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In Search of Women's Identity

Abstract: The aim of this article is an attempt women's identity. uthors search for answers for this question in history, gender stereotypes and feminism. It should be remembered that the process of socialization plays a significant role in the process of identity construction. It is associated with the specific social environments in which human socialization takes place. The concept of identity raises the issue of social position as well as past and present position in the social system. Both collective and individual identities are fluid, change over time and are created throughout life.

Keywords: feminism, identity, stereotypes, women

Introduction

Is there a need for a new definition of femininity? How can we detach femininity from a reduction of it to only a reflection or shadow of masculinity? Who is a woman nowadays? Another question which can be asked is, what defines modern femininity to a great extent? The possibility of self-realization? Maybe the necessity of meeting requirements or external pressures? And finally, what is women's identity? And also, after de Beauvoir, is it possible to change roles in such a way that women will stop accepting what is imposed from the outside and start defining themselves? Identity is a concept that has received many definitions. We understand identity as changeability, flexibility and the freedom of the individual to construct themselves. Identity is in

constant change, characterized by coherence, continuity and independence from the environment.

The aim of this article is an attempt to respond to the above issues. We search for answers for this question in history, gender stereotypes and feminism. It should be remembered that the process of socialization plays a significant role in the process of identity construction. It is associated with the specific social environments in which human socialization takes place. The concept of identity raises the issue of social position as well as past and present position in the social system. Both collective and individual identities are fluid, change over time and are created throughout life (Szczygieł, 2019, pp. 65, 72). We pose questions concerning a new definition of femininity which will not only be a reflection of masculinity. Our hypothesis is that historically imposed roles, perpetuated in stereotypes, have an impact on women's identity, understood as the freedom of the individual to construct themselves. We use historical-legal and theoretical-legal methods; these were applied to analyse academic studies relating to women's identity.

1. The impact of women's social situation on their identity from a historical perspective

Women's place in society and culture is one of the issues that has been studied through scholarship which was created on the basis of the second wave of feminism (Kamprowski, 2011, p. 33). Women in Europe have been treated as subordinate to men in physical, economic and cultural ways since ancient times. Legally, women were the property of their father or husband, and the fate of unmarried women depended on the decisions of their father or brother. Ancient times, especially Greek antiquity, which are idealized nowadays, were no idyll for women. Some philosophers spoke with contempt about women; Plato claimed that women are incapable of experiencing deeper ideas. Aristotle also did not contribute to improving the situation of women, although at one stage he spoke of their equality being necessary. In practice, a Greek woman was a slave of her father and then her husband. In ancient Rome, women's influence on home life increased, although it was still her father who decided about her marriage. The Judeo-Christian tradition treated women as men's property – first fathers, then husbands, were obliged to provide for the woman. The biblical view of women influenced the later perception of them, particularly in the early Middle Ages.

The image of a woman in the early Middle Ages was a bad one, in which the negative aspects of a woman's personality, morality or nature were emphasized. Women's situation through the next few centuries was similar. Even if they were no longer formally the property of their husbands, they still had to obey them unconditionally. On the other hand, women from those times were able to use their position very ef-

fectively (Sławiński, 2023). In the Renaissance, the ideal of the educated woman was created. However, among philosophers and theologians, there was a conviction that women are weaker vessels who do not have a moral backbone as strong as men's and who are not equal to men (Bogucka, 1998, p. 116).

In the Baroque and the Enlightenment, the aristocracy valued the image of a magnificent lady, while the bourgeoisie preferred the image of a magnificent hostess. In this period, the role of education increased, thanks to which women became more independent and sometimes took up employment. Romanticism, the period of national liberation struggles, brought a new type of woman, a companion, although it did not bring many changes in terms of the perception of women and their identity. The tendency to rebel and to resist the 'natural order of things' started to become noticeable among women. The 19th century was a time filled with a wide range of new concepts; however, this kind of cultural eclecticism was not fully applied in shaping the perception of women. Both Romantics and positivists believed that femininity was associated with holiness, devoid of any signs of individualism, which was considered a negative feature and a manifestation of egoism. The axiom of the positivist era was the conviction that women's fate is marriage, motherhood, the household and a mission in a particular community (Syguła, 2009, pp. 58–73). In the 19th century, the man was the head of the house, the person managing the property, the life of subordinate family members and the household as broadly understood. Although not required by law, a convent was an alternative for a woman who did not want to marry (Wójtewicz, 2017, p. 111).

The social situation of women in 19th-century Europe was similar. Polish women were no exception. In Victorian England, despite the fundamentals of the law and social changes, women still thought of themselves as *femmes couvertes* and the completion of their husbands, staying under the influence of the idea of 'the angel in the house'. Hispanic women accepted the role of *ama de casa* (housewife). Despite the loaded language, the role and function of women stayed almost without any changes (Syguła, 2009, p. 74), no matter whether the language had a more sacred tone (England), emphasized family aspects (Spain) or, finally, drew on patriotic reasons (as in Poland). Introduced in 1804 and a model for civil codification in many European countries, the Napoleonic Code significantly limited women's rights. The document, which was perceived as a masterpiece of legislative art, stated the equality of citizens before the law, but contained numerous regulations limiting the freedom of women (Wójtewicz, 2017, p. 107).

In the 19th century we can find the beginning of the discussion about the archetype of modern women and the model of women in the future. In this period, in journalism, there was a figure of the 'new woman', which contained various gender-based characteristics. It held together the visions and imaginations of the participants in processes of the creative shaping of social reality. They were the reflection of the effects of progress in emancipation and changes to family, property and electoral

law. Media images of the new woman portrayed them as practical, necessary to make them real in the everyday world. The foundation of such view was the issue of equal rights for women in all spheres of social and political life, including gaining electoral experience (Maj, 2022, p. 83). Although the differentiation of women's and men's attitudes towards work turned out to be an exceptionally permanent phenomenon, lasting at least throughout the 20th century (Aleksandrowicz, 2017), at the same time, performing professional work invariably determines different levels in the social hierarchy of prestige, depending on sex. Even in the first years of the 20th century, the independent social advancement of daughters – their social position becoming higher than that of their father – was rarely taken into account in family strategies. Even in the interwar years, in working-class families, and in fact also in most families of white-collar workers, success was seen in entering into a proper marriage. Custom prevailed over economic reasons, because women quit their jobs after marriage (Żarnowska, 2014, pp. 280–287). In the first years of the 20th century, when women increasingly began to take up positions previously reserved for men, one columnist warned young girls that by 'pushing' men out of positions, they act to their own detriment, because an unemployed man would not be a good candidate for marriage, which will result in an increase in the number of old maids (Kalinowska-Witek, 2014, p. 182).

Over time, the professional activity of women and their level of education began to increase. The number of women in high positions has subsequently grown. The phenomenon of late motherhood has been visible, as young women pursue their careers. The second half of the 1970s brought reflection on the low participation of women in public life. The new women's movement of the 1980s and 1990s analysed sex equality legislation. At the turn of the 21st century, due to European integration, globalization, social changes and emancipation movements, the need for a 'new gender contract' arose (Fuszara, 2002, p. 8).

2. Gender-based stereotypes and the problem of female identity

The word 'stereotype' derives from the Greek *stereos* (tightened, hard) and *typos* (print, pattern) (Jędrzejowska, 2021, p. 161). Stereotypes are of interest to representatives of many fields, e.g. sociology, linguistics and psychology. In social communication, stereotypes are an integral part of the natural language and code of culture. They can lead to discrimination, causing a lot of negative consequences for people who experience it, and when disseminated in society are a reflection of social norms about thinking, feeling and behaving as people deem right. On the one hand, personal beliefs in stereotypes are a manifestation of a search for social affiliation and, on the other, are the result of achieving it. Moreover, a belief in sharing a stereotype with other people can also activate or form social identity. One of the stereotypes appear-

ing in every culture is that about gender (Lewicka-Zelent et al., 2020, pp. 75–83). The term 'gender stereotype' is frequently used in literature on the subject interchangeably with or next to the following: understanding of gender, gender constancy, sense of gender identity, schema relating to gender, gender stability, the notion of gender roles, the process of gender typifying (Jędrzejowska, 2021, p. 161).

Stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are beliefs regarding the mental characteristics of men and women, and the actions and behaviours of one or the other sex. The concepts of gender roles and stereotypes are connected. When people recognize a behavioural pattern of women or men, they tend to skip particular exceptions and assume that a certain behaviour is inevitably associated with one or the other sex (Wołpiuk-Ochocińska, 2020, pp. 145–146).

Men's and women's gender identity is not only determined by biological characteristics of the sex (such as anatomy, physiological aspects, the endocrine system) but also by social and cultural formation through the patterns of behaviour imposed in a given culture, models of masculinity and femininity, social roles, social norms and expectations that function in a given culture as gender stereotypes. According to the stereotypes of gender roles, the roles of the person responsible for securing the material existence of the family are male, while the care and raising of children, as well as running the household, are roles assigned to women. The male stereotype is that the man is the head of the family, the leader, who is responsible for the financial support of the family and for repairs in the household. A woman, on the other hand, is a source of emotional support for family members and is the person managing the household, taking care of and bringing up children, and responsible for furnishing the home. There is a stereotypical belief that women work well in professions that will be an extension of their family roles, i.e. in professions related to subservience, caring, showing empathy and requiring communicativeness. It is stereotypically assumed that women are focused on others, on providing help, on care, and that they are characterized by interpersonal sensitivity, selflessness, a high level of empathy and emotions expressed through delicacy and kindness. In the stereotype of femininity, several subtypes are distinguished: the 'tomboy', wife, housewife, mother, businesswoman, feminist, lesbian, etc. (Królikowska, 2011, pp. 388–389).

Gender stereotypes perpetuate violence towards women (Helios & Jedlecka, 2016, pp. 62–101). Prejudices and practices concerning women, created through centuries, are often bound up with culture or tradition, for example female genital mutilation, forced marriage, domestic violence, dowry murders or attacks with acid. They can justify sex-based violence against women as a form of control over them. The goal of such violation of the physical and psychological integrity of women is to deprive them of equal enjoyment and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The consequences of these forms of violence help to keep women subordinate and contribute to the low participation of women in political life and their lower education, skills and opportunities in the labour market. In traditional socie-

ties, there is much greater acceptance of violence by men against women in various situations. Violence legitimizes a man's sense of power and his privileged position in the social structure (Nowakowska, 2008, pp. 150–157). Not all stereotypes result in men's violence (Kędzierska, 2009, p. 223).

In society the 'prescription of motherhood' was created, which was conditioned not only biologically but also culturally. Hence, the role of a woman is largely defined by children (Przybył, 2006, p. 284). Women across the whole world carry a greater burden for infertility. There is a long history of treating an infertile woman as inferior and morally and socially corrupt. According to this social message, it is the woman who is responsible for the lack of children and blamed for infertility. Even if there is an awareness that the cause of infertility can equally be in the man's body, there may be a story behind it of the woman's ultimate guilt. In this case we seem to come back to well-known theories which show that woman is on the side of 'nature' and that it is nature which designates her place in society. Man creates 'culture' and thanks to this does not have to worry about his biological age. The stereotype of woman-as-mother is still doing well and is at the centre of women's identity. Being a mother, now or in the future, is a strong element of the identity narrative of a large number of women in our culture. This equation becomes clearest when it cannot come true; realizing the impossibility of getting pregnant makes the maternal element of one's biography come to the fore. Motherhood becomes the centre of identity and destabilizes it. When there are so few options for women in the market of possible roles, difficulties in becoming a mother force a woman to withdraw and doubt her femininity (Radkowska-Walkowicz, 2013, pp. 76–80). The problem with specifying identity also exists in the case of a woman who is childless by choice, whose decision not to have children destabilizes her identity and role in social perception, and is also associated with a lack of social acceptance. In a large part of society, especially among those with conservative views, marriage and motherhood (Rachwał, 2019, pp. 57–67; Szczepaniec, 2013) are still treated as the greatest achievement of a woman (Wieczorkiewicz, 2023).

Stereotypes which stigmatize women, especially ones based on gender, should be treated as violence towards women. It is worth emphasizing that in Art. 4 Sec. 2 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention), a general obligation to counter all forms of discrimination against women was formulated, primarily by taking appropriate legislative action (Lewicka-Zelent et al., 2020, p. 84). In many countries, women do not yet have their fundamental rights, such as equal access to education and job opportunities, guaranteed. In wealthy countries, such as Japan, women still do four times more unpaid work, such as cleaning and childcare, than men. They are more likely to experience physical violence in all countries. The 'tragic consequence' for many is simply the awareness that the modern woman has a choice and can live as she wants (Kopińska, 2022, p. 214).

3. The influence of feminism on the evolution of women's identity

Are we currently facing a crisis of female identity (Sharma, 2022, p. 384)? And where might this crisis among contemporary women stem from? The position of women has always been related to the position of men. In France, a discussion that continues to this day addresses the issue of female identity; presently, the dominant trend in feminist thought is liberal feminism (Cabaj, 2010, p. 85; Fairfield, 2005, pp. 11–14; Michna, 2013, pp. 170–171). Its representative, philosopher Elisabeth Badinter, argues that women themselves have led to the current crisis. According to Badinter (2013), a particular focus in contemporary feminist discourse is the issue of motherhood and its influence on the identity quest of women, as discussed below.

As mentioned, in the early 20th century, women were considered beings created for life within marriage, finding joy in domestic tasks and their role as wives and mothers. The external world belonged to men. Girls were prepared for the role of a wife, to be obedient, submissive and to patiently endure the hardships of marriage. The situation of the 'old maid' worked against women, placing them in a disadvantaged position even within the family. The family model depended economically on women, and wives on their husbands, reducing them to the role of a homemaker and denying them the right to truly decide about themselves and their lives (Kwak, 2019, pp. 5–7).

Within feminist discourse, the issue of female identity has a long history. Initial philosophical reflections were linked to the critique of the worldview propagated by men in a patriarchal society. In order to dismantle the hegemony of the male perspective, feminists began with the deconstruction of entrenched dichotomous thinking within European culture. Beyond deconstruction, the discovery of and attempt to incorporate works by women into the philosophical canon, which had hitherto gone unnoticed in the public debate, was also significant. The goal of feminists, after all, was to integrate female thinking into mainstream reflection on the world and humanity. However, what feminists achieved in the second half of the 20th century was the inclusion of ethics into philosophical discourse, particularly the ethics of care, which is built around the concepts of relationality and custody, as opposed to the patriarchal ethics of justice or normativity (Michna, 2014, pp. 134–136).

Simone de Beauvoir's *The second sex*, published in 1949, analysed the essence of femininity, thus initiating a discussion of women's identity that continues to this day. De Beauvoir observed the problem faced by contemporary women, who were essentially deprived of the ability to define their own identity. According to the French philosopher, self-determination is a primary, fundamental and inherent need for every human being; it means the definition of oneself, one's own identity, and constitutes an inner necessity for every person. In de Beauvoir's opinion, no one is born a woman; rather, they become one in the process of seeking their own female identity. Therefore, the essence of being a woman, just as being a man, is the result of subjective

effort undertaken by each individual in the realm of their individual existence. Thus, a person makes themselves into what they ultimately are. Consequently, humans possess innate freedom, as derived from the doctrine of existentialism; freedom, in turn, shapes every individual as a self-realizing project. As a project, a woman seeks her identity because she has the right and obligation to do so, independent of the will of a man (Helios & Jedlecka, 2018, pp. 37–40; Michna, 2013, pp. 172–173). It is advocated that women should be viewed through the prism of their capabilities and, above all, their freedom – a fundamental aspect without which no person can truly self-realize or define themselves. Freedom is an essential reality for every human being (Ples, 2011, pp. 121–122).

Liberal feminism, where the issue of women's personal freedom is of paramount importance, plays a very significant role. It strives for the equal civil rights of women and men, equal access to education, and better healthcare, especially considering pro-choice policies. Gender roles should not negatively impact individual development and self-fulfilment. The essence of liberal feminism's concerns is often termed 'women's rights feminism', as it has undoubtedly contributed to educational and legal reforms that have improved the quality of life for women. It is worth acknowledging that achieving this kind of liberalism also involves recognizing that women's individual efforts, when coupled with the rejection of gender biases, are unfortunately not sufficient (Bratek, 2007). By allowing various forms of legitimization and the development of women's rights as citizens, political-liberal feminism promotes the countering of various forms of subjugation that women may face, depending on the context in which they operate (Lisowska, 2019, p. 133).

Seeking one's own identity is the essence of humanity. Self-realization, self-definition and self-formation are the core of humanity and, simultaneously, the greatest desire of every individual – as Ples (2011, p. 119) writes, and which is hard to argue with. Women will continue to search for their identity and opportunities for self-realization. An important role in this process will be played by debunking the myth of femininity. The myth of the ideal woman is constructed based on a set of traits, products of male consciousness, and permeates the entire culture. It can also be found in religion, tradition, art and language. Overthrowing this myth will be an additional victory for women.

The existentialist trend in feminist philosophy was strong, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. Its significance diminished somewhat with the emergence of new trends in feminist philosophy, such as the psychoanalytic and postmodernist movements. The former, drawing on Freud's methods of analysis, focused on exploring the depths of women's psyches. Postmodern feminism (also known as French or academic feminism), on the other hand, drew from the works of Lacan and Derrida. Its fundamental thesis is the belief that it is impossible to externally change the prevailing identity statuses of women and men. People are prisoners of a structure that does not allow for any changes, and this structure defines our identity as either male or female. Changes

are only possible within the structure itself but are hindered by women's traditional thinking about their own gender. Therefore, according to postmodern feminists, this structure is characterized by durability, and regardless of changes in discourse, it does not allow women to independently seek their own identity (Michna, 2014, pp. 137–139; Ples, 2011, p. 126). The postmodernist paradigm led to the questioning of the 'certainty' of feminism, referred to as women's discourse. Postmodernism and its associated intellectual movements revealed how problematic the term 'woman' is (Bratek, 2007).

It should be added that in the second half of the 20th century, a resurgence of what is known as 'reactionary naturalism' occurred, which did not remain without influence on women's exploration of identity. It encompasses three doctrines: ecology, ethology and essentialist feminism. According to this thinking, women should once again become devoted mothers and caretakers in the home. This approach is accompanied by a sense of guilt that deviating from the laws of nature can leave a mark on the psychological and physical development of the child. Regardless of one's views on reactionary naturalism, it undoubtedly has an impact on shaping female identity. The phenomenon of 'babycentrism' can be observed as a result of this naturalism. Women search for their identity, but lose it in the process of complete dedication to their child's needs. It could be said that women are returning to the quest for their own identity not through an individualistic approach but through an essentialist motherhood (Michna, 2013, pp. 173–176).

Contemporary women find themselves torn between three conflicting aspects of their identity: motherhood, being a conscious and liberated woman, and conscious childlessness. This leads to the need for a new definition of femininity. Michna argues that the identity crisis has led to profound changes in how modern women are perceived; simply resorting to outdated tools or definitions is insufficient today to determine the essence of femininity. The new definition should consider the perspectives of naturalists and maternalists but should not focus on the idea that having a child is a necessary factor for a woman to attain her identity. The 21st century has not yet provided a solution to the issue of women's identity. Women still struggle with self-definition, grappling with conflicting emotions and being torn between individualism and the ideologies presented by contemporary naturalists and maternalists. There is a call for a renewed reflection on the essence of femininity, one that allows for the resolution of the conflict between being a woman and being a mother. This definition of femininity should take into account the diversity of views on female nature and move away from defining women in relation to someone or something else – men, motherhood or the biological conditions of sex. It is certainly not an easy task, but perhaps it is inevitable that women take on this challenge with the belief that creating such a definition is possible and realistic.

Contemporary women are burdened in two ways: on the one hand, with their professional work and opportunities for self-development, and on the other, with

their work at home and the ideal of committed motherhood. This dual confinement of women's identities requires a new definition of femininity, one that is multidimensional, encompasses naturalism and avoids defining women 'in relation to'. It is essential to define the needs of each sex, which is why men are also invited to participate in the discussion about women's identity. Although, as previously mentioned, women are primarily held responsible for the ongoing identity crisis, there is still faith in the strength and determination of women to redefine their identity through dialogue, independent of external factors (Michna, 2014, pp. 146–154).

The issue of motherhood certainly stands at the centre of feminist reflection as a theory and as a social movement. Wodzick refers to feminist reflections on motherhood as the 'gradual denaturalization of the mother's role and motherhood itself'. In the first wave of feminism, motherhood was considered purely 'natural', where being a mother was seen as a complement to being a woman. However, the influence of culture and socialization on the perception of motherhood became evident. Motherhood is described by de Beauvoir as a kind of compromise between narcissism, altruism, dreams, sincerity, deceit, dedication and cynicism. According to her, there is no such thing as a maternal instinct. Badinter similarly asserts that the maternal instinct is merely a social construct, and motherhood is an ideology perpetuated in culture. She believes that the so-called maternal instinct is nothing more than a stereotype based on a woman's gender role. De Beauvoir depicts the situation of a woman tormented by biological processes, a woman who faces much more difficult conditions for creating her own identity. She also believes that biology is not a suitable criterion for determining the priority of one sex over the other in terms of the role of ensuring the continuity of the species. Thus she demonstrates that the discourse that treats motherhood as something natural has become outdated, because a woman's situation is not only about the possibility of giving birth but also about the process of girls' socialization, the presence of specific cultural stereotypes and the real choices made by women. In the first wave of feminism, it was assumed that motherhood was a constitutive condition of femininity, an essential element of being a woman. If a woman decided not to become a mother, it was believed that she was also renouncing her femininity. Challenging naturalism in the realm of motherhood allowed for the questioning of the identity of women at the beginning of the 20th century. It was not, of course, a complete rejection of motherhood, but rather an acknowledgement that the decision to become a mother should be one of many possible choices for women; it should be a conscious choice, not just conformity to widely accepted social conventions. The goal of demystifying motherhood, as undertaken by de Beauvoir, was to show that the ideal of a mother solely devoted to the family is incompatible with the requirement of women's independence, as advocated by the first wave of feminism (Wodzick, 2011, pp. 91–102).

Wodzick points out that three types of approaches to motherhood, reflecting its denaturalization process, can be identified. First, essentialism sees motherhood as

tightly linked to an unchanging and universal nature of women (Butler, 1990, pp. 14–16). Second, in the perspective of social structure, motherhood is analysed as an element of the social system. And third, social constructivism treats motherhood as a social construct upheld by members of a particular community (Wodzick, 2011, p. 103). Considering the multitude and diversity of views and theories regarding maternal instincts, it is challenging to unequivocally state whether motherhood is a woman's need or merely a response to societal pressures.

Currently, women's roles in the family have been transformed, compared to traditional roles. One could say that the dilemma of whether to work or have a family is a concern primarily for women; men, on the other hand, are not significantly affected in their professional careers by family responsibilities. Women address this issue by adopting various lifestyles in which they attempt to reconcile family duties with professional obligations. Nowadays, there is also talk of a kind of harmony between the roles of mother and woman, suggesting that these two truly complement each other. Most women do not limit the concept of femininity to motherhood and believe that one can be fully feminine without having children (Marszałek, 2008, pp. 273–275).

Regarding women's professional activity in the job market, there is still a tendency to focus on certain professions and lower levels in the professional hierarchy (i.e. a horizontal and a vertical segmentation). Most women still pursue education in fields such as the humanities, which have traditionally been feminized. This traditional sex segregation in the job market remains widespread. The majority of women work because they want to, not out of economic necessity. Work is a source of self-development, self-realization and something that boosts their self-worth and allows for personal growth (Marszałek, 2008, pp. 276–277).

Conclusions

In general, women had and still have a lower social status than men, in all spheres of life, in fact: social, cultural and economic. Existing pressures of a biological, social and cultural nature have an impact on internal splits and conflicts within the value system. Women have to create their own model of identity, which also depends, after all, on the strength of the pressure and, as a result, on which values will be at the centre of the search for identity (Marszałek, 2008, p. 277).

Women's departure from the traditional role of mother and wife leads to the construction of a new identity based on choices regarding family, private and professional life. Of course, this is not a simple and easy path; it involves experiencing many limitations and falling into various traps regarding, among other things, overlapping roles and conflicts between these roles, changing the meaning of the institution of marriage, etc. Various processes are important in this matter: the individualization of women, new family or work models, but also the preferences of women themselves in

terms of attitudes, values, interests and expectations. Women still face the dilemma of creating their own new identity; their awareness is the basis for building it. Of course, not all women strive to make changes and create a new model. Tradition does not disappear, and for some it is very important, which should be respected. The most important thing, in our opinion, is choice. A woman can build a new role, but she does not have to. Her own preferences, life situation and reflections on building her own identity are significant. It is also necessary to be aware of the differences between women and men, while recognizing them as equals. And in our opinion, it is not hormones or instincts that define a woman: what defines a woman is the way she views her body and how she defines her own relationship to the world (Ples, 2011, p. 125).

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