. Veblen, in turn, believed that ("ostentatious") consumption was meant to demonstrate people's social standing and economic advantage over others [Veblen 1971]. In a (post-) modern society, according to J. Baudrillard, consumption becomes a social activity with a broad spectrum of signs and symbols of tremendous social importance. The material aspect of consumption ceases to play the main role and is replaced by the symbolic aspect [Baudrillard 1998]. This is what has happened to sport consumption, which allows individuals and communities to build up social prestige, or conversely, they deprive themselves of such prestige when they fail to take part in sport consumption.

An extremely important role in changing Polish people's attitude to sport has been played by the so-called new health paradigm that has recently become popular and replaced the biomedical paradigm that prevailed so far [Maszczak 2014: 167-180]. As a result of this transition, the concept of health is no longer perceived in negative terms and interpreted the absence of a disease. Understood like this, “health” was solely used with reference to problems with the condition and functions of the human body, whereas now, health denotes positive phenomena and is linked to the quality of life. Terms bound with the biomedical paradigm, such as disease, hospital, treatment, therapy and patient have been replaced by such categories as good health, prevention, check-up, care and person. As a result, the burden of responsibility for public health has shifted from health care services and medical and pharmacological therapy to individuals as well as medical prophylactics that makes the most of sporting activity, adjusted to the social and demographic characteristics of individual people. Such a sporting activity aims to build up health through care and preventive measures that involve movement [Rekowski 2011: 164-185]. The change of the dominant health paradigm has turned members of Polish society into sovereign individuals when it comes to taking responsibility for their own health. It has also helped strengthen participation in sports among the Polish public.

## Summary and conclusions

In conclusion, Poland has seen a revival of sporting activity in society and significant changes have taken place in the lifestyle of Polish people. To a large extent, the changes mean an increased presence of different forms of sporting activity. The main reasons behind the Polish public's rekindled interest in engaging in sports are changes that have taken place over the recent years in Poland's social structure and in Polish culture.

The most important changes in the social structure include:

- a surge in the number of people with higher education;
- increased affluence of Polish people;
- a higher percentage of white-collar workers;
- migration from rural areas to cities;
- improved access to sports equipment and facilities.

Each of the social variables listed above had either a direct or, usually, indirect impact on the Polish public's sport-related activity, but it was not until they became aggregated that they turned into a real, major force that has altered the lifestyle of Poles, giving an important status to different forms of sporting activity.

A role just as important has been played by cultural variables that are somehow complementary to the social variables. The basic cultural variables are as follows:

- the prevalence of aesthetic and hedonistic models of physical culture in society;
- the increased prestige and significance of sport consumption in the public's consumption of culture;
- informal social control has been activated in society, leading to positive sanctions for engaging in sporting activity and negative sanctions for refusing to do so;
- there has been a growing number of people who, guided by rational and empirical truths, cease to interpret the success of others through the categories of theological or biological determinism and instead, they opt to act individually and together with others, also when it comes to health and fitness;
- a growing percentage of people accept the truth that good health primarily depends on prevention and lifestyle rather than hospital treatment and medication;
- Polish people top the statistics in the European Union in terms of optimism and satisfaction with life.

The above changes in the cultural sphere have had more and less indirect influence on the public's attitudes towards sporting activities. This is to say that culture is a socialization factor that prompts individuals and communities to internalize sporting lifestyles. The acceptance of such lifestyles meets with positive sanctions and symbolic rewards, whereas individuals and communities that reject such lifestyles expose themselves to negative sanctions and symbolic retributions which are often just as unbearable as financial penalties.

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## Sport powszechny w stylu życia społeczeństwa polskiego: przyczyny przemian

**Słowa kluczowe:** sport powszechny, styl życia, społeczeństwo polskie, przyczyny przemian

### Streszczenie

Cel. Celem pracy jest próba diagnozy renesansu sportu powszechnego i jego obecności w stylu życia społeczeństwa polskiego. W sposób zaś szczególnie ustalenie przyczyn takiego stanu



rzeczy, tj. wskazanie kierunków poszukiwań oraz czynników czy determinantów, które odegrały dominującą rolę w interesujących nas przemianach.

Metody. Do realizacji tak sformułowanego celu wykorzystano najbardziej nośne teorie stylów życia oraz ustalenia Andrzeja Sicińskiego, polskiego socjologa, którego dokonania na temat stylu życia budzą uznanie w świecie nauki. Pomocniczo wykorzystano także niezwykle ważne teorie socjologiczne, a mianowicie funkcjonalizmu strukturalnego i interakcjonizmu symbolicznego.

Wyniki. Z analiz prowadzonych w porządku racjonalnym, przy wykorzystaniu wielu danych empirycznych, wynika, że podstawową rolę w renesansie sportu powszechnego społeczeństwa polskiego i przemian w stylu życia Polaków w tym względzie, odegrały dwie podstawowe grupy czynników, wynikających z

jednej strony ze zmiany struktury społecznej (wykształcenie, zamożność, struktura zatrudnienia itp.) i z drugiej zmiany charakteru kultury (dominujące idee, wzory zachowań, kontrola społeczna, presja kulturowa itp.).

Dyskusja i wnioski. Przedstawione zmiany w sferze kulturowej wywarły bezpośredni lub bardziej pośredni wpływ na zachowania społeczeństwa w dziedzinie aktywności sportowej. Wpływ ten polega niejako na socjalizacyjnym oddziaływaniu kultury na jednostki i zbiorowości oraz orientowaniu ich na internalizację sportowego stylu życia. Akceptacja takiego stylu życia spotyka się z sankcjami pozytywnymi, symbolicznymi nagrodami, natomiast jego odrzucenie naraża jednostki i zbiorowości na sankcje negatywne, symboliczne kary, które często bywają niemniej dokuczliwe niż materialne.