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## THE ANDROGYNIZATION OF THE „CITY OF WOMEN” AND ITS REGION

**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to answer the question: are there any substantial arguments justifying the label given to the city of Łódź as the “city of women”? This seems especially relevant because the term/phrase can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, it may be a statement stressing that the town “belongs” to women and, unlike in a community based on patriarchy, “the second sex” dominates. This line of reasoning raises the question of the grounds (quantitative and/or qualitative) for asserting women’s preponderance in Łódź. Secondly, the label also allows for advancing a thesis about the “feminine” nature of the city, i.e. the gender of its community empirically identified as female.

This paper presents an analysis of both propositions, using the statistical data and the results of empirical sociological research conducted on a representative sample of the broader urban community, that is among the inhabitants of Łódź and the voivodeship (Province), as well as the findings of studies carried out on a random sample of 18,000 students from all primary, middle and secondary schools in the Łódź region (excluding private schools and those managed by foundations or associations).

The article is an attempt to respond to the following hypothesis: The “city of women” is not the same concept as a “feminine city”. Łódź is a “women’s town” due to their numerical predominance in the population and because it is women who have accumulated more and better (basic) human capital resources. However, empirically defined gender patterns of the community in the city and the region, i.e. personality orientations and the psychological sex of the inhabitants, together with personality traits revealed in the process of fulfilling social roles, which are of a key importance from the point of view of the cultural models of femininity and masculinity, need not confirm the feminine nature of the city.

**Key words:** city – community, sex, gender, androgyny.

### 1. The subject of the study

Taking a gender approach in social research opens up interesting, explorative areas of analysis. Sometimes it leads to a more thoughtful reconsideration of

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seemingly insignificant, already familiarized, phenomena and the meaning of the commonly understood terms describing them. From this point of view, a reflection on a “city’s sex”, if referring to Łódź because of its designation as a “city of women”, may seem unjustified, but only on the surface. The abovementioned phrase is in fact ambiguous and in a gender perspective it may be interpreted at least in two ways. Firstly, it could be taken as a declarative statement that the city actually “belongs” to women, who are in this case the dominant sex, unlike in communities based on a patriarchal order. Secondly, it could be interpreted as a thesis about the “feminine” nature of the urban population, i.e. the gender of the town’s community, empirically identified as female.

This paper presents an analysis of both propositions, using statistical data and results obtained by empirical sociological research conducted on a representative sample of a broader urban community, that is among the inhabitants of the city of Łódź and the voivodeship of Łódź, as well as the findings of the studies carried out on a random sample of 18,000 students from all primary, middle and secondary schools in the Łódź region (excluding private schools and those managed by foundations or associations).

The first proposition is discussed on the basis of: the results of an analysis of the numerical share of sex category (and in some cases additionally age category) in the population of Łódź and the region; the feminization index of the population structure; and the quality of the basic components of the human capital (education and skills, health) accumulated by those women and men who constituted a representative sample of the voivodeship’s population.

As for the second proposition, the identification of the surveyed population’s gender was based on the results of studies on personality traits as a component of human capital (Malinowska 2011), and performed through an empirical determination of personality orientation types and the psychological sex of the respondents. In addition, the study uses characteristics and behavior profiles of parents in their roles as mother and father, as identified by the children from public primary, middle and secondary schools in the Łódź region (Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2010).

The article attempts to respond to the following hypothesis: The phrase “city of women” is not the same concept as a “feminine city.” Łódź is a “women’s town” due to their numerical predominance in the population, and also because women have accumulated more and higher quality (basic) human capital resources than men. However, empirically defined gender patterns of the community in the city and the region, i.e. personality orientations and the psychological sex of the inhabitants, together with personality traits revealed in the process of fulfilling parental roles (which are of a key importance from the point of view of the cultural models of femininity and masculinity), need not confirm the feminine nature of the city just because it is feminized. Taking into account Sandra Bem’s findings,

which allow for rejecting a bipolar concept of gender (Bem 1974, as cited in Humm 1993: 22), one may rather consider the androgynization of the community of the “women’s city” and its region. When it comes to androgynization, it is seen here as a process of “linking, in a psychological and spiritual sense, features traditionally considered feminine and masculine” - as a new type of personality “[...] not sexually determined by the traditionally formed gender roles (*monogendered personality*)” (Humm 1993: 21).

## 2. Characteristics of the studies forming the basis for the article

The empirical basis of this paper consists primarily of the results of a quantitative sociological research carried out on a representative sample of residents, aged 16–65 years, of the Łódź region within module II of the project *Social and human capital as factors of the development of the region of Łódź*, co-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund. The studies were conducted over a two-month period from the 30<sup>th</sup> of October to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 2010, by a team of researchers from the University of Łódź.

Before starting the main fieldwork the characteristics of the current population at the time were developed, including sex and age structure of the inhabitants of Łódź and the voivodeship (as cited in Gonerska 2009). The basic components of human capital (education, skills and health) among men and women were determined in the pivotal studies (Malinowska, Dzwonkowska-Godula, Garncarek 2012). In reliance on the gender concept of the human capital constructed for the purpose of the research (Malinowska 2011), certain data was collected which allowed for identification of the respondents’ gender based on information about their personality orientations. This data was assessed using the NEO-FFI test by Paul T. Costa, Jr. and Robert R. McCrae (as cited in Zawadzki, Strelau, Szczepaniak, Śliwińska 2007), as this tool enables one to identify the five personality domains (factors): extroversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and agreeableness. The results of the test were then compared with the content of stereotypes of masculinity and femininity determined on the basis of empirical studies conducted earlier in thirty countries (Williams, Best 1990, as cited in Wojciszke, 2003: 419). Moreover, apart from the NEO-FFI, in the same studies the *Inventory to assess psychological gender (IPP)*, by Alicja Kuczyńska (1992), was used, which is the Polish version of the test Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem 1974, as cited in Kuczyńska, 1992). The psychological sex of the inhabitants of Łódź and the region was empirically determined with the aid of this tool. In both cases (IPP and BSRI), tests completed by 1778 people (out of 2004 in total) were qualified for further study (Malinowska 2012).

The third source of data used in this article consists of the results of a survey on the sense of security in the family and at school, carried out among children and young people in 2008–2009 on a random sample of 18,000 students from all primary, middle and secondary schools in the Łódź region (excluding private schools and those managed by foundations or associations) (Michałowska, Daniłowicz, Szymczak 2009). This study provides the children's characterization of their parents in the roles of mother and father, which was of great interest from our point of view (Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2011).

### **3. The city of female persons; the foundations for women's predominance in Łódź**

#### **3.1. Numerical preponderance**

Women represent more than a half (52,4%) of the population of the Łódź region, and this preponderance over men has persisted for many years. The Łódź voivodeship ranks first in Poland, ahead of other highly urbanized regions such as Masovia and Lower Silesia, in terms of the women's numerical dominance in the population of the voivodeship (Gonerska 2009).

The feminization index of the population structure in the Łódź region is also the highest in the country. In particular, the feminization index of the urban population of the voivodeship has reached a record-high value: in 2008 it was 115. Given that the average for Poland equals 111 women per 100 men, with this rate the Łódź voivodeship secured the highest rank in the state (rural areas in the region are not as highly feminized, but the figure is still 102). The city of Łódź – capital of the region – was characterized by both the highest percentage of women (54.5%) and the highest feminization index (120) in the entire voivodeship.

In the Łódź region, as in the whole country, women live longer than men. It is fair to say that that part of the population which is in its final decade of working age is under the influence of strong feminization, as women in their fifties start to significantly outnumber men (Malinowska 2010).

In light of the above data, Łódź is actually the only “women's city” in Poland (if this term is taken to mean the numerical predominance of women over men). It should, however, be noted that Łódź is also becoming a city of aging women. This implies that the Łódź Region now has and will have in the future mainly the human capital of an elderly female population.

Also for this reason, it seems interesting to compare the quality of the resources accumulated by women and men.

### **3.2. The qualitative foundations of women’s dominance, based on the results of a comparison of selected components of human capital in the two sex groups**

The analysis of the level of education, acquired additional skills, and the state of health of women and men (constituting a representative sample of residents of Łódź and the voivodeship), generally showed a higher quality of human capital in women as opposed to men (Malinowska, Dzwonkowska-Godula, Garncarek 2012).

The quality of education as a component of human capital is assessed using a relatively easy-to-apply and straightforward criterion: the higher the educational level, the better the quality of the resource. In the Łódź region, as in Poland generally and in many other countries as well, women predominate among persons with a higher diploma, whereas the number of men and women among those with a secondary education are comparable. On the one hand, looking at this fact with respect to the patriarchal model of femininity, one may note that women take advantage of the access to education, especially at the higher levels, as a proof of their emancipation from gender restrictions. Since the generally higher level of education of women compared to men is already a social fact – we perceive it as a sign of an important cultural change, not just as a quality indicator of particular women’s human capital component. However, on the other hand it should be pointed out that the female residents in Łódź and the region hold degrees in academic fields which fit into a modern patriarchal – in terms of social approval for women’s access to education above the elementary level – model of femininity. Their degrees are predominantly in: humanities, social sciences, pedagogy (Malinowska, Dzwonkowska-Godula, Garncarek 2012). In a quantitative study, the results of which are included here, the reasons for the respondents’ choice of field of study were not investigated. Nevertheless, according to other studies, it is known that women are influenced by prevailing gender stereotypes and even admit to downplaying the importance of their own talents and interests when dealing with disciplines socially defined as “masculine” (*Gender Imbalance...* 2009; Gras-Velasquez, Joyce, Debry 2009).

Hence the numerical preponderance of women among those with a higher educational degree may be seen as a sign of the androgynization of this key human capital component. However, this statement holds true only in a quantitative sense. Disciplines studied by the female respondents, as well as a hypothetical explanation of their choices, reveal a cultural femininity demonstrated by this group of women representatives living in Łódź and the region. This may be used as a justification for describing Łódź as a “city of women”. Yet this interpretation refers to the second way of understanding this concept.

Additional skills declared by the respondents were quantitatively and qualitatively similar in both sex groups. The most frequently mentioned competencies included command of foreign languages and computer literacy, i.e. *ability to use computer software programs* and knowledge of the tools needed to carry out work duties. This particular element of human capital was therefore neutral in terms of its potential for strengthening women's position as a better resourced community with a better human capital. In response to a question in this regard however, the respondents revealed that in the process of socialization they had assimilated the "appropriate" elements of the cultural gender models: men tended to overestimate their additional skills (which, as mentioned above, are comparable to those held by women), while women were more likely to point out their own shortcomings (Malinowska, Dzwonkowska-Godula, Garncarek 2012).

The community surveyed is not well-resourced with respect to the other two human capital components: health and life expectancy. This applies especially to men. Taking into account the average life expectancy for men and women in the Łódź region, when compared with other voivodeships in Poland, one may observe that people live shorter lives in the Łódź region. The Łódź region has the highest mortality rate in the country for cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Female residents of the voivodeship who are in their sixties have, on average, 22.5 years of life left, while their male counterparts can expect to live another 17.1 years (for Poland as a whole, these figures are respectively 23.1 and 17.9) (Malinowska 2010). Moreover, men suffer from multiple addictions and other unhealthy, destructive habits more often than women, and at the same time they are inclined to overestimate the state of their health. In this context, out of the two sex populations the female population appears to be the potentially stronger one. Describing Łódź as the "city of women" can thus be justified in a variety of ways: by reference to the numerical dominance of women, their superior education and better health, as well as to the fact that they care for themselves more than men and live longer (Malinowska, Dzwonkowska-Godula, Garncarek 2012).

Referring to Łódź as to the "city of women" may also raise the question of who exercises power here – women or men. Since for the purpose of this article no additional research was planned – nor was an analysis of the structure of the local authorities in terms of their share of male and female representatives share and participation undertaken – we may only state the fact that for the first time in the history of the Łódź region a woman is the Marshal of the Łódź Voivodeship while at the same time a woman was elected to the post of Mayor of the City of Łódź. This concentration of power at the highest level of the local authority in the hands of women is a strong argument to justify Łódź being dubbed as a "city of women," obviously, in the first sense of the term, since otherwise it would require a gender analysis of the style of governance.

## 4. Gender of the residents of Łódź and the voivodeship

### 4.1. Personality orientations and the psychological sex of women and men

Research carried out within the project *Social and Human capital as factors of the development of the region of Łódź* provided unique data on the personality orientations and the psychological sex of a representative sample of the Łódź region's population.

As already stated, in order to determine personality orientations of the respondents who live in the Łódź voivodeship, the NEO FFI test was used, also known as the *Big Five* framework of personality traits (from Costa and McCrae). The collected data was then developed by a certified psychologist (Celej 2011). Having included the standards for age and sex, raw scores were changed to standard scores, known as sten scales. This procedure allowed for valid comparisons between people of different sexes and various age groups. In light of the results obtained, it turned out that the vast majority of respondents achieved an average score on each of the sten scales representing the five personality dimensions in the NEO FFI test. However, analysis of the extreme values (both high and low) permitted the observation that the extremes are predominantly found on the scales of three dimensions, i.e. openness to experience, extroversion, and conscientiousness. Thus, the majority of those surveyed identified themselves as moderately open to experience, moderately extroverted, and moderately conscientious (Celej, Malinowska 2011; Malinowska 2012).

Analysis of the distribution of frequency of a given dimension level in the two sex groups allowed for the observation that low openness to experience was more often seen among men (32.1%) than women (24%). High scores on the extroversion scale were attained more by male than female respondents (respectively 22% and 16.4%). On the other hand, women were more likely to obtain low scores on the neuroticism scale than men (although the latter were more numerous among those receiving average results). When it comes to agreeableness, women slightly outnumbered men in terms of receiving both the highest and the lowest scores (Celej, Malinowska 2011).

A comparison of the descriptions of each of the five personality dimensions measured by the NEO FFI test with empirically determined contents of masculinity and femininity stereotypes (Williams, Best 1990, as cited in Wojciszke 2003: 419) revealed that most of the features describing dimensions of neuroticism and agreeableness match the stereotype of femininity, while those describing dimensions of extroversion and openness to experience fit the stereotype of masculinity. Only the personality traits referring to conscientiousness were found in the descriptions of both gender stereotypes, yet the basic difference consists in the fact that male conscientiousness objectifies men in the public sphere, with regard to

their professional work; whereas female conscientiousness objectifies women in the private sphere and involves care of the family and household chores.

Comparing the distribution of personality traits characterizing men and women participating in the study with the stereotypes of femininity and masculinity, one may observe that women in Łódź are no longer neurotic and conciliatory. In addition, they appear to be more open to new experiences than men. Thus, their personality traits show a tendency to masculinization, by eliminating the characteristics typical of the femininity model and acquiring stereotypically male characteristics. On the other hand men in the region, though still more open to other people (in accordance with the ideal of masculinity), are also more withdrawn and reserved in terms of taking up new experiences in comparison to women (which is a stereotypically feminine feature) (Malinowska 2012).

The above-described tendency towards personality change observed in men and women has been confirmed by the findings of a psychological gender analysis carried out on the same group of respondents. In this study the “Inventory to assess psychological gender (IPP)” was used. This is a research tool developed by A. Kuczyńska on the basis of Bem Sex Role Inventory test (Bem 1974, as cited in Kuczyńska 1992). Professionally developed data (Celej 2011) proved that among all those surveyed, the androgynous personality was the most predominant – represented by 52.1% of respondents (926 people). These people achieved high results in the IPP test on the scale of both masculinity and femininity. Androgynous and sexually undefined individuals were in majority among both women and men. As many as 54.4% of all female residents of the Łódź region who took part in the study identified themselves as androgynous. Similar results, although slightly lower, were attained by men: 48.4% of the entire researched population achieved high scores both on the scale of femininity and masculinity.

Frequency distribution of a certain type of psychological gender in the two sex groups shows, however, that more men (32%) than women (25.7%) identified themselves as sexually undefined (achieving low scores on the scales of both femininity and masculinity). Finally, it seems worth underscoring from the point of view of our enquiry that more than 60% of all androgynous persons were women (Celej 2011).

#### **4.2. Personality characteristics of the parents in the roles of mother and father**

The findings presented above refer to the empirically determined gender patterns of the female and male residents of Łódź and the voivodeship. Other studies, focusing on the sense of security in the family and at school among children and young people, conducted in 2008–2009 on a random sample of 18,000 students from all public primary, middle and secondary schools in the Łódź region, provided, *inter alia*, data concerning the personality characteristics



identified by children in describing their mothers and fathers (Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2011). In the discussed study the Chinese portrait technique was applied. The participants were asked to say the first thing that comes to their mind as a reaction to a stimulus. i.e: *If your mum were an animal, what animal would she be? Why? For the majority of students mother is a lion, for she is [...] imperious [...] dominant, but caring too, [...] a proud and noble person [...] she maintains order at home, [...] she is a caring person with a strong character. She knows how to put her foot down.* (as cited in Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2011: 26–27). The mother also brought to children’s minds a dog, because [...] *she is the best friend, [...] she sniffs out everything, [...] well, she’s always by my side, [...] dogs are definitely more open, [...].* Finally, mothers were also associated with a donkey: [...] *she is stubborn and always get her own way [...],* and a leopard, [...] *mum always has things her own way, makes a sudden attack, you never know when you can take the liberty of doing something [...];* and mothers happened to be a cat or a snake as well (as cited in Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2011: 27).

As the authors of the report conclude, the mother is perceived by the participants in the study “primarily as a strong person, assertive, independent, dominant, caring, resourceful, with a strong character and able to defend herself and the loved ones, demanding, consistent, she is someone you can fall back on, she is a friend” (Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2011: 27).

Subsequently, the schoolchildren were asked to name the first thing that came to their mind as a reaction to the stimulus: *If your dad were an animal, what animal would he be? Why?* According to some of the students their dad would be a dog as he is: [...] *strong, a bit wise, you can bring him up, he’s nice [...]* etc. Father was also associated with a giraffe [...] *cause he’s big [...],* an owl, for [...] *when I start talking about something, he gets so talkative and acts like a know-it-all;* and a teddy bear [...] *Big, cuddly bear. Because you can always snuggle up to him. He will comfort you [...],* a bear [...] *because he is also big and you may cuddle up to him, but he can shout, if needed, too [...].* Dad was also associated with a leopard as well [...] *Dad also gets his own way every time and he always knows how to win me over to his side. [...],* a fox [...] *sly, sneaky and cares only about himself [...].* For some, their father was a snake [...] *treacherous, messed up my life, broke up the family [...],* and for other children he resembled a horse [...] *they can be quiet, or do nothing like my dad, he’s kind of melancholic [...]* *he can get angry too [...], hardworking [...].* Father was also associated with a rat: [...] *A rat is... so small that if you catch it, squeeze it... it does, well, that’s what my dad is like, when we want something, you only need to grab the tail and he won’t do anything to you [...]* *he is gentle as a lamb, terribly henpecked, agrees to everything* (as cited in Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2011: 27–28).

Summarising the characteristics of fathers made by the students participating in the study, the authors point out that children emphasized such features as: “physical strength, egoism and a tendency to subordinate, submissiveness, despite the appearance of independence, firmness” (Michałowska, Daniłowicz 2011: 28).

It can be noted that the vast majority of features assigned to mothers by their children fit into the cultural model of masculinity, whereas children associate fathers mainly with those basic male qualities which are biologically determined (physical strength, tall height, etc.). As far as male features included in the cultural model of masculinity are concerned, the children’s statements testify to the fact that fathers rather pretend to have these characteristics than really have them. Instead they show traits typical for the cultural model of femininity. Essentially, it can be concluded that the social research results described above seem to provide documentary evidence for the ongoing process of personality androgynization among the inhabitants of Łódź and the region.

Finally, with reference to women, the more interesting sex group from our perspective, on the basis of the results obtained it may be hypothesized that their gender pattern is becoming masculinized. Not only did the female respondents show features identified as masculine and the androgynous psychological sex, but also their characteristics while performing their social role of a mother (a social role of fundamental importance in the cultural model of femininity) were described by the children as evidencing features mainly ascribed to the cultural model of masculinity.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the presented results of the analysis described above, it is now appropriate to respond to the hypothesis advanced in the introduction.

The city of Łódź is indeed a “city of women” due to their numerical preponderance over men in the entire population, and because female residents have accumulated more and better basic human capital resources. Moreover, women currently exercise power in the city and the region, occupying key positions, which include the highest offices of the local authorities.

However, Łódź is not a city of feminine women. When it comes to the gender of its female residents a tendency to masculinization of the personality orientations and an advanced androgynization of women’s psychological sex can be observed. The conclusions of our research were confirmed by other studies as well. Personality characteristics offered by the children from the public schools in the Łódź region portrayed their mothers as demonstrating strong traits, which evidences the women’s cultural masculinization and the predominance of the

masculine element in their gender pattern, while men increasingly and markedly reveal culturally feminine traits in their behavior, which did not escape their children’s notice.

In the second sense of the term, Łódź is not a “city of women.” but rather a feminized city of androgynous, unfeminine women and feminizing men.

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## ANDROGYNIZACJA „MIASTA KOBIEC” I JEGO REGIONU

**Streszczenie.** Celem artykułu jest udzielenie odpowiedzi na pytanie o merytoryczne uzasadnienie nazywania Łodzi „miastem kobiet”, zwłaszcza że to określenie może być interpretowane na co najmniej na dwa sposoby. Po pierwsze jako stwierdzenie akcentujące, że miasto „należy” do kobiet, że tutaj, odwrotnie niż w społeczności opartej na patriarchalnym porządku, dominuje „druga płeć”. Ten sposób rozumowania implikuje pytanie o podstawę – ilościową i/lub jakościową – przewagi kobiet. Po drugie – pojęcie to można odczytać jako tezę o „kobiecy” charakterze miasta, tzn. o zidentyfikowanej empirycznie jako kobieca, kulturowej płci jego zbiorowości. W artykule dokonano analizy obu problemów, wykorzystując do tego celu dane statystyczne i wyniki empirycznych badań socjologicznych przeprowadzonych na reprezentatywnej próbie szeroko rozumianej zbiorowości miejskiej, tzn. wśród mieszkańców Łodzi i województwa oraz badań zrealizowanych na osiemnastotysięcznej losowej próbie uczniów łódzkich szkół podstawowych i ponadpodstawowych (z wyjątkiem szkół prywatnych i kierowanych przez fundacje lub stowarzyszenia).

**Słowa kluczowe:** miasto kobiet, płeć, androgynizacja.