polish 4(196)'16
sociological
review
ISSN 1231 – 1413

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The (Self-) Exclusion of Women from the Roman Catholic Church in Poland:

Discursive Practices as Mechanisms Reproducing Models of Femininity in Church Organizations

Abstract: In this article I analyze discursive practices that serve to reproduce models of femininity and that are adopted by lay women employed in central Church organizations, including in diocesan chanceries and ecclesiastical courts. The key discursive practice is dissociation, which excludes women from various institutional orders of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, keeping them in their place in the hierarchy, and sanctioning non-normative gender models.

Drawing on integration theories of gender and new institutionalism in sociology, I depart in this article from individualist and identity views of gender. I consider this category as a social institution, that is, as the social rules, both formal and informal, that restrict and liberate human action and are reproduced and transformed in social practices as a result of human agency.

My article is based on 31 in-depth interviews which I conducted with lay women working in administrative and evangelizing organizations of the Church in Poland.

Keywords: gender, discursive practices, Roman Catholic Church, social institution, agency

Introduction: Methodological and Theoretical Premises

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland, viewed as a social organization and institution, is highly masculinized, meaning that men predominate numerically in positions in key central administrative-evangelical structures: in diocesan chanceries in Poland they occupy 73.8% of all positions, while in the Church's central organization, that is, the Polish Episcopal Conference, they occupy 91.2% of the positions (Leszczyńska 2014a, 2016).[1] In addition to the statistical horizontal segregation in central Church organizations, there is also vertical segregation. The main positions of power in Church organizations, such as chancellor of the curia or diocesan judge, are also dominated by men, even though formally, according to the Code of Canon Law, they could be occupied by women (see the Code of Canon Law, Cann. 224–231); the lowest positions, on the other hand, are feminized, and woman are

[1] It should be emphasized—although this is not the aim of the analysis in the present text—that in the Church sphere both masculinity and femininity are realized as intersectional categories; that is, the positions of men and women are determined in a multidimensional placement encompassing status, age, and family life. Masculinization is connected with the high clericalization of Church structures in Poland and the exclusion of the laity—which primarily recruits its members among women—from the highest positions.

excluded from positions of high prestige and power. In diocesan organizations men occupy 95% of all the management positions, and women fulfill no functions of authority in the Polish Episcopal Conference. Moreover, subordinate positions, in secretariats (office employees) are feminized: women occupy 77% of the positions there (Leszczyńska 2014a, 2016).

The subordinate place of women in the Church as an organization and institution, and the barriers and restrictions that hinder their activeness, should be seen as the result of complex conditions and interactions. On the one hand, the placement of women is the consequence of official Church norms, legitimized by religious tradition, concerning gender, the laity, the division of labour, relations of power, the symbolic sphere in religion, and the body and emotionality (Casanova 2009; Reali 2006; Stewart-Thomas 2009; Radford Ruether 2008). The source of this placement should be sought in the documents of the hierarchical Church, including in papal encyclicals, homilies, and exhortations, as well as in the theological discourse of the Roman Catholic Church. The documents that set forth the Church's position in regard to femininity and laicism include conciliar texts such as the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam actuositem*); the texts of succeeding popes, such as John Paul II's important apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* of 1988; writings of a legal nature referring to issues of female priesthood (Sacred Congregation For the Doctrine of the Faith 1976), including those excommunicating women who have been ordained (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. 2002); and texts of a theological nature (for instance, *Letter on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*). Femininity—its essence, genealogy, and gender relations—is also an object of interpretation in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, for instance, sections 369–373 and 2331–2336).[2] Although the vision of femininity has changed significantly in Church teachings in the last two centuries, that vision is still interpreted traditionally in the documents of the hierarchical Church: in an essentialist and complementary manner in regard to masculinity. Even though the last pope called attention to various contexts outside the family in which women might be active (for instance, those connected with vocational work), in the writings of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, or Francis, femininity is still associated above all with maternity, marriage, sacrifice, devotion, service, and care.[3]

On the other hand, the place of lay women in the Church is the effect of the expectations, interactions, informal rules, and daily practices not only of men but also of women themselves. In this article, I would like, while emphasizing the latter type of conditioning of women's position in the Church, to answer the question of how lay women themselves reproduce their place in the organizations of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland at the discursive level: that is, how they conceptualize and interpret femininity, normativizing and hierarchizing it, and above all, what models and attributes of femininity they distance, how they exclude and depreciate femininity (or some of its types). I interpret the answers in categories of discourse and agency, as social practices that have the power to maintain or

[2] From the research perspective, in addition to documents that are the voice of the universal Church, writings that represent the position of the local Church and its specificity are also important, for instance, the letter of 2009 of the Polish episcopate, entitled To Serve the Truth about Marriage and the Family (Służyć Prawdzie o Małżeństwie i Rodzinie) (Polish Episcopal Conference 2009).

[3] Issues connected with gender are addressed in numerous documents of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy in Poland (see, for instance, Polish Episcopal Conference 2009).

change institutionalized gender rules, reproducing barriers limiting activity and excluding various gender categories from the sphere of institutional religion. The adoption of such a perspective has made it possible to view women in categories of active social actors, participating in the processes of reproducing socio-cultural conditions, and not solely as passive recipients of religious rules.

The findings presented in this article are based on research I conducted in the years 2012–2013 among lay women who were working in Church organizations and were affected by their gender practices in institutional contexts. The organizations that constituted my field of research were structures connected with the central authority of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. These were diocesan chanceries and also structures of the Polish Episcopal Conference, such as councils, commissions, and teams.

I conducted the research in 15 dioceses, with women employed in three types of positions: 1) managerial and executive (superiors in diocesan institutions) and high-ranking administrative staff; 2) specialists (for instance, defenders of the bond, notaries, or family-life advisors); and 3) office positions in diocesan secretariats. The diocesan institutions in which my respondents worked were ecclesiastical courts, diocesan chanceries and secretariats, curia departments (economic, pastoral, family, catechetical, or youth divisions), media institutions, and diocesan archives. Some of my respondents were women working for councils, commissions, or teams of the Polish Episcopal Conference, being consultants or members who are permanently employed in other institutions connected or collaborating with the Roman Catholic Church. I present a detailed numerical breakdown of my respondents in the table below.

Table 1

Types of Interviewees (own work)

Type of position	Interviewee's place of work	Interviewee's position	Number of interviewees
Managerial/higher Church administrative official	Diocesan chancery	Directors, vice-directors, and managers of diocesan departments and other administrative units/ higher Church administrative officials	5
Highly qualified Church specialists	Diocesan chanceries Polish Episcopal Conference	Defenders of the bond, notaries, family-life advisors, department specialists, collaborators with diocesan chanceries, specialist consultants of Episcopal councils and commissions	14 3
Office workers	Diocesan chanceries	Secretaries in departments, chanceries, and diocesan departments	9
		Total	31

Among my interviewees, 5 women could be qualified as belonging to the first, managerial category, 17 to the second (14 worked or collaborated with diocesan institutions, while 3 were active as specialists in institutions of the Polish Episcopal Conference), and 9 women to the third category, of office employees. The youngest was 26, the oldest 63. One of the women at the time of our interview was of retirement age (according to the law in force in 2013), two women were slightly under 30, and as many as 20 of the interviewees

were between 30 and 45, or in other words, the most active category of the labour market. The average age of the women was 39.[4]

The majority of my interviewees had a higher education, usually in theology or a related subject (for instance, a degree in canon law), including one with a doctorate. 29 of the women had university degrees, 2 had a secondary-school education, and one was still a student at the time of the interview. It is worth noting that the high social and institutional status of the interviewees (the majority had higher educations) appears to be typical of Church cadres in Poland. As emerged from my research, higher education in theology or a related field (for instance, canon law) was required for every diocesan position, regardless of the gender or status of the employee (lay or cleric), including the lowest positions, connected with office work (secretaries, etc.).

All my interviewees, with the exception of one, were persons describing themselves as deeply religious and connected with the Church, engaged in the activities of religious communities and movements. Their path to working in the Church can be systematized in various patterns of internal Church mobility (between Church institutions, for instance, from Church movements, diocesan shops, or Catholic media, to work in the chancery) and external Church mobility (from lay institutions, for instance, from corporations, lay media, or small private firms to Church institutions). The process of recruitment of my interviewees for chancery positions was governed by internal regulations that were supposed to be in accord with religious and state law, but which never, as the women themselves emphasized, involved an open competition. As appeared from the conversations, a key role was played during recruitment by ecclesiastical acquaintances—for instance, a priest-professor, sometimes the diocesan chancellor, a spokesman, or even the bishop himself—who actively assisted the women in finding work. The statement below of Irena, a specialist in a diocesan chancery in western Poland, is illustrative of such ecclesiastical support, in this case, of the bishop:

Let's not kid ourselves. It's not easy to get into the [name of the diocesan institution] from 'the street'—shall we call it. Particularly if one is a lay person. That is, up to the moment that I came here and looked at the matter from the other side, I was a little indignant internally: Why is it so hard to get in there? I tried to get in as an intern; I tried in [name of the Church administration in another locality]; I tried in [name of another Church office]. And then I gave up. I was teaching the catechism during that time, teaching and teaching. In the mean time, I was also [name of another lay occupation]. But mainly, mainly, I was teaching catechism for all those years. And then Father [name] became [name of a promotion]. He was always a great moral authority. And it was he who taught us to love the Church. (…) And then, a short while afterwards, some two months or so—I don't remember precisely at this moment—the Bishop called me to say that a person with [a specific religious education] is needed here in [name of the office] and to ask if I would be interested in the position of [name of the function] (Irena).

The process of recruiting interviewees was long and complex. On account of the specificity of the employment and the hierarchization of Church structures, I began the process of acquiring respondents, in the case of dioceses, by gaining the permission of superiors such as the chancellor or, in some cases, the bishop of the diocese, whom I contacted by mail or when possible in person. My request for permission was sent to 37 dioceses; I received an initial agreement to interviews from 17 dioceses, and ultimately conducted research in 15. The choice of my interviewees was thus limited by access. After acquiring

[4] Some of the information in the methodological part refers to findings presented in Leszczyńska 2016.

permission, I contacted the potential interviewees directly. Each time I tried to ensure that their participation in the study was with their conscious agreement, and that they did not consider participation to be a work obligation imposed by their superiors. I would also like to emphasize that they could withdraw at any stage of the interview, and were free not to answer when they felt a question was awkward. Importantly, all my interviewees were very positive and supportive about the research; they willingly answered questions and, as they emphasized, treated the interview as an opportunity to share their experiences and express their positions.

Here I would like briefly to outline the theoretical premises on which I based my research. The key category organizing the analysis below is the idea of a social institution, which is understood in the article in categories of social rules and the associated sanctions, which can be interpreted as convictions, procedures, guidelines, models, cognitive scripts, patterns of behaviour, and normative instructions—both restricting and facilitating human activities (see, for instance, Chmielewski 2011; Mackay, Kenny, Chappell 2011, Scott 2008, Hodgson 2006, 2007, Leszczyńska 2014c, 2016). These rules should not be viewed as external in regard to social actors, even if they condition their activities. As Richard Scott notes, if institutional rules do not manifest themselves in activities and are not accorded importance, they are dead, like the institution that constitutes them. Rules, including gender rules, can be perceived by analyzing social practices (Scott 2008: 58, Martin 2003, 2004, Leszczyńska 2016). Gender as a social institution comprises rules that contain definitions of femininity and masculinity, and direct the behaviour of men and women, their manners of thinking and interpreting the world, indicating what is normative and non-normative for the genders and also stratifying the emerging models of men's and women's activities. These rules are subject to social reproduction and potential change under the influence of social activities.

Social practices, including gender practices, are simultaneously vehicles and carriers of the institution and instruments of their reproduction and transformation. The relation between practice and the institution should thus be seen as recurrent and causative, although various dimensions of human action should be noted in that agency. On the one hand, intentional, self-aware, and reflexive practices can be seen in the actions of the social actor, although it is important that the intentions of the actors are not always in accord with the effect of the practices undertaken, which not infrequently, in spite of the intentions, are unexpected (see DiMaggio 2006, Hausner 2013b, Martin 2004). On the other hand—and more importantly from the perspective of this article—in analyzing the processes of an institution's reproduction and their connection with agency, their naturalist source can be indicated. Institutions are seen as the consequence of habitualization, that is, of habitual practices and human customs realized in the context of institutional limitations. These practices, though described as being deliberate, do not always appear to be conscious and reflexive, that is, engaging the attention, being the effect of human self-awareness, and considering the consequences of actions, context, and deliberations. They are rather the result of the actions and common experiences of actors finding themselves in similar situations (Martin, 2003: 356, 2004). As Patricia Yancey Martin notes in applying Bourdieu's theory of habitus to institutional considerations on gender, people are most often accompanied in their activities by a limited, liminal awareness; that is, they are not fully conscious of why

and how they are acting. Agency in regard to gender is thus the 'state of being in action' (Martin 2003: 355), which may be intentional or not, reflexive or non-reflexive, routine or not. It is not always consciously oriented toward gender, but has in the long duration an influence on the placement of men and women in the social order.

Among the practices reproducing social rules, including gender rules, physical practices stand out and—more importantly from the perspective of the present analysis—discursive practices (see, for instance, Rhoton 2011; Martin 2003). People reproduce institutional rules through acts of speech—linguistic and linguistically realized activities of various discursive strategies (see Rajtar 2011; Rhoton 2011; Stobbe 2005; Green Jr., Li 2011; Hodgson 2007, 2006; Scott 2008). They also experience these rules in conceptual categories, among other ways. This means that through language as an action, a person interprets, creates, and reproduces institutional rules, because the guidelines for action are rooted in language processed in pragmatic categories. Discursive practices are realized in how people speak about themselves and others in gender categories, how they respond to social expectations and the connected sanctions, and also how they hierarchize the relations between the sexes and create central and peripheral patterns of masculinity and femininity (Martin 2006; Rhoton 2011; Stobbe 2005). Language in action thus reveals the causal force of the social actor in regard to institutional rules and is central for understanding the processes of 'doing gender'—its maintenance, reproduction, and also transformation.

Women in Church Organizations. On Determinism and Agency—an Overview of Research

The issue of women's place in religious organizations is one of the more important questions to be addressed by the sociology of religion in the last two decades, although it has only recently become the object of systematic analyses (see Adams 2007; de Gasquet 2010; Ecklund 2006; Sullins 2000). This subject is usually analyzed from one of two perspectives. On the one hand, religious organizations are examined in categories of patriarchal and oppressive spheres, in which women, most often fulfilling subordinate roles, are viewed as passive social actors predetermined by the system of religious sanctions and rules (see Avishai 2008; Stacey & Gerard 1990; Graff 2010; Szwed 2009; Środa 2010). Many analyses conducted in this spirit concentrate on seeking the barriers and hindrances in religious organizations that constitute a framework for women's activities. These barriers are often interpreted as conditioned first of all by official and formalized Church rules (see, for instance, the research of the Australian Episcopal Conference 1999).

As Sarah Bracke points out, referring to research on Christianity and Islam, such a perspective is adopted primarily by authors whose analyses are grounded in theories of modernity and who, in reproducing a dimorphic vision of gender, first explain the presence of women in religion and their greater religiosity by their lower education, and, essentialistically, by irrationality and a tendency to submissiveness, and second give positive significance to modernization processes such as secularization or individuality, while associating them with cultural values identified with stereotypical masculinity (Bracke 2008: 52;

Bracke 2003: 337). In what is perceived outside the religious institution as the potential for self-constitution and the experience of freedom is seen as their contradiction in the religious space. Typical of such a view of women's place in the Church is a specific understanding of femininity, not infrequently as a victim—excluded and oppressed by religion, and often also unconscious and objectified (after Avishai 2008, see Stacey and Gerard 1990, Leszczyńska 2016). The works of certain radical feminist theologians are written in this spirit (for instance, Daly 1978), as are interpretations made from the viewpoint of liberal, anti-religious, feminist movements (Stacey and Gerard 1990; Graff 2010; Środa 2010).

On the other hand, particularly in recent years, approaches have developed that concentrate on studying various attempts by women in religious organizations at self-constitution and on agency as a basic human dimension, including of religious activity (Avishai 2008; Bracke 2003; Kościańska 2009; Schwartz 2012; Weaver 2011; Leszczyńska 2016). Such researchers as Orit Avishai or Agnieszka Kościańska depart from a determinist consideration of the institutionalized order in a religion and concentrate on various patterns of behavior that could be interpreted in causal categories—transforming, renegotiating, or reproducing the religious order.

In analyzing the literature of the subject and inspired by Avishai's systematizations of women's activeness in Judaism, also Kościańska's studies of the Brahma Kumaris movement, and Saba Mahmood on patterns of women's activeness in Islam, it is possible, in my opinion, to distinguish several basic manners of understanding women's agency in institutionalized religious orders. First then, agency is understood on the model of analyses that are typical for performative, post-structuralist, and post-feminist studies; that is, it is defined in subversive categories, as rebellion, refusal, resistance, or noncompliance in regard to traditional religious norms (see Avishai 2008; Butler 2007). Agency is here identified not infrequently with autonomy, emancipation, creativity and subjectivity, control, and rationality, in which the ability of the individual to make decisions appears (Avishai 2008; Kościańska 2009: 36; Ahearn 2014; Martin 2003; Leszczyńska 2016).

Studies of American Catholicism that accentuate the transgression of formalized limits by women in parishes struggling with a lack of priests (Wallace 1996; 1997) fit within this view of agency, I believe. This stream also contains the research on schismatic activities initiated by women who construct alternatives to dominant institutions (Rue 2008), analyses of the movement for the ordination of women in Christian churches (Lummis and Nesbitt 2000), or activities on behalf of the emancipation of LGBT persons in various religions (Scherer 2011; Schippert 2011).

The second understanding of agency is typical of research analyzing the activity of women in traditional areas of religion, which are interpreted by them—in spite of the experienced limitations and subordinate position—as a sphere of self-realization, freedom, emancipation, and independence. Traditional religions, even though they rest on values of hegemonic masculinity, as Avishai has pointed out (Avishai 2008), could be read in categories of instruments ameliorating the effect of the patriarchy experienced in the family or in the vocational sphere. This stream comprises part of the research among Catholic women working in Church organizations in the USA (Ecklund 2005; Manning 1997), and also the analyses of Agnieszka Kościańska in regard to Brahma Kumaris converts in Poland (see also Leszczyńska 2016).

Agency in the religious sphere could be understood also in categories of the strategic activities undertaken by women that allow them to achieve goals that are not necessarily religious. These could be identified as pragmatic activities in which religious rules and resources are used to enable access to social, political, or cultural capital (see, for instance, an analysis of the activity of women religious leaders, Watling 2002).

One perspective on studies on religion, which goes far beyond the above and has become widespread in recent years, is the concept of agency present in the above-mentioned studies of Mahmood, Avishai, and Kosciańska. Agency is not identified here with unrestricted, voluntary, individualized, subversive, or transgressive activities, but is interpreted as a reflexive ability of self-constitution, which could express itself in obedience toward the religious tradition and acceptance of norms that are exclusionary in regard to women. Agency could thus be subordination, inactivity, or omission of activity; 'the renunciation of agency—not acting could be performative' (Kościańska 2009: 36).

The latter manner of understanding agency was inspiring for the analysis described in the present article. The concept of agency which I adopted was thus the consequence of defining gender as a social institution, an understanding which originates in the heuristic framework of new institutionalism and integrative theories of cultural gender, which depart from identity and individualist views, concentrating instead on the routine and non-reflexive nature of gender and its grounding in implicit and general cultural convictions (Stobbe 2005; Yancey Martin, 2003, 2006; Ridgeway 2008; Risman & Davis 2013; Risman 2004, 2009, 2011).

In combining the perspective of new institutionalism (which emphasizes the ability to reproduce social institutions not only as a result of reflexive practices but also in habitual activities) with premises derived from studies on agency in religious orders, I attribute the ability to maintain the institutional order (including self-restriction and the production and preservation of barriers and difficulties that condition female activity) to the practices undertaken by lay women. In other words, I view the relation between linguistic activities and experiential limitations in the Church as recurrent, referential, and linked. Inspired by Laura A. Rhoton's concept, I read women's distancing themselves from other women and femininity at the level of discursive practice as a causative, although not necessarily intentional, process of reproducing barriers and gender inequalities (Rhoton 2011: 700).

Following the above findings, I interpret the interview responses concerning femininity in categories of practices that serve to reproduce the institution of gender in the sense of a social rule defining patterns of behaviour—ways of thinking and interpreting the world—for men and women. In the further part of the article, I concentrate on those texts in which, first, my interviewees dissociate themselves from traits attributed to femininity and on the basis of which women are excluded from the power structures of the Church organization, and second, dissociate themselves from certain types of femininity in the Church and the activities associated with it, and third, from activities undertaken by women in the institutional spheres of the religion and directed toward the subject of gender. I define dissociation after Laura A. Rhoton as "a discursive separation or distinction from other women" on the basis of an appraisal and interpretation of what is appropriate, normative, and proper for a given gender (see Rhoton 2011: 701).

The Exclusion of Women from the Roman Catholic Church Organization in Poland —Research Findings[5]

The Exclusion of Women from Church Authority. Self-distancing from Traits that are Normatively Feminine

Femininity is essentialized and naturalized by my interviewees; that is, they conceptualize it. They point to traits that in their opinion are unalterable, ahistorical, and universally possessed by women, which disqualify them from occupying functions connected with power. They interpret femininity dichotomously to masculinity, to which they attribute qualities that they think constitute a natural predisposition for direction and domination, not only in the sphere of religious authority but also in the context of vocational work in the Church. Among the qualities that define normative femininity and simultaneously undermine the leadership skills of women are considered to be ways of thinking, characteristics, personalities, temperament, attitudes such as emotionality, irrationality, lack of logic, submissiveness, and empathy, and also behaviour that is, in the opinion of my interlocutors, typical behaviour of women in social relations, especially gossiping and jealousy. Hyperbole is characteristic in the normative conceptualization of femininity in the responses; that is, the attributed traits are presented as unambiguous, appearing in the collective of women indisputably and exaggeratedly.

Of course, polar-opposite and essentialist explanations of femininity are not typical solely of women working in the Church; it is a practice characterizing not only the religious and not only the Polish general discourse (see the analyses of Holmes and Schnurr 2006; Stobbe 2005). What should yet be pointed out is that such conceptualizations of femininity and then dissociation in regard to traits considered feminine appears above all in the responses of those interviewees who themselves occupy directing or managerial positions in the diocese and are engaged in the work of the Polish Episcopal Conference, and appears sporadically in interviews conducted with women at lower levels:

Women are, tend to be, more emotional—I know it from my own self. I don't at all consider myself to be a wonderful boss precisely for the reason that I am, for instance, sensitive to human reactions. Doubtless—of course, men are also not insensitive and also in some manner take notice, but doubtless less than women. Another thing is that women have a different range of such soft skills than men do and for this reason, for example, there is a certain different—actually it comes to the same thing—management style. Softer, based more on confidence, more on—again in quotation marks—a 'maternal approach'; on the other hand, I know from my own experience that I work better with a man as a boss than with a woman boss—although there was only one such time when I had a woman boss—so perhaps what I'm saying is not entirely removed from how things really are[6] (Aleksandra).

I imagine that perhaps if a man were in my position he would keep stricter discipline. For instance, among [name of a position]. He would have requirements and stick to them more consistently. I'm a woman, so I can be talked

[5] In the empirical part of the article I refer to the findings of research presented in my book (2016) concerning the processes of reproducing models of femininity and masculinity by lay men and women. In this article, however, in contrast to the said publication, I concentrate exclusively on analyzing discursive practices that maintain the models of femininity adopted by lay women. In the book I analyzed the complex practices of lay men and women that reproduced models of masculinity and femininity within Church organizations.

[6] To protect the anonymity of my interviewees, I have removed all data from the quotations that could aid in their identification. For this reason too, I do not give any information about the particular geographic locations of the dioceses in which given interviews were conducted.

round—I can be, I don't know, I'm aware of it. I think with my emotions; I empathically imagine myself in the situation of a given [name of a position] and let her off some task.[7] (Wanda)

From the answers a kind of paradox concerning interpretation of the place of women in the Church emerges. The interviewees attribute to themselves traits that are in their opinion normatively feminine, such as emotionality, caring, and understanding. However, they define these traits as contrary to the practices of power, and consequently with their vocational positions. Undermining the value of femininity (thus understood) for vocational work and grounding a pejorative conviction about women in dominant positions, they undermine their own value as superiors, excluding themselves from the organizational structures of the Church and reproducing barriers that could hinder other women. It is also worth noting that a model of authority emerges in the answers that does not place much emphasis on interhuman relations, or empathy, but on values opposed to those considered to be feminine—distance in relationships, discipline, and rationality (see also Leszczyńska 2016).

My interviewees also attribute to femininity other traits that, in their opinion, make the presence of women controversial in the sphere of vocational work. One of the interviewees, occupying a specialist position in a diocesan chancery, pointed to the difficulty of working with women, ascribing talkativeness to them and also presumably envy and jealousy, for instance:

But you know well that women work with men much better [than with women]. Working in [a previous place of work] I experienced working with women—where one woman looked at another like so, and the other looked at her like that, and one said thus and such, and the other said—well, here [in the chancery] there's none of that. Men have short, clear rules; in relation to me there is basically no situation where I might feel awkward or anything like that. (…)
There is such a thing as a sub secreto conversation with a priest. When I speak with a colleague and I say 'listen, this is sub secreto'—I know that he knows what I mean. With a woman, I don't know; I—in my experience, it's hard for a woman to keep a secret. (Kinga)

Femininity as Power and Domination—Distancing Oneself from Non-normative Femininity

This essentialistically interpreted gender difference connected with power is perceived to be permanent and inevitable; that is, all attempts to go beyond the boundaries constituted by traits and practices attributed to femininity appear as non-normative, as activities against essence and nature. In the responses, they emerge laden with sanction, that is, admonition, criticism, and rebuke.

Acting contrary to femininity, in the light of the analyzed conversations, is manifested primarily in striving for power of any kind, either structural or symbolic, placing vocational work above family life, entering into traditional male roles, or domination over men

[7] See also: 'Like how they try to make men and women equal—that's absurd in itself; it's simply not possible. That's the way it was set in ancient times. Guys think straight, from A to B, to the point, they don't mince matters, don't get emotional; they were hunters, fishers, providers for the whole family. And women sat by the fire, appraised his catch, cleaned the cave. And that's the way it was from the dawn of time till today; it's encoded in nature. It's not that a feminist can think—I don't know—that a woman will amuse herself with a car today and a guy will play with a doll. But still she wants them to be equal. That can't be reorganized; that's the way human beings were programmed. We are differently built and differently built not only physically but also mentally, and from the viewpoint of mentality (…) Men behave differently. Among other things, that's why men are chosen over women as priests. A woman wouldn't be suited to that.'

in the religious, professional, or domestic sphere. Some of my interviewees, in reference to Church structures, consider unnatural such activities as young girls being altar servers, women participating in the power structure of the Church in Western Europe, or women engaging locally—for instance, in parishes—in ways that are critical of clerics or in competition with their activities, for instance:

There are—there are—women who—I don't wonder later that parish priests don't want to allow lay persons to participate in the life of the Church—because there are women who, in general, want to turn everything upside down in the Church—and refurnish the parish house too.
K.L. Refurnish?
For instance, they want to change the decoration of the church, because the cross is on the wrong side. And it's not even about very important matters, but matters like…Well, it's that women want to run everything. (…) So that kind of zeal here has to be…What is needed is a kind of womanly wisdom in order to exist in the Church, but positively, to show priests that they can make use of lay help and needn't be afraid… (Dorota)

Women, in taking on male roles, deprive men of initiative at certain moments. And if I were to marry, then I would never in my life want to be, so to speak, above the guy. I wouldn't want to be subordinate either; I recognize the partnership relation, but my ideal would be a guy who—'I said so and that's final.' I'm capable of subordination to a just authority. And for me, a guy is a guy. He's a father, that is, someone responsible, who says he'll do something and does it. And nothing on the order of 'well, I don't know, maybe, someday.' (Agata)

Agency, with multidimensional consequences, is ascribed to women's practices that transgress the rules of femininity. Practices that are contrary to femininity in the essential sense and imitate masculinity have both individual and collective effects, as my interviewees point out. They can lead women to emotional disturbances, including depression; they also have a destructive impact on the family. Above all, however, the consequences of such practices affect men, who lose their nature, which is constituted by authority and domination, in the confrontation with non-normative femininity. They lose their masculine potential, that is, the ability to take the initiative and to make decisions, for instance:

Nevertheless, a woman's mentality is different, and men's is different and we [women] shouldn't, so to speak, violate that mentality. There can be permeation, but it shouldn't, shouldn't, entirely change the, so to speak, mentality. Because men have certain needs; definitely, for instance, the need for domination. If that is taken from them and they are entirely subordinated, then that, that is not… [proper]. (Zuzanna)

Very often, on account of a family breakdown, it happens that a woman takes on all the roles, including responsibility for the family's material welfare and raising the children. On the other hand, I think it's not good if the man is in the house, but he's not allowed to be responsible for the family, because 'I do it better', right? That is, that masculinity isn't valued. (Łucja)

Women at present, beginning with girls at the secondary school level—because I think that it already begins there—do not make demands of men. I mean, beginning with basic things. For instance, swearing in the presence of women, girls. Currently—even when I was in secondary school I think the boys in the class wouldn't use the F word every other sentence in front of us girls. And now they use it all the time, and it doesn't bother girls. They don't pay any attention at all. Never mind that they swear like sailors themselves. But, well, beginning with such details and beginning with much, much more serious matters, like in general the problem that women don't require courting. They simply offer themselves on a platter. And that, I mean, I'm speaking about the secondary school level, it doesn't bring a man up to be a man. (Irena)

A man is, in himself, already authoritative, on account of being a man. On the other hand, what he does with his masculinity, well, either he will build on that authority, or he will be perceived like, like a caricature of a man. Then again, one could look at it from another point of view, that the freedom we have today, the variety of possibilities and the multiplicity of callings that we can undertake as women does not always improve us as women. I think

that women often lose themselves somewhere and thus we often suffer depression. What do I mean? Because if a woman sets too large a store by her career and she has a family and children and neglects that sphere, she will in turn never achieve happiness. She will always be torn between one and the other. And from this viewpoint it can be said that it won't benefit anyone—that is, that freedom and access and diversity. Because in the last accounting, a woman loses, not gains. (Krystyna)

Women who depart from the tradition, like those who deprive men of masculinity (Agata), 'violate' the male psyche (Zuzanna), take away men's masculinity (Barbara), depreciate them (Maryla), stifle them (Irena), 'trample on their masculinity' (Krystyna), or underappreciate them (Łucja), thus appear in many responses as being responsible for the emotions of others (including clerics) and their fear of feminine dynamism, and above all for masculine non-normativeness.

The model of non-normative femininity distinguished in the analysis, that is, a woman who engages in vocational work, makes decisions, and has a dominant position in regard to men, appears singular if the context in which it is constructed is taken into account. Among my interviewees working in specialist positions, the majority were unmarried and childless women, vocationally engaged and often working even—as they emphasized—on Sunday and holidays (see Leszczyńska 2014c, Leszczyńska 2016). Although qualitative research can not be interpreted in categories of statistical representativeness, nevertheless, assumptions can be made on that basis about models of social activities.

Among my interviewees, 22 women were working in positions requiring high qualifications—as directors, managers, or specialists. Among them, 12 were persons living alone (in the case of men, for 18 employees with high qualifications, 5 are unmarried). As emerges from conversations with both men and women, the work of specialists in Church organizations is unusually time-consuming for lay persons; it does not favour family life, and is particularly difficult to make accord with having a child and care of a family, and thus clerics prefer employees to be single persons (see Leszczyńska 2016). The below responses of women who are diocesan specialists, living alone, are illustrative.

Thus it seems to me that they look with more favourably on people who are single, because they are more at their disposition. (…) After all they [priests] sometimes have congresses, conferences, meetings. Someone with a family and three children can't just go like that. One child sick, a second child sick, and how is he going to go? A person who is alone is available. Able to pack a bag and go. Here only one or two lay persons are married. (Agata)

We laugh because—we laugh because that movement to keep Sunday holy began with us; they signed such a declaration about work on Sunday. I say: 'I'm not signing that,' because it's darkest under the lantern. And it's the same with life in this milieu, because I see them here for how many hours—I see the bishop here and I go to some meeting, and there he is again. I too work all the time. If it's about that day of work, I can't say that I have a free day. They there—during the week it varies—of course, there are free weekends, but it happens rarely. (Teresa)

I suppose their [lay persons'] engagement in work keeps them from having a private life. I even warn myself sometimes—I scold myself—'how many times are you going to run about for everyone because someone is expecting something there, and when are you going to leave a little time for yourself?' What matters here at work is—I have to go somewhere, sign something, then someone asks me for something, or there is some initiative in the parish. And I simply don't have time for it. (Elżbieta)

The Self-distancing of Women Engaged in Women's Issues

Some of my interviewees criticize and distance themselves from women whose activities intentionally and reflexively involve women's issues, organizing and initiating women's

movements in the Church and beyond. These movements are not identified with feminism, which is located outside the Church and interpreted as a threat to religion, family, and femininity.

Gender and femininity in the responses appear as indisputable and constituting rather part of common knowledge than being reflexively analyzed. Only two women among my interviewees actively participate in women's movements within the Church; one describes herself as a feminist, while defining feminism on the model of John Paul II's theology, as the conscious exhibition of her femininity within the sphere of the Church. Generally, the activeness of women in regard to women's issues in the Church is rather passed over in silence; if it is referred to in the responses, it is interpreted as unnecessary, frivolous, and contrary to women's calling within the Church:

Well, it's true, there are, I understand, some kinds of women's movements—like there was a women's league in the countryside, but that was something entirely different, because that was something on the order of a group of crafts-workers. Women did lace work; they made household preserves and that was their milieu and from that there were those housewives' clubs and so on. Well, obviously those were women's affairs—it couldn't be otherwise. And here in answer to that—that feminists are creating some sort of milieu, calling together a Catholic [women's] milieu, for me that was ridiculous. I thought it was ridiculous and that's why I didn't want to participate with them. (Maryla)

Another interviewee, referring to feminist theology and to theological studies, in which she has a degree, emphasized her distance from women's initiatives, from feminism in the Church, and the activation of women in the structures of Church power:

I am not in that stream—I'm not in it—I don't have any feminist views. On the contrary, sometimes they laugh at me—my women colleagues—for saying that women aren't suitable for that. For example, I say that women can't be priests. (…) I say that certain things would be too difficult for them. Really, too difficult and that would perhaps be harmful for them themselves. It's not that the best director is a man and not a women—it's not that. But I don't have any feminist leanings and here I would not at all want to acquire [religious authority]. I would like them to accept me as I am, and I say—I'm a sufficiently dynamic person and I like to stand up for myself. (Kinga)

Models of Femininity and their Significance, and the Creation and Preservation of Relations of Implicit Power within the Church

It is worthwhile to look at emerging models of femininity and the significance they are given in categories of creating and preserving relations of power, which Lineke Stobbe describes as being 'implicit' (Stobbe 2005: 107, see also Leszczyńska 2016), as well as at the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005a, 2005b). According to Stobbe, implicit power is created in social relations that are routine, symbolic, often non-reflexive, hierarchical, and functioning as a *doxa*—an obviousness on which the institutional rules of gender rely, while manifesting itself discursively as an ideology excluding various social categories. In referencing various works on relations of subordination and domination by, for instance, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Hans Doorewaard, Joan Acker, or Pierre Bourdieu, Stobbe distinguishes four basic types of power, which in my opinion, are also created discursively in the analyzed responses. The first type of power is power based on difference, which is interpreted as permanent and indisputable (taken for granted), and which stratifies and hierarchizes social relations. This difference is justified by its naturalistic origin. In their responses, my interviewees define the relations between men and

women as universal and inegalitarian; they ascribe to men an essentialistically interpreted capacity for domination. The second type of power of which Stobbe writes—the power of denial—appears in the negation and exclusion of the experience of subordinate social categories from social structures and power, while this exclusion occurs outwardly as an objective and neutral practice. Femininity in the responses is interpreted stereotypically as oversensitive, emotional, generally not very stable and appearing—logically—as contrary to the practices of power, which are identified with rationality and predictability. The third type of power of which Stobbe writes is pastoral power, which consists, among other things, in defining what is good and proper for social categories occupying lower positions, and which is realized as concern for those categories, for as long as their practices are confined within boundaries that can be defined as normative. In the interviews, a picture emerges of what harms 'real femininity' and what are the consequences of atypical practices for femininity. The last type of power, according to Stobbe, is normative power, which is typical for organizational practices (see also Leszczyńska 2016). Power is encoded in norms which are read as neutral and universal but in reality are rules representing a culturally defined hegemonic masculinity. For example thus, in defining family life and child care as contrary by nature with vocational work and a career, it is assumed that primarily men can realize themselves in these latter in the context of a patriarchal society, and that work, including in the Church, is a male domain. Vocational work is seen as time-consuming and presupposing availability. In this context, feminine embodiments connected with, for instance, motherhood—combined with the fact that contemporarily it is still women who do the unpaid work of housekeeping and care—are seen as a barrier to the professional execution of vocational obligations.

Conclusion

Femininity and masculinity are interpreted in the text as social institutions; that is, while they have the social nature of a collection of rules, they are created and brought to life in the activities of real actors. Thus gender, which is considered to be reproduced and modeled in the practices of gender rules, cannot be reduced to what is associated with biology or to a binary view of human gender in which an essentialistically viewed femininity is opposed to masculinity. As analyses have shown, femininity as emotional, weak, and subordinate, and the hegemonic masculinity manifested in the practices studied (that is, dominating and patriarchal) could thus be reproduced and supported by the practices (viewed in biological terms) of women who paradoxically are excluded from and marginalized in social structures by these practices (see also Rhoton 2011; Connell 2005a). Generally, all my interviewees, regardless of their location in the structure of the hierarchical Church or civil status, engaged in practices at the discursive level that justified and strengthened the traditional pattern of femininity, which is connected essentially with nurturing, irrationality, embodiment, and subordinate positions. The normative pattern that emerges from these types of activities is thus strongly dichotomous, homogenous, and universal, as it is supposed to concern all women, independently of their prestige, position in the Church structure, or status.

As Monika Szczepaniak writes, 'nearly all male members of society and many women are invested [in hegemonic masculinity], through the process of upbringing and shaping relations between the sexes, through the system of privileges and securities, through the separation of their own positions in society' (Szczepaniak 2010). Similarly, in linguistic acts interpreted in categories of social practices, mechanisms can be found that support hegemonic masculinity and by the same token reproduce the barriers women encounter in various social orders.

Importantly for research into religious orders, adoption of the institutional concept of gender—in which a major role in maintaining gender models is played by the practices of the social actors—has made it possible to depart from conceptualizing women themselves in categories of passive recipients of Church rules. In analyzing the relation of practices and rules concerning femininity in institutional categories, the dimension of agency can be seen. Moreover, agency itself should then be read broadly: not only as a reflexive process of changing rules but also as preservative activities whose effects are not necessarily intentional but are connected with the normative logic of suitability (Hausner 2013a, 2013b; Jessop 2014; March and Olsen 2006; Martin 2004). In this context, reproducing gender rules is not thus their simple replication but a causative process in which the social actors participate within the bounds of the gender order, reinterpret the rules, and resolve dilemmas; that is, they constantly actualize the rules and so contribute to their preservation.

Acknowledgement

The project was financed by the National Science Centre Poland, on the basis of decision number DEC-2011/01/B/HS6/01753.

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