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Do Men Have Their Own Glass Ceiling?

Abstract: This article tries to find out whether “the glass ceiling” concept, coined and used to describe the woman’s status, is also applicable to men. Gender theory and empirical research based on this theory will help us to realize this objective. Analysis of empirical data covering a brief period (1998–2002) within the transformation process allowed us to formulate an intriguing yet optimistic conclusion as far as men are concerned. If the hypothetical identification of the male “glass ceiling” with an unfortunate pattern of sex-typing is confirmed, we will be able to say that the men’s situation is paradoxically rather good. The presented results show that the changes in gender self-definition which men have undergone in so short a time and which have led to a shift from the former dominant poor gender definition to cultural masculinity, and the simultaneous enrichment of this self-definition with traits conducive to relation building (“caring,” “emotional,” “affectionate”), place men in the position of individuals who are more social adapted than before. Our sociological diagnosis suggests that the proportion of culturally androgynous men may increase in Poland.

Keywords: androgyny; gender; glass ceiling; sex-typing.

Introduction

Three premises inspired me to ask this question: (1) the large number of feature articles on Polish men’s confusion in post-1989 reality; (2) the paucity of research reports on gender in the research literature on men and their psychosocial characteristics; and (3) most importantly, the lack of clarity as to whether it is legitimate to restrict the “glass ceiling” concept in gender studies to women only.

Male dominance in areas of authority and top management has been observed worldwide, on every continent (Wirth 2001). Quite recently, this situation has acquired a unique and original terminology in the literature. Factors conducive to male dominance at the highest career levels of widely understood power and management have been termed the “glass ceiling.” This “glass ceiling” is an invisible barrier which apparently separates women from the highest career levels, preventing them from advancing to the very top. In other words, this concept symbolizes the visibility of promotion and its simultaneous inaccessibility (Szkłany sufit 2003; see also Brannon 1999; Strykowska 1995).

Following a travesty of the original, classical definition of the glass ceiling, let us assume that as far as men are concerned gender, that is the intensity with which their self-concept is determined by cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity, may function as a glass ceiling. In other words, the glass ceiling in men is a self-descriptive, individual characteristic although of course, like all such constructs, it is the effect of socio-cultural macro-factors.

In this approach to the metaphorical “glass ceiling” concept we would say that the glass ceiling with which many men are struggling is inability to achieve the cultural masculine script, still widely accepted despite the systemic transformation, and the resulting flight into cultural self-identification ambiguity. Now let us see whether the empirical findings support this hypothesis.¹

Gender Functioning as a Correlate of Identity Problems in Contemporary Polish Men

The “gender” concept’s theoretical-methodological status is more complicated than the status of the “glass ceiling” concept. It includes all those female and male attributes which vary and differ depending on social context and hence encompass everything that is mutable and socially determined. Gender is a historical, cultural and social construct (Lorber 1994; Titkow 2007) and so, if gender is a human construct and a product of man-made social structures and relations, its *status quo* can change.

We must therefore identify the “content” and dynamics of gender when, like the present writer, we are interested in the degree to which women’s and men’s self-concepts remain under the influence of “accepted” cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity. Paradoxically, rather than this cognitive incentive with which I feel affinity, it was the need to see whether a specific combination of cultural femininity and masculinity (androgyny) is most conducive to complete individual development and self-realization which led to the explosion of empirical research on gender.

A review of the psychological literature for 1974–1986 reveals that Sandra Lipsitz Bem was the most frequently quoted theoretician and researcher in the field of feminine psychology. She set out to demonstrate that masculinity and femininity in the traditional sense organize people’s behaviour but also restrict it in many ways, and that psychological androgyny widens the range of possible individual behaviour (Bem 1987, 1988). Sandra L. Bem constructed a measure of androgyny, the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), and demonstrated that androgyny is related to mental health and effective social functioning.

As we know, Bem’s inventory has been used in hundreds of research studies and has stimulated heated controversy in academic circles. One particularly important debate took place between Bem (1981, a,b) and Spence and Helmreich (1981). Also worth

¹ The results presented in this article come from two studies using Alicja Kuczyńska’s IPP (Gender Assessment Inventory). The studies (sociological surveys) were conducted in 1998 and 2002. The 1998 survey was part of a research project funded by the Committee for Scientific Research (now: Council of Science) and managed by me: project 1 H01F 067 10 “Women’s Social and Cultural Identity.” Danuta Duch-Krzysztozek and Aleksandra Dukaczewska-Nałęcz were the principal project executrices. The 1998 survey was conducted on 1002 adult Poles aged 18–65. The sample was randomly selected by LU Tay H.C. on the basis of the Government Information Centre PESEL operator. The 2002 survey was part of another research project funded by the Committee for Scientific Research and managed by me: “Women’s Unpaid Work and its Socio-Cultural Context.” Danuta Duch-Krzysztofek and Bogusława Budrowska were the principal project executrices. The survey was conducted on 1038 adult Poles aged 18–65, selected using the Government Informational Centre PESEL operator. I am also referring to analyses presented in my book “The Identity of Polish Women. Continuity, Change, Context,” 2007.

mentioning is the work of Downing (1979), Clayton Foushee (1979), Hoffman and Fidel (1979), Marsch and Myers (1986), Safir (1982), and Sturm White (1979). Bem's inventory inspired the writing of several textbooks (Piel & Cook, 1985). Researchers wanted to know, for example, whether femininity and masculinity were independent variables (Spence & Helmreich 1978) or whether androgyny was a good predictor of well-being (Hoffman & Fidel 1979; Sturm & White 1979).

From our contemporary perspective and in the context of the large body of literature on gender which has now been published, these early discussions now seem rather obsolete because in contemporary, postmodern reality androgyny is largely a hypothesis concerning male-female relations; a hypothesis concerning relations between masculinity-femininity and other categories such as self-concept, broadly understood competence, or self-efficacy.

In the research reviewed here, "gender" was operationalized using Alicja Kuczyńska's Gender Assessment Inventory (IPP). This questionnaire is based on Sandra L. Bem's (1974) theoretical rationale but was constructed in Poland and then published in the test manual (Kuczyńska 1992).

I have substituted Alicja Kuczyńska's term "psychological gender" (*pleć psychologiczna*) with the term "gender" (*pleć kulturowa*).

The IPP has 35 items, 15 items reflecting the female cultural stereotype and 15 items reflecting the male cultural stereotype. The former constitute the Femininity Scale and the latter constitute the Masculinity Scale. The five remaining items are buffers. These are neutral and can just as well be attributed to men and women.² Each scale is scored separately by adding up points for each scale item. Score values are then compared with the IPP values (see the table in Footnote 3) to determine the respondent's cultural gender.³

According to the principles laid down by Sandra L. Bem (1974), the author of the original inventory, four cultural gender categories can be distinguished: sex-

² Alicja Kuczyńska, 1992. Attributes included in the Gender Assessment Inventory:
Femininity scale:

Sensitive, caring, involved in other people's problems, gentle, coquettish, taking care of one's looks, thrifty, aesthetic sense, grouchy, affectionate, emotional, sensitive to other people's needs, able to make sacrifices, delicate, naïve.

Masculinity scale:

Dominant, independent, competitive, success-oriented, forceful, makes decisions easily, arrogant, physically fit, has a sense of humour, convincing, self-confident, self-sufficient, open to worldly events, sexually experimental, smart.

Neutral:

Responsible, friendly, reliable, tolerant, sympathetic.

³ Gender type criteria

Score		Femininity scale	
		0-51	52-75
Masculinity scale	0-48	1. Undifferentiated persons	2. Feminine women/ feminine men
	49-75	3. Masculine men/ masculine women	4. Androgynous persons

typed—feminine women and masculine men, i.e. respondents with high scores on their biological sex-concordant scale and low scores on their biological sex-nonconcordant scale; androgynous—women and men with high scores on both the Femininity Scale and the Masculinity Scale; undifferentiated—women and men with low scores on both scales; and cross-sex-typed—feminine men and masculine women, i.e. respondents with high scores on their biological sex-nonconcordant scale and low scores on their sex-concordant scale.

The Femininity Scale and Masculinity Scale scores underlying the foregoing categories are not measures of the level of femininity or masculinity per se. They are measures of readiness to apply the cultural gender dimension when describing oneself.

If we look at the prevalence of Polish men and women's readiness to apply the culture gender dimension in their self-descriptions we will find some startling differences. Men are much less likely than women to give self-descriptions conforming with the social definition of their gender. In our respondent sample, 17.2% of men qualified as "masculine men" compared with 44.4% of "feminine women."

Two contradictory interpretations of this finding come to mind. First, men may have a stronger tendency than women to discard culturally determined ways of perceiving and describing themselves. A larger proportion of men (65.5%) than women (50.8%) qualify as undifferentiated or androgynous (in the men's group, 36.9% were undifferentiated and 28.6% were androgynous; in the women's group 27.8% were undifferentiated and 23% were androgynous).

On the other hand, the larger representation of "undifferentiated" respondents among men than women suggests that perhaps the reported results empirically support researchers' hypotheses (Titkow 1995) and popular opinion that in post-1945 reality, due to a specific configuration of political, economic and cultural factors, the social identity of Polish men but not Polish women became less culturally salient. If this were indeed so, this would have a number of consequences because, according to the findings of research on cultural gender and androgyny, undifferentiated individuals, i.e. individuals with low scores on both Masculinity and Femininity, compared with androgynous individuals, have lower self-esteem, are less open-minded, less sensitive to the helpless and less caring (Bem 1987).

Is undifferentiated gender at the individual level a sign of positive cultural change as far as social development is concerned or is it a sign of cultural vacuum? Perhaps presentation of further empirical findings will help us to resolve this dilemma.

What are the classical socio-demographic correlates of the different gender categories? How is gender related to place of residence, marital status, age, own and parental education, occupational activity and profession?

A specific pattern of cultural-territorial egalitarianism attracts our attention. This observation is justified by the enormous similarity in proportions of respondents' different self-reports among village residents and residents of large cities with over 500 thousand inhabitants, two very different localities in Poland (e.g. 23.1% of village residents and 21.5% of respondents living in large cities are androgynous).

Because "gender" is very closely related to "social role," another category used to organize and describe social life (Burke 1981), marital status may be viewed as a sign

of involvement of sex-typing in “the private sphere of life.” It is interesting to find the above-average representation of androgynous men and women among divorced people, people living in informal relations and singles. We may say that non-married status is closely related to these people’s frequent low age, a factor “conducive” to androgyny. As far as the remaining two types of male and female relationships, not very popular in our society, are concerned, we find that participants score high on both masculinity and femininity scales. This confirms the claims of the approach to sex-typing which pays attention to the psychological advantages of androgyny. These advantages mentioned earlier are: higher self-esteem, independent judgment and openness (Bem 1987, 1993). It seems that these dispositions are essential when making such vital decisions as whether or not to divorce or live in informal relationships. They are also essential for further functioning in these specific situations, especially if one lives in Poland.

The nature of the connections between women and men’s age on the one hand and self-description which includes the masculinity-femininity dimension on the other hand suggests that both these dimensions may be quite strongly involved in the context of other individual features. One connection which I find interesting is the statistically significant connection between gender and age. This significant connection is still found when we control for the effect of biological sex. It is differently expressed in men and women, however. Androgynous men and androgynous women are most frequently found in the youngest age range, 18–20 (39.6% of the entire category in both groups). The proportion of androgynous women drops rapidly in the 31–35 age band, increases rapidly in the 36–40 age band, then falls to a much lower level than in analogous male categories. The number of androgynous men shows a rather rapid increase in the 56–60 age band, comparable to the one observed in 36–40-year-old women. Generally, only being younger than 30 is conducive to androgynous self-representation in both men and women.

We know already that men are more likely than women to perceive themselves as undifferentiated (low scores on both femininity and masculinity scales). This trend remains stable in all age groups and peaks in 51–55-year-olds to 48.6% (5.7% of “masculine men” and 28.6% of “feminine men,” that is men scoring high on femininity and low on masculinity). It is worth noting, however, that “undifferentiated” and “feminine” individuals, that is individuals scoring high on femininity and low on masculinity, predominate among both men aged 51–65 and women aged 51–65.

As I said before, the androgynous self-representation prevails for a longer time in young women than in young men. One possible reason is that men aged 26–30 (compared with younger and older male groups) show a sudden increase in number of individuals scoring high on culturally defined masculinity. A different pattern is found in women who do not show a more pronounced increase in number of high femininity scores until they are 36–40. In 50–65-year-old women this trend leads to clear predominance of women with intensively feminine gender definitions.

The first interpretation of this tendency which comes to mind is the life-cycle hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, sex-role norms, rules and stereotypes “deprive” individuals of the possibility of, or predisposition to, androgyny and encourage them

to choose a self-definition which reflects social expectations, is rewarded and convenient in everyday life. In my opinion, the hypothetical effect of the last two decades of transformation on the present generation of thirty-year-olds does not compete with my own hypothesis. In spite of appearances, media messages and models do not promote androgynous culture.

Our society is the product of patriarchal culture based on “a male over female power-dominance system” (Humm 1993: 158; Bourdieu 2001). One would think that such an important attribute as male self-perception via cultural characteristics would be very popular. Meanwhile, the findings presented above suggest that masculinity is “dominated” by femininity and men’s escape into “undifferentiated” gender with little readiness to use the male gender dimension in self-description.

Analysis of the relations between cultural sex-typing and level of education complements this picture in an important way (Tab. 1). The findings suggest that, in men, education is the factor which facilitates cultural crystallization of their understanding of masculinity and their willingness to use this tool in self-description. Note that increment in respondents’ education was accompanied by a systematic increment in proportion of masculine men. What is more, increments in level of education increase the likelihood of occurrence of androgynous men in the male group and hence reduction of the proportion of undifferentiated men. These two tendencies are discontinued in the group of men with higher education, however. Here, compared with the previous categories, we find a significantly higher proportion of undifferentiated men and a reduced proportion of androgynous individuals. This is surprising but the fact is that the smallest proportion of androgynous men was found among men with higher education. This fact is difficult to interpret because, as many foreign researchers have demonstrated, we may legitimately assume that higher education usually helps people to shake off traditional masculine and feminine stereotypes and develop an androgynous gender (Doyle & Paludi 1991). Meanwhile, in our sample (a representative sample of Polish men and women aged 18–65), we found a significant departure from this pattern. Perhaps the relationship between higher education and undifferentiated gender, i.e. low scores on both femininity and masculinity, is a sign of cultural transition, emergence of a stage preceding liberation from the male and female stereotypes traditionally ascribed to biological sex.

When we look at these findings from the perspective of the functioning of male and female stereotypes (whose intensity and mutual relations are taken care of by my gender typology), we can see a basic difference between men and women. As opposed to men in whom increased level of education helps to crystallize the stereotypical male identity, increased level of education in women definitely facilitates liberation from the feminine stereotype. Although the nature of the connection between women’s education and gender type is statistically insignificant, it still merits our attention.

Discussions of androgyny and its benefits for contemporary men and women often point out that androgynous individuals are more socially adjusted because the

Table 1
Gender, education and biological sex (% , 1998)

Education	Men				Total (%)	Women				Total (%)
	Undifferentiated men	Feminine men	Masculine men	Androgynous men		Undifferentiated women	Feminine women	Masculine women	Androgynous women	
Primary	43.4	20.5	10.8	25.3	15.7	50.0	2.9	20.2	19.2	
Basic vocational	40.5	18.0	14.0	27.5	42.1	47.2	1.6	20.8	23.0	
Secondary general	44.6	7.1	19.6	28.6	10.6	42.2	6.7	25.6	16.6	
Secondary vocational	25.3	22.2	21.2	31.3	18.8	43.0	5.3	25.4	21.0	
Post-secondary, incomplete higher	24.1	3.4	27.6	44.8	5.5	46.6	9.3	25.9	9.9	
Higher	31.6	18.4	28.9	21.1	7.2	35.7	7.1	21.4	10.3	
Total	N 195	91	91	150	527	241	26	125	543	
	% 37.0	17.3	17.3	28.5	100.0	44.4	4.8	23.0	100.0	

$\chi^2 = 29.73$

Cramer's V = .13

χ^2 —nonsignificant

presence of both masculine and feminine traits (e.g. dominance and caring) improves their functionality. Therefore, the 1998 finding that unemployed people and people who identify themselves as “homemakers” belong to categories where it is most likely to find androgynous individuals (we have left “students” out because, as we said before, androgynous people are most often found in the youngest age groups) is intriguing. The more frequent androgyny in the “homemaker” (or simply housewife) category than in other categories is not very surprising if we accept that conditions of life after 1945 led to the development of a special form of patriarchy which was typical in communist and post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and hence the development of a model of woman as indispensable manager of family life. Both attributes typically identified as feminine and attributes which are cultural synonyms of masculinity are very helpful in the exercising of this function (Titkow 1995). Less obvious is the finding that androgyny—the synonym of good social adaptation—is so frequent among the unemployed, often viewed as a socially maladjusted category. Perhaps this is related to the specific nature of social transformation, in the process of which not only the criteria of social adaptation change but also the structure of demand on the labour market changes rapidly.

The role of gender in systemic transformation is ramified, however. “Undifferentiated” individuals dominate in the “director” group (54.5%) whereas the category most highly represented in the group of private entrepreneurs is the androgynous category (35.9%). The former category (directors) may fit the “mediocre but loyal” (relatively indistinct) stereotype typical of the previous socio-economic system whereas the latter category (entrepreneurs) symbolizes the dynamic changes of 1989–1998 and the career pattern which was promoted at the time (sometimes too aggressively). To put it more forcibly, we could say that both a large number of feminine traits and a large number of masculine traits can be useful in the new role of private entrepreneur, the target role for a considerable number of occupationally active individuals (comp. Durest-Lahti & Kelly 1995).

Our search for androgynous individuals in the various socio-occupational categories is most successful among pupils and students (40.0%), private entrepreneurs (35.9%), housewives (33.3%), unemployed people (32.3%), technicians (29.9%), and the technical intelligentsia (28.0%). Combined with some of the results presented earlier, it seems legitimate to hypothesize that the “androgyny” construct functions in a peculiarly egalitarian way in Polish society. If we agree that being an androgynous individual, i.e. one remaining under the equally powerful influence of the cultural definition of femininity and masculinity, is good for our functioning and social adaptation, then our finding suggests that Polish society has considerable psychological resources—resources which are very useful or even indispensable when participating in the process of more or less accepted social transformation.

Compared with the importance of level of education for intimate partner choice, as indicated by the considerable convergence between the education of respondents and their partners, the role of gender seems to be much weaker but interesting

nevertheless. My attention was caught by the tendency of “undifferentiated” men and women to form intimate relations with similar partners. I also found a similar pattern for men and women who saw themselves as androgynous. Feminine women are usually partners of “feminine” men, i.e. men who have higher scores on femininity than masculinity, and androgynous men. “Feminine women” and “masculine men” are by no means the most frequent type of couple. In other words, it is not true that “real femininity” attracted “real masculinity” in Poland in the late nineteen-nineties. And *vice versa*.

Equally noteworthy is the higher proportion of androgynous individuals among men than women. Androgynous individuals predominate among “private entrepreneurs” whereas “undifferentiated” individuals (low on both “masculinity” and “femininity”) dominate among “directors.” But particularly intriguing (mainly because of the signifying role it plays in determining the chances of changing the rules which define relations between men and women) is the finding that, in Polish men, increase in level of education increases the tendency to remain under the influence of existing cultural definitions of masculinity. This can be interpreted either by suggesting that one needs to be more intellectually refined to be able to register at an individual level what cultural masculinity means and to be aware of the need to possess this attribute, or by suggesting that men who already have possess attribute have less trouble assimilating or constructing their own masculine cultural identity. Another interpretation is also possible: men’s higher level of education and the consequential more advantageous position of men in the social structure helps them to notice the increasing (despite odds) presence of women in the public sphere as a threat to their position, leading to a greater need of defence mechanisms in this group. Reference to culturally defined masculinity and its prerogatives may act as such a defence mechanism. Of course these interpretations are not mutually exclusive. We must remember to view them against the backdrop of the generally stronger tendency in men than in women to discard culturally defined, traditional ways of perceiving and describing themselves. This leads in effect to men’s loss of “distinct” social identity, a possible harbinger of significant change of this identity.

Any Chance of Change?

Stability of gender popularity. As I said before, I am going to base my presentation of gender functioning in Polish society on data gathered in 2002 when an identical instrument, i.e. Alicja Kuczyńska’s Gender Assessment Inventory (IPP; Kuczyńska 1992) was used to assess women’s socio-cultural identity.

If we look at Table 2 from the point of view of the readiness of Polish men and women to define themselves in terms of gender, we shall see that the unexpected differences discovered earlier have remained stable. Despite the passage of time, men are consistently much less likely than women to characterize themselves in terms which are consistent with the social definition of their sex. In the analyzed sample,

Table 2

Biological Sex and Gender 1998–2002 (%)

Cultural sex-typing (gender)	Biological sex					
	Women (%)		Men (%)		Women and men (%)	
	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Undifferentiated	n = 151 27.8	n = 122 22.4	n = 195 36.9	n = 158 32.8	32.3	27.3
Feminine women + feminine men	n = 241 44.4	n = 246 45.1	n = 91 17.2	n = 82 17.0	31.0	31.9
Masculine men + masculine women	n = 26 4.8	n = 18 3.3	n = 91 17.2	n = 89 18.5	10.9	10.4
Androgynous	n = 125 23.0	n = 159 29.2	n = 151 28.6	n = 153 31.7	25.8	30.4
Women and men	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

CV = .356, $p = .000$ CV = .32, $p < 0.001$

17.2% of the male respondents qualified as “masculine men” in 1998 compared with 18.5% in 2002. The proportions of “feminine women” among female respondents were 44.4% and 45.1% respectively.

Like in 1998, the proportion of “undifferentiated” respondents with respect to gender is higher among men than women. Not only do the data presented in Table 2 suggest once again, due to a specific configuration of political, economic and cultural factors, Polish men lost their distinct social identity in post-1945 Poland. They may also suggest that Polish women are coping with systemic transformation more effectively, psychologically speaking, than Polish men. They are more likely to move from a state of “cultural suspension,” symbolized by undifferentiated gender, to androgyny.

Cultural and territorial egalitarianism has remained stable. This conclusion is based, for example, on the similar proportions of respondents applying cultural self-description who live in places so different for many reasons as villages and large cities with over 500 thousand inhabitants (for example, 24.4% of the village population and 28.8% of the population of large cities are androgynous; 18.8% of men living in the village and 19.6% of men inhabiting large cities with over 500 thousand inhabitants are masculine men).

The above-average proportion of androgynous individuals (compared with the average for the entire sample) among respondents remaining in informal relations, divorced or single in 2002, like in 1998, is closely related to these people’s usually low age (a factor conducive to androgyny) but the specific nature of this “androgyny” needs to be underscored once again. The “fashion” for androgyny in the media, once moderately visible, has now passed but observations of daily life and analyses of the contents of public relations and management handbooks or TV broadcasts suggest that androgyny is increasingly present in current social life in ways which predict that it will eventually become a social script. In a world which thinks increasingly in terms of “gains” and “losses,” the significant presence, independent of biological sex, of both traits culturally defined as

feminine and culturally defined as masculine in people's self-concepts and self-representations may pay on the labour market and when "pursuing a career" (cf. Mandal 1999).

Among both women and men it is easiest to find androgynous individuals in the youngest age group. Androgyny is most widespread among 25–34-year-old men and 18–24-year-old women (this category has become extended by 4 years compared with 1998). After the age of 25 the number of androgynous women systematically drops only to increase again suddenly after 55. This dynamic is possibly linked to the "institution" and "experience" of motherhood shared by most women over 25, a factor which may be partly suppress the masculine dimension of their gender.

In men, except for the "leap" in number of androgynous individuals in the 24–34 age group (to as many as 41%), perception of oneself as androgynous remains very similar in age categories—a very different picture than in 1998.

As I said before, men are more willing than women to view themselves as undifferentiated (low scores on both femininity and masculinity). I now want to add that this tendency persists in all age groups and peaks in the 55+ group (38%) compared with 10.3% "masculine men" and 25.6% "feminine men," that is men scoring high on femininity and low on masculinity. Additionally, this tendency is accompanied by a systematic reduction in number of "masculine men" (from 25–26% among 18–34-year-olds to 10.3% in the 55+ age group). While culturally feminine and androgynous women dominate in the 55+ age group, undifferentiated men systematically predominate from age 35 on.

We are therefore equipped with arguments that can be used in the ongoing debate (not only in Poland) on contemporary men and who they are. Drawing on the data from 1998 and 2002 we may say that, according to their own self-descriptions, a large portion of men are neither particularly masculine nor particularly feminine, they are simply culturally undifferentiated. Although the number of undifferentiated men has dropped over the four years, it still stimulates our sociological imagination and provokes us to ask once again: is this a sign of transformation of social identity or is it simply a symptom of permanent withdrawal from culturally defined masculinity which perhaps no longer works in the present reality or (and this is the most probable interpretation) maybe several process are interacting and leading to the emergence of a new male model.

It is interesting to analyze the dynamic relations between gender and level of education.

Things began to change in 2002 compared with 1998. The increased level of education which these four years helped both men and women to liberate themselves from the cultural stereotypes of their own biological sex. As far as women are concerned, increased level of education began to have a more pronounced supportive effect on the disposition to self-present as androgynous and to weaken the disposition to use culturally undifferentiated attributes in self-presentation.

As far as the men who were interviewed in 2002 are concerned, we cannot draw such clear-cut conclusions concerning the role of increased level of education in the crystallization of their identity enmeshed in the cultural masculine stereotype.

What needs to be underscored is the fact that increased level of education, from secondary vocational upwards, increases the likelihood of presence of androgynous individuals in the male group and reduces the likelihood of men with undifferentiated gender. The last two trends break down in the group of men with higher education. Once again, we find a significant increase in the proportion of undifferentiated men and a parallel drop in proportion of androgynous men. This observation is hard to interpret because, as I said before, it is assumed on the basis of strong premises that higher education is the factor which helps people to free themselves from masculine and feminine stereotypes and become more androgynous (Doyle & Paludi 1991). Meanwhile, the present sample (representative for the Polish population aged 18–65) departed dramatically from this pattern. This general observation is supported by the data for women. Like in the male group, in the group of women with higher education we see a relatively large proportion of undifferentiated individuals and a reduction in proportion of androgynous individuals compared with respondents with incomplete higher education.

The most plausible interpretation of this last observation is the role of age: the exceptional proliferation of androgynous self-representations in the group of young respondents, i.e. many of whom have incomplete higher education (37.4% of women and 40.0% of men aged 18–24).

Indicators of masculinity and femininity. Changing structure. The choice of assessment instrument to measure and categorize gender provides additional opportunities for gender presentation. The femininity and masculinity subscales can assume a different form if we exclude neutral gender attributes and view these scales as material which allows us to calculate average scores or raw material for factor analysis. Were we to apply these procedures, we could express gender with the help of a variety of indicators of masculinity and femininity. This is an interesting proposal because it is less dependent on respondent classification principles adopted by the researcher. We could also say that it is an attempt to analyze gender “quantitatively.” Comparison of the 1998 and 2002 data will be one element of this quantitative analysis.

Let us now to find out how pronounced cultural femininity and cultural masculinity were in 2002 in the gender categories identified earlier.

Compared with women, men seem to be more harmonious—they display more similarity between the levels of femininity and masculinity previously defined as androgynous (see Table 3) whereas the contribution of factorial masculinity among androgynous women is high enough to merit particular attention. With respect to this harmony, only feminine women and masculine men resemble the androgynous men. These feminine women and masculine men are equally intensively positively and negatively endowed with femininity and masculinity.

Irrespective of these observations, the 2002 data allow us to conclude that contemporary women and men were extraordinarily similar culturally when constructing their gender during the interview when each respondent, both male and female, referred to the same elements whose concordance with their own self-perceptions they were to rate on the same scale.

Table 3

Gender and factorial indicators of femininity and masculinity (2002)

Factorial indicators of femininity and masculinity	GENDER				Correlation (eta)
	Undifferentiated	Feminine women + feminine men	Masculine men + masculine women	Androgynous (ne)	
	Index value (means)				
WOMEN					
Women—femininity	-1.035	0.417	-1.176	0.298	0.640 p = .000
Women—masculinity	-0.373	-0.411	0.870	0.851	0.603 p = .000
MEN					
Men—masculinity	-0.448	-0.507	0.508	0.503	0.499 p = .000
Men—femininity	-0.461	0.776	-0.588	0.434	0.545 p = .000

The collection of attributes which obtained the highest average rating, selected by both men and women and co-constructing gender and its feminine dimension, is quite intriguing. In case of both men and women, the first three places, in the same order, are occupied by the following traits: caring, emotional and affectionate. The six additional traits comprising the feminine gender dimension with which the male and female respondents identified most strongly were: sensitivity to others' needs, sensitivity and thrift (women) and thrift, sensitivity to others' needs and ability to make sacrifices (men).

This structure of the femininity dimension can be found in both men's and women's self-presentations and is quite sensational considering the presence and high rank of such traits as caring, emotionality and affection. It suggests that men are acquiring soft traits, traits associated with relations—not previously a basic men's domain, as we know.

But is the conviction that one has a particular trait a forecast of internalization of, for example, a whole cultural construct associated with the ethic of care? Does this conviction find its expression in behaviour in the private sphere? We know that it does not (Titkow et al. 2004).

I wish to draw attention to the fact that men living in cities with 100–500 thousand inhabitants, 55 years old and older, with primary education and working as foremen or blue-collar workers in the service sector have relatively high femininity scores. This observation may be interpreted as a consequence of post-1945 social mobility in Poland, the specific socialization of children in the 1950s and the high respect for family values among workers.

As with the intensity of culturally defined femininity, where we find a certain structural similarity between female and male respondents, we also find certain similarities as far as the significant presence of culturally defined masculinity is concerned. The most "masculine women" are women living in cities with 100–500 thousand inhabitants, aged 18–24, with incomplete higher education and working as private en-

trepreneurs. The most “masculine men” are men living in cities with over 500 thousand inhabitants, aged 18–24, with incomplete higher education, and working as private entrepreneurs, manual workers in the services or directors.

These findings clearly indicate a large concentration of men and women more likely to use attributes culturally defined as feminine in their self-descriptions among respondents over 55 years of age, that is, respondents who have reached the stage of life when problems of life choices, family responsibilities, occupational and domestic burdens no longer evoke such intensive emotions and debates at either the individual or the group level.

When we compare the data for 1998 and 2002 we find that two different, seemingly contradictory processes may take place simultaneously in the area of gender. On the one hand, we see the basic stability in proportion of the different forms of sex-typing (undifferentiated, sex-typed, androgynous, and cross-sex-typed men and women; see the previous paragraph). On the other hand, we see changes in the masculine/feminine factors of gender structure.

Factor analysis of the 1998 and 2002 IPP self-characteristics yielded rather surprising findings. A lot of things are changing in both women and men but the patterns of these changes are rather different.

In the male group, our attention is attracted in particular to the change (compared with 1998) in the rank order of “cultural femininity” and “cultural masculinity” factors. In 1998, “cultural femininity” emerged as Factor I in both male and female respondent groups. In 2002, “cultural masculinity” emerged as Factor I in the group of male respondents. Is this a strong sign of pending crystallization of cultural masculinity in spite of the findings discussed earlier?

The content of the “cultural masculinity” factor and changes in this content since 1998 suggest that we can definitely say that this factor is becoming stronger and that this strengthening is specific in that it is taking place thanks to attributes which were not traditionally perceived as masculine (e.g. “convincing”). On the other hand, these changes are taking place at a price: the significant weakening of the role of such decidedly masculine attributes as “dominant” and the less pronounced weakening of the role of such attributes as “competitive” and “forceful.”

The changes observed in the masculine gender structure are accompanied by corresponding changes in the cultural femininity dimension in men. Feminine gender no longer includes such elements as “gentle” and “taking care of one’s looks” but now features a new, previously absent, element—“sensitivity.” The importance of “caring” has now increased whereas such attributes as “affectionate,” “emotional” and “delicate” are now less important.

These changes suggest that we are witnessing a process leading to the interesting situation where men’s cultural masculinity and cultural femininity present themselves as capital, facilitating the development of relationships, an area of social life not traditionally associated with men.

And what about women’s gender? When we compare the data for 1998 and 2002 we see that the configuration of attributes specific for the *ethic of care* traditionally ascribed to women (Gilligan 1982) is now transforming into a configuration of attributes

Table 4

Men. Gender factor structure 1998–2002**Factor 1 (Factor 2 in 1998)—Cultural masculinity**

Cultural masculinity attributes:	1998	2002
Success-oriented	0.718	0.722
Competitive	0.791	0.672
Forceful	0.676	0.639
Coquettish	0.488	0.536
Convincing	0.154	0.512
Dominant	0.520	0.444
Self-confident	0.404	0.458
Makes decisions easily	0.197	0.401

Factor 2 (Factor 1 in 1998)—Cultural femininity

Cultural femininity attributes:	1998	2002
Affectionate	0.808	0.732
Caring	0.597	0.691
Emotional	0.811	0.626
Sensitive	0.478	0.581
Delicate	0.557	0.534
Gentle	0.621	0.437
Takes care of looks	0.500	0.341
Thrifty	0.484	0.492
Sensitive to others' needs	0.474	0.373
Aesthetic sense	0.497	0.342

Factor 3

	1998 Modern man/woman	2002 Pro-social person
Involved with other people's problems	-0.065	0.520
Sensitive to others' needs	0.196	0.684
Able to make sacrifices	0.101	0.637
Open to worldly events	0.373	0.518
Convincing	0.644	0.456
Has a sense of humour	0.618	0.271
Physically fit	0.609	0.185
Smart	0.527	0.083

conductive to, for example, *crashing the glass ceiling* (Glass Ceiling 2003). Comparison of the 1998 and 2002 data suggests that such attributes as “taking care of one’s looks” and “having an aesthetic sense” are no longer important building blocks of women’s feminine gender and the importance of such attributes as “affectionate,” “caring,” “emotional,” “thrifty,” “sensitive,” “sensitive to others’ needs” is greatly reduced. This reduction is not accompanied by any increase in importance of other attributes (except “gentleness”) of this dimension in the female group.

Interestingly, in women in 2002 the masculine gender structure no longer includes such previously present elements as “self-sufficient,” “dominant” and “independent” but includes such new elements as “smart” and “convincing.” The im-

Table 5

Women. Gender factor structure 1998–2002**Factor 1—Cultural femininity**

Cultural femininity attributes:	1998	2002
Affectionate	0.831	0.808
Gentle	0.627	0.703
Caring	0.716	0.702
Emotional	0.809	0.700
Delicate	0.551	0.590
Thrifty	0.658	0.579
Sensitive	0.660	0.566
Sensitive to others' needs	0.614	0.562
Aesthetic sense	0.579	0.416
Takes care of looks	0.520	0.468

Factor 2—Cultural masculinity

Cultural masculinity attributes:	1998	2002
Smart	0.172	0.703
Convincing	0.389	0.645
Self-confident	0.507	0.627
Forceful	0.542	0.610
Makes decisions easily	0.532	0.532
Competitive	0.537	0.508
Self-sufficient	0.639	0.288
Dominant	0.639	0.219
Independent	0.670	0.050
Success-oriented	0.357	0.430

Factor 3

	1998 Modern man/woman	2002 Pro-social person
Sensitive to others' needs	0.254	0.549
Able to make sacrifices	0.306	0.640
Open to worldly events	0.523	0.576
Convincing	0.657	0.262
Has a sense of humour	0.580	0.227
Physically fit	0.562	0.138

portance of “self-confidence” and “forceful” in women’s self-perceptions has also increased.

Significant and specific changes have taken place in both men and women’s gender descriptions in so short a time. These changes suggest that systemic change has perhaps forced Polish men and women to androgynize their self-descriptive gender structures. The hypothesis that men are withdrawing into undifferentiated cultural self-identification has not gained sound support.

Changes in factor III and this factor’s structure also suggest a certain communality of men and women. In 1998 both women and men had a factor we may call “attributes of modern man and woman.” In both sexes, this factor included such attributes as

“convincing,” “sense of humour” and “physical fitness.” Two additional attributes were also identified—“openness to worldly events” in women and “smartness” in men.

In 2002 a new quality which we may call “pro-social attitude” emerged in both women and men. From one point of view this is simply a partial operationalization of the ethic of care (Gilligan 1982) and it comprises such traits as “involvement in other people’s problems,” “sensitivity to other people’s needs,” “capable of sacrifice” and “open to worldly events.” Women are more involved in other people’s problems whereas men are more sensitive to other people’s needs. Both sexes are equally capable of making sacrifices.

In other words, current gender characteristics should pay attention to androgynization processes and to such specific elements of these processes as the emergence in women of attributes which facilitate public career making, the emergence in men of attributes which greatly help to develop relationships, and the emergence in both women and men of attributes closely linked to realization of the ethic of caring.

It is also possible to view the processes outlined above as inchoate balancing of the deficit of the capital of traits which women and men feel to be prerequisites of effective social functioning in both the private and public spheres.

This suggestion concerning the processes taking place in Polish society in the sphere of cultural-moral transformation fits well into the wider, cultural-territorial process sometimes called the emergence of an “androgynous generation” (Wilkinson 1997). This emergence is allegedly being spurred by men and women born after 1960 who share many common values: they are less bound to tradition and to the traditional contract between the sexes. The men and women must, however, cope with the challenge of multi-dimensional identity and a society where everything is “fluid,” there is room for a new ethic of care, and men and women are expected to share responsibility for weaker “others.” Even if, not only in Poland, the “masculinisation” of women is progressing more swiftly than the “feminization” of men, we may conclude, with or without a certain level of satisfaction, that presence of signs of this tendency is approximating us to trends which define the functioning of other European societies.

Concluding remarks

Having analyzed our empirical material, spanning a brief time interval as far as transformational processes are concerned, we can now formulate a conclusion which is both intriguing and optimistic for men. If we are right in identifying men’s “glass ceiling” with their gender, then we may say that, despite this identification, their situation is still rather good. Our results show that changes in their self-description which have taken place in so short a time—changes leading to weakening of the culturally dominant undifferentiated sex-typing, strengthening of the masculine factor, and simultaneous enrichment of this picture with relation-building attributes (“caring,” “emotional,” “affectionate”)—render men more adjusted than before to the transforming reality. Hopefully these changes will increase the number of culturally androgynous men.

Women's "glass ceiling," consisting of both barriers with which women in managerial positions are confronted and situations providing opportunities for promotion but simultaneously rendering such promotion unattainable, is much more difficult to overcome than men's individual adaptive mechanisms. These mechanisms are much more flexible than the centuries-long sanctioned different status of men and women. This is why I think that men in Poland have a better chance of "crashing" their glass ceiling (one of many, perhaps), provided one condition is fulfilled: that women give men access to activities in the private sphere which were previously their domain; that women modify their conviction, endorsed (and implemented) by 87% of married women in Poland, that they would rather do something themselves than ask someone (their husband) for help (Titkow et al. 2004).

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