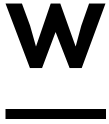 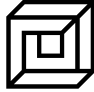 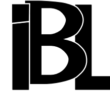 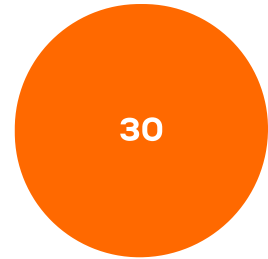

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The subject of the article is the importance of classed representations in shaping the attitude towards the body and constructing their own subjectivity by people from the working class. The text is based on a qualitative analysis of individual in-depth interviews with working-class women and men, as well as reality shows with the participation of the working class: Project Lady and Warsaw Shore. Contrary to previous studies (Skeggs 1997), in the light of the conducted analyzes, class representations are a negative point of reference not only for women, but also for the majority of adult men from the working class. The study shows that while it is difficult to reconstruct the representation of an attractive body that would be the object of desire and aspiration of the studied group (middle-class patterns of caring for the body are not accepted uncritically), the key in the construction of subjectivity is striving to distinguish oneselves from the representation of the working class functioning in popular culture (the figure of chavs) and from people who are at the bottom of the social structure (homeless and bums).

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“Not the Tracksuit, Please, It Sends the Wrong Message”: The Role of Body Image in Shaping Subjectivity in the Working Class

> *Projekt Lady* was conceived to make a space for those who rarely grace the public’s thoughts. Those the world left behind. We believe in second chances, however. We believe each of the 13 rebel girls participating in our experiment is capable of change and believe that each of them will leave the palace in Rozalin a confident, strong, classy woman, ready to take on whatever challenge life throws at her.

Delivered by an off-screen narrator, these words open the first episode of the fifth season of *Projekt Lady* (TVN, 2016–2020), a reality show about young girls from the working class, who a group of instructors try to remold by teaching them manners, improving their physical fitness, and putting them through psychological training.[1] The producers made no secret of the show’s critical lens – it deliberately chose girls who were prone to physical altercations, offensive language, substance abuse, and had trouble landing and holding down jobs, to offer them a “life-changing metamorphosis” which would remake them into “better versions of themselves.” The transformation naturally involved revamping the girls’ appearance – their “revealing” outfits and garish makeup were replaced by more mainstream looks, and the whole process was overseen by a team of experts that included fashion stylists, makeup artists, and fitness trainers. Over the course of the episodes, the young women are critiqued for their previously inappropriate appearance, and subsequently instructed on what to do to refashion themselves into “women with class.”

Projekt Lady, TVN promotional materials

Foregrounding the participants' pre-transformation appearance and behavior is symptomatic of popular-cultural representations of the working and lower classes. The labor required by the metamorphosis, on the other hand, is supposed to illustrate the struggle to achieve control over one's own body, characteristic of the dominant classes and their associated respectability.[2] Their portrayal stigmatizes the working class as neglected, overweight, and flaunting their sexuality, a framing that sees them as incapable of meeting the body care standards established in the dispositions and tastes of the middle class.[3] In this essay, I attempt to retrace and analyze the role of these class-ified representations of the body in shaping working-class subjectivity in Poland, basing my inquiry on a study of 36 extended interviews revolving around bodily practices that were conducted with men and women aged 16–65 for the doctoral project "Stosunek do ciała wśród przedstawicieli klasy ludowej" [Attitudes Toward the Body Among Working- and Lower-Class Individuals]. The interviews had two parts: the first sought to reconstruct the picture of the interviewees' everyday bodily practices, while the second explored their attitudes toward body image in the public sphere and the reception of expert messaging on body care standards. As research material, the project also included 50 extended interviews with working- and lower-class individuals, conducted for two projects investigating the intersection of class and lifestyle: *Klasowe style życia i kultura pod pochmurnym niebem* [*Class Lifestyles and Culture Under Cloudy Skies*] and *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej* [*Cultural Practices of the Working Class*].[4] These interviews mostly explored the everyday life of their subjects, while the excerpts I use in this essay pertain primarily to patterns

of consumption and body care practices.

Using that research material, I examine the impact of both stereotypical depictions of the corporeality of the working class and hegemonic representations of what constitutes attractive bodies in terms of body care practices and external appearance. This analysis of the internalization of class-coded representations by working- and lower-class individuals also serves as a starting point for further reflection on the mechanisms used to maintain and reconstruct class divisions. In this essay, I define the working class according to the approach proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, who divided society into an upper, a middle, and a lower class, distinguished on the basis of their access to three types of capital: economic, cultural, and social.[5] Bourdieu's concept of class was also used by the academics I worked with on the research projects this essay draws on.[6] In these projects, as well as in my own academic work, the term "working class" includes skilled and unskilled manual workers, farmers, and service personnel in positions that do not require particular qualifications (e.g. cashiers, janitors, salespersons, call center employees). Interviewee recruitment was based primarily on economic and cultural capital, operationalized for research purposes as income, job type, and education. Those selected included workers with primary, vocational, technical, and secondary education, and, in special cases, graduates of post-secondary schools, but only if they worked jobs that met the requisite criteria and whose income did not exceed the salary ceiling, which the researchers set as the median monthly income in Poland (in 2016, when I began the interviews, it stood at roughly 2,500 PLN or €600).

Dissociation as a strategy in the struggle for respectability

Beverley Skeggs notes that one's image and the impression it produces have recently been recast as a form of personal responsibility, while appearance and behavior are becoming a way to invest in oneself and are judged for the exchange value they generate.[7] As this emphasis on the deliberate creation of one's "self" ultimately disrupts class relations, depictions of class functioning in popular culture are a key conduit for symbolic violence. Among examples of such depictions, Skeggs includes television shows and newspaper stories exploring elements of the working-class lifestyle such as hen parties, in which the participants are portrayed as disgusting: loud, vulgar and defiant, inebriated, and visibly overweight.[8]

Displayed in such a manner, Skeggs argues, bodies are used to signal class background through association and moral euphemism. In other words, representations of class carry a specific moral load and only some of them implicitly confer respectability, currently one of the most prevalent and ubiquitous indicators of class. Respectability decides how we classify others, how we speak with and about them, how we determine who deserves respect, who we identify with, and who we distinguish ourselves from.[9] In Skeggs' interpretation, the ability to define respectability indicators is a privilege of the middle class – hence the efforts to construe the category around attributes of class distinction and the enshrining of the white, heterosexual, middle-class body as the paragon of respectability. As such, this becomes a real or imagined Other, casting the harsh light of judgment and critique on every aspect of life. Class status, Skeggs concludes, likewise haunts the everyday lives of the working class, experienced as uncertainty, resentment, persistent inadequacy, and anger, all of which are

affective responses to the discomfort brought on by the sense that one is not an independent subject, but rather an object of constant judgment.

As demonstrated by researchers, the shame engendered by this discourse of contempt plays a key role in the self-regulation and self-disciplining of the body by working- and lower-class people,[10] while the emotions arising from class distinction are an important driver of fashion and beauty industry consumption.[11] The working class, however, is reluctant to reflexively internalize either negative depictions of itself or the ubiquitous representations of the middle class (especially in advertising messaging); on the contrary, it is more likely that such will be met with resistance, or absorbed and remolded by everyday practices. Although the women whom Beverley Skeggs spoke with described their position in the class hierarchy through the prism of cultural discourses of classification (which define, among other issues, who deserves respectability and why), they did not internalize them implicitly and unambiguously, but rather formed them into a collage of common class representations and the meanings underpinning them.[12] The working class continues to develop multiple strategies for distinguishing itself from its representations and classifications mainstreamed by popular culture, based around consumption patterns, interior decoration, entertainment choices, and, above all, body styling. Research shows that one way of remolding prevalent cultural classifications involves efforts to redefine the rules of group affiliation in order to situate oneself outside a group and then critique its attributes. Dissociation from the depictions of the group one belongs to, which frame it as pathological and deserving of criticism, seems a prerequisite to meeting mainstream norms of respectability and gaining social approval.

The representations that the interviewees in the conducted research sought to dissociate themselves from are interrogated in the next part of the essay. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's

relational understanding of class lifestyles, and Beverley Skeggs' findings on the significance of class representation in the reproduction of class divisions, I asked my interviewees about the specific depictions of the body that elicited their disgust or aversion. As I sought to retrace the figures that appeared spontaneously in the interviewees' accounts and their particular characteristics, I decided against showing pictures or giving examples during the interviews. This decision was prompted by Skeggs' research experiences, as she recounted that the moral connotations of the working class, elicited by its prevalent cultural representations, were often brought up spontaneously by individuals during their qualitative interviews – for example when they discussed local issues.[13] And indeed, in keeping with some early intuitions, questions in my interviews about how the interviewees would not want to look or what sort of fashion or accessory choices they disapproved of usually prompted some kind of story about the group they were trying to dissociate themselves from and how they recreated the specific moral attributes ascribed to it (and which, I soon realized, came easier to them than reconstructing their own hygiene and body care practices). This, in turn, made it possible to reconstruct class representations functioning in Polish culture and their attendant class dynamics. Of particular interest to me was the question of whether potential opposition to particular visual representations of the working-class body leads to the formation of autonomous personal narratives about desired appearances and the treatment of the body. Consequently, the study of the meaning of representation became the starting point for further reflection on the capability of the working class to disrupt existing class hierarchies and their particular rules.

To not be like the homeless: the fear of being declassed

One issue that most of the interviewees agreed on was the definition of what constitutes body care. To the majority, this meant personal hygiene – when asked how they understood the phrase "taking care of the body" or what personal care practices they followed, most interviewees brought up regular washing.

> **I have a question about everyday life: how do men and women care for their bodies?**
>
> How? Well, you gotta wash. Whole body, the works (Stefan, 47, butcher).
>
> **What is the most important element in taking care of your appearance? And what does personal body care entail?**
>
> First and foremost, personal hygiene – brushing your teeth, washing your hands, washing yourself. I forgot where I was going with this… ah, that I need to smell good – deodorant, I mean (Aldona, 28, food processing worker).
>
> Taking care of yourself means eating well – a diet, some say. Most people would also say staying active. Personal hygiene is a must. You need to be clean, not look like a drifter, but that's important for health overall, not just body care (Janusz, 57, retiree / former serviceman).

Open disapproval of dirty clothes and body odor was mentioned primarily by interviewees facing financial difficulties, like 32-year-old Lidia, temporarily unemployed, with prior experience in menial jobs such as cleaning.

> **Is taking care of your appearance important to you?**
>
> No.
>
> **Why not?**
>
> Why would it be? I don't think that… why should appearance matter? What matters is what's inside you. Am I right?
>
> **What does taking care of your body mean to you? Body care?**
>
> It means looking agreeable.
>
> **And what's agreeable to you?**
>
> Not having dust on my face.
>
> **What else?**
>
> No foul smells (Lidia, 32, unemployed / cleaner).

Although Lidia initially denies the importance of external appearance, she later admits that some forms of neglect are wholly unacceptable. She also adds, unprompted, that she tries to impart similar rules of personal hygiene to her children: "I brought up my kids to be clean and neat. And to be mindful of how they smell." Lidia sees the lack of personal hygiene as an affront to human dignity and a transgression that may result in social isolation. Similar undertones can be found in the remarks of a young farmer, also from the very low income bracket:

> Having grimy hands, not using any soap, any water to wash, that's just… I wouldn't be able to look at myself in the mirror (Jarosław, 31, farmer).

When the interviewees emphasize the importance of a washing regime and stress their own hygiene standards, they might also be seeking to distinguish themselves from those on the lowest rungs of the societal ladder. Soiled clothes and bad body odor are typically associated with extreme poverty and homelessness,

as confirmed by many of the interviewees:

> **How would you finish the sentence: "I would never want to look like…"?**
>
> A homeless person.
>
> **Why such a negative association with homelessness?**
>
> I think of them as unkept, disheveled, in old, ragged clothes, and so on (Michał, 27, security guard).

Some interviewees went as far as rejecting valid cultural trends – such as facial hair, currently fashionable with middle- and upper-class men – if they carried even a trace of association with images of homelessness:

> Whenever I see a beard like that, that makes me think of a bum, a drifter from downtown. But it's possible I'm behind with what's hip. I don't know, maybe it's attractive to some people, I see it differently. I associate it with neglect (Emil, 28, real estate office worker).

Emphasizing the visual differences between themselves and those in extreme poverty may stem from an interviewee's realization that their own limited access to economic capital situates them relatively closely to that group. Therefore, by emphasizing their own commitment to personal hygiene, interviewees seek to highlight the gap between themselves and those living below the minimum subsistence level, and, at the same time, subvert the association between grime and manual labor itself. Farmer Jarosław stresses that laborers often pay much more attention to hygiene and body care than others, offering the example of a local waste collector: "We have this guy, he's a little… the guy washes once or twice every day, he's up to his ears in trash all day, but still takes such care of himself" (Jarosław, 31, farmer). Among the interviewees, strong approval for personal hygiene, sometimes even a little

exaggerated, seems to go hand in hand with open disdain for the homeless, whom the respondents see as a threat to the rest of society and themselves – as demonstrated in this statement from Wanda:

> The homeless, they look dreadful, because you can be homeless and still be clean, and these people are vagrants, stinkers. It's also very strange to me that the municipal guards would rather hand fines to grandmothers selling parsley at the bazaar without a permit than do something about these people. We sit on the same subway or bus seats that they do; maybe there are bugs there or something – these stinkers. I steer clear of them (Wanda, 53, homemaker).

One of the ways Wanda demonstrates her separateness from and superiority over those living on the streets is by emphasizing that personal hygiene and body care are just a question of choice. In her view, by "choosing" uncleanliness, the homeless validate their personal situation and social position, as evidenced by her nonchalantly labeling them "vagrants" and "stinkers." Similar derogatory names were used against the poor by the working-class individuals from New York City suburbs whom Michele Lamont studied in the 1990s for her book *The Dignity of Working Men*, in which she reconstructed their view of American society, along with its divisions and the rules governing relations of domination and power.[14] When Lamont's interviewees spoke about people above them in the social hierarchy, they went beyond competence and work ethic in their explanations of their positions, but whenever they were asked to describe those below them, they universally attributed their material and social status to their laziness and poor character. In my own interviews, those whom the respondents sought to distinguish themselves from by their neat appearance are presented as "bums," "drifters," "outcasts," "poorly educated," and "afflicted with low self-esteem," which could be interpreted

as evidence of their seeing the underclass as stripped of personal dignity.

> **Who do you believe cares less about hygiene?**
>
> No hard rule for that. Maybe aside from, let's say, social outcasts, but we're not talking about that now (Bartosz, 31, warehouse worker).
>
> **Do you ever meet people in your everyday life who don't take care of themselves, don't care for hygiene much?**
>
> I do. What kind of people are they? Usually folk with low self-esteem or poorly educated. There are also those, but it's much rarer, who are such workaholics that they no longer pay that area much attention. But the latter aren't entirely lost and can still be brought around (Balbina, 50, poultry processing plant worker).

Balbina's statement clearly distinguishes between "workaholics," in whose case the lack of hygiene is merely temporary, and the underclass, in whom, as the interviewee declared, self-neglect is ingrained by nature, predisposing the group as a whole to certain choices. Polish working-class individuals, like their American counterparts studied by Lamont – and unlike those in France, where the poorest are still considered "one of us" by the working class and believed to share a common class interest – make a considerable effort to delineate between themselves and the underclass, whom they see as perpetually feeding off state benefits and living on the streets. The emphasis on personal hygiene and the careful dissociation from those who do not show similar commitments is used here as proof that, despite limited means, the interviewees manage to retain their dignity – that they are still "staying afloat," so to speak. At the same time, however, this fierce resistance attests to their permanent fear of being declassed. The research material accumulated in the course of

the interviews corroborates the findings of Beverley Skeggs, whose interviewees expressed the fear of being declassed primarily in comments about the bodies of individuals they perceived as the "underclass." In this case, class distinction was manifested primarily in the emphasis placed by working-class individuals on being responsible for one's own body.[15]

To not be a *dresiarz* or a *blachara*: the pursuit of respectability by dissociation from representations of one's own class

In today's individualistic culture, the conscious and reflexive construction of identity also extends to the body,[16] viewed as malleable, fulfilled through everyday choices, and as an instrument of self-expression. Skeggs points out, however, that the ability to forge one's identity is a privilege of the middle class, which commands the economic and cultural capital needed to perfect its individualized self. Alas, such empowered subjectivity is far removed from the everyday experience of working-class women, whose role in culture is to embody not individualism, but rather the "masses" in contrast to which individualism can be construed. Their ontological status is predicated not on their individual selves as much as their ability to "fit in" with the popular narrative about working-class women – characterizing their relationships, style, lifestyle, and preferred entertainment – serving as a primary point of reference. Strategies of constructing a respectable self require them to possess knowledge of how the working class is positioned; these develop within their limited opportunity for self-actualization and largely involve contravening the identities that the cultural narrative assigns to working-class women.[17]

Working-class men and women are often stigmatized using the figure of the *dresiarz*[18] (the *Sebix* is another incarnation of the

figure used in Polish contexts) and the *dresiara*, its female counterpart (also appearing as a *blachara* or a *lambadziara*).[19] When asked about types of female appearance they considered objectionable, most interviewees mentioned looks they believed provocative or vulgar. This is exactly how many popular-cultural shows depict young working-class women – examples including the aforementioned *Projekt Lady* and another reality show, *Warsaw Shore*[20] (MTV Polska, 2013–2021), in which a group of young people live together and go out at night to party for the cameras.

Especially in its early years, *Warsaw Shore* was a hotbed for controversy and drew fierce public debate that raged across blogs and newspaper op-eds, where the show was analyzed by columnists and academics. Much of the discussion turned on moral outrage, with pundits calling the show "a total disaster," "the end of civilization,"[21] "puke,"[22] or "the lowest of the low [...] in the hierarchy of evil."[23] The producers, on the other hand, made no secret of the fact that they wanted to create a show that would explore the lifestyles of young working-class individuals, hailing from outside major urban areas, and package their stories for a middle- and upper-class audience. Jerzy Dzięgielewski, then-programing director for MTV, said as much in an interview with *Newsweek*, published on the heels of the first season's finale, in which he called *Warsaw Shore* "the most vulgar show on Polish television."

Warsaw Shore, promotional materials of the program producer

> According to Dzięgielewski, the audience (averaging 155,000 people every week) watches *Warsaw Shore* as a soap opera:
>
> – "My friend, a high-stakes banker guy, watches it out of curiosity. Watching people just like him would be boring. It's

> like a zoo."
>
> – "So what you're telling me is that a group of well-off bankers, lawyers, and media people is having fun at the expense of poorly educated, perpetually inebriated young people from the provinces?" I ask.
>
> – "We have their consent," Dzięgielewski assures me. "They're fully aware of what type of show they signed up for."[24]

Warsaw Shore and *Projekt Lady* depict young working-class women in similar ways. In both, the female participants swear and drink a lot, start fights with other women, and wear skimpy, provocative outfits, fake eyelashes, and fake nails in flashy colors. In *Warsaw Shore*, this framing is used to portray the women as prone to casual sex and building self-esteem from their ability to elicit male arousal. Likewise, in their pre-metamorphosis incarnations, the women in *Projekt Lady* are portrayed as being fond of shocking looks. "I love tattoos and provocative outfits. I like the attention," says one of the women featured in the show's fifth season. Foregrounding the unrestrained sexuality of working-class women here acts as a way of introducing the audience to the practices of the Other, who, Skeggs noted, is supposed to shock viewers with their uncivilized ways. Construed in such a manner, the cast of *Projekt Lady* then undergo a symbolic act of civilizing in the form of having the women put on the show's official uniform and studying their reactions. "No tits, no ass," one of the women tells the camera about her new attire, further assuring the audience of the belief that their earlier provocative appearance was a deliberate choice on their part, one they have a hard time giving up. We then watch as a camera locks onto one of the women, whimpering in terror while a professional manicurist clips her fake nails.

Projekt Lady, TVN promotional materials

Portraying working-class women as provocative, vulgar, and flaunting their sexuality drew universal opposition from my interviewees; although they did not refer to either of the shows directly, the interviewed women were consistent in their critique of and dissociation from such an image. One example can be found in an anecdote told by Agata, a 32-year-old sales associate:

> I had this one client at the store – I can't get her out of my head. She came in on Saturday... no, Sunday morning. Yeah, I had the morning shift on Sunday. She wore a pair of Daisy Dukes and black pantyhose with holes. No idea whether the holes were there on purpose or not... She was so slim... her legs were like that umbrella. Some kind of gal, right? She had these holes cut out here, her hair up, and she was either hungover or still drunk. And she says to me – she bought a beer and says to me: "Would you be so kind as to tell me the time, I slept over at a friend's and have no idea what day it is" [laughs]. So I said: "It's eight in the morning on a Sunday." Barely able to walk, she tells me she has to buy four more beers and asks for the time again. I told her to go to sleep. What a party animal [laughs]. Eight in the morning on a Sunday, some people just... That's what I'm talking about – it doesn't exactly fly, right? (Agata, 32, sales associate).

For Agata, her client's vulgar appearance immediately suggests a tendency toward alcohol abuse and promiscuity (the phrase "some kind of gal"; her spending the night at a friend's [in the Polish version of the story, the word for friend is gendered and implies that the friend is male – ed. note]). With a hint of outrage, the interviewee expresses disapproval of her client's fashion and lifestyle choices, all the while seeking to highlight their dissimilarity by way of binary opposites: the client likes to

spend her weekends partying and tends to lose track of time, while Agata is a responsible and disciplined employee, working the early shift on a Sunday.

The interviewees also show themselves capable of decoding representations operating in mainstream culture and recalling individual elements of depictions of lower-class women, including white knee-high boots, widely considered a symbol of poor taste, "warpaint" (excessive makeup), intensely bleached hair, and skimpy tops and skirts.

> **Is there something you would never put on?**
>
> White knee-high boots?
>
> **But why not, what's the association there?**
>
> Whenever I see them, I think of those girls, I don't know whether I can call them that… working girls, if you know what I mean (Ania, 20, tailor / student).
>
> I'm fortunate in that my daughters never walked with their midriffs bare, and have no tattoos or piercings on their bodies. My girls are normal. I wouldn't want my girls to walk around like those airheads, as I call them, in their indecent outfits and gaudy makeup. I wouldn't. I don't like it (Wanda, 53, homemaker).

Particularly interesting in that context are the remarks of 22-year-old waitress Ewa, who critiques that sort of appearance not because of her own individual antipathies, but because of her awareness of how mainstream culture tends to link such provocative looks with intellectual and moral deficits:

> I wouldn't want to look like these girls, the ones that look empty-headed, you know, wearing – although this might sound silly – wearing white knee-high boots, makeup so thick it looks as if it's about to fall off, platinum-blonde hair. No, I wouldn't want that. It looks comical to me. And because the

> stereotype that people who look like that are empty inside. That can be misleading, because sometimes it turns out that it's nothing more than just a style of dress. But the stereotype definitely influences that. I'd feel bad. I'd feel like – I don't know – a woman in the world's oldest profession. I don't think so (Ewa, 22, waitress).

While Ewa's statement indicates that working-class women are aware of the arbitrary nature of the rules shaping class representations in popular culture and may seek to question their legitimacy, they likewise realize that distancing oneself from the essence of such representations is often the only way of securing respectability. It is also symptomatic that Ewa highlights her aversion to an appearance that might connote sex work. Critiquing it as undesirable only confirms her awareness of how sexuality, expressed by specific features of external appearance and censured when excessive, is central to the representation of working-class women. As noted by Skeggs, the self-regulation of sexual practices, speech patterns, and outward appearance among working-class individuals is just another response to their positioning by sexual distinction.[25]

The interviewees also critiqued the seeming inability to adjust one's appearance to fit given circumstances, described as "overdressing," typically drawing representations of working-class women used by shows like *Warsaw Shore* – which depicts its female cast as lazy, focused on entertainment, and consequently prone to choosing outfits that work well in club / party settings – as a key frame of reference.

> I'm really amused by this so-called overdressing – you know, going to work in full party attire, with heavy makeup and all that. What I mean by that is this total inability to dress appropriately for the situation (Katarzyna, 25, sales associate).

> I like looking pretty, like when I'm going out or to a party,

> but like I said, I wouldn't want to copy anything, I prefer looking my own way. But I also have my own ways of dressing, for example when I go to Wolumen market to buy food, I don't do that wearing heels, but rather something more comfortable or sporty (Wanda, 53, homemaker).

In this case, building respectability involves demonstrating a specific set of cultural competences, manifested here in the ability to select appropriate attire and abide by dress codes, as well as attempts to stress that most working-class women believe the pursuit of entertainment to be just another element of life, alongside household labor and professional work, rather than the essence of their days. Another strategy of dissociating from certain class representations involves equating them with immaturity and youth, and thus something the interviewees eventually "grew out of."

> Back in the day we had these wild colors – I can't imagine what we were thinking, using all these greens and blues, really. Nowadays… I even laugh at myself just thinking about it. I sit down and think – are these really the colors I went with? If I saw someone using such harsh blues or greens today, I would immediately think "what happened here?" (Agata, 32, sales associate).

> Back when I was a teenager, I definitely paid that stuff much more attention. I don't remember all of it, but I was rather rude, with my hair bleached white using the strongest Joanna bleach available, the back stiffened to the side with hair product, my eyelashes painted blue; I was a bit hardcore in my pink sweater, a dumb Barbie doll walking down the street, but in denim and sneakers rather than high heels and a dress (Justyna, 35, preschool assistant).

Both male and female interviewees use youth and immaturity to explain the similarity of their own past stylization choices to stereotypical representations of the working class, and the

subsequent critique of adults adopting that sort of appearance is not applied exclusively to women. When asked about representations of men whom they considered distasteful, both men and women mention the *dresiarz* figure, a staple of Polish mainstream culture since the 1990s, primarily associated with young working-class men living in large *Plattenbau* housing projects and prone to aggression and violence. In British discourse, the *dresiarz* is paralleled by *chavs*, a descriptor used for young, white working-class men and women, widely believed unintelligent and lacking taste, immoral and prone to criminal activity.[26] The *dresiarz* and the *chav* have both been heavily exploited by popular culture, which usually portrays them as either dangerous or tragicomic.[27] Given the interviewees' statements, the image of the *dresiarz*, aside from the *de rigueur* sportswear, today includes a distinctive body type – the neck overdeveloped from weight training, sometimes assisted by the use of steroids, often with a thick chain around it – and a fast car. The style automatically evokes negative connotations, as can be seen in Marek's statement:

> I usually associate tracksuits with… what do I call it… this… I don't know… a thick-necked thug in sportswear, sitting in a BMW. A roughneck, so to speak. Which is not to say that I don't have a tracksuit myself, but I wear it around the house. I'd never go out wearing one (Marek, 36, construction worker).

Like the female interviewees who admit to wearing provocative outfits in the past but have since come to see them as distasteful and worthy of criticism, the interviewed men concede that while typical *dresiarz* attire is acceptable for boys and young men, adults wearing it evoke universally negative connotations.

> **What should a man wear for you to like it?**
>
> Not sportswear, that's for sure. A pair of jeans or sneakers,

> you know, somewhat sporty, but with a regular T-shirt, a sweater, or a sweatshirt. My husband would never wear khakis, especially pressed – that's not for him, but all I'm saying is that maybe more simple… something more simple in terms of clothing.
>
> **Why are you so against sportswear?**
>
> I just don't like it. It's good for kids in middle or secondary school. Because they have PE or whatever. But seeing 40- or 50-year-olds in sweatpants or a tracksuit, paired with loafers or something, that just isn't a good fit, regardless of how you cut it (Beata, 30, homemaker).
>
> I wore sportswear back in the day, but that was in middle school, plus I hung around with those sort of people, *dresiarze*, you know. But when I started technical high school, things changed, and I started wearing nice denim and so on… so it also depends on the people you're running with.
>
> **So your friends from technical high school don't wear tracksuits?**
>
> Yeah, that basically doesn't happen (Tomek, 19, student / apprentice cook).

Some of the statements suggest that the interviewees' antipathy toward the tracksuit stems not from their judgment of its aesthetics, but rather its inherent connotations of the figure of the *dresiarz*. The interviewees associate tracksuits with poverty, backwardness, and lack of taste, i.e. with the pathologizing representations of the working class that one has to dissociate from in order to paint oneself as resourceful and possessing higher moral qualifications.

> I don't wear a tracksuit either, I grew out of it. I wore it in middle school, but no longer did in high school.
>
> **Why?**
>
> I don't know. When I see *dresiarze* in the Praga district, I feel like I'm in another city. Damn, all those shabby buildings and tracksuits everywhere, because people still haven't caught on that they fell out of fashion a long time ago (Kamil, 27, gardener).

One significant example of how the *dresiarz* figure is perceived may be found in the one of the youngest interviewees' accounts of the *dresiarze* in his school, who are widely considered social outcasts and stand in stark contrast to the rest of the students. Their role in the school, as told by Marcin, may be read as a metaphor for their position in the class hierarchy of the group pathologized not only by the cultural messaging, but by the narratives of much of the working class itself.

> **From what you're saying, high school is quite tolerant when it comes to appearance, but there are groups whose appearance deviates from the rest, like *dresiarze*.**
>
> Yes, it's split roughly into two groups, making up most of the whole. There are other, smaller groups, like *dresiarze*, etc., but no one talks to them. Well, not literally, there's just no need to talk to them, because there's little to talk about. About six of them are so deep in it that there's nothing to be done about them, aside from maybe saying something once in a while, but that's it. They also affect the rest of us mentally, mainly in class – as teachers tend think less of all of us because of them. They have had a total of two reprimands or something (Marcin, 16, technical high-school student).

Contrary to the findings of Skeggs – who noticed that, while depictions of working-class women in late-twentieth-century British popular culture carried overwhelmingly negative

overtones, popular masculinity had some positive connotations – we would be hard-pressed, given the responses collected by the studies in question, to identify any contemporary representations of working-class masculinity that the interviewees would spontaneously reconstruct and identify with in a positive way. The *dresiarz* is the only consistent construct to appear across most of the narratives exploring male appearance, and serves as a negative reference point for the majority of the interviewees in the group.[28] The lack of positive representations of working-class masculinity may be driven by changes sweeping the labor market. According to Raewyn Connell, in the past, most paradigms of popular masculinity revolved around permanent employment in traditional occupations, while the contemporary working-class experience is based on precarity and employment uncertainty.[29] Furthermore, as author Elizabeth Dunn argues in *Privatizing Poland* – an ethnographic account of the post-1989 remaking of the Polish economy – even in the earliest days of efforts to introduce a "managerial culture" in Poland, much of the messaging and advice on professional appearance and behavior was aimed exclusively at white-collar workers, while impeccable hygiene and body care – indicative of the strong drive for success – was expected primarily from managerial staff. In popular culture (with Dunn giving the commercials for Frugo, a beverage targeted at teenagers, as an example), workers were portrayed as old, rigid, and unable to adapt to the country's new economic landscape, and, as a result, saddled with an image that was hard to identify with even in the earliest days of the transformation.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that these working-class representations prompted no resistance from the interviewees. The reproduction of some of the figures pathologizing the working class, and efforts to dissociate from them, appear alongside attempts to subvert the seemingly universal conflation of certain dress codes with specific moral

attributes. 35-year-old Justyna, for example, reveals that her behavior is read differently depending on how she looks at a given moment (whether her tattoos are visible or not).

> We judge people on their appearance, their behavior, the size of their bank accounts. My account is empty, I smoke, and have multiple tattoos, but I still think I'd be more prone to help a homeless person at a bus stop than someone with a lot of money, a 5,000-złoty monthly salary, no tattoos, more modest clothes, and no smoking habit. That's what I mean. I might be a vulgar person who swears a lot and says what's on her mind, which may lead some people to perceive me a certain way, because people don't like the truth. Those who know me know that I like to joke around and tell it like I see it. I never seek to humiliate people with different views – everyone has the right to their own opinion, but there are these dumb situations where I have to prove to people just how wrong they are judging me by the way I look. I can tell how differently I'm seen when I help an elderly woman in winter and in summer, when I have a thin strap top on and my tattoos are on full display; I see how differently those people treat me, and that makes me f**king angry (Justyna, 35, preschool assistant).

While Justyna rebels against making moral judgments based on appearance or class habitus, she still engages in a similar critique against the "plastic Barbie doll" image. Again, the interviewees conflate behavior and appearance with morality and character when speaking about individuals sitting below them in the social hierarchy, but question that logic when it applies to themselves or people they see as similar. Stressing one's distinction from those pathologized by representations is used here as a strategy of building respectability by emphasizing one's agency, control over one's life, as well as the ability to tell good from evil and beauty from ugliness. Questioning the very idea of conflating outward appearance with morality and class

position, meanwhile, is a response to the acute awareness of one's limited possibilities of shaping everyday life, including one's own body image.

To not be like a pansy in skinny jeans: dissociation from representations of the middle class

The interviewees' consistent attempts to dissociate themselves from representations of the working class might suggest that they uncritically internalize middle-class paradigms of the ideal body and try to follow them. While the unambiguous rejection of certain class representations features in the majority of interviews, the interviewees themselves fail to produce any figures that could serve as positive points of reference. This lack is also apparent in the manner of their responses to questions pertaining to corporeality – although they readily spoke of what they considered distasteful in terms of appearance (and also physical fitness and nutrition) and promptly produced examples of what they saw as unacceptable, interviewees had trouble reconstructing their own practices and fashion styles, as well as identifying positive image archetypes in popular culture.

The relationship of working-class women toward middle-class body care practices and the beauty standards espoused by modern consumer culture is deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, the interviewees engage in many ways of questioning the hegemonic narrative; on the other, their statements seem to bear traces of subjugation, manifested in the belief that certain body care practices are "not for me," and by a sense of guilt (especially among younger interviewees) for not meeting certain body care norms – for example, those pertaining to physical activity or a healthy diet. What emerges from the interviews, however, is more of a claim to respectability commanded by the middle class than a fantasy of becoming middle class and recreating its

lifestyle, which usually runs counter to the working-class habitus. It would seem that rejecting stigmatizing representations of the working class is not tantamount to a fantasy of promotion to the middle class.

Among the working class, the antipathy toward fashion styles typical of the middle class is stronger in relation to men and manifests itself in a pronounced aversion to outfits seen as inconsistent with prevailing gender norms, exemplified in the interviews by close-fitting skinny jeans, popularly referred to as "carrots" or "tubes."

> **Why don't we turn it around? "I would never want to look like…"?**
>
> Generally, snowflakes in skinny jeans are all the rage right now […]. What a clumsy bunch, these boys – skinny jeans, plus a jacket, so fashionable right now, but that's not for me.
>
> **OK, skinny jeans. What else?**
>
> It's not like I have anything against them… maybe skinny jeans are okay with… let's say I see this guy on TV, wearing a suit, but all of this is just… he looks like a clown, you know? (Maciej, 41, office worker).

> What the men wear on TV, or when, for example, I see young men on the street wearing those pants, those skinny jeans, that makes me sick (Marek, 36, construction worker).

Similar comments can be found in interviews with both men and women, the former declaring they would never wear an outfit like that, the latter admitting they don't really like skinny jeans on men. Some interviewees went as far as to conflate skinny jeans (or any other part of the overall look that could be considered effeminate, like makeup) with homosexuality:

> The kids today – you often see boys wearing girl's clothes, like skinny jeans, and girls wearing… I don't know, I can't think

> of something now – large sweatshirts, maybe. That always make me… I don't think much of a kid dressed like that. There's this implication…
>
> **What do you mean?**
>
> That I'm dealing with a gay fella, if you know what I mean. Sometimes I wonder, if there was a war, would these kids be able to defend us? (Michał, 27, security guard).

Using homophobia to explain this deep antipathy toward the style exemplified by men's skinny jeans, however, would be too reductive.[30] According to Connell, the public reading of homosexuality as dangerous and unacceptable is a direct consequence of hegemonic masculinity, which also seeks to repress forms of masculinity typical of the working class. To working-class men, accepting representations diverging from the heteronorm would render them doubly oppressed, whereas affirming traditional, "exaggerated" masculinity would seem to most an organic part of their collective experience, which makes up much of their strategy for dealing with deprivation and is consistent with their class habitus.[31] The interviews also clearly demonstrate that the working class sees gender nonconforming outfits primarily as a way of standing out, as evidenced by this statement from Magda, a young beautician from a mid-sized town in eastern Poland, where such looks are particularly eye-catching:

> It's so weird, seeing men in skinny jeans. And I'm not talking about those, you know… homosexuals, I mean. I see high-school kids walking around in pants so tight they look as if their butts are about to split the whole thing apart at the seams. What a strange thing. We're a larger town, so we get trends and all, and some time ago the place was swept by a hat craze. On women they were fine, more than fine even. But guys – and I mean guys, because they were adults, not boys – in skinny jeans and hats, thinking they're cool. That…

> not that it upsets me, but I just feel that this can't be comfortable. What a strange look (Magda, 24, beautician).

Adopting an image that diverges from the established feminine and masculine archetypes is seen as an extravagance, which, in turn, clashes with the egalitarian disposition of the habitus – the maintenance of group cohesion by way of invoking shared values and an aversion toward competition between individuals.[32] This disinclination toward competition between individuals of similar appearance, who share a similar social background, manifests itself in the rejection of individual expression and personal style preferences. Efforts to the contrary are seen as aberrant, while individuals who decide to engage in such "experiments" are usually censured and treated with a degree of suspicion. Consequently, whenever men take care of their appearance in a manner considered effeminate, their efforts are believed extravagant, alien, detached from common experience, and running counter to the shared aesthetics and principles of their own social group:

> **What do you think of men who go for beauty treatments? Who do you think they are?**
>
> Moneyed guys. Pansies. I don't know, I can't really say.
>
> **Do you think it's good that men are more likely to take better care of their appearance nowadays?**
>
> I don't think so, no (Aleksander, 24, village administrator).

Speaking of men who enjoy beauty treatments, Aleksander directly indicates the class distinction: the figure of the pansy (recurring across many of the interviews) describes men not only very conscious of their appearance, but also more affluent than the interviewees. Here, the emphasis on taking care of the body is interpreted as a display of superiority not just for men,

but also for women:

> But as soon as the makeup comes off, you see the witch underneath. It's that… unfortunately, like someone once said, you pick a scarecrow, you just might get scared, and when you take the clothes off, then… I'm sorry, but that's how it is. Like I said, I'm not a fan… and isn't that just showing you're better than everyone else? In my opinion it is (Beata, 30, homemaker).

The interviewees, regardless of age and gender, usually declare that they tend to pick outfits they see as simple, muted, modest, but still comfortable, while rejecting exaggeration and flash. In light of that, it could be argued that working-class men and women seek to dissociate themselves from fashion as a category and see it as the obverse of outfits fitting their aesthetic preferences and practical considerations, and ones "you look good in." While fashion trends are fleeting, personal preferences, according to respondents' declarations, are either constant or slow to change. As a result, following fashion is interpreted as subordination to external criteria, when it is the sartorial choices that should follow personal needs, as exemplified by this statement from Agata, the sales associate quoted earlier:

> I buy things that are comfortable and that I'm sure I'll wear. I don't exactly follow fashion and never buy stuff to wear once and ditch. […] That's what I meant by not following trends – that I don't need to have something just because someone else does and it's in fashion now. No, I don't have that kind of drive. If I buy something, then I have it and I'm happy (Agata, 32, sales associate).

At first glance, the category of "dressing for oneself" might seem antithetical to the aforementioned egalitarian disposition and the emphasis placed on similarity, and instead embedded in

the individualistic practice of self-expression through outward appearance. The logic of "dressing for oneself" versus "dressing for others" is best illustrated by the narratives offered by the youngest interviewees, who freely use the category of "personal style," which, in practice, usually means hewing close to the style of their immediate peer group. Hence, declaring oneself as having a "personal style" does not imply the pursuit of self-expression through sartorial stylization, as much as the questioning of mainstream fashion trends. In other words, given the descriptions of the interviewees' preferred outfits, "I wear what I like" is nothing more than a commitment to rejecting current fashion trends and observing the dress codes of one's own group. The emphasis on similarity, embodied by the relatively homogeneous personal image-building standards, seems to be a key mechanism for nurturing a sense of community and belonging in peer groups with a major working-class component (such as vocational schools or local rural communities).

Summary

Research ultimately confirms what Michael Savage once demonstrated using empirical examples: the lack of direct class consciousness, exemplified by the lack of references to the category of class in interviewee accounts, is no proof of the demise of class division. On the contrary – it might just as well be an affirmation of the hegemony of the dominant classes, which allows them to stigmatize the working class and depreciate its identity.[33]

The image of the working class functioning in hegemonic cultural narratives has a profound impact on how individuals belonging to that group construe their own subjectivity and shape their everyday body care practices. The interviewees have no doubt that popular-cultural depictions of people with a similar class background, education, and financial status to theirs

ultimately strip them of their dignity and the respectability that would put them on equal footing with the middle class. Contrary to previous research, the conducted analyses demonstrate that class representations are a negative reference point not only for women, but also for most adult men from a working-class background. The role of the negative archetype, from which most of the interviewees seek to distinguish themselves, is played by the figure of the *dresiarz*, along with its female incarnation, the tackily dressed woman popularly referred to as a *dresiara* or a *blachara*. Attempts to dissociate from those situated lower in the class hierarchy, embodied in interviewee accounts by figures such as the homeless person or the bum, are also widespread in the group. Drawing a clear line between one's own group and individuals associated with extreme poverty acts as a panacea for interviewees' fears of being declassed, and proof that they are still able to "stay afloat" despite their harrowing circumstances.

In the light of this study, it might be posited that the working class develops its subjectivity in a wholly different manner than suggested by narratives about a malleable "self" created in the course of sanctioning everyday choices and the reflexive stylization of experience. Here, subjectivity is constituted in counterpoint to social representations, without any unambiguous and shared positive reference points to fall back on or a specific style that the group in question could aspire to. The working class operates amid a metaphorical deficit of "base materials" from which to fashion an improved body or an improved self, a condition premised on limited economic means on the one hand, and insufficient cultural capital on the other, which precludes it from drawing on fluid and ambiguous archetypes of attractive appearance or enforcing its own. Although middle-class practices and representations raise considerable objections from the working class and clash with the specific dispositions of

its habitus, the interviewees were more prone to questioning the impact of hegemonic taxonomies than the rules that shape the overall social order. In the narratives of working-class interviewees, attempts to disrupt certain domains of the social order mesh with a sense of being dominated by hegemonic norms, as evidenced in the guilt wrought by the awareness of their inability to meet them. Meanwhile, their attempts to critique hegemonic archetypes of the attractive body unfold alongside somewhat reflexive perpetuations of other narratives constituting that same hegemony, pathologizing groups from which the interviewees seek to distinguish themselves.

The attitude of the working class toward the body and bodily images is thus characterized by constant tension: on the one hand, uncritical internalization of the rules imposed by the middle class would imply tacit acceptance of its critiques of the working class; on the other, the wholesale rejection of middle-class taxonomies, enacted without the requisite cultural capital that would permit the establishment and enforcement of its own, would render useless the long-honed ability to dissociate from those whose role in an unjust society is to provide a backdrop against which to highlight one's own superior position in the hierarchy.

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1 The show, which first aired on TVN on June 27, 2016 (its fifth season premiered on September 7, 2020), and is now available for streaming on the Player platform, is based on the British *Ladette to Lady* format.

2 Helen Holmes, "Self-time: The importance of temporal experience within practice," *Time and Society* vol. 27, no. 2 (2018), 7.

3 Beverley Skeggs, *Formation of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London:

Sage, 1997); Sylwia Urbańska, "Normy szacowności i płeć jako oś przekształceń klasowych w procesach migracji," in: *Klasy w Polsce. Teorie, dyskusje, badania, konteksty*, eds. Maciej Gdula and Michał Sutowski (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, 2017).

4 The interviews comprising the supplementary research materials were conducted during two projects: *Klasowe style życia i kultura pod pochmurnym niebem. Diagnoza rozwarstwienia społecznego w dostępie do kultury w województwie warmińsko-mazurskim* (Centrum Edukacji i Informacji Kulturalnej w Olsztynie, 2014) and *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej* (Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, 2013–2014). The research staff comprised: Przemysław Sadura, Maciej Gdula, Mikołaj Lewicki, Katarzyna Murawska, Dorota Olko, Jakub Rozenbaum, Bogna Kietlińska, Krzysztof Świrek, Michał Chełmiński, and Tomasz Piątek. The projects produced the following reports: Maciej Gdula, Mikołaj Lewicki, and Przemysław Sadura, *Kultura i klasy społeczne na Warmii* (Olsztyn: Centrum Edukacji i Informacji Kulturalnej, 2014), www.ceik.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/publikacje/publikacje_-_kl_style_zycia/Maciej_Gdula__Mikołaj_Lewicki__Przemysław_Sadura_KULTURA_I_KLASY_SPOŁECZ (accessed March 30, 2016); Maciej Gdula, Mikołaj Lewicki, and Przemysław Sadura, *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, 2015), https://issuu.com/krytykapolityczna/docs/isz-raport-praktyki-kulturowe-klasy (accessed December 1, 2020).

5 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 101–114, 372–396.

6 Maciej Gdula and Przemysław Sadura, "Style życia jako rywalizujące uniwersalności," in: *Style życia i porządek klasowy w Polsce*, eds. Maciej Gdula and Przemysław Sadura (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2012); Gdula, Lewicki, Sadura, *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej*.

7 Beverley Skeggs, "The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation," *Sociology* vol. 39, no. 5 (2005), 965–982.

8 ibid., 965.

9 Skeggs, *Formation of Class and Gender*.

10 Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (London: Routledge, 1990).

11 Angela McRobbie, "Notes on 'What Not to Wear' and Post-Feminist Symbolic Violence," *The Sociological Review* vol. 52, no. 2 (2004), 99–109; Karen Rafferty, "Class-based

emotions and the allure of fashion consumption," *Journal of Consumer Culture* vol. 11, no. 2 (2011), 239–260.

12 Skeggs, *Formation of Class and Gender*, 79.

13 Skeggs, "The Making of Class and Gender," 966.

14 Michele Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (New York–Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

15 Skeggs, *Formation of Class and Gender*, 82–83.

16 Cf. Anna Wieczorkiewicz, "Lustro i skalpel," in: *Gadżety popkultury. Społeczne życie przedmiotów* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2007); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

17 Skeggs, *Formation of Class and Gender*, 162.

18 Sylwia Urbańska, "Normy szacowności i płeć jako oś przekształceń klasowych w procesach migracji," in: *Klasy w Polsce. Teorie, dyskusje, badania, konteksty*, eds. Maciej Gdula and Michał Sutowski (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, 2017).

19 The terms "dresiarz" and "dresiara" (describing male and female incarnations, respectively) come from the Polish word "dres," meaning "tracksuit." "Sebix" comes from Sebastian, a popular male name among later millennials and early Gen Zers, stereotypically associated with tracksuit-clad, young working-class men. The "blachara" is a Polish version of the "car bunny," a derogatory for women believed attracted to working-class status symbols, such as highly modified street cars, and "lambadziara" comes from the 1989 song "Lambada," performed by French-Brazilian group Kaoma, which was immensely popular in Poland, even reaching the top spot on the country's biggest music chart [trans. note].

20 The show, based on the American *Jersey Shore* format, premiered on MTV Polska on November 10, 2013.

21 "'Warsaw Shore' czyli jak się porzygałem oglądając MTV," *Europejczycy.info*, www.salon24.pl/u/europejczycy-info/552960,warsaw-shore-czyli-jak-sie-porzygalem-ogladajac-mtv (accessed March 5, 2021).

22 Barbara Kaczmarczyk, "Nowa 'Ekipa z Warszawy' nie nadaje się do oglądania. Żarty się skończyły, teraz to już tylko wymioty," https://natemat.pl/173973,nowa-ekipa-z-warszawy-nie-nadaje-sie-do-ogladania-zarty-sie-skonczyly-teraz-to-juz-tylko-wymioty (accessed March 5, 2021).

23 Agata Bielik-Robson, "W Polsce bez zmian: Ekipa z Warszawy część 2," https://krytykapolityczna.pl/felietony/agata-bielik-robson/w-polsce-bez-zmian-ekipa-z-warszawy-czesc-2/ (accessed April 16, 2021).

24 Sebastian Łupak, "Warsaw Shore. Ekipa z Warszawy. Ludzie oglądają z ciekawości? 'To syndrom zoo'," www.newsweek.pl/styl-zycia/warsaw-shore-ekipa-z-warszawy-mtv-program-telewizyjny/9v44y9r (accessed March 4, 2021).

25 Skeggs, *Formation of Class and Gender*, 123.

26 Imogen Tyler and Bruce Bennett, "'Celebrity Chav': Fame, Femininity and Social Class," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 13, no. 3 (2010), 375–393.

27 One of the most notorious interrogations of the *dresiarz* subculture can be found in Dorota Masłowska's 2002 book *Snow White and Russian Red* and its 2009 film adaptation directed by Xawery Żuławski. The animated series *Hoodies Squad* is another instance of popular culture exploiting the *dresiarz* figure; first premiering on YouTube in 2013, it has since been aired by a number of television stations. The three *Hoodies Squad* protagonists, all of them *dresiarze* and hardcore fans of the Legia Warsaw soccer club, are portrayed as prone to hooliganism and aggressive behavior, and shown spending their free time on a park bench, where they drink alcohol and smoke marijuana.

28 One exception was found among younger vocational school students with rural backgrounds, whom we spoke with as part of the case studies for our *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej* project. We found them to be the only group for which wearing a tracksuit was just another sartorial choice and carried no negative connotations.

29 Raewyn W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge–London: Polity Press, 1995), 101.

30 Gdula, Lewicki, and Sadura described the attitude of the working class toward non-heteronormativity as dominated by conservative tolerance ("They can do what they want, but not publicly"), which could be defined as tolerance of otherness insofar as it is sequestered outside the community that serves as the source of identity (Gdula, Lewicki, and Sadura, *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej*, 43). A similar sentiment was expressed by Patryk, a 21-year-old bicycle repairman, who, of all the interviewees, exhibited the least restrained antipathy toward homosexuality:

> "Okay... some don't flaunt it [their sexual preference – ed. note], and I have no beef with them, as long as they do it in the bushes, at home, or somewhere then I'm okay with it, just don't do it on the street.
>
> **Why not on the street?**
>
> Because not everyone wants to see that stuff – not everyone does, normal relationships are between men and women. So not everyone will fancy seeing that out in the open, doing that on the street."

31 Connell, *Masculinities*, 41.

32 Gdula, Lewicki, and Sadura, *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej*, 43.

33 Michael Savage, Gaynor Bagnall, and Brian Longhurst, "Individualization and Cultural Distinction," in: *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*, ed. Michael Savage (Buckingham, PA: Open University Press, 2000).

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