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## ARE THE LIPS FOR SPEAKING? *MODUS OPERANDI* OF EXCLUSION OF UNDERAGE SEX ENCOUNTERS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** The article takes up an issue that is currently part of a subject matter which is very sensitive and complicated in social terms. It is also an attempt to comprehend the bewilderment that we, not only sociologists, feel when we observe how the – familiar to us – social world is constructed with its allowed, restricted, or forbidden meanings and actions, with the necessities and sanctions, with the transgressions and anomalies. During the lifetime of the generation that the authors belong to, there has been an essential change in the attitude towards sex and sexuality. Taboos surrounding private life and sex has been debunked. The seal of silence has been opened. We have decided that “the lips are for speaking”. However, as some of the previous prohibitions have been abolished, the new ones have been created and some of the already existing have been strengthened. Among the latter, there is a children’s sexuality taboo and the prolongation of the sexual neutrality of a child even beyond the period of sexual maturation and in the situation of sexual acceleration. Sexual activity of certain age categories is a subject of specific perception and interpretation. This matrix results in an exclusion of this sphere of life. It reserves all forms of sexual activity only for those who are thought to be adults in social terms. We have made an attempt to show the assumptions which are the fundamentals of this matrix and to show some of its consequences. We are joining to the voices of those who see a threat not in the exclusion but in the uncritical use of the negative matrix of perception and interpretation of sexual activity before the age of consent and in the consequences that follow.

**Keywords:** exclusion, negative matrix of perception and interpretation, sexual neutrality of a child, taboo.

### 1. Equal sexual rights?

The generations that became adult in the second half of the 20th century have participated in the changes, which are already occurring on the substantial scale, in the relationships between men and women. These changes have involved

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a considerable number of the inhabitants of West in “everyday social experiments” (Giddens 1992: 8). They have caused a transformation of marriage, family, and sexuality. For many of us, gender relationships ceased to be something natural, and based on the conventional division of the roles. They revealed their construction and lost the stability they earlier had. Anthony Giddens claims that relationships “[are] a complex series of interactions that have to be constantly negotiated and ‘worked through’” (Giddens 1992: 8). Sex has been recognized as the subject of conversations and negotiations, and also has been connected with closeness and commitment, with intimacy understood, “as a transactional negotiation of personal ties by equals” (Giddens 1992: 3). Therefore, it has been connected with values which are of a much importance in modern world and that demand, as it is thought, emotional and social maturity. It resulted in the transformation of reality in which young people are now construing their own experiences. This article considers only one issue: the treatment of the sexuality of very young people (after the period of infancy and before reaching the maturity, especially before the age of consent) by the part of social institutions in the situation when the biological adolescence takes place much earlier than the recognized social adolescence and the perception of the boundaries of sexual experiments has changed. The ethics of a male conquest and the notion of reputation referring to the women did not disappear completely from the social landscape. However, the teenagers of both sexes believe that age is not the criteria which excludes them from the sexual activity. Therefore, it is even more interesting how some of the adults, performing the representative role in different institutions, speak about the sexual experiences of teenagers. The juxtaposition of these two diametrically opposed discourses reveals social mechanisms that are characterized by structural contradictions.

## **2. About *modus operandi* of specific exclusion**

Categories such as childhood, teenagers and youth have a relatively short history. Phillippe Aries (1995) estimates that the social construction of childhood, as it is defined and understood today, took place in the 18th century. Either way, the child has become a protected good. Even though there is much dispute concerning Aries’ findings, we agree with what follows: that with the prolonging life expectancy, the generational exchange has slowed down, and that in the complex societies, the time of preparation for the adulthood has also prolonged. The careers offered by the society are extending in time and stepping into social roles is postponed as the demographic dynamics slow down. The societies grow and become complicated, and the roles of adults (especially professional ones) become specialized and complex. Norbert Elias wrote that “for a long and still lengthening period children and young people are isolated from adult circles... Biologically

mature people remain socially immature” (Eliás 2001: 123). Therefore, they lead their own life which is socially and culturally separate, and mostly focused on the indirect preparations connected with intensive and constant development of knowledge and technology<sup>2</sup>. After early and later childhood, individuals who are not children anymore, not men and women yet, are forced to experiment with others in relationships with them or with themselves in the relationships with others. Their field of experiment does not share much in common with the life usually associated with the adulthood (Eliás 2001: 123–124). As a proof of this, we could point out not only social changes but also the legal ones. In the area of our interest, there is legally regulated age of consent, marriageable age, child labour age, and other regulations concerning the protection of the child’s corporality. It was bound to happen because not only the number of children is decreasing, but also, as Michel Foucault (1978: 30) writes in his *The history of sexuality*, “[t]he sex of children and adolescents has become, since the eighteenth century, an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed”. And so, the idea of dual character of sex started to move to the foreground: as a *sine qua non* condition for personal fulfilment and as an experience, at least potentially, devastating. It is the second, demonic appearance that is the base for exclusion of the immature part of population from the sexual activity. Judith Levine (2002) points out that the lack of consent for the sexual activity of under-aged is a new tendency and closely related to the social birth of childhood. According to Levine, “the concept that sex poses an almost existential peril to children, that it robs them of their very childhood, was born only about 150 years ago”. Levine sympathizes with the Aries’s approach in this aspect and considers the prolonged childhood not only to be a mor-

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<sup>2</sup> In a sense, children are again deprived of childhood. In the USA and Europe, children do not die in a battle, do not slog away in the plants, do not take early difficult parental responsibilities; however, still prolonging and intensifying period of preparation, connected with the development of knowledge, technology and caused by other social factors, made them get up every morning, go to school with a bag full of books, and sit in front of the desk for hours, like a clerk from gloomy stories written by Kafka. No one gives them ha’penny for their hard work. Childhood as a time of joyful, uninhibited fun, contact with one’s own body happens more often in the idealized plays and in social imaginarium. In reality, it is closer to hard and intensive work, emotional complications, making diagnosis, or therapy. Children who do not fit in oppressive social corset are often eagerly pathologized. Such point of view is represented, e.g. by these experts who perceive diagnosis like ADD and ADHD as result of horrific, mainly educational, restraint imposed on natural emotional and behavioral needs of youngsters. They evaluate therapeutic behavioral modification, often backed up by pharmacological interventions, as violation of personal freedom legitimized by agents of social control (Breggin 1993, 1998; Szasz 1970, 1974). We believe that empty playgrounds are not only an indicator of the time that young people spend in front of the computer or an outcome of paradoxical sedation achieved after dispensation of stimulants prescribed for actions classified as hyperkinetic. It is also not irrelevant that if the playgrounds are full, they are “taken over” by children belonging to specific social classes, those which are not so efficiently controlled, for instance, by closely cooperating institutions of education and medicalization.

atorium on the immediate entrance into all social roles but also to be involved in the specific perception and interpretation of the signs of sexuality (Levine (2002: xxvii)). Such a matrix functions within the frame of reference. Its characteristic features are extreme one-sidedness and negativism. It is the matrix of negative perception and interpretation. Let us take a look on the elements of the frame of reference and features of the treatment of the sexuality in the case of individuals before the age of consent. One of the parts of this specific way of perception and interpretation is what one could call the discourse of asexuality. It introduces, scientifically legitimized, the dormancy of sex drive. The latency period is treated as a part of the cycle of human psychosexual development which is characterized by the calming of sexual tendencies and needs, when the libido is not connected with any sphere of the body and the energy is directed onto gaining cultural and social skills. The view on the latency has become closely integrated into common discourse. Many people have adopted the view assuming that the sex drive of boys and girls before the period of adolescence falls into the winter sleep. Keeping this concept alive and pointing at its psychoanalytic provenance<sup>3</sup> allows maintaining the myth of asexuality of specific age category. Topicality of the Freud's distorted statement is puzzling, for instance, because there are straightforward practical evidences of the intensive sexual activity of children which appears in the form of ipsation. It would be difficult to prove that the discourse of asexuality in certain age categories is harmful itself. On the contrary, it could be and it is in the societies, which are so demanding for the adapting individuals, a way of legitimization

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<sup>3</sup> It is commonly believed that Sigmund Freud was the author of the thesis considering the latency period on the human's sexual development. However, it is one of the interpretations which is in opposition to the original intention of the author who clearly wrote: "From about sixth or eighth year onwards a standstill or retrogression is observed in the sexual development, which in those cases reaching a high cultural standard deserves to be called latency period. This latency period, however, may be absent; nor does it necessarily entail an interruption of sexual activities and sexual interests over the whole field. Most of the sexual experiences and excitations occurring before the latency period then succumb to the infantile amnesia, already discussed, which veils our earliest childhood from us and estranges us from it. It is the task of every psycho-analysis to bring this forgotten period of life back into recollection; one cannot resist the supposition that the beginnings of sexual life belonging to this period are the motive for this forgetting, that is, that this oblivion is an effect of repression" (Freud 1933: 274). As it can be seen in the quote, Freud claims that the latency period could appear in the specific context of high cultural standards which is characterized by the oppression of children's sexuality. For Freud, latency could be present but does not have to. Fascination and the sexual activity could be stopped, yet it is not an imperative. Finally, according to the author, the fact that we do not remember sexual activity during the latency period does not mean that there was not any, but it comes from repression, which results in infantile amnesia.

Let us quote this astute researcher once more: "That children should have no sexual life – sexual excitement, needs, and gratifications of a sort – but they suddenly acquire these things in the years between twelve and fourteen would be, apart from any observations at all, biologically just improbable, indeed, nonsensical, as to suppose that they are born without genital organs which first begin to sprout at the age of puberty" (Freud 1933: 262).

of the model which demarcates following life stages in accordance to the norms and requirements of social institutions; that was already pointed out by Sigmund Freud<sup>4</sup>. More puzzling is the occurring prolongation of child's sexual neutrality beyond the puberty in the situation of sexual acceleration (I m i e l i ń s k i 1995: 261). This process, which is quite recent and triggering opposing tendencies<sup>5</sup>, contributed to the social awareness that there is no clear and distinctive difference between the sex drive (which affects a human being much earlier than before puberty), physical maturity and social maturity. However, to understand the attitude towards the sexual activity of individuals near the age of consent, we should indicate few other significant assumptions, which are of more ambiguous and implied character. Firstly, there is an assumption that women and children are reluctant to sexual activity by nature and therefore, they require a, connected with this issue, protection. We also assume that they are the most exposed to hurting. These statements operate on a large quantifier which includes whole social categories and they allow avoiding the examination of individual cases. The sources that contribute to these beliefs and that make them politically and socially meaningful are some of the feministic and religious currents<sup>6</sup> (see also L e v i n e 2002). Secondly, we are operating on the Janus-faced arrangements concerning human sexual inter-

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<sup>4</sup> Freud referred to these issues and, among others, he pointed at the system of education. He wrote that: "For it is indeed one of the most important social tasks of education to restrain, confine, and subject to an individual control (itself identical with the demands of society) the sexual instinct when it breaks forth in the form of reproductive function. In its own interests, accordingly, society would postpone child's full development until it has attained a certain stage of intellectual maturity, since educability practically ceases with the full onset of sexual instinct. [...] Not is the task of restraining it ever an easy one; success in this direction is often poor and, sometimes, only to great. [...] Experience must have been taught educators that the task of moulding the sexual will of the next generation can only be carried out by beginning to impose their influence very early, and intervening in the sexual life of children before puberty, instead of waiting till the storm bursts. Consequently almost all infantile sexual activities are forbidden or made disagreeable to the child; the ideal has been to make the child's life asexual, and in course of time it has to come to this that it is really believed to be asexual, and it is given out as such, even at the hands of science. [...] The little child is supposed to be pure and innocent; he who says otherwise shall be condemned as hardened blasphemer against humanity's tenderest and most sacred feelings" (F r e u d 1933: 262–263).

<sup>5</sup> For a while now, in some European countries, there are demands, which are justified by the earlier sexual maturation, to decrease the age of consent. Irrespective of favorable treatment of such postulates, in some of these countries, we deal with an unofficial decrease of the age of consent, for in some cases (e.g. the under-aged is close to the age of consent, there is only little difference of age between the partners, *etc.*) an inquiry is not opened. On one hand, the facts show contradictory tendencies which take place in Western culture. On the other, they show how some of the institutions connected with the formal social control deal with those contradictions, which are a part of their functioning.

<sup>6</sup> Feminism and religion are internally very differentiated and we often forget about it. It is easier for us to think about them as coherent and counter to each other movements (moreover, sometimes they think as such about themselves and they present themselves in such a way), which is not always true to their factual state.

course: one can be sexually abused or molested independently of the age; however, sex is treated as nearly an existential threat in the case of individual below certain age. It is almost always thought to be an abuse or departure from the norm, anomaly – and it is presented as such. This schema of interpretation is especially active when there is an age difference between the partners. It might also be the reason why we know only so little about the sexual experience between the peers. The former assumption of the latency is in great favour of absence, lack of communication (and in the result, inaccessibility of reflection) of this sphere of life. However, the assertion about the damaging capabilities of sex is accompanied by two other assumptions. Firstly, the early sexual experiences shape the latter preferences (and it does not have to be accompanied by molestation or any other kind of abuse). It is assumed that an early initiation is a source of, for example, promiscuity, inability to get involved in the heterosexual relationship or homosexuality (see also Tripp 1977). Therefore, all these consequences are negative; they lead to non-normative sexual behaviours and socio-psychological impairment. It is better to be safe than sorry. Especially because (and this is the second of the mentioned earlier assumptions) the younger the child is (the lower age of taking up sexual activity), the vaster and more serious are the effects (see also Paris 1998). However, it should be highlighted that even though such is a judicial practice (in the cases of abuse and seduction, the younger is the victim, the higher is the sentence) and there are studies which confirm this relation, there are also as many reports that confirm the same extent of damage and harm in the latter age (Pospiszyl 2009: 53). Moreover, most of these studies share the same restriction: they investigate the harmfulness of an early or too early engagement in the sexual practices in the circumstances of seduction and molestation.

Matrix constructed in such a way provides enough support for the discourse that accelerates the “monstrualization” of sexualisation: contacting a child or an adolescent (especially if the contact is initiated by an adult) with anything that could trigger sexual arousal is similar to waking up a bear in the middle of the winter – it is dangerous, harmful or at least nonsensical. Sexual activity is only for the adults, and it is perfectly reflected by the quote from one of the interviews: “[...] and so he introduced me into the adult world” (Friday 1992: 147). It was not pointless to describe the matrix as negative since it results in the pathologization and stigmatization of the manifestation of sexuality by certain age categories. At the same time, the controlling, stigmatizing and pathologizing approach exists in the context of certain (and, in this case, significant) quality of the modern Western culture, i.e. a body that is very young and lacks the signs of sexual maturity is presented as sexually attractive<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> This contradiction is sometimes named under the term of paedophilization of culture. One may talk about such trend and refer to multiple issues. Firstly, the paedophile concept did not exist in

The signs of negative perception and interpretation can be noticed on the web pages, in press and on the TV, but also in the scholar works. From time to time, the events related to the sexuality of young people are in the news or are a topic of television feature programmes. Invited experts establish the reasons why teenagers have sex:

their peers pressure them or pedophiles [adults] manipulate them; they drink or drug too much, listen to rap, or download porn; they are under too much pressure or aren't challenged enough; they are abused or abusive or feel immoral or suicidal; they're rich and spoiled or poor and demoralized, raised too strictly or too permissively; they are ignorant or oversophisticated (Levine 2002: xxv–xxvi).

This list could be possibly expanded; however, it is puzzling that all of the enlisted reasons omit biological processes and they refer to some kind of evil, they are connected with the pathological behaviours. The context and tone of this type of performances – the atmosphere of indignation and scandal – also play significant role in the widespread and consolidation of the analyzed matrix. It is not concerned only with the media, but sometimes also with the works claiming to be the scholar ones. Moreover, on the one hand, the individuals appearing in the media are presented as the experts in the field who change its character by the manner of their speaking (unambiguity and temporality of the scholar findings 'evaporates' from these voices; premises that were the fundamentals for the conclusions drew from the studies disappear; conclusions are no longer hypotheses or opinions but they are the truth delivered by the author-

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mainstream discourse until late XX century – then its popularity started to rise rapidly. At the present moment, paedophilia is well established as an icon of deviation. Some researchers indicate that social perception and responses evoked by this type of sexual behaviour meet the criteria of moral panic. It implicates, inter alia, the emergence of such processes as sensitization, diffusion, escalation, innovation, exaggeration, negative symbolization or overestimation of the deviance. All of these phenomena are described by Stanley Cohen (2002: 81–161). Mainstream society is suffused with notions and evaluations of underage sex. Extraordinarily intensive cognitive and affective reactions are present on individual and societal level. Shortly speaking, one could say that some of the mentioned above components of large and complex social phenomenon may be called paedophilization of Western culture.

As another paradoxical example of this phenomenon, we could point out depilation. At present, hair are routinely removed not only from armpits and legs, but also from genital area. It is almost compulsory regarding women and, day after day, it is becoming more popular among men. Since hairless intimate areas are biologically connected with immaturity, modern fashion for depilation leads to socially accepted disguise; mature individual removes signs of maturity and pretends to be immature. One could say that such individual impersonates preadolescent child – but impersonation serves an adult as exciting fetish. Such intimate game seems to contradict the concept of paedophile as "another species" reacting with excitement to unusual stimulus, because it indicates that normal adults respond in paedophilic manner.

Furthermore, modern Western culture seems obsessed with youthful appearance in general. Media often use the images directly or indirectly related to preadolescent bodies.

ity). On the other, there is no analysis of established assumptions, no anthropological reflection (its relativism and criticism treated as the working tools), no fundamental elements of constructivist approach towards social reality (e.g. taking into account context and meanings) not only in the media, in the statements given by the representatives of different institutions, but also in the guides, popular and scientific literature or therapy. Yet there is emotional and appraising language (Tripp 1977; Paris 1998). Instead of relativism, criticism, and constructivism (treated not as moral attitudes but the tools of scientific studies), objectification of the study's subject and the development of balanced approach in therapy, there is an exchange of social constructions for natural phenomena, classification of behaviours, generation of the mechanism of labelling, which is not necessarily conscious, demonization of phenomenon and its results, over-estimation, and sensitization. The classification detecting the sexualisation of behaviours has been drawn up, detailed lists of symptoms have been created and the methodologies have been developed which are applied with the seriousness and legal consequences. Yet they omit the knowledge concerned with unintentional psycho-manipulation that could take place during the meetings related to diagnosis and therapy (especially in the case of children). They forget that there is no way to distinguish real story from the implanted memories (Draheim 2003; Gujska 2008). We suppose that the practice of some specialists involves such unconscious and unintentional manipulations. The mechanism of retrospective interpretation and negotiation of the reality, which is too often used in the popular psychological literature, is apparent to anyone who knows, even casually, the accomplishments of the social reaction theory. These are the mechanisms "that cause an individual to 'enter' the imposed social role or which cause an individual to be unable to free oneself from such a role" (Siemaszko 1993: 348). In the result, we do not judge the act but person, one's identity, e.g.: one can have flu, but one is sexualized. In the case of the first mentioned above mechanism, the earlier behaviours, which until the diagnosis were neutral or unambiguous, are reinterpreted through the prism of the information, which is collected later, concerned with deviation (Siemaszko 1993: 356). Therefore, being single in the case of young women who could not enter long term relationship, even though they tried multiple times, appears to be a result of an early sexual initiation or an early lesbian relationship, although there is no premise during the interview (surely, the words of the patient are quoted in the book) that would allow to come to such conclusion or to acknowledge the traumatic influence of previous relationships. The second term draws attention to the fact of negotiations of the character of an event and behaviours, during widely understood interactions. An individual who breaks a norm is not only a victim of a public opinion and can influence on the manner of his or her perception and qualification. However, the negotiations depend on the bargaining power. In this case, an individual who presents himself or herself as a specialist

and therapist possesses more bargaining power in the social negotiations. It is extremely difficult to bargain a smaller label in such a situation. The terminology used in many of these works refers to catchy metaphors and colourful metonymy: “bad touch”, “predator in the human skin”, “shark circling its potential victim”, “bite of the rattlesnake”. In a very specific way, they sensitize parents and public opinion to a number of everyday parental and educational practices. These are not the only rhetorical figures which are applied in such works. There are also exclamations and hyperboles, which result in a very emotional interpretation of the text. It is difficult to have unambiguous approach towards rhetorical figures used in scientific or pop-scientific works. The language should be precise, neutral, and objective. If we follow these rules absolutely, especially the rule about emotional neutrality, the text may sometimes lack “life and colours”. However, in this case, it is about omitting or blurring the definitional problems (e.g. concerned with harassment, sexual abuse, difficulties to determine what is hiding behind the term “bad touch”), and definitely about creating a convincing, unambiguous emotional climate, condemnation and moral indignation, which is close to the phenomenon that, in the sociological literature, is connoted by the term of moral panics (Cohen 2002). It is about a demonization of phenomenon (there are phrases such as “condemnation”, “Satan’s work”, “time bomb” but there is also an attribution of the wide spectrum of very serious consequences, from behavioural disorders, through psychological results and sexual disorders to symptoms of PTSD) and these efforts are accompanied by an over-estimation of the scale (“epidemics”, “infection”) and generalization of the threats (“alarming truth”, “trashing that has weakened our souls”<sup>8</sup>).

It is not only media (with their specific cropping of the reality, such as sensation and scandal, over-estimation and sensitization in the case of the acts of deviance), therapy and psychiatry that participate in the process of propagation and legitimization of negative matrix. There is also, maybe unexpected, support from the parents and schools. Within the framework of this approach, the responsibility is taken for the educational failure of these institutions – whatever it is (watching pornography, irresponsible behaviour of the adults, excessive sexualisation of cultural contents, premature sexual activity), it is an external factor for these institutions. It allows to camouflage the tensions between physical maturation (its individual character and unpredictability) and social maturation (encompassed in fixed frames, predictability is here required), and the overlapping of these issues with other conflicts and shortages (these are much more often the basis for the non-normative behaviours, including the sexual ones). It also makes expiation (and it brings relieve: if it was not for this... everything would be fine). The act of

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<sup>8</sup> All of the terms mentioned here as examples are in quotation marks as they were taken from the works available on the Polish market (e.g. SALTER 2005).

pathologization of certain behaviours is experienced by the individuals engaged in those institutions as the grace of expiation.

### 3. Are the lips for speaking?

Deprivation of psycho-socio-political reflection in three important areas – consequences that come with the negative matrix of perception and interpretation, nature of our reactions and their intensity – is not only puzzling, but also symptomatic. Firstly, let us ask what is happening. Does the frame of reference not result in significant expenses? Or maybe we do not want to notice them? We believe that such a way of conceptualization and treatment of sexuality results in real consequences for a certain amount of social practices and involved roles, and therefore, in some degree, for each and one of us. Let us point out few of them. Parents have quite difficult role: they are between the risk of traumatisa-tion by the “bad touch” and the preparation of their teenage offspring, which lacks of any tools, for a responsible sexual activity. Conscious parenthood and parental love, which according to the social ideology should be an arcadia, is more or less marked by fear of different practices: bathing, changing clothes, sleeping together, caressing (for example, the exposition of a naked body, which is a part of these practices, may be treated as a sexualizing behaviour). Being accused of an inappropriate touch is equal to serious trouble, regardless of the role: the one who guards (parent, teacher, tutor, and therapist) or the one who is guarded (child, student, pupil, patient). One may receive a huge bill for a simple, human, yet impulsive, gesture (see *Kelly Wallace... 2013*). Actions of parents, teachers and other people are not only streaked with fear of the sexualisation of behaviours (this is why, for example, the teachers of physical education do not introduce safety measures based on direct touch, manual support to protect their teenage students during classes anymore – they delegate this task to the peers; one could create a whole catalogue of stratagems used by adults working with children and teenagers in order to protect themselves from the suspicions and accusations<sup>9</sup>). This fear and an asymmetry coded in the matrix co-contribute to the loss of authority of these roles (it is symptomatic that teachers are accused by students of such behaviours when they are not satisfied by the received mark or that the difficulties to confirm the existence of sexual abuse are used by mothers in divorce cases). Media panics entail smaller or bigger social panics. The hysterias which surround dating rapes, bad touch,

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<sup>9</sup> For example, we have heard about a therapist who, each time he had an appointment with a child or teenager, left the doors to his office opened, so that the receptionist could see him for the whole time. It is a kind of a professional policy – a word of a child against the word of two adults, where one of them is not engaged in the relationship.

paedophilia attacks, or teenager's obscene behaviour result in the growing fear of interactions with strangers. At the first glance, it does not seem to be important. Yet it prevents us from rendering and receiving help, undermines confidence which is necessary to start any new interpersonal relationship (at the same time, we are not able to function in our societies and interact only with the people that we have previously known), monstrualizes and blurs certain types of behaviours, so that we are more and more frequently accompanied by the feeling of uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety. Let us add here, to the list of examples of changes within the social relations, the widely known social effects of medicalization, pathologization and stigmatization, which can be partly observed and experienced (Banaszak, Florkowski 2010; Critcher, ed. 2006; Goffman 2005; Good, Ben-Yehuda 1999; Jenkins 1992) and the use of the definition of sexual abuse in the police practice (e.g. if the child is missing, the assumption about sexual abuse determines the search for the child, while the child simply ran away from home).

The character of our reactions proves that sex per se is not such a potent taboo anymore, but the sexuality of children and very young people is. As Brian McNair states,

[s]ex is not an embarrassing or bashful topic [...] It is the driving force behind our culture. [...] It is the catchphrase of modern life. There is a new generation growing up that [...] [wants to] discuss it, explore it and celebrate it (McNair 2004: 99).

This is what thinks the liberal part of Western culture. It is not relevant if we fully approve of, as the author of the quote, certain processes in a culture, or if we present an opposing attitude. We are still reluctant to think in taboo categories. Several dozen years ago, our culture announced a definite end of taboo, finding any kind of violence repulsive (Bumam 1998: 193). The taboo is, on the one hand, "a form of participation in the social life", and on the other, "it offers the language of coercion, which allows people to control each other" (Tokarska-Bakir 2007: 12, 32]. However, the manner in which we are dealing with something that does not fit into the category of cultural schema (it is an anomaly) and/or it is ambiguous (therefore, it cannot be definitely assigned anywhere by the schema) says something completely different. Paedophile, among others, is an anomaly forced by the analyzed normative change. Out of five possibilities of dealing with the phenomena that does not fit the cultural schema, which are enlisted by Mary Douglas (2007: 80–81), four of them are applied by the late modernity societies in the cases of paedophilia or other banned sexual behaviours: physical control of the anomaly (sentence to prison, chemical castration, blackmail, humiliation, and harassment), steering clear of the anomaly through the introduction of taboo (children sexuality taboo and the prolongation of the sexual neutrality of a child beyond the period of sexual maturation), ideological control of the anomaly through the associations with danger (e.g. a ban on the positive voices on

the cross-generational sexual relationships, ostracism of the labelled, associations with an illness and the indication of the possibility of pharmacological treatment and/or teaching to control the threatening behaviour), or re-classification consisting of the disqualification of anomaly (equalling sexual interest in teenagers to, on the one hand, sexual abuse of the child, and on the other, to zoophilia, necrophilia or dangerous ideologies that materialized themselves as the movements destroying civilized world). New taboo was established in the place of the old one. As Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (2007: 26) claims, “ban on taboo and its reverse, a dictate to invalidate taboo, are both functioning in an explicit order and they perfectly fit into the hidden game of real tabooing and obediently establish repulsion towards the rebellions – transgressors”.

Taboo provides protection. Ban is to keep us away from things that violate a given vision of order and its realization. Thus, the division into actions and things that are a subject of restrictions and that are not becomes apparent (Douglas 2007). Taboo, repulsion, and shame do not have to be an imperfection or be associated with psychopathological reactions. Such a depiction is our cultural heritage after the series of binary oppositions established in anthropology and reinforced by the series of psychoanalytical publications in order to differ as from the savages (Douglas 2007). However, it does not explain the intensity of observed reactions<sup>10</sup>. Several or several dozen years ago, the term ‘paedophile’ was known only to the group of specialists, today it is in common use. Certain manners of speaking of children’s, teenagers’, or adults’ behaviour were allowed even in the public discourse. Ambiguous behaviours were thought to be part of the initiation ceremony, e.g. hazing. Currently, the imperceptions of this dynamic social change end always the same. Why? Maybe the answer is the Michael Polanyi’s theory of the moral inversion (Tokarska-Bakir 2007: 36). By the means of the dynamic shift of condemnation, once aimed at certain actions, now aimed at people, who still express disapproval towards these actions, we – the society – protect ourselves from the guilt; the guilt that hunts us down since we have changed our views and we understood that these views and actions which were based on them could have contributed to harm. It is not only evil and harm that took place and that we could not have stopped, but also that we did not react in time. We want to appease our conscience and tightly encapsulate our guilt and shame by the means of

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<sup>10</sup> Part of the fierce reactions to these events which contain some elements of eroticism or sex could be probably explained by the claim that weak cultures are the “copies” of dominating cultures. Judging from what is happening in the media and part of the public space, Poland is on the position of a weak culture. Other reactions, e.g. that violence and aggression lack of such a characteristic as sex and eroticism – they are not labeled with strong response and so many prohibitions (movies containing erotic scenes are labeled with higher age categories, yet these labels are not applied in the same way in the case of violent scenes) – could be explained by the mechanisms controlling opinions which are reflecting the relations of power.

the intensification of reactions. We want to do it so badly that, there is no knowing when, we have changed our indignation into fetish and we do not notice that our behaviours and way of thinking are too often characterized by significant incoherence and that they can be as harmful as our previous actions.

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### CZY USTA SĄ DO MÓWIENIA? *MODUS OPERANDI* SEKSUALNEJ EKSKLUZJI OSÓB PONIŻEJ WIEKU PRYZWOLENIA

**Streszczenie.** W artykule opisano zagadnienie, które obecnie jest tematem społecznie bardzo „wrażliwym” i trudnym. Niniejszy tekst jest też próbą poradzenia sobie z często odczuwanym nie tylko przez socjologów doznawaniem społecznego świata, z jego dozwolonymi, ograniczonymi lub zakazanymi znaczeniami i działaniami, z koniecznościami i sankcjami, z przekroczeniami i anomaliami. W trakcie życia pokolenia, którego autorzy są częścią, uległ zasadniczej zmianie stosunek do seksu i seksualności. Zostały obalone niektóre tabu otaczające życie prywatne i seks. Zdjęto z tych sfer pieczęć milczenia. Uznano, że usta są do mówienia. Tyle tylko, że wraz ze zniesieniem poprzednich zakazów zostały utworzone nowe i wzmocnione niektóre już istniejące. Do nich należy tabu seksualności dzieci i prolongacja seksualnej neutralności dziecka, aż poza okres dojrzewania seksualnego w sytuacji seksualnej akceleracji. Seksualna aktywność określonych kategorii wiekowych jest objęta specyficznym postrzeganiem i interpretowaniem. Jest to matryca negatywnej percepcji i interpretacji, za pomocą której dokonywana jest ekskluzja z tej sfery życia. Wszelkie formy aktywności seksualnej zarezerwowane są tylko dla tych, którzy zostali społecznie uznani za dorosłych. Podjęto próbę wskazania założeń, na jakich jest ufundowana wspomniana wcześniej matryca, i niektórych jej konsekwencji. Autorzy artykułu przyłączyli się do tych głosów, które dostrzegają zagrożenie nie w samym wykluczeniu, ale w bezkrytycznym używaniu negatywnej matrycy postrzegania i interpretowania aktywności seksualnej przed wiekiem przyzwolenia i w konsekwencjach, jakie to za sobą pociąga.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ekskluzja, negatywna matryca postrzegania i interpretowania, seksualna neutralność dziecka, tabu.