

Personality of Men and Women – Similarities and Differences. Temporal and Cultural Trends

Abstract

The article discusses similarities and differences in the personality development of men and women in their life-span. The analyses of the developmental psychology research show that boys and girls develop their own personality from the early years of their life, thus adapting themselves to the gender stereotypes. The article also contains a survey of meta-analyses concerning the personality traits of men and women, conducted in different countries from 1958 to 2001 (Maccoby, Jacklin, 1974, Hall, 1984, Feingold, 1994, Costa, Terraciano, McCrae, 2001). The meta-analyses show a coherent image of gender differences in personality traits concerning greater tender-mindedness in women and greater assertiveness in men. At the same time, they indicate temporal changes and trends connected with a tendency for differences to disappear. They also emphasize cultural distinctness.

Key words: gender differences, personality traits, personality development.

Definitional, methodological, and research problems in studies of the gender differences in personality

In psychology there are a number of problems in the analysis of gender differences in personality. They are mainly of a definitional and methodological character.

From the definitional point of view the difficulties result from the fact that in psychology there are numerous different personality theories and researchers into gender differences do not always determine how they understand the concept. At the same time, in research there appears a tendency to perceive personality traits

as certain constant characteristics of a subject. Psychologists seem to forget that personality traits are not invariable. In general, it seems inappropriate to treat women and men merely as “sets” of stable feminine and masculine features. In psychology the opinion that personality could be formulated in terms of a set of constant traits has long been questioned, as nobody displays the same trait with the same intensity and in each situation. On the contrary, people’s behaviour may frequently go from one extreme to the other and personality is by all means a dynamic structure (Bakan, 1966, Basow, 1986).

The assumption that women and men possess only traits typical of their own sex proves false as well, since traits considered as typically feminine are found in representatives of the opposite sex. At the same time, in the stereotypical comprehension of femininity and masculinity, traits characteristic of gender are most frequently formulated in an antithetic, dichotomous way, in terms of “all or nothing,” eg. all men are assertive and all women are not so. Whereas, despite the fact that women and men may differ as to the distribution of the intensity of a certain trait, still the distributions of features in some common area overlap (eg. although the majority of men are more assertive than women, there are men who do not reveal the trait). The fact that there are common, overlapping areas of the distribution of women’s and men’s normal traits seems to be especially important in the analysis of women’s and men’s personality traits (Basow, 1986).

Other problems are those of a methodological character. While cognitive differences, such as verbal abilities, may be measured by a range of tests of a paper-and-pencil type (eg. spelling, reading comprehension), it is much more difficult to measure such traits as sensitivity to others or assertiveness. A person studied individually in a laboratory is not always able to demonstrate the trait of assertiveness, as assertive behaviours take place in a social environment and the latter is indispensable for that trait to be expressed. A person may be characterised by assertiveness but s/he may not behave in an assertive way in a given situation. As this is individual factors together with situational ones that determine a subject’s behaviour (Basow, 1986).

Sensitivity to other people may be measured both in terms of a number of friends and acquaintances an individual has, as behaviours of social responsiveness, sensitivity or empathy, and in terms of the frequency of dogging somebody’s footsteps. And if, additionally, one researcher investigates preschoolers’ behaviour and another one teenagers’ behaviour, then it is even more difficult to compare their results and draw conclusions concerning gender differences (Eisenberg, Lennon, 1983, Hyde, 1984, Eagly, Crowley, 1986, Basow, 1986).

The problem of different age groups is evident not only in research into children but also in research into adults. In psychology a lot of research concerns students,

usually 19-22 year olds, whereas results are generalized to all adults. Similarly, the validity of transferring conclusions from American research to women and men from other cultures may be controversial, as nationality may play a remarkable role in revealing such traits as assertiveness or activity (Basow, 1986).

Another question is the effect of social expectations on an individual's behaviour. The influence may have the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy. For instance, if assertiveness is not socially expected of girls they do not present such behaviour. That behaviour may be also –conversely – differently interpreted and classified in women (not as assertive, but as aggressive) than in men (Eagly, Steffen, 1986, Eagly, Crowley, 1986, Basow, 1986).

It is also worth remembering that both genders' traits and behaviours are similar to a great extent. The common area makes it very difficult to find clearly defined differences between women and men and traits themselves make it possible to predict a subject's behaviour only to a slight extent. Thus, the majority of the researchers into personality emphasize individual differences rather than those connected with gender.

Personality development of women and men in their life-span

Personality development is a very complex process considered from many perspectives in psychology. Bearing in mind the multitude of research standpoints, shaping personality traits considered as typical of a given sex is mainly focused on in the analysis of the development of gender differences.

From the developmental point of view, some research shows that boys develop personality features characteristic of their sex much earlier and more strongly than girls. As early as at the age of 3 boys very rarely prefer toys and games considered as "girlish." Whereas girls of that age choose "boyish" games and toys as often as boys. Especially at the age of 6-10 the majority of girls are eager to choose "boyish" games apart from "girlish" ones (Payne, 1981, Uberg, 1981, Basow, 1986). It is so because some typically "boyish" games, plays, and toys could be considered as more interesting and amusing by children (eg. computer games). At the same time, that phenomenon is explained by theories of feminist psychoanalysis, which indicate the creation of "separated self" in boys at that period. In their development they change their initial identification with mother and intensively seek the elements of male identity (Chodorov, 1978).

At the school age, while describing their own personality boys and girls adjust to gender stereotypes in their self-descriptions. The degree of compatibility of the self-descriptions with stereotypes changes with age and depends on gender.

Research (Davis, Williams, Best, 1982) shows that third-graders more frequently attribute stereotypical gender traits to their mates than to themselves. At the same time, this is boys that perceive themselves both in terms of male and female traits more often than girls. Whereas girls perceive themselves in terms of feminine traits. A similar tendency was noted in children at an older age and it continued until adolescence, until the eighth grade (Stericker, Kurdek, 1982, Basow, 1986).

Observed in children at the school age, the tendency to describe themselves from the point of view of feminine traits rather than masculine ones may be explained by the nature of the stereotype of masculinity, which is more "adult" and incompatible with a child's nature than the stereotype of femininity. In the majority of children it would be impossible to observe such typically "male" behaviours as discretion in the expression of opinions or emotional control and those behaviours prove to be too difficult for many adults, as well.

In adolescence there occurs a greater similarity of self-concept and self-descriptions to traits and behaviours socially determined as typical of one's own sex (Donelson, 1977, Basow, 1986). Distinct gender differences in self-concept are clearly defined. They have been noted by researchers for a few decades. That diversity is called differently by different researchers. Two clusters of traits have been indicated: warmth and expressiveness, described as feminine, and competence and rationality, as included in the stereotype of masculinity; or a dichotomy: an orientation to action and an orientation to people and instrumentality-expressiveness (Bakan, 1966, Broverman et al., 1972, Constantinople, 1973). All those similar terms express inter-gender personality differences mainly from the point of view of self-descriptions and ideal social standards of femininity and masculinity. As gender stereotypes are firm and commonly copied in many societies, it is not surprising that the majority of women and men perceive themselves as compatible with the patterns.

On the other hand, the problem of real behaviour of women and men remains a separate question. Because of the great pressure of the environment in childhood and even greater in adolescence for individuals to conform to the accepted stereotypical behaviour, one's own image concerning the traits of one's own sex may be an incorrect premise for the interpretation and description of oneself.

At the same time, it is observed that the expectation of the perception of traits typical of one's own gender seems to be stronger in men than in women. Investigated American male students expected masculine traits in themselves to a greater extent than female students expected feminine ones (Canter, Meyerowitz, 1984, Basow, 1986). However, it may reflect not only personality differences but a different social evaluation and significance of masculine and feminine traits. Since male and female students want to possess masculine traits more

strongly, then those traits are perceived as more important in education and future social life.

The majority of research into the differences in the development of masculine and feminine traits in the representatives of both sexes is concentrated on children, schoolchildren, or students. Whereas personality development is a continual process. The research into adults in their life-span shows that with age people evaluate the participation of feminine and masculine traits in the image of themselves in a different way. A high evaluation of gender typicality in adolescence and youth shifts in the direction of noticing and accepting in oneself of traits typical of the opposite sex in middle age. There appear more numerous groups of androgynous people. In old age, particularly men seem to perceive feminine traits in themselves, but also quite a considerable group of women notice masculine traits in themselves (Miluska, 1996).

Therefore, age plays a significant role in the analysis of personality differences in women and men. The effect of different stages of life, mainly parenthood and professional activity, is similarly important in the evaluation and manifestation of individually feminine and masculine personality traits. Some research shows that professionally active women obtained lower results at the scale of mental femininity than unemployed ones. The results did not depend on marital status or having children. Whereas the partners of professionally working women obtained lower marks at the scale of masculinity than those living with women not working professionally (Cunningham, Antil, 1984, Basow, 1986).

The data may mean both that professional work changes women and their partners and that women of certain traits are more often professionally active and they choose less masculine partners. However, because of high or sometimes even prevalent professional activity of women in many societies, it seems more valid that this is women's professional career that effects not only women themselves but also their partners' personality.

Personality of women and men in meta-analyses. Temporal trends and cultural differences in the period from 1958 to 2001

In 1974 Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin did their precursory qualitative research into gender differences concerning personality. They were the first to carry out comparisons comprising 68 studies of 17,729 people (48% of women and 52% of men) in the period of 1958-1974. Their research was of a qualitative comparison character and it was conducted using a narrative method. According to the prin-

ciples of that method, they divided their studies into those observing personality trait differences between the sexes and those not doing so.

In their conclusion the researchers stated that there are personality differences between the sexes concerning only three characteristics, namely : anxiety (higher in women), assertiveness (greater in men), and a locus of control (more internal in men). They also noticed that the differences in the sense of control change with age and they are the most important in the period of studies.

A consecutive attempt at focusing on gender differences concerning personality were Hall's comparisons (1984) made with the use of a meta-analysis method that had not yet been possible at the time of the earlier studies by Maccoby and Jacklin. In meta-analyses it is assumed that the calculated value d denotes the magnitude of the influence of a gender variable on the studied dependent variables. When $d = 0.80$ it is great, when $d = 0.50$ it is moderate, when $d = 0.20$ it is small, when $d < 0.19$ it is very small, and when $d < 0.15$ it is practically irrelevant (McGuinness, 1998).

Hall based her meta-analysis on 42 studies of 18,730 people (46% of men and 54% of women) published in prestigious psychological journals in 1975-1983. The results confirmed those of Maccoby and Jacklin. She, too, noted greater anxiety in women ($d = -0.32$) and a greater inner locus of control ($d = 0.24$) and slightly greater assertiveness ($d = 0.12$) in men (cf. Table 1).

Table 1. Temporal trends in gender difference effect sizes for adolescents and adults. Mean effect size (d).

Source	Study Years	Self-esteem	Internal locus of control	Anxiety	Assertiveness
Maccoby, Jacklin, 1974	1958-1974	0.10	0.07	-0.31	0.20
Hall, 1984	1975-1983	0.12	0.24	-0.32	0.12
Replicaton of Hall	1984-1992	0.16	0.08	-0.15	0.17

Source: Feingold A. (1994, p. 438)

As part of his PhD thesis, Alan Feingold (1994) re-analyzed the data from the studies by Maccoby, Jacklin, and Hall. Using a meta-analysis he analyzed the research reports from Maccoby and Jacklin's comparisons. It appeared that in the studies from the period of 1958-1974 taken into account by the researchers, in the light of advanced statistical procedures the proposition concerning men's more internal locus of control was not confirmed. The author obtained results nearly indicating a lack of gender differences ($d = 0.07$) in the locus of control (LOC). He confirmed the thesis about greater anxiety in women ($d = -0.31$) and higher assertiveness in men ($d = 0.20$) (cf. Table 1).

At the same time, Feingold observed that generally at that time there were no gender differences in self-esteem ($d = -0.05$). However, in childhood girls had a slightly higher self-esteem ($d = -0.11$), whereas in adolescence and adulthood men had a higher self-esteem ($d = 0.10$). In precise analyses he did not observe general differences in women's and men's locus of control ($d = 0.01$). Whereas depending on the measurement method there appeared certain distinctness. If the locus of control was measured using questionnaire methods or scales in personality tests, women displayed a slightly more internal locus of control ($d = -0.05$). Similarly, in the measurement with the use of scales in tests connected with a sense of responsibility for intellectual achievements, women also possessed a more internal locus of control ($d = -0.28$), whereas when the measurement was of a behavioural character, more differences were noticed towards the internal LOC in men ($d = 0.25$). Thus, it seems that women have a slightly more internal LOC from the point of view of declarations and men in practical activity.

The meta-analysis showed that women achieved generally higher results at the scales of anxiety ($d = -0.31$). With age gender influence proved stronger. In children differences were smaller and indicated greater anxiety of girls ($d = 0.24$), whereas in adolescence and adulthood differences intensified ($d = -0.31$). It suggests that with age women become more anxious, whereas in men anxiety decreases.

In the assertiveness measurements men generally obtained higher results ($d = 0.38$). Interestingly, no assertiveness differences in behavioural measurement were observed ($d = 0.04$) and they were noted mainly at personality scales ($d = 0.23$). It may indicate a declarative rather than actual lack of assertiveness in women connected with the effect of social expectations, which negatively evaluate high self-confidence in women. At the same time, they reward firm behaviour in men.

Also here age modified the effect of the gender variable on assertiveness. In children gender differences were hardly noticed ($d = 0.03$), whereas starting with adolescence and adulthood men proved more assertive ($d = 0.20$). That confirms the influence of social interactions on revealing higher self-confidence in men.

Feingold (1994) replicated Hall's (1984) research broadening her analyzed research reports, i.e. including the period of 1984-1992. He also made international comparisons. According to the meta-analysis results, on average women were characterized by slightly higher anxiety ($d = -0.15$) (cf. Tab. 1). However, precise comparisons proved that gender differences depend on the kind of revealed anxiety. General anxiety is stronger in women ($d = -0.26$), but there are hardly any differences between the sexes in social fear ($d = 0.04$).

Nationality had an effect on the value of differences, as among the Americans almost no differences were observed in anxiety ($d = -0.04$), whereas for the

remaining nationalities the results indicated greater anxiety in women than in men ($d = -0.35$). It may result from higher liberation of American women in comparison with other countries.

The mean differences for assertiveness indicate a higher intensity of that trait in men ($d = 0.17$) (cf. Tab. 1). At the same time, gender differences are slightly greater in men among the Americans ($d = 0.20$) than in other nationalities ($d = 0.16$).

The mean effect d for self-evaluation indicated a slightly higher self-evaluation in men ($d = 0.16$). In international comparisons gender differences in self-evaluation were also slightly higher, in favour of men ($d = 0.17$), especially in the Americans ($d = 0.19$), but they were hardly observed in the Canadians ($d = 0.04$). Thus, American men seem to have an exceptionally firmly acquired norm of high self-confidence and assertiveness.

The smallest gender differences were observed in the locus of control. The mean effect ($d = 0.08$) indicates a near lack of differences in all the studied nationalities (Feingold, 1994).

At the same time, in the comparisons the author noticed that the majority of the research into children is conducted using mainly behavioural methods, which may influence the interpretation of the obtained differences, since it is possible to indicate a methodological effect or an age effect. They give reasons to conclude that gender differences concern actual situations (and not declarations) or that among children no gender differences are observed.

Alan Feingold (1994) is also the author of a different, comprehensive meta-analysis of the gender differences of personality traits. It comprised all the known research reports from the period of over fifty years (1940-1992) comparing 105,742 people. In order to avoid a methodological effect, the analysis comprised only questionnaire research. It was conducted using 13 different generally-known personality inventories (among others, MMPI, NEO PI, MPI, Eysenck's and Catell's tests). Traits measured in different tests were analyzed according to the groups of 9 characteristics concentrated around the so-called "Big Five". They were the following: I. Neuroticism – (1) anxiety (fear). (2) impulsiveness. II. Extraversion – (3) gregariousness. (4) assertiveness. (5) activity. III. (6) Openness for experience. IV. Agreeableness – (7) trust. (8) sensitivity to others (tender-mindedness). V. (9) conscientiousness.

The research was grouped according to the years 1940-1967, and 1968-1992. 1967 was considered as a time division limit because exactly then the norms for six of the analyzed questionnaires were changed. The comparisons were made for three groups: higher education institution students, college students, and adults. The research came from different countries: Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Poland, and Russia. Generally, it appeared that gender differences measured by the

intensity of statistical effects comprised the personality traits of the “Big Five” in a different way. (cf. Table 2).

Table 2. Effect sizes of gender differences in personality traits within the “Big Five”.

Mean effect size d	Neuroticism		Extraversion			Openness – Ideas	Agreeableness		Conscientiousness – Order
	Anxiety	Impulsiveness	Gregariousness	Assertiveness	Activity		Trust	Tender-mindedness	
Total	-0.28	0.03	0.15	0.47	0.10	0.08	-0.20	-0.56	-0.10
Study years									
1940–1967	-0.23	0.12	-0.22	0.50	0.09	-0.05	-0.20	-1.05	-0.05
1968–1992	-0.32	-0.01	-0.07	0.51	0.08	0.19	-0.35	-0.91	-0.18
High school	-0.30	0.05	-0.20	0.46	0.11	0.01	-0.23	-1.18	-0.26
College	-0.24	0.11	-0.23	0.45	0.10	0.06	-0.25	-0.82	-0.01
Adults	-0.25	-0.10	-0.06	0.67	0.01	0.00	-0.22	-0.92	-0.12

Source: based on: Feingold A. (1994, page 445)

Gender differences were marked in five of the nine analyzed traits. The most distinct ones concerned sensitivity to others (tender-mindedness), which characterized women to a greater extent (d = -0.56). Gender differences comprised in turn the following traits : assertiveness – men are more assertive (d = 0.47), anxiety – women are more anxious (d = -0.28), trust – women are more trustful (d = -0.20), and gregariousness – women are slightly more gregarious (d = 0.15). Considerably smaller statistical effects (actually signifying almost a lack of differences) concerned the following traits : activity – men are somewhat more active (d = 0.10), conscientiousness – women are somewhat more conscientious (d = -0.10), openness to experience – men are somewhat more open (d = 0.08), and impulsiveness (d = 0.03) – men are somewhat more impulsive (cf. Table 2).

The comparison of the effects of gender in that and the two earlier meta-analyses indicated a relatively constant but slight effect of gender on self-evaluation (d runs from 0.10 to 0.16). Therefore, men present a somewhat higher self-evaluation more frequently. Their higher assertiveness is similarly characterized (d runs from 0.12 to 0.20). All the same, the effect of gender on the anxiety variable decreases (d runs from -0.31 to -0.15).

In the analysis of temporal trends it appeared that there were general gender differences of personality traits prevailing during the period of 1940-1992 (cf. Tab.

2). The period during which the research was conducted indicates that certain characteristics show relative stability. They are especially men's higher assertiveness (in the period of 1940–1967 $d = 0.50$, in the period of 1968–1992 $d = 0.51$) and women's greater sensitivity to others (gentle-mindedness) (in the period of 1940–1967 $d = -1.05$, in the period of 1968–1992 $d = -0.91$).

Based on the observation of temporal trends made by Feingold, it may be supposed that there is a slight increase in the gender differences concerning anxiety (in 1940–1967 $d = -0.23$, in 1968–1992 $d = -0.32$), and trust (in 1940–1967 $d = -0.20$, in 1968–1992 $d = -0.35$). Women are increasingly more anxious and less trustful.

Feingold attracts attention to the fact that age in the analyzed research into the youth and adults is a moderator, but relatively weak, of the influence of the gender variable. Some gender differences increase with age. Namely: the difference in assertiveness, the greatest in adults ($d = 0.67$) and smaller in college students ($d = 0.46$), and the difference in impulsiveness, somewhat greater in adults ($d = 0.10$) than in students ($d = 0.05$).

Whereas other gender differences become weaker. One of them is especially the difference in gregariousness, which is higher in students (female students are more gregarious than male students) ($d = -0.20$), and nearly disappears in adults ($d = -0.06$). The gender difference in anxiety also gets weaker with age (but to a slight extent). Adult women ($d = -0.25$) are somewhat less different from men in their experiencing anxiety than female students ($d = -0.30$). Female students seem to experience more fears than mature women. The gender differences in activity also disappear with age. This is male students who are more active than female students ($d = 0.11$), whereas differences between adults are imperceptible ($d = 0.01$).

It should be emphasized that the influence of age is very small (it runs from 0 to 0.12 in five of the analyzed characteristics, $M = 0.05$). Similarly, the education level is a weak moderator of gender influence (d runs from 0.05 to 0.22, $M = 0.12$) (cf. Table 2). There are also gender differences observed depending on the methods of measurement. In two of the analyzed assertiveness scales women obtained higher results, and in different two there were no differences observed.

In international comparisons Feingold observes that there are mainly perceptible differences in assertiveness and activity in women and men of different nationalities (cf. Table 3). In some countries, eg. Canada ($d = 0.56$) and Poland ($d = 0.43$), men's advantage over women in assertiveness is higher than in other ones, eg. China ($d = 0.16$) and Finland ($d = 0.17$).

It appears that there are considerable differences between nationalities concerning the intensity of activity, in which gender differences generally indicate men's slight advantage ($d = 0.18$). On the contrary, in the Eastern block countries women tend to be more active than men. Especially in Russia there is a considerable dif-

ference concerning that trait in favour of women ($d = -0.55$), and in Poland it is at a similar level, but to a slight extent ($d = -0.09$). It is probable that difficult economic conditions and almost common professional activity of women in the Eastern block countries contributes to that dissimilar image of inter-gender differences. Whereas greater gender differences in activity in favour of men are observed in Finland ($d = 0.36$).

Within the scope of the remaining personality characteristics gender differences in particular countries are approximate (Tab. 3). Generally, it is observed that gender differences in personality traits are dependent on age, the education level, and nationality to a slight extent.

Table 3 Cross-national meta-analysis of effect sizes for gender differences in personality traits within the “Big Five” (1985–1992).

Country	Neuroticism	Extraversion			Openness-Ideas	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness Order
	Impulsiveness	Gregariousness	Assertiveness	Activity		Tender-mindedness	
Canada	-0.34	-0.16	0.56	0.29	0.11	-0.55	-0.11
China	-0.10	0.09	0.16	0.20	0.03	0.03	-0.22
Finland	-0.27	-0.15	0.17	0.36	0.02	-0.33	-0.17
Germany	-0.03	-0.09	0.19	0.12	0.25	-0.35	-0.22
Poland	-0.05	-0.10	0.43	-0.09	-0.19	-0.39	-0.29
Russia	-0.04	-0.22	0.32	-0.55	0.14	-0.47	-0.46
Total	-0.07	-0.12	0.26	0.18	0.07	-0.37	-0.22

Source: based on : Feingold A. (1994, page 448)

At the same time, attention should be paid to the three-dimensional character of the analyzed personality traits and to the fact that because of that the obtained image of differences may be dissimilar in particular sub-aspects of a given trait. For instance, the trait of anxiety comprises not only general fear but also a sense of subjective well-being and happiness or a need for affiliation, where women obtained higher results in the test measuring them. Similarly, the trait of gregariousness makes it possible to isolate its different aspects and some tests state greater sociability of men, whereas other ones indicate a higher intensity of that trait in women.

Since personality traits are of a three-dimensional character and Feingold’s meta-analysis (1994) comprised only nine characteristics, the latest research into the

image of personality differences of women and men are oriented towards personality. Currently, it begins to comprise the increasingly complex nature of factors involved in the basic canon of the “Big Five” traits.

In 2001, Paul Costa, Antonio Terracciano, and Robert McCrae, famous researchers and authors of a personality inventory, made a comparison of differences in 30 personality traits measured within the framework of the “Big Five.” It comprised 23,031 people from 26 countries. The measurement concerned questionnaire studies of two groups : (college) students at the age of 18–21 and adults over 22.

Generally, the results showed that differences between the sexes, although perceptible, are not considerable as they are never bigger than half of the standard deviation. Whereas, an in-depth analysis proved that in the area of the trait of neuroticism women obtained higher measurement (z for $p < 0.001$) within the scope of five of all the analyzed six dimensions¹ : general anxiety, vulnerability, depression, self-consciousness, and angry hostility. Smaller differences (z for $p < 0.05$) indicating higher results in women (z for $p < 0.05$) concerned impulsiveness.

Within the scope of extraversion women obtained higher results ($p < 0.001$) in three dimensions, i.e.: warmth, gregariousness, and positive emotions. Whereas men obtained higher measurements in two dimensions : assertiveness and excitement seeking. The smallest difference ($p < 0.05$) indicated women’s advantage in activity.

Within the scope of openness women had a higher intensity ($p < 0.001$) in two dimensions : openness to feelings and openness to aesthetics. Men were characterized by higher results in the dimension of openness to ideas, but the difference was smaller ($p < 0.05$). No gender differences were observed in the dimension of fantasy and values.

In the analysis of the trait of agreeableness women obtained higher results ($p < 0.001$) in all the six analyzed dimensions , i.e., straightforwardness, sensitivity to others (tender-mindedness), trust, altruism, modesty, and compliance.

The fewest differences were observed within the scope of the trait of conscientiousness and they were the least intensive. Women obtained higher results ($p < 0.01$) in only two dimensions, i.e., order and dutifulness ($p < 0.05$). No significant

¹ Here I give the results for adults from cultures other than the USA with Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae’s meta-analyses (2001) (inclusively). I refer readers interested in the topic to the article by the researchers who, in their comprehensive review, illustrate in detail gender differences also in the context of data for adults from the USA and students from other cultures. The results for particular groups are similar.

differences were found in the remaining four dimensions, i.e., competence, self-discipline, striving for achievement, and a tendency to deliberation.

At the same time, the authors observe that the correlations between the data for the younger and older groups and for the groups of the Americans and those from other cultures are high and they run from 0.81 to 0.91, which indicates a transcultural similarity of the obtained image of differences. On the other hand, it appears that the value of the gender differences measured with the use of questionnaires is greater in countries of an individualist orientation (eg. the USA and the majority of the European countries) than in the collectivist countries of Africa and Asia (eg. Zimbabwe).

In the interpretation of the data, the researchers show that the differences may be due to the adopted method of self-description and culturally different ways of self-definition. Since in individualist cultures, in self-cognition social comparison with others or also with the opposite sex is generally more frequent. Whereas in collectivist cultures an individual perceives their own similarity to others and to a group more readily, therefore they may perceive mental differences between women and men to a lesser degree. At the same time, it is worth reminding that Williams and Best's research (1990) described more diversified gender stereotypes in the individualist cultures of the West (Costa, Terracciano, McCrae, 2001).

Generally, meta-analyses show a certain coherent image of slight gender differences in personality traits. They concern women's greater sensitivity to others and men's assertiveness. More in-depth characteristics are complementary for them and constitute their "development" as in women they include, among others, warmth, openness to emotions, positive emotions, and agreeableness and in men they concern excitement seeking and openness to ideas.

In the interpretation of the obtained image of gender differences within the scope of personality traits it can be observed that they are concentrated around the main core of gender stereotypes, which are women's expressive orientation and instrumental orientation. The result is compatible with other meta-analyses, especially those concerning empathy. They indicate women's considerable advantage in empathy in self-description measurements ($d = -0.91$) and that trait is connected with sensitivity to others (Eisenberg, Lennon, 1983). However, limitations are worth realizing connected with the fact that research and meta-analysis results are created mainly basing on data from questionnaires and self-descriptions and the obtained image of personality differences could change if the traits were measured using behavioural indicators in natural conditions.

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