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Dynamics of perceiving oneself on femininity and masculinity dimensions in diverse contexts

The article is about issues related to gender perceived as a result of social context and thus fits in the current, processual gender paradigm. Two studies have been conducted verifying hypotheses about perceiving oneself on the femininity and masculinity dimensions in various types of contexts. Expectations were that generic contexts would make perceiving oneself within the psychological gender dimensions more dynamic. Women were expected to perceive themselves as more feminine and less masculine in contexts matching their gender, i.e. “feminine”, comparing to “masculine”, and men were expected to perceive themselves as more masculine and less feminine in “masculine” contexts comparing to “feminine” contexts. Research results do not confirm the above hypotheses and indicate dynamism in perceiving oneself on femininity and masculinity dimensions. However, the dynamism is perceived only on dimensions inconsistent with biological gender – situation affects women's perceiving of themselves on the masculinity dimension and men's – on femininity dimensions.

Keywords: *Femininity, Masculinity, Gender*

Issues of gender and gender differences seem to be inseparable elements of general reflexions about human being. Simultaneously, gender might be the only biologically-grounded variable with so strongly related to psychological and social functioning. Various approaches to gender issues have been created within humanistic and social studies within the space of years. Although all those concepts may be treated either as competitive or complementary, they always concern the probably fundamental dispute - “nature” vs. “culture” - to some degree.

The article briefly discusses approaches to gender and gender differences significant from the psychological point of view, indicating the clear reformulation of the gender study paradigm shift taking place within the last hundred years. The shift from the essential, constant gender and gender difference understanding, which located gender within the relatively constant and nontransferable individual differences (traits, individual characteristics), towards the contextual, interactive, process-related and performative understanding (Butler, 2008), close to social impact thinking. Within the latter paradigm, psychological gender,

if treated as a characteristic or attribute at all, would be a feature of the interaction itself rather than of persons who interact. This has been pictured by the famous statement that people form gender rather than own it, expressed by West and Zimmerman (1987). The remaining part of the article presents own studies, focusing on the issue of destabilization of self-perception on the *femininity* and *masculinity* dimensions depending on the context, together with presentation and discussion of study results.

Gender and gender differences psychology – modern paradigm

Chronologically, gender and gender differences at first were considered within the essential framing, to be followed by structural functionalism. These trends dominated in reflections about gender until approximately the 60s of the twentieth century. Within the maximalist approach to gender (Epstein, 1988, cited by: Brannon, 2002), characteristic of the essentialism, the differences in psychosocial functioning between women and men were ascribed to the basic biological structure, and at the same time treated as fundamental and inborn, determining

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identity, social position and roles (Shields, 1975; Ślęczka, 1999). Functionalists described society as a constant and orderly system of values, beliefs and roles, being ground to social consensus, ensuring balance in the form of social order. According to the functionalists, the obvious biological differences between women and men, and particularly men's physical strength and women's reproduction abilities, decided about the differences in their social roles and set constant social requirements and expectations towards both genders (Renzetti, Curran, 2005).

On the turn of the 60s and 70s in the twentieth century, the attitude towards gender issues has changed. Researchers started to aim at a so-called enlightenment regarding gender (Bradley, 2008) – first of all through empirical insight into the scope and size of differences and similarities between genders. This was expressed in a number of study projects with results indicating how gender diversifies life experiences, talents (Hyde, 1981; Linn, Petersem, 1986, as cited by: Brannon, 2002; Hyde, Linn, 1988; Hyde, Fennema, Lamon, 1990; Feingold, 1994, as cited by: Brannon, 2002), personality traits and self-appraisal (Kling, Hyde, Showers, Buswell, 1999), competence or behaviors (Maccoby, Jacklin, 1974, as cited by: Brannon 2002).

The distinction has also been made between sex and gender, relating to all socio-cultural aspects of being a woman or man, as well as all expectations, requirements and social norms relating to what *femininity* and *masculinity* are (Unger, 1979). Concepts of shaping type and learning social roles have also appeared (Lott, Maluso, 2002). Gender has become an individual variable, taken into account in experiments.

An approach has been shaped in the 70s basing on cognitive-developmental theories that treated gender as a cognitive scheme – a capacious social category (Unger, Crawford, 1991, as cited by: Beall, 2002; Cross, Markus, 2002; Renzetti, Curran, 2005), acquired since early childhood through intellectual attempts at organizing the social world. The gender category is an external matrix (of *femininity* and *masculinity*), possible and easy to internalize in order to create an identity consistent with social expectations. Type schemes are a consequence of individual's cognitive development and the categorization process, with their contents being set by the social environment, which defines *femininity* and *masculinity* accordingly (Brannon, 2002).

The gender scheme theory created by Sandra Bem (1975, 1981, 2000) was a crowning achievement of such an attitude towards gender. Within this theory, the author has merged cognitive aspects of gender shaping with cultural influence on the socializing process of the dichotomy *feminine-masculine*. The author says that assignment of individuals to a specific gender results to a big degree from the schematic nature of information processing done by an individual. However, on the other hand, there may be individual differences in gender information

processing (Cross, Markus, 2002; Deaux, Kite, 2002)¹. These differences, in turn, condition the easiness in using *femininity* and *masculinity* categories (Bem, 1981) and the level of adaptation to the so-called type-ideology. The latter element, according to Bem, is a set of assumptions or *meta-messages* encoded in the cultural discourse, relating to how society members should look, what they should think, feel and how they should act taking into account gender, and which steer the type scheme internalization process. Gender prisms, as the author calls these assumptions, relate to the previously mentioned elements: type polarization, that is distinction and opposing nature of the *feminine* and *masculine* worlds; androcentrism – placing the *masculine* element in the center and ascribing higher value to it; biological essentialism – rationalization of the two previous elements, treating gender differences as unavoidable and unalterable (Bem, 2000; Renzetti, Curran, 2005). Individuals learn these schemes in the type socialization process – for instance through taking up various gender roles, different communication behaviors, different physical appearance-related practice, as well as institutionalized social behaviors. After learning, the individual becomes a *carrier* of the scheme, representing specific opinions about *femininity* and *masculinity*, using type stereotypes, formulating different expectations towards women and men and creating its own type identity (Bem, Lenney, 1976; Markus, Crane, Bernstein, Siladi, 1982; Maccoby, 1990; Bem, 2000; Beall, 2002; Cross, Markus, 2002).

Gender deconstruction and role of the context – post-modern take

A paradigm shift within gender and gender difference studies is connected with rejection of *the big theories* at the beginning of the 90s in the twentieth century and focusing on description of particular cases of social interactions (Lyotard, 1997; Barrett, Philips, 1992, as cited by: Bradley, 2008). Concepts created within humanistic and social studies, whose authors suggested the necessity to break all dichotomies – in this case, the feminine-masculine and nature-culture oppositions – in favor of indirect forms – for instance experiences, activities, social roles, that do not fit within the dichotomous categories – influenced the re-formulation of attitude towards gender and gender differences. Moreover, the reasonability of differentiating between biological and cultural gender was questioned, as researchers thought that all that derived from nature, is also constructed socially (Birke, 1986, as cited by: Bradley, 2008). The idea of inconstancy of individual identities, including gender identity, the *essential self* (Foucault,

¹ She has singled out gender-schematics, people with high readiness and easiness of information processing basing on gender category, and readily using the masculinity and femininity categories, who look at the world through gender, and gender-aschematics, with lower readiness and easiness of usage of such categories (Bem, 1974; Deaux, Kite, 2002).

2000), said to be discursive, shaped each time and precisely determined in social interactions, was presented elsewhere.

Introduction and appropriate understanding of the contemporary approach to gender and gender differences would be difficult without the Butler performative gender concept (2008), a theory said to be a breakthrough. The author says that the essential (also called substantial) effect of cultural gender and gender differences is created and comes into force because of social norms and repetitive behaviors. According to Butler, the cultural gender is a product of the everyday performance following social norms and expectations. In other words, the cultural gender is an effect of shaping the body into a *feminine* or *masculine* body; repetitiveness of such shaping creates an illusion of a constant self, gender identity. The author thus introduces the concept of the performative gender – gender performed by an individual according to norms, during social interactions taking place within a specific context. The cultural gender is thus an activity, action aimed at execution of *femininity* and *masculinity* patterns (Shields, 2004)², rather than a constant and homogenous characteristic of the individual.

Contemporary psychology, and particularly social gender and gender difference psychology, remains under the influence of the presented post-modern research paradigm, as well as concepts formulated within its confines. The interactive cultural gender model, presented by Kay Deaux and Brenda Major in the article symptomatically titled “Putting Gender Into Context: An interactive Model of Gender-Related Behavior” (1987), proposes to treat gender as a type of interpretations, judgements and social evaluations made by other people rather than a constant characteristic of an individual. Such information form the basis for orientation and indications for specific actions in specific situational contexts. The authors postulate also that the actual diversity between men and women is less important than the meaning people ascribe to them in various social situations. The concept of the interpersonal context is crucial for the presented approach – this concept gives the possibility to realize (express) gender (Shields, 2004). From this point of view, the cultural gender is a feature of the situation (rather than a disposition of a person) in which people interact (West, Zimmerman, 1987) or a context-related social transaction³.

Such a process-related, dynamic take on gender has won followers in the practice of psychological research. Questions about the scope and size of differences between women and men in various areas of their psycho-social

2 This way Butler confirms Foucault’s assertion (2000) about the false gender construct; individuals, when creating gender understanding, ascribe it with unambiguity and want to perceive gender as a reason rather than an effect of social interactions (Butler, 2008)

3 Such a take on gender is often close to the way autresentation theory followers think. The interpersonal context may be understood, using this theory’s wording, as expectations of the auditorium, autresentation norms, situation scenarios, etc. (Shields, 2004).

functioning were supplemented by questions: when, why and on what basis such differences appear. Gender, a variable traditionally treated as the describing variable, has become the described and/or intermediary feature. Researchers are also wondering when the differences between women and men are emphasized and when disappear, in what situations *being a woman* and *being a man* becomes important.

In research dealing with differences between women and men, inclusion of the situational context has been hitherto done in various ways. Some of the research indicates the role of situational activation of gender patterns (Cross, Markus, 2002) – which is consistent with Butler’s postulates (2008) regarding *performing* of genders according to scripts or cognitive scenarios. Some other refer to the *phenomenon of stereotype threat* – depending on whether the study conditions are characterized by a specific type or not, the differences between men and women are revealed or become clearer (Wojciszke, 2002). In yet still some other research, the status of people interacting has become the context factor triggering gender differences (Snodgrass, 1985, 1992)⁴. Also interesting might be the research in case of which the set of independent variables includes type of interaction between subjects, differentiating the same sex/ the opposite sex interactions (Carli, 1989, 1990). Such a research scheme is consistent with what Deaux and Major (1987) postulate – behaviors and characteristics typical of one type (feminine or masculine), as well as possible differences between them, are revealed first of all in social interactions, reaching particular clearness in diverse-gender interactions (Carli, 1989, 1990).

The role of the context-related attitude towards gender and type differences is particularly emphasized in social psychology research – this relates to the context of interacting with people who are *carriers* of expectations and norms regarding *femininity* and *masculinity*. Moreover, such people influence and contribute to current creation of various gender-related characteristics or behaviors, leading to how an individual perceives itself on various dimensions – including the *femininity* and *masculinity* dimensions. Situations characterized by information about gender may have impact on the level to which an individual describes itself as *feminine* or *masculine*.

Study Aims

The study presented below was designed according to the contemporary gender and gender differences paradigm, emphasizing that type is encoded rather externally to the individual – within situations – rather than being an individual’s predisposition.

4 To put it simply, subjects that were subordinate in the research revealed feminine-type characteristics, while the dominating subjects revealed masculine traits (Snodgrass, 1985, 1992).

Table 1
Means of femininity and masculinity obtained by women after reading the feminine and masculine stories.

Psychological gender	Femininity		Masculinity		
	Situation	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine
Mean		57,43	56,52	49,22	43,28
SD		4,82	7,27	6,75	8,46

Aim of the study was to verify hypotheses regarding perceiving oneself on the *femininity* and *masculinity* dimensions in contexts differing by type. The subjects (both men and women) were expected to perceive themselves in the particular type contexts in the following ways:

- in “feminine” contexts – they will perceive themselves as more feminine than in the “masculine” contexts,
- in “feminine” contexts – they will perceive themselves as less masculine than in the “masculine” contexts,
- in “masculine” contexts – they will perceive themselves as less feminine than in the “feminine” contexts,
- in the “masculine” contexts – they will perceive themselves as more masculine than in the “feminine” contexts.

Thus the hypotheses concern dynamics of femininity and masculinity in various contexts (the dimensions are treated separately, with differences within the dimensions are of interest) rather than comparisons of femininity and masculinity in a specific context.

Study 1

In order to verify the hypotheses, a pen-and-paper study was designed following the diversity-experimental paradigm.

Situation characterized by feminine vs. masculine information (the situations will further be related to as “feminine” and “masculine”) was the independent variable.

Two psychological gender dimensions were the dependent variables – femininity and masculinity.

The method, participants and procedure

115 students from Wrocław colleges participated in the study (from University of Wrocław, Wrocław Technical University and University of Lower Silesia), 59 of them being women and 56 – men.

The study consisted of two stages. In the first stage, under the pretext of learning their opinions on social roles women and men fulfill in the modern world, the subjects studied the story of a young couple (Ania and Krzys), who were expecting a baby and considered which of them should stay at home after the delivery in order to take care of the baby. The first part of the story presented the couple’s professional situation (all elements indicated that their situations are almost identical – both work in big companies, like their work very much, are team managers,

with similar average income, they have similar chances of promotion and further development). The second part was characterized by feminine or masculine information. The assumption was that the diverse second parts of the description were a manipulation intended to bring out categories and features characteristic of women or men. The “feminine” part presented activities that would be performed by the person that stays home with the baby (changing the baby, feeding, preparation of meals, going out for walks, going for vaccinations and doctor visits, shopping, cooking, taking care of laundry, ironing and cleaning). Elements relating to the child’s growing up and joy derived from parenthood were emphasized in the description (for instance “watching the baby’s first steps, hearing it say mama or papa”). The “masculine” part presented activities of the person that would continue working (being available, being up to the superior’s and customers’ requirements, reading specialist articles, staying at work till late), emphasizing the advantages resulting from continuation of work (for instance “realizing professional dreams, acquiring experience, acquiring new knowledge, working in a harmonious team, teammates’ respect, recognition of superiors and customers”). Descriptions of two different situations – a “feminine” and “masculine” – were obtained thanks to the addition of the second part. Each subject read only one story – either the “feminine” or “masculine”.

After reading the story, the participants were asked to answer, among others, who should stay home and take care of the baby.

During the second stage (lead by another researcher, under the pretext of executing a completely different study), measurement of the dependent variables was made – the subjects were asked to fill in a scale evaluating how individuals perceive themselves on the femininity and masculinity dimensions (created by Alicja Kuczyńska, 1992).

Results

The obtained results were calculated separately for men and women, using a two-factor variance analysis in the mixed pattern. Situation (“feminine” vs. “masculine”) was the between-group variable, with psychological gender (masculinity and femininity) being the within-group variable.

Table 2
Means of femininity and masculinity obtained by men after reading the feminine and masculine stories

Psychological gender	Femininity		Masculinity	
	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine
Mean	47,24	52,9	53,10	53,65
SD	6,88	6,06	7,05	8,37

Results of women

The femininity and masculinity results obtained for groups of women reading the feminine story were the basis for comparisons during analysis. From the point of view of the verified hypotheses, the interaction between situation variables and psychological gender was particularly interesting. Women reading the masculine story were expected to obtain lower results on the femininity scale and higher on masculinity scale comparing to women who read the feminine story.

The interaction effect turned out to be statistically significant on the trend level of $F(1, 46)=3,8523$; $p<,06$; $\eta^2=0,08$. In order to compare the means for individual groups, Scheffe test was calculated, not proving the expected, statistically significant difference between the group who read the feminine story and the one reading the masculine story on the femininity dimension (57,43 vs. 56,52; ns). The test showed a difference between those groups on the masculinity dimension, but the means were exactly opposite to the expected – women who read the masculine story perceived themselves much lower on the masculinity scale comparing to those who read the feminine story (43,28 vs. 49,22; $p<0,0001$).

Results of men

The femininity and masculinity results obtained for groups of men reading the masculine story were the basis for comparisons during analysis. Similarly to the participating women, from the point of view of the hypotheses being verified, the interaction between situation variables and psychological gender was particularly interesting. Men reading the feminine story were expected to obtain lower results on the masculinity scale and higher on femininity scale comparing to men who read the masculine story.

The interaction effect turned out to be statistically significant on the trend level of $F(1,47)=3,3605$; $p<0,073$; $\eta^2=0,07$. In order to compare the means for individual groups, Scheffe test was calculated, not proving the expected, statistically significant difference between the group who read the masculine story and the one reading the feminine story on the masculinity dimension (53,10 vs. 53,65; ns). The test showed a difference between those groups on the femininity dimension, but the means were exactly opposite to the expected – men who read the feminine story perceived themselves much lower on the femininity scale comparing to those who read the masculine story (47,24 vs. 52,9; $p<0,07$).

Discussion

The results obtained make it impossible to accept the hypotheses regarding gender-matching to feminine or masculine situations. Moreover, they also suggest a competitive hypothesis – regarding psychological defense mechanism of the gender identity in situations described as opposite – characterized by masculine elements for women and with feminine elements for men.

No cross-examination study was held, but a decision was made for repeated verification of the theory-based hypotheses. The verification was done as a replication of the first study, with modified manipulation of the type variables. The change consisted in making the situations more clear regarding gender (*see the below description*).

Study 2

The second study was designed almost the same as the first one (paper-and-pen study, diversity-experimental paradigm). Situation characterized by feminine vs. masculine information was the independent variable, with two psychological gender dimensions were the dependent variables – femininity and masculinity.

The difference between the presented studies consisted in structure of the stimuli materials. In order to bring out a stronger effect of categories characteristic of women and men, the stories were presented as a feature article, that supposedly was downloaded from the internet, signed by a fictional editor – Martyna Kowalska. The article contained a description of a couple expecting a child, their statements, photos⁵ and advantages only of staying at home or only of working (in case of the materials from the first study, in case of both the “feminine” and “masculine” stories, the drawbacks and advantages of both situations were presented, with emphasis on the advantages).

184 students from Wrocław colleges participated in the study (from University of Wrocław, Wrocław Technical University and Wrocław Economics University), 88 of them being women and 96 – men.

Similarly to the first study, this one also consisted of 5 Women received articles with photos of the woman (taking care of the child or working), while men received photos of men (taking care of the child or working). We would like to thank Justyna Chmielewska, Marzena Pawlas, Malwina Pawłowska, Paulina Sikora and Paulina Stelmasczyk for preparation of the stimulus material and help in collection of some of the results.

Table 3

Means of femininity and masculinity obtained by women after reading the feminine and masculine stories.

Psychological gender	Femininity		Masculinity	
Situation	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine
Mean	57,63	56,69	49,16	44,41
SD	7,16	5,74	7,39	5,66

Table 4

Means of femininity and masculinity obtained by men after reading the feminine and masculine stories.

Psychological gender	Femininity		Masculinity	
Situation	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine
Mean	45,63	51,02	53,78	53,34
SD	6,31	5,82	7,71	7,51

two stages. First, the subjects read the stories and answered, among others, the question who, in their opinion, should stay home and take care of the child. Then, under the pretext of execution of a different study, the participants filled in a questionnaire evaluating the psychological gender.

Results

The obtained results were calculated separately for men and women, using a two-factor variance analysis in the mixed pattern. Situation (“feminine” vs. “masculine”) was the between-group variable, with psychological gender (masculinity and femininity) being the within-group variable.

Results of women

The effect of interaction, important from the point of view of the hypotheses being verified, turned out to be statistically significant on a trend level of $F(1, 62)=2,6157$; ns; $\eta^2=0,04$. In order to compare the means for individual groups, Scheffe test was calculated, with results similar to those obtained after calculations performed in case of the first study – no significant differences between the group who read the feminine story and the one reading the masculine story on the femininity dimension (57,63 vs. 56,69; ns). The test showed a difference between those groups on the masculinity dimension – after reading the masculine story, women perceived themselves much lower on the masculinity scale comparing to those, who read the feminine story (44,41 vs. 49,16; $p<0,04$).

Results of men

The effect of interaction between situation type and dimensions creating the psychological gender turned out to be statistically significant $F(1, 79)=6,43$, $p<0,01$; $\eta^2=0,08$. In order to compare the means for individual groups, Scheffe test was calculated, not proving the expected, statistically significant difference between the group who read the masculine story and the one reading the feminine story on the masculinity dimension (53,34 vs. 53,78; ns).

The test showed a difference between those groups on the femininity dimension – after reading the feminine article, men perceived their femininity lower comparing to men who read the masculine article (45,63 vs. 51,02; $p<0,01$).

Discussion

Configuration of the results obtained in the second study is the same as the one from study 1. Regardless of the type of the description (“feminine” vs. “masculine”), women evaluate their femininity on a similar (high) level, while regarding their perceived masculinity, differences have been shown, indicating that after reading the feminine article, women assess their masculinity higher comparing to those who read the masculine article.

Results obtained in case of men are symmetrical to those observed in case of women – no differences noticed on the masculinity dimension, with differences observed on the femininity level, depending on the article read. Men who read the masculine article, evaluated their femininity higher comparing to those who read the feminine article. It is worth mentioning that this difference was on a trend level in the first study, but reached statistical significance on study 2.

The aim of this second study was to determine whether the hypotheses formulated in the theoretical part of this article or a competitive hypothesis may be accepted. The competitive hypothesis, suggested by the results of the first study, related to the defence of psychological gender identity. Attempts to intensify the availability and suggestiveness of categories characteristic of men and women did not modify the general results – it turned out, that results obtained in both studies by men and women are similar. Moreover, the differences observed in case of men and their femininity as a trend in the first study, became statistically significant in the second study.

General discussion

Results of the presented studies confirmed the assumptions about dynamism in perceiving of oneself on the femininity and masculinity dimensions within various type contexts only to some degree. Moreover – the result was opposite to the one contained in the hypotheses.

Perceiving oneself on a dimension consistent with sex (in case of women – feminine dimension and in case of men – on the masculine dimension) is independent of the type context (in discordance with the hypothesis – does not show dynamics), but perceiving oneself on the dimension inconsistent with sex is dependent on type of situation. Women perceive themselves as less “masculine” in masculine contexts comparing to feminine contexts, and men perceive themselves as less “feminine” in the feminine context. Such a result may prove some kind of gender identity regulation. However, a question arises why this regulation works by discrediting the characteristics that are stereotypically ascribed to the opposite gender. When answering such a question, we may refer to two theoretical motifs. Firstly – this regulation may be treated as a defense mechanism (intrapersonal), providing consistency of the gender identity. And secondly – this may be an adaptation mechanism (interpersonal), guaranteeing optimal social functioning.

Pursuit of consistency regarding self is a central mechanism ensuring constant feeling of own identity. Many theoretical concepts, as well as research projects, indicate that gender identity is an integral part of the structure of self, being one of its more important elements (Melosik, 1999). It thus may be judged that an individual, if facing situations requiring behaviors inconsistent with its own gender identity, would feel internal inconsistency (discomfort, even anxiety or fear), making it strive to get rid of it (Bem, Lenney, 1976; Schiedel, Marcia, 1985).

Gender identity may also be considered as a result of fulfilling different type roles by men and women in the society. The roles are related, for instance, to division of works (Eagly, 1984; Wood, Eagly, 2002). According to Eagly (1984, 1987, as cited by: Brannon, 2002) formulation of different expectations towards men and women is a basic result of this situation. Basing on the expectations, women should present protectiveness or sensitivity, while men – competition, domination and decisiveness. In the process of socialization, people internalize these expectations towards feminine and masculine roles. It may thus be presumed that situations inconsistent with gender identity (as during the presented studies) would be threatening, leading the individual to try to be consistent with stereotypical expectations.

The role conflict theory (Sarbin, Allen, 1979, as cited by: Strykowska, 1992) may be a supplement to such an interpretation. Authors of this theory postulate existence

of a conflict between the ascribed (biological) and selected (professional) roles in case of women, because there are differences in evaluation and rewarding from others. The authors say that social opinion exerts pressure (particularly on women) to fulfill roles consistent with the “femininity” and “masculinity” norms, making one either neglect one or have an internal conflict. As a consequence, the individual might be escaping the possible, negative psycho-social effects of taking up roles opposite to its biological gender, avoiding disapproval.

Similarly, the obtained study results may be explained using the attribution theory. Some of the studies indicate that women, who are successful in their professional roles are unkindly evaluated by others (they are perceived as authoritative or aggressive) (Neff, 1977; Horner, 1978, as cited by: Strykowska, 1992; Rosenthal, 1996; Owen, Todor, 1993, as cited by: Brannon, 2002). Maybe a similar tendency may also be found among men, who, when successfully fulfilling roles assigned normally to women, risk disapproval from others. This again leads to an assumption that people, wanting to avoid biased and negative appraisal from others, distance themselves from roles inconsistent with their gender.

Both postulated mechanisms were revealed in the presented studies in the fact that the subjects, in situations inconsistent with their biological gender, depreciated one of the psychological gender dimensions (women – depreciated the masculinity dimension, while men – the femininity dimension). Supposedly, these mechanisms were an effect of possible threat to identity consistency and/or anticipation of negative evaluation of others.

Attempts were made to explain the study results presented above from various theoretical points of view. However, it is worth to take a closer look from the methodological point of view – attempting to explain why the results obtained were inconsistent with the hypotheses derived from theories treating psychological gender as a result of the specific situation. Foundation for the studies laid in the assumption that appropriate construction of the presented stories would make the subjects update their “feminine” and “masculine” categories, affecting (if the hypotheses are legitimate) their own perceived femininity and masculinity. It is worth noticing, that in such situations, the participants at first were observers (reading stories about other people), to turn into actors (they evaluated their own psychological gender). Maybe the obtained results are a consequence of the participants looking at someone else’s situation, not experiencing it. There is a need to hold successive studies, with participants not only “observing” specific situations, but also participating in them.

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