Shyness and Gender.
Physical, Emotional, Cognitive, Behavioural
Consequences and Strategies of Coping with Shyness by
Women and Men of Different Gender Identity

Abstract

This article presents research into shyness from the perspective of gender and
gender identity. The research comprised a group of 240 Polish women and men
(120 women and 120 men) in the period of early adulthood (20–25 years of age).
The Stanford Shyness Questionnaire (Zimbardo, 1994) and Bem Sex Role Inven-
tory (Polish version, Kuczyńska, 1992) were used. Gender differences and differ-
ences between people of different gender identity in experiencing shyness were
found, including: frequency, causes, consequences (physical, emotional, cognitive,
behavioural) and strategies of coping with shyness.

Key words: shyness, gender, gender identity, early adulthood

Introduction

Shyness is a phenomenon that has been of great interest for a long time. The
oldest documented use of the concept of shyness was noted as long ago as in the
10th century in the Anglo-Saxon language, where it meant “easy to frighten”. Shyness
is a common and acute personal problem and nearly everybody has felt shy in
a certain situation, trying to fight this unwanted emotion, usually not too effectively.
It is a characteristic that makes satisfying social contact considerably difficult.

As Philip Zimbardo (1994) claims, nowadays shyness becomes a problem that
reaches epidemic proportions and its increasing tendency in our society inclines
one to draw the conclusion that the situation will get worse in the coming years as