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CONSTRUCTION OF FEMINITY AND MASCULINITY IN THE DISCOURSE TO POPULARIZE A SCIENCE. THE ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES¹

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present the analyses of the discursive strategies of constructing gender difference in the articles published in the *Science in Poland* bulletin. This bulletin is an important platform for the popularization of Polish and world science. It is funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland.

In the article, I assume that gender is a socially constructed structure (including discursive) level, about the difference between men and women, especially anatomically. Starting from the assumptions of the theory of discourse, which is understood as the process of producing and reproducing social meaning, the analysis includes articles published on the website between 2005 and 2010. In the first part of the paper, I introduce the definition of gender and gender beliefs, which are an important context for the analysis. Then, the content and the method of research (the analysis of discourse) are characterized. In the last part of the paper, the results of research characterizing the main discursive strategies reproducing gender in polarized, homogeneous, and universal categories are presented.

Key words:

gender, gender beliefs, media, discourse, femininity, masculinity

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1. Introduction: gender beliefs, sex difference, and biology

Contemporary gender researchers unanimously emphasize that it is a multidimensional category, constructed on the different meaning of social life and not limited to just one of them. It is not only an identity or a social role or individual experience; it is a social institution, reproduced in complex and recursive social practices that categorize people into two different categories (men and women). Based on this categorization, social life is organized². One of the main directions in gender studies is the identification of the key components that constitute a gender system. Although these studies are rather highly differentiated and finding a coherent theory seems to be far off, the researchers point out the very important role of gender beliefs in the process of constructing a system of gender. Researchers, such as Cecilia L. Ridgeway; Shelley J. Correll; Sandra Bem; and Barbara J. Risman, conclude that gender beliefs set a frame of interpretation used by people during a symbolic interaction, social relations, or complex institutional activities reproducing the gender system. Gender beliefs are cultural rules, which help individuals to define themselves and others. It is a point of reference for cognitive processes during which people categorize the world and organize their social reality³.

Gender is a system of producing and organizing inequality on the basis of this difference, and gender beliefs legitimize it. Gender beliefs are more than stereotypes and prejudices. They are close to what can be described as “a stereotypical definition of the situation”, which, “describes the situation, its structure and the relationships between the actors playing in it”⁴. These rules are not just simple definitions of expectations for men and women, but also the formulation that

² See: institutional definition of gender: B.J. Risman, *Gender as a Social Structure Theory Wrestling with Activism*, “Gender & Society” 2004, No. 4, pp. 429–450; J. Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender*, New Haven–London 1994; P. Yancey Martin, *Gender as Social Institution*, “Social Forces” 2004, No. 4, pp. 1249–1273; C.L. Ridgeway, S.J. Correll, *Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations*, „Gender & Society” 2004, No. 4, pp. 510–531.

³ As Ridgeway and Correll writes: “widely shared, hegemonic cultural beliefs about gender and their effects in what we call ‘social relational contexts’ are among the core components that maintain and change the gender system [...]. If gender is a system for constituting difference and organizing inequality on the basis of that difference, then the widely held cultural beliefs that define the distinguishing characteristics of men and women and how they are expected to behave clearly are a central component of that system”, *Ibidem*, pp. 509–510.

⁴ E. Bobrowska, *Obrazowanie społeczeństwa w mediach: analiza radiomaryjnego dyskursu* [Representing of Society in Media: Analysis of the Discourse of Radio Maryja], Kraków 2007; see also: C.L. Ridgeway, *Framed Before We Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations*, “Gender & Society” 2009, No. 2, p. 148.

conceptualizes femininity and masculinity in referential, relational, and polarized ways that prioritize them at the same time.

Cultural rules concerning gender are omnipresent; they act and are reproduced in various areas of social life. Like other cultural rules, they are discursively formulated and realized in reflective social practices and in a conscious and planned action. They are present in the process of gender practice, not necessarily reflective and intentional, but fragmentary, routine, and fast⁵. The presence of cultural rules of gender in social discourses (and the presence of the other cultural rules⁶) proves their repeatability and their presence in many independent narrations of a particular situation.

Beginning from these suppositions about the construction of gender, I assume that the discourse of the researched bulletin – *Science in Poland* – concerning femininity and masculinity plays an important role in the construction of convictions about femininity and masculinity. The aim of this article is to analyze discursive strategies reproducing gender belief rules. The research method⁷ is a discourse analysis (inspired by the assumptions of the poststructuralist theory)⁸. In the following parts of the article, I am going to describe the characteristics of the bulletin and to familiarize the assumptions that are in the background of the method used on the research on a text. The last part of the article presents the results of analysis.

2. The research material. The scientific bulletin *Science in Poland*

It is a truism to say that media plays an important role in the reproduction of the gender rules and polarized vision of femininity and masculinity, including those media that, by reproducing gender patterns, appeal to research authorities. *Science* in modern secular societies is the authority and the body claimed to be impartial, even though it has an actual involvement in an interpretation, conventions, and

⁵ See e.g.: P. Yancey Martin, “*Said and Done*” versus “*Saying and Doing*”: *Gendering Practices, Practicing Gender at Work*, “*Gender & Society*” 2003, No. 3, pp. 342–356.

⁶ See: E. Bobrowska, *Obrazowanie społeczeństwa...*, op.cit., pp. 26–28.

⁷ I decided not to use qualitative analysis software, such as Nvivo or Atlas.ti, because I found that using tools in the Word program for the content analysis of the texts published in the service (which are very short) will be sufficient to formalize interpretation of my research.

⁸ See e.g.: H. Calsamiglia, T. Van Dijk, *Popularization Discourse and Knowledge about the Genome*, “*Discourse & Society*”, No. 4, Vol. 15, pp. 369–389; T. Ricento, *The Discursive Construction of Americanism*, “*Discourse Society*” 2003, Vol. 14; P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge 2003.

cultural rules⁹. Scientific knowledge, which has become the content of the media argumentation, plays a role in the authentication and making messages objective. Appealing to the authority of science, which is not subject to discussion (it is assumed to be rational, based on lack of prejudices and verifiable facts) has got strong persuasive meaning and plays an important role in the shaping of the cultural beliefs. Studies from researchers, such as Victoria Brescoll and Marianne LaFrance¹⁰, prove that media that popularize scientific discoveries focused on emphasizing of the gender polarization (justified biologically) affect the increase of the sexual prejudice in their consumers and their aversion to the processes of the equalization of gender. As Martin and Parker wrote, “The more individuals thought that biology caused sex differences, the more they saw the sexes as different”¹¹. On the other hand, the messages emphasizing non-biological explanation, i.e. the impact of society and culture on femininity and masculinity, enhance the conviction on the variability of human behaviors and their relativity.

Media reporting about the results of scientific research, such as the analyzed *Science in Poland*, serve many functions to science, which are described by Carol H. Weiss and Eleanor Singer¹² with the help of two conceptual metaphors. First, the media is a filter of research, meaning they only present a fraction of research projects. Second, they transform scientific knowledge so that it is accessible to non-specialists and the mass public. Therefore, the knowledge presented in the messages is obviously not a simple reflection of research, but always a kind of interpretation of the results of an analysis taking place in a context constructed by receivers. As Calsamiglia and Van Dijk write, “The mass media are not passive mediators of scientific knowledge, but actively contribute in the production of new, common knowledge and opinions about science and scientists – including information and views that do not derive from scientific sources”¹³.

The *Science in Poland* bulletin is one of the specialized electronic mediums focused on the popularization of research results among a diverse audience, not necessarily experts in a given field of knowledge. Daily news, prepared by journal-

⁹ See: S. Filipowicz, *Krytyka. Imponderabilia i strategia* [Criticism. Imponderables and Strategy], “Nauka” 2012, No. 2.

¹⁰ V. Brescoll, M. LaFrance, *The Correlates and Consequences of Newspaper Reports of Research on Sex Differences*, “Psychological Science” 2004, No. 8, Vol. 15, pp. 515–521.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 520.

¹² C.H. Weiss, E.Singer, *Reporting Social Science in the National Media*, New York 1988, pp. 10–11.

¹³ H. Calsamiglia, T. Van Dijk, *Popularization Discourse...*, op.cit., p. 371; see also the analysis of scientific media research: J. Strelau, *Science and Media* [in:] *ALLEA Biennial Yearbook Critical Topics in Science and Scholarship*, Amsterdam 2004, pp. 91–98.

ists from the Polish Press Agency, about the most important, from the point of view of the authors of the portal, discoveries and research in Polish and world science is published in the bulletin. This service is publicly supported and financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and, therefore, can be considered as a mainstream institution taking an important role in the promotion of science in Poland and communication between the academic world and society. This service is directed at researchers and representatives of the academic environment, but also internauts who are interested in the academic news. The authors of this service are journalists and they are specialized in a variety of scientific fields. Articles published on this website can be reprinted (free of charge) by many other of the most popular Polish websites (such as Interia.pl, Wirtualna Polska, TVN 24, and Wyborcza.pl). As a result, the bulletin can be considered as having an important opinion-forming and educational role among internet users in Poland.

The bulletin has existed for a few years. In 2011, the website was been redesigned (e.g. home website), new categories were introduced, but the general format of the bulletin remained unchanged. In this paper, the analyzed articles published between 2005 and 2010 remain accessible.

Every day, approximately 40 new articles from the fields of natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences are published on the website. We can say that the subject matter of this service is multidimensional. These texts relate to discoveries in the various fields of science and a variety of disciplines (e.g. medicine, social issues, and history). Importantly, the information presented in the service are not only reports, but also comments, opinions, and the interpretations of the authors. There are English and Polish versions of this service. One of the issues that is regularly undertaken by the authors of the bulletin are scientific discoveries related to issues of gender; between 2005 and 2010 721 articles on issues of femininity and masculinity were published.

3. Discursiveness of a social reality and the analysis of discourse

Taking into consideration the varied perspectives of the study on discourse, it is possible to distinguish different research traditions that conceptualize the discourse. Each of these traditions is referential and complementary to the other one. The first theoretical perspective defines discourse in the categories of a text in social contexts – local and global ones. In this perspective, we can place a critical discourse analysis in which language is interpreted as a way of social interaction,

institutional relations, and tool organizing knowledge about the world and structuring experiences¹⁴.

The second tradition of defining discourse is also associated with a critical perspective, particularly with the theory of communicative action by Jürgen Habermas. It has its origins in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, as well as the Paul Grice's concept of conversational rules, and the speech acts theory of John Austin. Discourse is here a special, rational, and organized operation and method of argumentation. It is based on rules and its function is to build a social agreement, negotiation of meanings, inter-subjective worlds, as well as support of a public sphere¹⁵.

The third tradition of understanding a discourse in the social sciences – the most important from the perspective of this paper – interprets a discourse as a means of legitimizing power, building relationships of domination and subordination, and reproducing ideologies and cultural beliefs. The works of M. Foucault, P. Bourdieu, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe can be classified as belonging to this tradition, although many assumptions are also common for researchers undertaking the research from the critical discourse analysis perspective. A discourse acts in a symbolic space full of symbolic conflicts and acts as a standard-setting tool. It is “a practice forming objects with which these discourses speak”¹⁶. The discourse is inseparably associated with a reproduction of power, which can be dispersed or institutionalized and located in symbolic elites (communities and social institutions) with a mandate to name and categorize social phenomena¹⁷. Thus, discursive power is a power to control and influence minds in a subtle way. Therefore, it is particularly important from this perspective to analyze the discourse of dominant groups and institutions (such as mainstream media or politics), which have the authority to legitimize power and have a specific impact on

¹⁴ See: T. Van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, London 1998; T. Van Dijk, *Discourse and Context. A Sociocognitive Approach*, Cambridge 2008; Krytyczna analiza dyskursu. Interdyscyplinarne podejście do komunikacji społecznej [Critical Discourse Analysis. Interdisciplinary Approach to Social Communications], A. Duszak, N. Fairclough (eds.), Kraków 2008.

¹⁵ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Boston 1984.

¹⁶ M. Foucault, *Archeologia wiedzy* [The Archeology of Knowledge], Warszawa 2002, p. 57.

¹⁷ See also: P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge 2003; M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: *An Introduction*, New York 1990; A. Czyżewski, *Dyskurs* [Discourse] [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii. Suplement* [Encyclopaedia of Sociology], Warszawa 2005, pp. 50–59; B. Jabłońska, *Krytyczna analiza dyskursu: refleksje teoretyczno-metodologiczne* [Critical Discourse Analysis: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections], “Qualitative Sociology Review” 2006, No. 1, Vol. 2, http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/PL/archive_pl.php [access: 8.09.2012].

the community, the development of social action patterns, value systems, and normative ideologies.

The conviction about the discursiveness of a social reality assumes that a close relationship between the language of expression and the world, to which the statement relates, exists. In this perspective, any category, word, or concept is not neutral; they include the valuation and evaluation of the described reality. Both the form and content of a message have important axiological significance. A valuation is already included in the very choice and selection of information, which suggests an ideological vision of the world because the selection of information is often associated with (not always intentional) the sender's conviction about what is important for receivers and what is not. Knowledge – understood as a discursive process created within the framework of a discourse is not impartial – is a *sine qua non* condition of power and enters with it in recursive relations.

To understand the processes in a language, we need to reject reductionism and linguistic attitude, and analyze the language as a part of the complex structural relations, class relations, relations of domination, and subordination, to which it refers and represents. Analysis of a text as an autonomous communication is not possible without setting its interpretation in the complex structural and cultural contexts. Therefore, to understand the media messages about femininity and masculinity, it is necessary to set them in the context of the interpretation of cultural convictions about gender, understood as recursive to the discourse (as the cause and the consequence of a discourse).

The researchers (such as Thomas Ricento and Małgorzata Jacyno¹⁸) distinguish the main discursive strategies that are aimed to the construction and reproduction of the meanings of social reality systems, ideologies, and objectivity of a message. These strategies will be crucial in the analysis of the studied texts. According to Thomas Ricento, the most important strategies are the constructive ones¹⁹, which can be classified as:

1. Justification strategies are dedicated to justify status quo ante,
2. Strategies for a construction of the world on the basis of differences (creating dichotomous social order and simplifying the values),
3. Strategies of generalization dedicated to joining a discursively created world, appearing in the homogenization of de facto distanced experiences,

¹⁸ See types of the discursive strategies, eg.: T. Ricento, *The Discursive Construction...*, op.cit., p. 617; M. Jacyno, *Iluzje codzienności: o teorii socjologicznej Pierre'a Bourdieu* [Illusions of Everyday Life: The Sociological Theory of Pierre Bourdieu], Warszawa 1997.

¹⁹ T. Ricento, *The Discursive Construction...*, op.cit., pp. 617–618.

4. Avoiding strategies, combined with a strategy of unification, leaving content that could undermine a homogenous vision in a message unsaid, cancelling all differences.

These strategies are structured with the use of various linguistic and rhetorical strategies, such as euphemisms, hyperboles, presuppositions (obviousness, truth), metonymy, etc.

4. Femininity and masculinity – the diametrically opposed views of gender. The results of the analysis of discourse

As mentioned before, the analyzed texts published on the site usually take the form of reports, which refer to the results of scientific research on women and men. Although there are many texts on gender issues, repetitive discursive strategies are characteristic of most of the messages.

The form and structure of texts published on this site is noticeable. The texts are usually very short. Details of their methodology, research tools, sample selection rules, and the course of research are presented only occasionally. However, despite their small size, information authenticating messages, such as data on the nationality of researchers (particularly analysis of American and British scientists, after 2011 also the Polish ones) are almost always present. The names of scientific societies and institutions where the research was conducted is also included. If there is any information about research samples, it appears that these studies were usually conducted on small communities. Nevertheless, the judgment is always presented with a large degree of generality. The results of research, in fact referring to every specific and small group, are extrapolated to femininity and masculinity as such, which are homogeneously understood.

Although the site covers different areas and academic disciplines, the majority of the messages refer to results in the field of natural sciences, almost completely ignoring the results of research in the humanities or the social sciences. If there are any references to “soft” sciences in the context of sexuality, they are usually embedded in the sociobiological interpretation (11 times), which serves to justify gender inequality. Exclusion and sepiation is typical of the constructionist prospects, despite the fact that they have dominated studies on gender in recent decades²⁰. In total, queer or feminist approaches appear in two analyzed texts and the results of

²⁰ See: C. Brickell, *The Sociological Construction of Gender and Sexuality*, “Sociological Review” 2006, No. 1, pp. 87–113.

research from the essential “Gender and Society” journal are referenced only once. A social perspective, without which it is impossible to understand the problems of the human body, health, or sexuality, practically does not exist in the analyzed content.

The quantitative analysis shows the important features of the discourse on femininity and masculinity and illustrates the hierarchy of threads in the texts. Table 1 shows the results of the saturation of information in the researched messages.

Table 1. Thematic distribution of information on women and men (own research)

| | | Dedicated to women | Dedicated to men |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Materials dedicated to one sex | | 612 (100%) | 336 (100%) |
| Materials comparing femininity and masculinity | | 227 | |
| Materials focused only on the issue of one sex | | 385 | 109 |
| Subjects/ contexts: | | | |
| Physical health | Generally | 216 (35%) | 78 (23%) |
| | Including: a reproductive health | 142 (23%) | 31 (9%) |
| Mental health | | 8 (1%) | 9 (3%) |
| Fertility (infertility treatment) | | 18 (3%) | 21 (6%) |
| Sexuality | | 10 (1,5%) | 33 (10%) |
| Responsibility for babies (during pregnancy and after childbirth) | | 89 (15%) | 0 |
| Work | | 13 (2%) | 8 (2%) |
| Homosexuality | | 0 | 10 (3%) |
| Free time/ hobby | | 1 (0,16%) | 13 (4%) |
| Beauty/appearance | | 29 (5%) | 13 (4%) |
| Care of children | | 20 (3%) | 8 (2%) |

The number of the all articles is 721. 227 of the articles analyze both the subject of femininity and masculinity, mainly in the context of seeking of differences between them. 385 texts are dedicated only women’s issues and only 109 to male issues. Analyzing all the texts, which include in their context the gender difference and those ones that focus on a particular sex together, femininity issues are mentioned in 612 texts and masculinity issues are addressed almost two times less (336). A woman is then more precisely defined and conceptualized by the articles published on the site, while masculinity is in many cases described in its relation to femininity and mainly as its negation.

Categories forming a kind of conceptual frame of femininity are mainly health (particularly a reproductive health and diseases related to the reproductive sys-

tem), pregnancy, and childbirth. Nearly 23% of the texts concern diseases of the uterus, ovaries, and breasts, which is particularly interesting if the data is compared with the actual causes of death of women in Poland. According to the analysis of GUS, among of the primary causes of death in women in Poland are diseases related to the circulatory system (52% in 2010), not gynecological issues²¹. Masculinity is defined in the text mainly by the experiences of health, illness, and sexuality (also defined in terms of dysfunction and sexual efficiency). It is worth mentioning that male diseases – compared to women diseases – are more diverse and include the entire spectrum of different afflictions.

4.1. Unifying strategies. Universality of femininity and masculinity

Generally, as is typical for all of the analyzed texts, universalization and its consequence, the essentialization of femininity and masculinity, is omnipresent. The authors of texts use the generalizations and stress the existence of a timeless and exemplary woman who determines what is normative and non-normative for femininity; and, therefore, there are cross-cultural attitudes that define masculinity and femininity.

Therefore, for example, the typical woman has a “worse mood than a man” and sleep “less than men”²², but are better at relationships with people²³. Men „are ahead of women” in management²⁴ and are “better than women at recognizing cheating”²⁵. The image of gender as a relational and hierarchical category, building stratified relations, is characteristic of the majority of the texts (e.g. “Men are better than women in finding out cheating. Faithless women beware! Men can perfectly assess

²¹ GUS, *Podstawowe informacje o sytuacji demograficznej Polski w 2011 roku* [Basic Information about Demographic Situation in Poland in 2011], http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/l_podst_inf_o_syt_demograficznej_2011.pdf [access: 08.09.2012].

²² Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Koszmarne sny kobiet* [Terrible Dreams of Women], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,234518,koszmarne-sny-kobiet.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

²³ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Dlaczego kobiety są lepszymi menadżerami?* [Why Women are Better Managers?], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,73127,dlaczego-kobiety-sa-lepszymi-menadzerami.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Mężczyźni lepsi od kobiet w wykrywaniu zdrady* [Men are Better than Women in Uncovering Infidelity], <http://www.naukapolska.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,301884,mezczyzni-lepsi-od-kobiet-w-wykrywaniu-zdrady.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

whether their partners are cheating on them or not²⁶). Women as a community, if they are at something better than men, usually are better in consumption, communication/interpersonal relations, and life span. Masculinity dominates in the discourse in all areas considered by Raewyn Connell as the major regime of the reproduction of gender. Therefore, the articles show that men are more rational and do much better than women in the emotional sphere (*cathexis*) in a public space, but they also set rules of emotional behaviors in a relationship. They are better in the sphere of labor and power (they manage better), but are weaker in maintaining a routine and everyday social relations. The studies cited refer only to the stereotypical hegemonic masculinity and leave unsaid the existence of the other possible patterns of masculinity, which not produce dominative rules. For example:

Women cope better with planning strategies, risk-taking, have better relations with the people [...] Men – managers exceed ladies in giving commands and control of a progress and better focus on financial results²⁷.

Kisses are more important for women than men [...] The kiss was for them an important part of building of a bond. For men, the kiss was less important – they concerned it rather as a prelude to sex and preferred deep kissing with tongue. They were less fussy in deciding whom to kiss or with whom to have sex. The longer the relationship, the less important for them were kisses²⁸.

When we are talking about dreams, it is better to be a man because women more often have nightmares. Besides, women have more emotional dreams... Additionally, we have found that women generally sleep less than men. One of the factors is the variation of the temperature of body during menstrual cycle²⁹.

The style in which messages are formulated takes a partially descriptive form, which means that the authors combine the description (reporting of the data) with the valuation of the described relations. Many quantifiers (such as “more important”, “better”, “excellent”) hyperbolize the message and unify the described com-

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Dlaczego kobiety...*, op.cit.

²⁸ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Całowanie ważniejsze dla kobiet* [Kissing is More Important for Women], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,65724,calowanie-wazniejsze-dla-kobiet.html>, 2007 [access: 08.09.2012].

²⁹ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Koszmarne sny kobiet...*, op.cit.

munity. The hyperbolizing of differences and universalization of gender is also present in the titles of articles, which often take a direct colloquial form. For example: “Terrible dreams of women”, “What happens to the poor sex?”, “Humor is a male thing”, and “Woman without clothes is an object”. Femininity, as well as masculinity, appears to be internally homogeneous and undifferentiated while departing from the pattern set by this community is perceived as deviance, disease, exception, or curiosity.

It should be stressed that the exemplary woman, who is a point of reference and a source of standards in the texts, is a woman of Western culture. As it was mentioned, the studies cited in the articles were usually conducted on relatively small groups by various university centers, almost exclusively from the Western countries (mainly from the U.S.), but the conclusions made in the texts of the bulletin include the entire population of women, as well as the population of men. If there are any references to the other cultures and social contexts, they are usually presented as a curiosity and located on the periphery of the main articles on the website. Equally significant are the characteristic over-interpretations made by the authors aimed at reducing the heterogeneity of gender. For example, fa’afafine (the third sex living in Samoa), not typical for the Western binary sex distribution, was incorporated into the dual categorization and recognized by the authors of the bulletin as an example of gay men³⁰.

4.2. Femininity and masculinity on the two poles. Sex polarization in the analyzed texts

As it was emphasized in the introduction, the difference in gender is always a social act and is constructed on the different levels of a social life. Rahman and Jackson conclude that the search for differences between men and women (not the similarities between them) always produces a polarized gender construction, building a conviction about femininity and masculinity as about categories different from each other, but internally homogeneous ones³¹. In the most of the analyzed texts,

³⁰ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Czy ewolucja przygotowała rolę dla homoseksualistów?* [Did Evolution Prepare Roles for Homosexuals?], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,370059,czy-ewolucja-przygotowala-role-dla-homoseksualistow.html>, 2010 [access: 08.09.2012].

³¹ M. Rahman, S. Jackson, *Gender and Sexuality. Sociological Approach*, Cambridge–Malden 2010, p. 162.

femininity is always described in relation to masculinity and as its opposition³². The worlds of men and women are presented as radically opposed to each other and contradictory realities between which tensions, conflicts, and misunderstandings arise. The quantitative distribution of texts indicates the dominance of the polarizing discourse – texts focused on direct analysis of the differences between women and men is more than two hundred and only two are focused on finding the similarities.

In the analyzed texts, there exists a kind of “naturalization of sex opposition”, supported by the numerous presuppositions ascertaining a stability and the obvious differences between men and women. The sources of this polarization, according to the studied texts, are biological, evolutionary, and medically justified laws. Therefore, they appear to be indelible, universal, and historical, and individuals do not have the ability to smooth out these differences. Naturalization of the opposition uses different conceptual frameworks related to the biomedical discourse, particularly: neuroanatomical, endocrinological, and evolutionary ones³³.

³² What is also important is that anatomical differences do not correlate directly with differences in behaviors, abilities, skills, and ways in thinking of men and women. Meta-analysis by Eleanor Maccoby, Carol Jacklin, and Janet Hyde compared the results of several thousand research projects focused on the search for differences between men and women showed that both women and men possess comparable analytical, cognitive, intellectual, and mathematics skills. The differences, if there are any, are actually irrelevant and do not exceed 0.1 (when the lack of differences is equal to 0). The studies of researchers also suggest that if there are any differences between people, they are intersectional (not dichotomous), which means that gender is a relational category and enters into complex relationships with class, religion, ethnicity, race, age, etc. The other experiences tend to be a resource of white middle-class women, while others tend to be common for women from ethnic minorities and the lower classes. For example, as research on mathematical abilities has proven, young, white males (called WASP) achieve slightly better results than white women in the tests from this subject in the United States, but American Asian females cope with mathematics better than men. Gender differences in mathematical achievements are not present in countries with a high degree of egalitarianism and with a high position in the Gender Gap Index (Scandinavian society), but are significant in countries with a low position in the index (e.g. Turkey). B. Lott, *Cataloging Gender Differences: Science or Politics?* [in:] *Women, Men, and Gender*, M. Roth Walsh (ed.), New Haven 1997; J.S. Hyde, *Gender Differences in Math Performance: No Big, Not Biological* [in:] *Women, Men, and Gender*, M. Roth Walsh (ed.), New Haven 1997; L. Guiso, F. Monte, P. Sapienza, L. Zingales, *Culture, Gender, and Math*, “Science” 2008, No. 5880, Vol. 320.

³³ Although a “biologisation” of the gender discourse is the result of the complex cultural social and historical changes, it does not mean that biology has no effect on human sexuality and the individual experiences of an individual. This effect, as shown by analysis of the biologists is, however, ambiguous, variable, and not always realized dichotomously. In reality, between biological femininity and masculinity are more similarities than differences, and the same biological processes are experienced in different ways by different individuals. Lorber stresses, “Menstruation, lactation, and gestation do not demarcate women from men. Only some women are pregnant and then only some of the time; some women do not have a uterus or ovaries. Some women have stopped menstruating temporarily, others have reached menopause, and some have had hysterectomies. Some women breastfeed some of the time, but some women lactate [...]. Menstruation, lactation, and gestation are

Universal women differ from universal men in many attributes (health, life style, a way of building relationships), and, according to the cited research, especially in the brain's structure and its functions. The consequences of these differences appear in various spheres of a human life. Therefore, universal women use always both hemispheres, have differently developed areas of the brain than men do, and, as a result of these neurobiological differences, have different skills. Due to the different structure of the brain, according to the texts in the bulletin, men treat women as an object and are cold³⁴ while women are emotional, have verbal skills, and have the ability to make choice of professions that are expressed with speech. So, for example:

For example, it is known that the capacity associated with the activity of the left hemisphere develop better in women than in men. Therefore, girls are able to speak earlier than boys, they like to talk, and often choose professions in which these skills are preferred³⁵.

Men's brain reacts to a sexy woman in a bikini as an object. Half-naked women were associated by men with words describing catching / holding. Men remembered better photographs of bodies in bikinis without a head than photos of dressed women (even if they were presented just for a fraction of a second)³⁶.

A woman's sense of humor more slowly reaches the brain of women, but they have a more refined sense of humor than men. This conclusion was formulated by the American scientists and the results were published by the British newspaper "Times"³⁷.

individual experiences of womanhood, but not determinants of the social category "woman", or even "female". Similarly, men are not always sperm-producers, and in fact, not all sperm producers are men", see: L. Carli, *Biology Does not Create Gender Differences in Personality* [in:] *Women, Men, and Gender*, M. Roth Walsh (ed.), New Haven 1997; J. Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender...*, op.cit., p. 39.

³⁴ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Kobiety i mężczyźni inaczej reagują na niebezpieczeństwo* [Women and Men React in a Different Way to a Danger], <http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,368473,kobiety-i-mezczyzni-inaczej-reaguja-na-niebezpieczenstwo.html>, 2009 [access: 08.09.2012].

³⁵ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Symposium o kobietach* [The Symposium about Women], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,22652,symposium-o-kobietach.html>, 2006 [access: 08.09.2012].

³⁶ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Bez ubrania kobieta jest przedmiotem* [Woman without Clothes is a Thing], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,359098,bez-ubrania-kobieta-jest-przedmiotem.html>, 2009 [access: 08.09.2012].

³⁷ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Kobiety mają subtelniesze poczucie humoru, niż mężczyźni* [Women Have a More Subtle Sense of Humour than Men], <http://www.>

The discourse of this website is dominated by the perspective typical for the “brain organization theory”³⁸, which was developed in the fifties as a consequence of animal studies. A decade later, it was used in the studies of people and applied to broad psychological and neuroendocrine studies. The feature of this perspective is a specific fetishization of neurological differences between men and women and its projection on every aspect of their life. This perspective, although still present in the natural sciences, is now the subject of extensive criticism, both in the social sciences and humanities, and increasingly so in medical science. It is accused of reductionism; one-sidedness; locating sources of human behavior only in neuro-anatomy; passing over the cultural conditions of human activities; as well as ignoring of diversification a brain depending on age, health, sexual orientation, and many other factors. As Lorber emphasized, “they assumed [the representatives of this theory – KL] that what was masculine and feminine sexually and psychosocially was clearly dichotomous, universal, and stable. They were ‘commonsense’ constructs that did not need to be defined. The measures they chose were rooted in dated stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and conflicting categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality”³⁹. It is worth noting that today this perspective is declining and the concept of emphasizing the plasticity of a brain (under the influence of social/environmental factors) and its variability is more common in neuroscience⁴⁰.

A characteristic feature of the discourse in the bulletin is also an endocrinologization of a sex polarization. The hormonal attitudes of a human being are presented as fixed, unchanging, and more importantly, determining various social skills, spatial ability, verbal, and interpersonal skills that are the homogeneously understood personalities of men and women. Importantly, these articles, with the help of a hormonal argumentation, prioritize gender and construct an androcentric perspective, usually pointing out women’s imperfection and perceiving masculinity as a base point (e.g. “Do women have a chance to get close to the men’s results?”⁴¹). Gender polarization is also present on the semantic level. Thus, for example, in the discourse functions a category referring to androgens, which is

naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,370019,kobiety-maja-subtelniejsze-poczucie-humoru-niz-mezczyzni.html, 2010 [access: 08.09.2012].

³⁸ J. Lorber, *Gendered and Sexed Brains*, “Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews” 2011, No. 40.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 407.

⁴⁰ See: R. Connell, *Gender. Short Introduction*, Cornwall 2009; J. Lorber, *Gendered and Sexed...*, op.cit.

⁴¹ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Prawdy i mity o predyspozycjach kobiet oraz męskich umiejętnościach* [The Truths and Myths about Predispositions of Women and Men’s

described as male sex hormones despite the fact that these hormones are present both in both males and females. Female hormone activity is often personified and metaphorical (“Estrogen is a friend of a woman”⁴²).

The results of the research all over the world point out to men’s advantage in this respect [spatial abilities – K.L.]. It confirms the stereotypical image of a woman who doesn’t know how to read a map and estimate distance. The representatives of the fair sex object to it, but [...] tests are merciless and present definite advantage of men in this respect [...] Men dominate – in varied countries, on the varied continents and invariably during the last 25 years! According to one of the hypotheses, androgens, men’s sexual hormones, determine it, especially testosterone⁴³.

Women like to say ‘on the right’, ‘on the left’, ‘near’, and ‘far’. Men use more precise expressions using the measurements of distance and points of the compass. Do women have a chance to come close to men’s results? [...] Nowadays, the secret of both sexes intrigues scientists. Interestingly, all over the world more female scientists are interested in research on the differences between sexes [than men – K.L.]⁴⁴.

Men are more willing to joke than women thanks to the male hormone, which is testosterone [...]. Men more often than women use humor aggressively – dimension of aggression is connecting with dimension of testosterone to which the fetus was exposed during the stay in the womb⁴⁵.

Furthermore, the framework that organizes and dichotomizes the sexual discourse is the principle of evolution and natural selection, as well as the psychologization of male and female behaviors. Men, according to the texts published on this site, are visualizers. At the beginning, they evaluate the appearance of a woman, and here the motivating factor is a reproductive success, which is naturally

Abilities], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,21063,prawdy-i-mity-o-predyspozycjach-kobiet-oraz-meskich-umiejtnosciach.html>, 2005 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁴² Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Co się dzieje ze słabą płcią?* [What is Going on with a Fair Sex?], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,21208,co-sie-dzieje-ze-slaba-plcia.html>, 2005 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁴³ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Prawdy i mity o predyspozycjach kobiet oraz męskich umiejętnościach*, op.cit.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Humor to męska rzecz* [Humour it is a Men’s Thing], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,69166,humor-to-meska-rzecz.html>, 2007 [access: 08.09.2012].

desired by a man. The evolutionary conditioning of the rules of building of inter-sexual relations is presented in terms of deterministic behavior of women and men. Polarization is supported by the presuppositions (e.g. “There is nothing new in the fact that men choose younger women”) and quantifiers (e.g. “It is well known that women and men do shopping differently”), which builds the conviction about obvious gender differences.

A man watches (observes), a woman deliberates. It appears that when a man is enchanted by a woman, he ‘transforms himself into a vision’ and focuses on the observation of a woman’s appearance. But a woman, while looking at an attractive man, wonders, ‘it is appropriate to flirt with him,’ ‘whether I met somebody like him in the past,’ ‘whether his features suit me,’ ‘whether they are positive for me.’ These differences are the result of the fact that the occipital lobe is responsible for vision and attention, while a temporal lobe – for memory and emotional processing in the context of social norms (‘am I allowed’)⁴⁶.

It isn’t new that men choose younger women in order to enhance the chance of reproductive success and that women bond with older partners who guarantee safety⁴⁷.

Men see their female partners in a bad light after meeting an attractive single woman. While women try to strengthen their relations after meeting an attractive single man⁴⁸.

For most men, sex is independent of love. Meanwhile, for most of women, sex going hand in hand with love is the most important⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Mózg Zakochanych Świeci Kolorowo* [Brain of Lovers Shines Colorfully], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,20006,mozg-zakochanych-swieci-kolorowo.html>, 2005 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁴⁷ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Obliczono różnicę wieku partnerów gwarantującą liczne potomstwo* [They Calculated the Difference of Age between Partners Guarantying a Numerous Offspring], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,65577,obliczono-roznicze-wieku-partnerow-gwarantujaca-liczne-potomstwo.html>, 2007 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁴⁸ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Kobiety i mężczyźni inaczej postrzegają pokusę* [Women and Men Perceive Temptation in a Different Way], <http://193.200.216.136/aktualnosci/news,146983,kobiety-i-mezczyzni-inaczej-postrzegaja-pokuse.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁴⁹ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Mózg Zakochanych...*, op.cit.

It's a well-known fact that women and men do the shopping in the different ways. However, it shouldn't surprise us. This is all because evolution has shaped men into hunters and women into collectors⁵⁰.

Gender differences, which not only concern anatomy or relations, but also perception and human sensuality, are naturalized. Women are presented as more emotional and impulsive than men, as well as being more aware of their feelings, including in their dreams. Very often, biology and the evolutionary differences are considered to be the determining factor:

Women can better describe what they feel for their partners and what partners feel for them. While men make the projection of their feeling – it means that they more often base on their own images of women's feeling than on real 'recognizing situation'⁵¹.

Women – it's a well-known fact – have better smell than men. Research showed, for instance, that only 5% of men in comparison with 60% of women could recognize the smell of their T-shirt. Moreover, women mind their own smell more than men do⁵².

A man wakes up when the signal in the car starts. In the second place among these unexpected alarm clocks is the wail of wind. The pirouette of a fly is the third and it has a bigger chance to stop a man's dream than a restless child. On the other hand, the strongest sound for a woman is the cry of a baby, which can disturb her dream⁵³.

⁵⁰ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Zakupy pod dyktando ewolucji* [Shopping at Evolution Bidding], <http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,368620,zakupy-pod-dyktando-ewolucji.html>, 2009 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁵¹ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Kobiety lepiej rozpoznają uczucia niż mężczyźni* [Women Are Better in Recognizing Feelings than Men], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,70784,kobiety-lepiej-rozpoznaja-uczucia-niz-mezczyzni.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁵² Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Węch – niedoceniany zmysł* [Smell – Unsung Sense], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,63596,wech---niedoceniany-zmysl.html>, 2007 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁵³ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Mężczyznę szybciej rozbudzi natrętna mucha niż płacz dziecka* [A Pirouette of a Fly Has got a Bigger Chance to Wake up a Man than a Crying Baby], <http://193.200.216.136/aktualnosci/news,368455,mezczyznie-szybciej-rozbudzi-natretna-mucha-niz-placz-dziecka.html>, 2009 [access: 08.09.2012].

4.3. Masculinity as sexual efficiency, femininity as disease. Medicalization of gender in the discourse of service

The strengthening of the discourse that dichotomizes sex is a medicalization of masculinity and femininity, which refers to both sexes. In the process of medicalization, various human experiences – social, moral, or identity – are defined and explained within the biomedical schemes and in health and disease categories⁵⁴. Medicine, in the process of medicalization, is implied to be a remedy for all of an individual's problems, not only those directly related to anatomy, but also to human intimacy and existence. Medical practice does not only solve individual problems, but emerges as the action that sanctions social norms. In the process of medicalization, the subject is stripped of personal experience, which is replaced by the rational dictates of scientific experts.

While it is typical of the articles to explain life experiences in terms of health for both women and men, it is realized in different ways and within different conceptual frameworks. The reproductive experience (particularly the organs responsible for reproduction), maternity, and pregnancy time (more than 250 articles undertake this issue) are the center of the discourse, which medicalizes femininity. By contrast, the medicalization of masculinity focuses mainly on sexuality (sexual efficiency and satisfaction, erection and sperm quality, totally 85 texts). Importantly, the discourse on female sexuality *de facto* does not exist, as well as male responsibility for a child and the natal period.

The medicalization discourse on femininity, whether in a relation to the experiences of maternity, pregnancy, or the body as a whole, results in the perception of femininity as a category of disease that should be subject to constant and expert inspection. Each stage of the life of a woman is interpreted in the articles in terms of a potential disease. For example, menopause in the articles (although rarely analyzed in the center of the discourse is the image of a woman in a reproductive age) is not treated as a normal, next stage in human life, but as a time of an increased control of an unstable body, defined by the prism of the category of a so-

⁵⁴ See: M. Jacyno, *Kultura indywidualizmu* [Culture of Individualism], Warszawa 2007, p. 123; Z. Melosik, *Kryzys Męskości* [Crisis of Masculinity], Kraków 2006, p. 19; S. Urbańska, *Profesjonalizacja macierzyństwa jako proces odpodmiotowienia matki. Analiza dyskursów poradnika „Twoje dziecko” z 2003 i 1975 roku* [The Professionalization of Motherhood as a Process of Desubjectivisation of Mother. Analysis of the Discourses of how-to Journal “Your Child”] [in:] *Kobiety. Feminizm. Demokracja* [Women. Feminism. Democracy], B. Budrowska (ed.), Warszawa 2009, p. 22; A. Buczkowski, *Spółeczne tworzenie ciała: pleć kulturowa i pleć biologiczna* [Social Construction of Body: Gender and Sex], Kraków 2005, p. 144.

matic hormone deficiency. There is a lack of studies, analysis, and reports on the social consequences and experiences of women during menopause. And, attempts to settle the interpretation of research on their poor physical state in the cultural contexts is lacking. As Leysen writes, you cannot understand the status of women during menopause, without taking into account the environment in which they function. Cultural rules define femininity in the terms of reproduction; these ones who do not fulfill the roles of reproduction are evaluated as deviations from the standards. Therefore, menopause is not only a somatic deficiency, but also the stress resulting from the change of cultural roles⁵⁵.

The medicalization of women is manifested in texts in the context of reproductive categories, especially the relationship with a child during pregnancy, childbirth, and after the delivery. In the medicalization of motherhood, which today dominates the institutional discourses (press, scientific, medical ones), as noticed by Sylwia Urbańska, is characterized by the submission of women's experiences to the medico-therapeutic control⁵⁶. The medicalization is inseparably associated with drama, which constructs the relationship of the mother and child as full of dangers. Proceeding in accordance with scientific dictates is the only thing that reduce this danger. These dangers do not apply only to the body, but also to the psyche; and, notably, they only include a child, never a woman. Dealing with risk is presented as the constant responsibility of pregnant women, but a child's father is never held responsible. Moreover, the mother in the discourse of the bulletin is a permanent threat to her children and the source of a child's intellectual, emotional, and mental health problems. Any activity, even the simplest one (as breathing and eating) undertaken by a pregnant woman appears in the texts as potentially pathogenic while pregnancy is simultaneously portrayed as a traumatic experience. The following quotes are just a few examples of observation indicating the danger in the relationship between a mother and a child:

Eating many products with liquorice during the pregnancy could have negative influence on intelligence and behavior of a descendant⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ A. Buczkowski, *Spoleczne tworzenie...*, op.cit., p. 169.

⁵⁶ S. Urbańska, *Profesjonalizacja macierzyństwa...*, op.cit., pp. 24–27; M. Jacyno, *Kultura indywidualizmu...*, op.cit., p. 123.

⁵⁷ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Uwaga na lukrecję w ciąży* [Beware of the Liquorice During a Natal Period], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,367020,uwaga-na-lukrecje-w-ciazy.html>, 2009 [access: 08.09.2012].

Children whose mothers experienced strong stress during the first three months of pregnancy are more exposed to schizophrenia in the future⁵⁸.

You are pregnant – eat properly. A standard pregnancy and optimal fetal development is conditional upon, inter alia, a rational nutrition. Studies carried out on a group of pregnant women showed that their diet is characterized by a shortage of energy and an unbalanced content of essential nutrients⁵⁹.

A successful childbirth and pregnancy appear in the discourse of the bulletin as exceptions. The rule is pathologies and diseases that can only be avoided by listening to scientific experts. The psychomedical conceptual frame of the discourse creates the model of a mother, who should have her body disciplined, controlled, and constantly monitored in order to avoid any potential threat.

Ambitious mothers have confident daughters. ‘My daughter is going to be successful’ – when a mother thinks like that, she helps her daughter grow up as a confident woman⁶⁰.

Natural childbirth it is greater bond of a mother and a child. Mothers who gave birth with a help of ‘forces of nature’ strongly respond to the cries of their children compared with women who decided to have a caesarean section. This was shown in the studies of the brain activity of young moms⁶¹.

While the discourse medicalizing femininity focuses primarily on the experiences of reproduction (particularly pregnancy and childbirth), the conceptualization of masculinity in the articles centers on sexual practices. In the content of

⁵⁸ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Silny stres w ciąży grozi schizofrenią u dziecka*, [Strong Stress during the Pregnancy Causes Schizophrenia], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,70566,silny-stres-w-ciazy-grozi-schizofrenia-u-dziecka.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁵⁹ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Jesteś w ciąży - odżywiaj się prawidłowo* [You Are Pregnant – Eat Properly], <http://www.naukapolska.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,322580,jestes-w-ciazy--odzywiaj-sie-prawidlowo.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁶⁰ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Ambitne matki mają pewne siebie córki* [Ambitious Mothers Have Confident Daughters], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,260899,ambitne-matki-maja-pewne-siebie-corki.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁶¹ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Naturalny poród to większa więź matki z dzieckiem* [Natural Childbirth is a Greater Bond of a Mother and a Child.], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,219944,naturalny-porod-to-wieksza-wiez-matki-z-dzieckiem.html>, 2008 [access: 08.09.2012].

analyzed the texts, characteristic is the idea of relation of causality, which gives the causative power to sexuality and determines a life of a man. Male sexuality is perceived as the “cause of everything and anything” (Foucault).

On the one hand, failures in the sexual life can lead to a depression; on the other hand, depression creates disorders and can lead to a complete lack of interest in sex life. However, sex is one of the major sources of satisfaction in life – that’s why it cannot be underestimated, especially for men, for whom a career and sexual efficiency are the most important. Sex increases satisfaction with life and strengthens relationships⁶².

In the bulletin, male sexuality is described almost exclusively in terms of non-standard (problems with sexual efficiency, erectile dysfunctions, and sperm quality) and is seen as a constant challenge that must be overcome. A lack of sexual readiness is presented in the texts as a disorder that should be treated, not as a natural experience of a man that can be caused by social, emotional, or psychological factors. Therefore, a healthy (in normative categories) man, as cited in the text, is always ready for sexual activity; the exception to this norm is always a disease. The basic method to deal with these problems is pharmacology, which reduces the physicality of man to pure biology. E.g.

2.6 million Poles suffer from erectile dysfunction. Taking into consideration their partners, the problem affects more than 5 million people in Poland. Doctors argue that these disorders, which are often a sign of other diseases, are important and should be treated⁶³.

Doctors warn: erectile dysfunction is a warning signal. Sexual efficiency is the barometer of a health of a man, their disorders may be the first sign of serious illness⁶⁴.

⁶² Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Depresja a seks* [Depression and Sex], <http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,66486,depresja-a-seks.html>, 2007 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁶³ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *2,6 mln Polaków ma zaburzenia erekcji* [2.6 Million of Poles Suffer from Erectile Dysfunction], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,361062,26-mln-polakow-ma-zaburzenia-erekcji.html>, 2010 [access: 08.09.2012].

⁶⁴ Nauka w Polsce [Science and Scholarship in Poland], *Lekarze alarmują: zaburzenia erekcji to sygnał ostrzegawczy*, [Doctors Alarm: Erectile Dysfunction Is a Danger Signal], <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,373097,lekarze-alarmuja-zaburzenia-erekcji-to-sygnal-ostregawczy.html>, 2010 [access: 08.09.2012].

As Melosik writes, the discourse which medicalizes masculinity emphasizes that “potency exists or not, a male member is functional or dysfunctional, there is no ‘continuum’ between these poles [...] A man was deprived of his emotional sphere, his partner ‘ceased to exist’, also ‘sexual technique’ is without significance. Only the male member matters”⁶⁵. Therefore, medicalization makes masculinity dichotomous, fragments it (by reducing to particular organs), and standardizes it, giving the impression that there is a model male sexuality that should be gained. Importantly, subject matter sexuality doesn’t exist in analyzed texts.

* * *

Gender beliefs typical for the analyzed text are organized into a few main patterns that define relations between the sexes. These are: gender dimorphism, which assumes that femininity is radically different from masculinity; androcentrism; essentialism; and biologism, stressing the stability of the nature of femininity and masculinity. What is important is that these patterns are constructed by the discourse vulgarizing and oversimplifying scientific findings about men and women.

The main argument, on which gender beliefs in the analyzed texts are based, is biology, and, more precisely, on the anatomical differences between women and men. During the processes of the conceptualization of gender, anatomical sex differences are assigned social meanings that stratify femininity and masculinity, justifying and determining the unequal access of women and men to social resources⁶⁶.

Despite an abundance of evidence on the actual heterogeneity of the population of women and men and the similarities between the statistical community of men and women, in different social discourses, there exists widespread conviction about their differences, which is rooted in biology. As R. Connell notes, sexual dimor-

⁶⁵ Z. Melosik, *Kryzys Męskości* [Crisis of Masculinity], Kraków 2006, p. 20.

⁶⁶ As Judith Lorber mentioned, anatomy (particularly genitalia and a structure of a brain), in modern discourses about gender since the 19th century in Western societies, has gained cultural significance, implying and justifying the different position of men and women in the social space. In Europe until the Enlightenment, femininity and masculinity were perceived as categories of a one continuum of sexuality. This unisexual model determined e.g. medical terminology in which male and female genitals were named with the same terms. The woman was interpreted not as a contradiction of masculinity but rather as an imperfect man who still can achieve sexual perfection with a help of sacrum. During the development of a scientific discourse based on rationality, secularization of knowledge, economic and structural transformations of modern society, and particularly the medicalization of a human knowledge and sexology, concept of a one continuum of sexuality has been substituted with a dichotomous model, polarising femininity to masculinity. J. Lorber, *Gendered and Sexed...*, op.cit., pp. 405–409; A. Buczkowski, *Spółeczne tworzenie ciała...*, op.cit., pp. 111–139; M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality...*, op.cit., pp. 51–72.

phism is so well established in the Western culture that even in a science it is the dominant perspective, which is the center of research. One of the researchers writes:

Within our usual research design, gender similarity is not a positive state; it is merely the absence of proper difference (literally the null hypotheses). Epstein gives an example of journal editors not liking to publish null results; so the true evidence for gender similarity may be even stronger than the published literature reveals. Nature abhors a vacuum, and so do researchers⁶⁷.

Pierre Bourdieu found that “the division between the sexes appears to be ‘in the order of things’, as people sometimes say to refer to what is normal, natural, to the point of being inevitable”⁶⁸. Gender dichotomy appears in the texts of bulletin as something obvious, as naturally (biologically, evolutionarily, psychologically) justified, which objectifies a belief in the invariability of the differences and their timelessness. Although, at first glance, the discourse on gender polarization may seem as a neutral description and ordinary report on the results of research, the discovery of the connection of this dichotomy together with the other oppositions constructed in the discourse shows the axiological attitude of the message. Homogeneously understood categories of femininity and masculinity become part of the poles of the senses, actions, and emotions. “The homologous oppositions”⁶⁹ of femininity and masculinity are associated with the other factors, such as *emotions* (anger, sadness, depression) – *rationality* (balance, distance), *attachment* (building of relationships, closeness) – *indifference, openness – closure, subordination – power, concreteness – abstractness*, etc. This reinforces the idea of the arbitrariness, obviousness, and stability of the dichotomy. Leaving unsaid the exceptions and research that would undermine the vision of equality and homogeneity would show the similarities between the sexes (and as much research shows, there are more similarities than differences), as well as legitimize gendered polarity. In the discourse, anatomical difference is related to the other contexts and becomes the justification for the differentiation of social experiences, positions, and roles.

⁶⁷ R. Connell, *Gender. Short Introduction...*, op.cit., p. 62.

⁶⁸ P. Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, California 2001, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

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