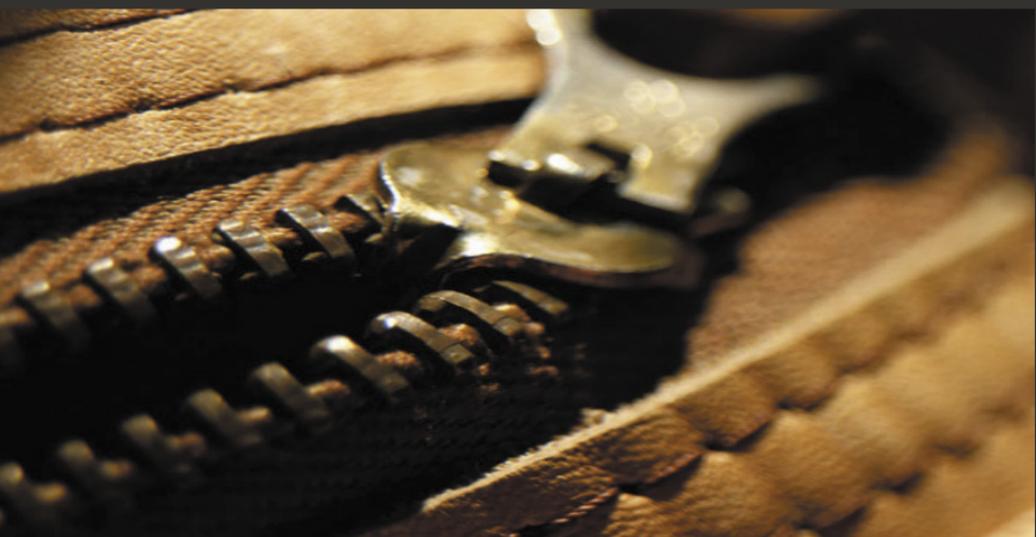


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MEDIA  
REPRESENTATIONS  
*of* HOMOSEXUALITY

*An Analysis of the Print Media in Slovenia,  
1970–2000*



ROMAN KUCHAR

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PEACE INSTITUTE  
METELKOVA 6  
SI-1000 LJUBLJANA  
E: INFO@MIROVNI-INSTITUT.SI  
<HTTP://WWW.MIROVNI-INSTITUT.SI>

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# MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF HOMOSEXUALITY

*An Analysis of the Print Media in Slovenia, 1970–2000*

ROMAN KUHAR, *Mirovni inštitut*  
e: [roman.kuhar@mirovni-institut.si](mailto:roman.kuhar@mirovni-institut.si)



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## SUMMARY

The subject of this study is media construction of homosexuality. The author looks into the media representations of homosexuals and related discourse on homosexuality in the print media in Slovenia in the period 1970-2000. The author places these media texts into their historical context and presents an overview of the history of gay and lesbian movement in Slovenia.

Media representations of homosexuality are divided into five basic categories: stereotyping, medicalization, sexualization, secrecy and normalization. Stereotyping primarily relies on rigid gender schemas exploited by the media to present gays as effeminate and lesbians as masculine, drawing on the analogy with their social roles which thus appear as natural rather than socially constructed. Medicalization of homosexuality is a continuation of the psychiatric discourse on same-sex orientation from the end of the 19th century. In media representations it is manifested as a search for the causes of homosexuality (the implied question is "what went wrong and led to homosexuality?") and the consigning of homosexuality to the medical and psychiatric spheres (homosexuality as a disease or a disorder). Sexualization, the third component of the media discourse, is manifested as a reduction of homosexuality solely to sexuality and sex (since sexualization frequently occurs in graphic images, the author uses Barthes' model to explain the difference between the connotative and denotative levels). The veil of secrecy implied by media representations makes homosexuality appear as something concealed and related to shame and regret. Normalization, the last component of media representations, is characteristic primarily of the late 1990s when previous images of homosexuals as criminals, psychiatric patients and the like, were surpassed. However, this change in attitude is only apparent, since the kind of normalization found in media representations is actually a heterosexual normalization. Media representations of normal homosexuality are representations tailored to the perception of heterosexuals in such a way that they do not threaten their world. Homosexuality is acceptable only when depoliticized.

The author concludes that in the period 1970-2000 media reporting on homosexuality was generally sympathetic or neutral. Yet this general positive trend within media representations nevertheless contains ingredients that

enable the perpetuation of the negative attitude of public opinion towards this phenomenon. The author argues that it is precisely the five most frequent components of media representations mentioned above that are responsible for the gap between politically correct media representations and negative public opinion. Homosexuality still causes uncertainty and uneasiness, so the media usually resort to highly stereotyped images which easily tally with the readers' representations of homosexuality without upsetting them.

### A homosexual in Tivoli

All who intend to drop into the Tivoli sports hall on Wednesday should be very cautious. A danger called Aids will lurk in the bosom of the Ljubljana sports hall, since there will be a homosexual staying there. Particularly dangerous will be close contact with the said (risk) person, so it is better not to get near him, let alone touch him. Although public awareness of this new plague has increased recently, one never knows where the danger lurks. The person mentioned above, who may slip into the dark Tivoli hall thanks to his dark skin, is a gay person originating from the country that is most affected by this disease. He is an American, currently holding Italian citizenship and living in Bologna. Fortunately, this new Italian will not stay in Ljubljana for very long, and you will have a chance to watch him mainly on the basketball court. Dan Gay is 35, 206 cm tall, and is a player on Teamsystem. On Wednesday he will be playing for the Italian national team against Slovenia in a qualifying match for the European Cup in Spain.

*Slovenske novice*, October 28, 1996

## FOREWORD

At the time when I was finalizing the revision of this text for the Media Watch edition, the Peace Institute was conducting a broadly based research project on the social aspects of gay and lesbian life in Slovenia. As part of this research, I was spending hours on end talking to gays and lesbians and filling in an extensive questionnaire. The formal part was almost invariably followed by a long chat about the personal experiences of living this (stigmatized) identity which revealed that many of the interviewees became acquainted with the concept of homosexuality through teenage jeers or insults. Obviously, we are socialized into accepting a broad range of stereotyped and vulgarized representations about *faggots*, without even knowing or meeting one. Since those born in the 1970s or earlier could not have learned anything about homosexuality at school, not to mention obtaining information that could contribute towards de-stigmatization of same-sex orientation, insults were the only form of socialization available to them. One of my interviewees told me that it took him a long time to realize what “faggot” actually meant, although he was aware of the negative connotations, because his parents always shouted “Damned faggot” whenever some politician they disliked appeared on tv. That amounts to nearly everything he learned about homosexuality from his parents.

For many, the only source of information about homosexuality was medical books, popularly known as “family doctors,” and even more frequently the media, although articles about homosexuality were rare indeed. Even so, in that age of stigmatization and information blockade when adolescents could not discuss same-sex orientation with their peers, let alone their teachers and parents, nor could they read anything about it in the textbooks, media representations provided the only and indisputable truth about homosexuality. Textbooks at best instructed them that homosexuality was “the result of wrong education” although there was no evidence that homosexuals showed “serious personal disorders or derangement”.<sup>1</sup>

This study was motivated precisely by the significance of the media representations of homosexuality during the three decades from 1970 to 2000. The media constructions had an impact not only on the personal attitudes of readers

1 See Gradšek, Anton et al. (1985), *Health Education* (second, revised edition), Univerzum, Ljubljana, p. 137.

faced with this stigmatized identity, but also on the general social and political climate, since the media (along with other social institutions) co-shape the environment and the mental framework we employ when considering a specific concept. However, this by no means implies that this study fosters the theory of reader's victimization (Mihelj, 2001a), in which the media are understood as a source of evil and their users as helpless receptors of content. Neither do I believe that the media are the mirror image of the world, but rather that they offer just various representations of the world. The material world should not be equated with the symbolic process through which representations, meanings and language operate. Meaning is a social construct which does not exist outside time or history; it is not inherent in an object, person or event per se and can never be definite, but is always open to changes. In order to understand meaning, one must actively engage in the process of interpretation. By interpreting meaning as readers, viewers or listeners we actively participate in its production. Or, as Hall says, "There is a constant sliding of meaning in all interpretation" (Hall, 1997:33). Edward Alwood (1996), the author of a study about media representations of homosexuality in the US, argues that media objectivity is just a myth. Journalists think that they can leave aside their prejudices and stereotypes and communicate the truth (and we even imagine that we know what the truth is). But the majority of things we see are a result of the long filtering process which determines what will become news. In the course of this process, the *heterosexual assumption or heteronormativity* became the fundamental perspective of the news.

The point of departure for this study was the belief that media representations are significant for the shaping and legitimization of identities. Luthar (1998) says that our identity is formed through discourses and representations to which we are exposed. In order to understand our identity or socially constructed selves, we need to interpret the texts which we produce, in which we see our images and through which we achieve self-thematization.

*"The media gives us ways of imagining particular identities and groups which can have material effects on how people experience the world, and how they get understood, or legislated for or perhaps beaten up in the street by others. ... [T]his is partly because the mass media have the power to re-present, over and over, some identities, some imaginings, and to exclude others, and*

*thereby make them unfamiliar or even threatening*" (Branson, Stafford, 2001:125).

Branston and Stafford (2001) point out a link between the frequency of the appearance of a specific image in media texts and the public's response to it. If the media regularly represent homosexuals as sexual perverts and as a threat to, say, nation or morality, then such an image becomes realistic for gays and lesbians, particularly in terms of its consequences i.e. the public's response. In support of this thesis let us mention just the first gay pride march in Belgrade in 2001, which ended in fierce brawls with nationalists, Milošević's supporters and football hooligans.

This study presents the five basic lines of the discourse on homosexuality used by the print media in Slovenia over the past three decades (1970-2000). Owing to the character and the layout of the Media Watch series, the long theoretical introduction in the original version has been omitted and stress placed on the analysis itself and conclusions.<sup>2</sup> The book nevertheless opens with a brief overview of the theoretical framework, particularly Foucault's thematization of discourses and critical discourse analysis which was the basic methodological tool used in this study. This concise theoretical part is followed by a historical overview of the gay and lesbian movement in Slovenia and scandals that influenced the media representations of homosexuality. A brief statistical analysis of the sample, consisting of 644 texts published between 1970 and 2000, is followed by critical discourse analysis which takes us to the slippery terrain of media text interpretation.

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Vlasta Jalušič and Dr. Tanja Rener for their encouraging e-mails and talks, their trust and guidance during the writing of the first, longer version of this text. I certainly would not have been able to accomplish such a task without their help. I am also indebted to Dr. Mirjana Ule and Dr. Slavko Splichal for their constructive remarks. My thanks also go to Dr. Majda Hrženjak, Marta Gregorčič and Dr. Tonči Kuzmanič, then to Brankica Petković, for her decisive intervention when it came to the shortening of this text, and to Maruša and Mojca. And, as many times in the past, I owe special thanks to Ruža.

<sup>2</sup> For the longer theoretical argumentation of this study see Kuhar, Roman (2002): *Diskurzi o homoseksualnosti (Primer časopisnega in revialnega poročanja v Sloveniji od 1970 – 2000)*, MA thesis, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana

Although many people provided guidelines and suggested improvements, the final version of the text is my work, so I accept responsibility for any potential error.

ROMAN KUHAR

*Ljubljana, May 16, 2003*

## 1. THE DISCOURSE

In the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2001, 1969) Foucault departed from the understanding of discourse as simply a set of statements focusing on a specific topic. Instead, he described discourse as a controlled group of statements operating by specific internal rules and mechanisms inherent to that discourse. A discourse thus combines statements that have meaning, power and specific effects in some social context.

One of the main characteristics of discourse is exclusion. A discourse related to power<sup>3</sup> becomes constituted and organized through exclusion, implying also the naturalization of the stated. The things that can be talked about appear as given and natural, but their naturalness is a result of the exclusion of that which is virtually unutterable. Within a discourse the process of exclusion takes on the form of defining of what can be said, what one is allowed to think about, and what counts as knowledge.

An illustrative example of a discourse as a practice of exclusion is the discourse on homosexuality. During some periods of history homosexuality was seen as a sin. At the beginning of the 19th century, the discourse of heteronormativity (only heterosexuality was seen as a normal and natural practice) and the discourse of sexuality understood as an exclusively reproductive practice, were responsible for formulations such as one found in the then English law mentioning a “crime not fit to be named” which thus became known as “gross indecency.” Under the pressure of such a discourse, homosexuality slid into the realm of secrecy and shame. The fact that even today many people perceive homosexuality in these categories is a consequence of the same pressure and the same practice of excluding certain kinds of knowledge, but this does not mean that such a perception of homosexuality has any authentic or realistic existence per se. Such a perception is a discursive construct. It is possible only because of the exclusion of certain discourses, of different and other kinds of knowledge and understandings of homosexuality. And it was precisely that which led gay

<sup>3</sup> Foucault speaks about the circular, dispersed model of power and its productive and repressive role, and thus transcends the understanding of power as only repressive. He argues that resistance is embedded in the idea of power itself. The place of power is empty - it cannot be appropriated, since it is invariably relational. At the same time, a discourse does not simply translate the systemic domination into language, but it is precisely the discourse because of which and for which these battles are fought. For more on this see Dolar, M., (ed.) (1991): *Vednost – oblast – subjekt* (Knowledge – power – subject), Krt, Ljubljana.

and lesbian theorists to invest a great deal of effort into overturning the presumed naturalness of the dominant (heteronormative) discursive structures which secured for themselves the dominant position through exclusion. Their efforts are aimed at the revitalization of excluded discursive positions which should be made accessible and should enjoy a certain credibility.

Since discourse defines and produces the subjects of our knowledge, it is exclusive or inclusive by definition: just as it includes or allows certain ways of reasoning or speaking, it also excludes, disqualifies or isolates different and other ways of reasoning and speaking. In other words, it excludes opposite discourses. A discourse is also delimited through various rituals that allow only selected individuals to utter certain statements. For example, only the priest's words at a wedding ceremony have formal significance, but if the same words were spoken by someone else, the utterance would not have any effect.

This conclusion can be likened to the effect of the psychiatric discourse on homosexuality. Psychiatrists proclaimed homosexuality a disease, and, thanks to their institutional power, this was taken as the "truth" (indeed with realistic implications for homosexuals). If someone else having no such position or power asserted something similar, the statement would not have the same effect. This was the case with all counter-discourses on homosexuality competing with to the psychiatric discourse. Other discourses were ineffective because they did not originate within institutions, and even those that did were in the minority and not in harmony with the then rules of discourse formation. In addition, these discourses had less power and less connection with power (Mills, 1997:67-75).

Particularly important for our analysis of discourses on homosexuality is Foucault's conclusion that a discourse seen as a practice shapes or constitutes a subject to which a specific discourse refers and at the same time positions it. A subject is thus produced within a discourse and does not exist outside it, since a subject must be subordinated to the rules and conventions of a discourse, power relations and knowledge. In simplified terms, we are what we are said to be and what we are written about, or what a specific social group to which we belong is said to be or is written about, meaning that the discourse also has the power to define the position of the individual and the group within society. The discourse can thus be understood as "language in action":

only through language can one see things and ascribe meaning to them. Our self-understanding also becomes formed through such discursive experience. The discourse regulates, controls and co-shapes to a certain extent our thoughts and actions, while at the same time producing a place for us as subjects. We identify with these positions constituted by a specific discourse, and become the subjects through such identification.<sup>4</sup> In Foucault's view, in order to be able to grasp these processes we should first understand the function played by power in a discourse. It involves the prescription and shaping of operation in accordance with norms that set the limits for individuals, while at the same time enabling certain types of functioning and identity. The individual's discursive position is a result of the working of power. In more specific terms, at the beginning of the 20th century the discourse on homosexuality consisted of a set of heterogeneous statements (e.g. utterances, texts, gestures, behavior and the like that were accepted as essential characteristics of a homosexual, e.g. a mental patient, effeminate, unresolved Oedipus complex, etc.) which laid down the parameters within which homosexuals could seek their identity. Other opposing discourses existed simultaneously, but, owing to the lack of institutional power, they could not counterbalance the ecclesiastical and psychiatric discourses on homosexuality which had connection with power and were reproduced in many ways with media representations being one of these.

Nevertheless, Hall (1997) warns against excessive resentment of the media. Notwithstanding their power, the media cannot instill in or impress upon us meanings or explanations, because we are not mental blank slates. Yet the media do have the integrative, explanatory and legitimate power to shape and define political reality, particularly in situations which are new, problematic or challenging. What is involved here is an arrangement of the social reality that did not exist prior to these situations, or a re-shaping of the meaning of existing tendencies in such a manner that they are presented as a socially acceptable form, while inability to accept it is designated as social deviation.

4 Foucault mentions three ways in which people are constituted into subjects, or in other words, three ways of acquiring the position of a subject. These are moduses of objectification: segregation practices, scientific classification and man's active role. For more on this see Foucault, Michael (1991): "Subjekt in oblast, zakaj preučevati oblast: vprašanje subjekta." (Subject and power, why should power be studied: the issue of subject). In Dolar, M., (ed.) (1991): Vednost – oblast – subjekt (Knowledge – power – subject), Krt, Ljubljana.

## 2. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The popularity of discourse analysis within social sciences contributed to the hypertrophy of scientific approaches and methodologies used in the description and analysis of discourse meanings. A contributing factor was the very nature of discourse analysis which, thanks to the subject of its study – text, speech, or in general terms, linguistic social interaction – is primarily interpretive. Yet it seems appropriate to stress here that there is no uniform or “correct” answer to the question “what does this image mean?” or “what message does this advertisement communicate?” The problem of discourse analysis lies in the sliding nature of meaning. Texts, pictures, words and actions – all bear specific meanings, but none is absolute. Consequently, there is no way of knowing what meaning any specific individual will infer from a text or picture, because meaning is formed through interaction with the individual. Verschuren (2000: 136) writes that the mental state of viewers, readers or listeners co-creates meaning as much as does the statement itself or the utterer of that statement. Since there is no (social) law that can ensure single and true meaning of things, one which would remain fixed in time and space, the analysis of this aspect of social life is limited to interpretations. Interpretation does not imply debate about who is right and who wrong, but, instead, discussion about equally plausible, although sometimes competitive and contradictory, meanings and interpretations.

Methodologically, this study relies on the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) founded by Norman Fairclough. CDA has clear political goals (e.g. changes in discriminatory policies), since, viewed through the theoretical lenses of CDA, discourse becomes a basic tool through which people become constituted as individuals and social subjects. Given that language and ideology stand close one to another, a systematic analysis of language or texts (written or spoken) can expose the systems exploited for the oppression of people within specific social structures.

*“Discursive practices may have major ideological effects: that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. So discourse may, for example, be racist, or sexist, and try to pass off assumptions*

(often falsifying ones) about any aspect of social life as mere common sense" (Fairclough, Wodak, 1997:258).

The ideological aspects of language usage, and the power relations on which it is based, are often invisible and only implicit. Accordingly, the task of CDA is to make visible these aspects of the discourse. As Fairclough (1997) concludes, it is precisely owing to this task that this branch of discursive analysis is not a "non-political", distanced, or objective social science. It implies a form of intervention in social practice and social relations and is thus an integral part of political activism directed against racism, sexism, homophobia and the like.

*"But CDA is not an exception to the normal objectivity of social science: social science is inherently tied into politics and formulations of policy, as for instance Foucault's (1971, 1979) work convincingly demonstrated. What is distinctive about CDA is both that it intervenes on the side of dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups, and that it openly declares the emancipatory interests that motivate it. The political interests and uses of social scientific research are usually less explicit. This certainly does not imply that CDA is less scholarly than other research: standards of careful, rigorous and systematic analysis apply with equal force to CDA as to other approaches"* (Fairclough, Wodak, 1997:258-259).

Since CDA, just like any other form of discourse analysis, is primarily an interpretive and qualitative sociological method, the existing methodology of discursive analysis does not offer "recipes" or verifiable, exact methodological rules such as are characteristic of certain quantitative sociological methodologies. The findings and conclusions of a study based on this method are thus inevitably an original work of the author.

An important question raised by CDA is the question of the power governing the discourse, which is primarily connected with the question of accessibility (e.g. who has access to the media and who can appear in the media). The main task of CDA as an anti-discriminatory scientific political practice is to disclose power relations behind the discourse and implicit elements of the text; so, for example, certain instances of critical analysis in the past led to changes in textbooks that were found to contain discriminatory, sexist or similar elements. The task of the critical linguist is not

only to describe, but also to explain how discourse becomes shaped through power relations and ideologies, how it influences social identity, social relations, knowledge systems and value systems. A discourse cannot be understood and analyzed without its context, since it is not ahistorical or unchangeable in space and time.

To sum up, one could say that, on the most general level, discourse analysis attempts to rephrase the elements of the rhetorical structures incessantly recurring within a specific discourse and thus defining it. Since we are constituted as social subjects through the discourse, in this study the CDA methodology will be used to identify the principles behind the constitution of the homosexual as a social subject. Our point of departure is the assumption that homosexuals are a discriminated group in our social space. It is precisely this assumption that makes us convinced that the application of the CDA principles to a discourse analysis of media representations of homosexuality is the most suitable approach. It has clear political goals and through the systematic analysis of language or texts it exposes the systems used to oppress individuals within specific social structures. We will attempt to single out the elements most frequently occurring in the discourse on homosexuality which, as a discursive practice, constitutes its subject – the homosexual – or a group to which he/she belongs as a social group of homosexuals. However, we should point out that the horizons of our study are limited, since we have chosen to restrict ourselves to only one aspect of the constitutive discursive practice i.e. print media representations, even though the homosexual as a subject has been co-shaped by a series of other parallel, and occasionally contradictory, discourses. Some of these, above all those that have the greatest power in terms of intertextuality,<sup>5</sup> are undoubtedly reflected in the print media analyzed here.

5 Any discourse invariably denotes discourses that were produced in the past, but also discourses that are synchronous and emerge as a result of the discourse to which we refer. The phenomenon of intertextuality means that our thoughts and words are linked to what has already been said, and to that what we expect will be said in the future.



*Journalism was overwhelmingly male,  
overwhelmingly macho,  
overwhelmingly drinkers, smokers, fuckers,  
all of these things.  
Women lost by it,  
blacks lost by it,  
gays lost by it,  
everybody lost by it,  
because it did not reflect the diversity of this country.*

NAN ROBERTSON, *The New York Times*

### 3. THE REPRESENTATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE PRINT MEDIA IN SLOVENIA 1970-2000

Before we embark on discourse analysis to show how the media construct the homosexual as a (stigmatized) social subject, we will examine this discourse in relation to the historical context in which it appears, since a discourse cannot exist outside history. In presenting this historical cross-section, we will highlight those events that influenced, in some way or another, media reporting on homosexuality. As we shall see, homosexuality usually becomes visible and finds its way onto the media agenda when it is perceived as a scandal. This was not only confirmed in Slovenia by the media attention accorded to homosexuality thanks to a series of scandals that dotted the 1980s and 1990s, but was also exploited by some western gay and lesbian movements (here we have in mind primarily the activist group Queer Nation) as a political tactics for attaining visibility in all spheres of public life, not only the media.<sup>6</sup> In the next step we will present a basic statistical analysis of the collected material and then proceed to analyze the elements of the rhetorical structures. The concluding part will delineate the five general principles underpinning the media construction of homosexuality: stereotyping, medicalization, sexualization, secrecy and normalization.

#### 3.1. EARLY DISCUSSIONS OF HOMOSEXUALITY

The first newspaper article that touched upon the issue of homosexuality appeared as early as 1921 in the *Njiva* magazine. In it the anonymous author urged the repeal of an article of the then law penalizing “every act by which the offender sought or found sexual satisfaction in the body of a person of the same sex.”<sup>7</sup> This first reference to homosexuality was followed by a samizdat publication five years later, an essay entitled *Homoseksualnost* (Homosexuality), more than 30 pages in length and signed by Ivan Podlesnik writing under the pseudonym Vindex. His pioneering work, which mainly draws on the ideas and writings of the German author

6 For more on this, see Berlant, Lauren and Elizabeth Freeman (1993): *Queer Nationality*. In: Michael Warner (ed.) (1993): *Fear of a Queer Planet*. *Queer Politics and Social Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, pp. 193-229.

7 Quotation taken from Mozetič, Brane (1990): *Modra svetloba: homoerotična ljubezen v slovenski literaturi* (Blue light: homoerotic love in Slovenian literature), škuc, Ljubljana, p. 55.

Magnus Hirschfeld, was written, much like the newspaper article mentioned above, in support of homosexuality and people of this kind of sexual orientation. Podlesnik's work strikes one as a therapeutic piece, among other reasons, also because in conclusion it offers advice to homosexual men and women. Among other things, Podlesnik encouraged them not to feel unhappy. "Before the supreme judge – their conscience – they are innocent, and the more others consider them guilty, the more innocent they are. They will also overcome their feeling of isolation once they realize that many people throughout history and the world have shouldered the burden of the same destiny. Above all, they should not overlook the fact that their properly understood homosexual love may reward them with the purest kind of happiness, just like any other love, despite the fact that many people disdain it. By making others happy through their homosexual love, they become happy themselves. Through the uplifting of their bodies and souls, this love endows them with so much good that their shouldering of some pain is worthy of it. After all, neither are heterosexuals spared the bitter drops of the intoxicating love potion." (Podlesnik, 1926: 8).

The liberal spirit radiating from these first written references to homosexuality in Slovenia was soon offset by opposing voices mainly coming from those authors who considered homosexuality unnatural and, in accordance with the views of the medical science of the time, labeled it as a disease i.e. psychological disorder. A translation of the work *Orientation Towards the Same Sex* by the Dutch essayist Van Oertringen was published in 1937. The very rendering of the title in Slovene, *Protinaravna čud* (Unnatural Disposition), by the translator signed s. κ., exacerbated Oertringen's position which aimed to present homosexuality as unnatural. In the foreword to the Slovene translation, s. κ. explained that this kind of sexual abuse was widespread among Slovenes, as it was in other European countries, with the exception of Germany, which had been successfully purged of such anomalies by Adolf Hitler when he rose to power.

After the Second World War the issue of homosexuality continued to be primarily the subject of psychological and psychiatric studies and practically absent from public media discourse. Official psychiatry and medicine treated homosexuality as a psychological disorder. For example, in a book entitled *Pastoralna psihologija* (Pastoral Psychology), published immediately after the Second World War in

1946, Anton Trstenjak referred to homosexuals as “sexual psychopaths.” In his opinion, a homosexual person was a representative of “the psychopath of the fanatic type dangerous to humankind.” The same statement reappeared in the second, revised edition of *Pastoralna psihologija*, published in 1987. The medicalization of homosexuality would become, as we shall see later, the pivot of media representations of homosexuality throughout the 1970s, and would also partly persist into the 1980s and 1990s, when the medical discourse was generally taken over and replaced by the human rights discourse.

### 3.1.1. *The Seventies*

The first decade of the period analyzed here, i.e. 1970 to 1980, was characterized by the silence of the print media on this issue, and probably the mass media in general. It was only interrupted by sporadic personal ads that began to appear in the *Nedeljski dnevnik* daily and the *Antena* weekly towards the end of the Sixties, from men seeking *male friends*. Somewhat more media space was dedicated to the discussion about the second paragraph of Article 168 of the Penal Code, according to which every “unnatural act of unchastity between persons of the male sex” was a criminal offense. Although the Penal Code did not mention any such type of unchastity among women, this should not be interpreted as a sign of a liberal approach to homosexuality among women. The invisibility of “women’s love” was actually a consequence of the patriarchal understanding of sexuality and love, according to which a sexual relation between women was less problematic, or, owing to the absence of the male sexual organ, even considered impossible and therefore non-existent.<sup>8</sup>

The problematization of the legislation that defined male homosexuality as a crime, during the early 1970s when sex between men was already decriminalized in many western countries, served as the point of departure for a wider debate on homosexuality. In the print media this issue was addressed on three occasions in 1974 and 1977 by the judge of the Supreme Court, Janez Šinkovec, and the psychiatrist Dr. Jože Lokar who spoke for the *ITD*

<sup>8</sup> The lower visibility of lesbian relationships can be interpreted, from the patriarchal perspective, in the sense suggested by Slovene psychiatrist Janez Rugelj: two women may be actively joined by a man, so such a relationship is at least potentially reproductive, while the sexual act between two men essentially excludes this option.

newspaper. The discourses they used were those of crime and psychiatry, although, viewed from a historical perspective, these two discourses were not necessarily separate, given that they implied a system of logic identical to that by which the repressive social apparatuses operated. In other words, homosexuality as a mental disorder was also considered a criminal offense (and before that, during the reign of the Church, a sin).

The first feature article about homosexuality in the 1970s was entitled “Dolgi pogovor s homoseksualcem” (A long interview with a homosexual) and appeared in two installments, in 1971 and 1972, in *Problemi*. The subtitle of the first part reading “G. K., 40, an intellectual from Zagreb, reveals his genetic mistake” (1, 1971),<sup>9</sup> provides an excellent illustration of a typical media representation of homosexuality in the 1970s and the early 1980s. The platform on which this interview was based set down the frame of reference for the perception of homosexuality, and it is interesting in this respect for at least two reasons. First, it placed homosexuality in the field of the secret and the alien, which, by the way, was a typical approach in media reporting throughout the thirty years analyzed here. Second, it medicalized the issue of homosexuality, much like all other six texts<sup>10</sup> about this issue that appeared in the 1970s. In these texts homosexuality was addressed through medical or psychiatric discourse, partly also criminal discourse, and referred to as a “mistake,” “a mistake of nature,” “genetic mistake,” and so on. In this specific example, the placing of homosexuality in the realm of the secret and the alien is apparent in the use of initials instead of the full name of the interviewee (in the second part he is described as “an anonymous intellectual”). This is understandable if viewed from the perspective of identity protection, but given that such a practice is otherwise typical of crime reporting, it also carries specific information on the connotative level. In other words, it relates homosexuality to concealment, secrecy, shame, rejection, prohibition, crime and so on. Homosexuality is thus presented as a human trait that must be concealed, and indeed, at the time of the interview, this

9 All quotations from newspapers and magazines are equipped with a reference number for the analyzed text and the year of publication. If the name of the source is not mentioned in the specific context, the reference also includes the name of the source along with the reference number and year of publication. For the title and author of the text see the complete list of analyzed texts at the end of this study.

10 The term “text” is here used as a generic name for newspaper and magazine articles, interviews, notices, commentaries, reportages, and the like.

type of sexual behavior was legally prohibited, even though so-called “consensual homosexual acts” between adult individuals had not been penalized in practice since the 1960s, at least not in Slovenia. The subtitle of *A long interview with a homosexual* mentioned above, therefore, superbly outlines the discursive framework that was to set the direction of media representations of homosexuality in succeeding years. Its essential characteristic is that it takes heterosexuality as the point of departure and as the only correct, and one could say, the only healthy sexual practice with respect to which other forms of sexuality (wrong, unnatural, pathological, criminalized) are assessed. Consequently, homosexuality was a genetic mistake and therefore primarily a medical issue. Such stigmatization and delineation of homosexuality as a “different” practice served as a guard against the threat it could pose to our (the reader’s, journalist’s) stable heterosexual identity. As a matter of fact, the media coverage of homosexuality was acceptable only insofar as homosexuality was constructed as different and marginal, hence harmless to the dominant system.

### 3.1.2. *The Eighties*

The number of texts touching upon homosexuality began to increase on a yearly basis in the 1980s, with a major concentration of texts noticeable in 1984. This sudden increase was provoked by the first Magnus festival (Culture and homosexuality), which not only laid the foundation for the organized gay and lesbian movement in Slovenia, but also placed homosexual issues on the agenda of the mass media in Slovenia (and Yugoslavia). Another important achievement of the Magnus festival was the demedicalization of homosexuality in the media discourse and a shift towards a different frame of reference, first that of culture and then of politics.

The Magnus section of the šKUC Forum<sup>11</sup> was constituted, along with the gay scene, as a part of the then alternative culture and new social movements, which was a course of events not typical of global gay and lesbian movements. As Nataša Velikonja (1999) observed, the usual course of events in western metropolises was first the concentration

11 “Magnus” gay organization, which was named after the Magnus festival, was the first gay organization not only in Slovenia, but also Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe. It was established on December 8, 1984. The first lesbian organization was established three years later in 1987, under the auspices of šKUC Forum, a student cultural organization.

of the gay and lesbian population followed by the formation of a critical mass and finally by political, social and cultural upgrading.

Stuart Hall (1993) argues that stigmatized deviant groups can respond to discriminatory practices only by shaping a (political) program and organizing (political) actions that are directed against such practices. Speaking in Foucault's terms, this is resistance provoked by repression on the part of power. Such a process also implies the politicization of the deviant group, since only politicization can ensure it a certain legitimacy within society, while the label "deviant" de-legitimizes it as a non-political subject. The politicization takes place on at least two levels. By putting up opposition to authority, the discriminated group becomes organized with respect to that authority, while at the same time it re-defines retrospectively, through the process of its own organization, the social stigmatization directed against it. The subcultures usually referred to as "deviant" generally offer a wide basis for political organization, and this is precisely what happened in the case of the gay and lesbian movement in Slovenia in 1984: the primarily cultural platform that brought together the homosexual population was soon translated, owing to stigmatization, into a political platform.

The first article in 1984 to capture considerable attention, mainly in the form of readers' letters, was featured by the weekly *Teleks* and entitled "Queers of all nations...". The author, Miroslav Slana Miros, advocated the establishment of the gay and lesbian club and newspaper unleashing a barrage of readers' letters, nineteen in all. The respondents were mainly gays and lesbians themselves, who wished to thank Slana for placing this topic on the agenda of the Slovene media, with the negative responses coming mainly from those who interpreted his writing as a provocation and a scandal.

"Don't tell me that you believe that the world is too blind to see the real purposes behind your support for those poor faggots (or whatever you call them). Do you think that you are the only savior of your own and their faggot asses. ... You publish only those letters which you find suitable. But if someone has an opposite opinion, you don't publish it or you tailor the message to suit your needs. The second important detail is that these faggot texts stretch across entire pages. No wonder! It is much easier to sit in Opera klet, Slon, Daj-dam or similar (Ljubljana restaurants, R. K.) copying those silly texts about faggots, than to hit the road and write a socially useful article. ... If one really

trusted your writing about faggots, one wouldn't dare go out into the street and would put a lock on his ass" (II. *Teleks*, 1984).

Media attention in Slovenia peaked for the second time in 1987, the year of the first bona fide political scandal related to homosexuality, i.e. homosexual culture. The fourth Magnus festival was scheduled to start on May 25, the late Marshal Tito's birthday, and to present a Dutch gay and lesbian production. As this was the year of the events known as the "Slovene syndrome" - scandals related to posters and ceremonies at Tito's birthday - the Belgrade and Sarajevo media interpreted the scheduled start date of the Magnus festival as still another provocation coming from Slovenia. On March 6th, the Belgrade daily *Politika* wrote:

"No one in Ljubljana is alarmed because of the gathering of homosexuals and Magnus gays. ... No one seems to mind that the festival begins on May 25. This homosexual commotion is indeed not new to Ljubljana which is playing host to homosexuals and their escorts for the fourth time, but the start of the festival, May 25, is certainly a novelty. ... There (in Ljubljana, R. K.) a homosexual is not blamed, nor is he subjected to ridicule. Homosexuality is assumed to be a personal matter."

On the same day, another Belgrade daily, *Politika ekspres*, wrote:

"Ljubljana will not be hosting the dirty festival. ... The provocation won't work."

These writings provoked a response from the Yugoslav political leaders, who put pressure on the local government in Slovenia, which then stated that the organization of such a festival in Ljubljana would represent a threat to the healthy part of society. Homosexuality was equated with Aids, which was a practice generally employed by the media in the early 1980s. On March 20, 1987, the Ljubljana daily *Delo* featured the following notice.

"At yesterday's meeting, the members of the Council for Social and Health Policy with the presidency of the RK SZDL (The Republic Committee of the Socialist Alliance of Workers, R. K.) discussed, among other things, information carried by various daily papers pertaining to the announcement that Ljubljana will be hosting a gathering, or rather a congress, of homosexuals with international participation. Following

the publication of this information on Thursday, the Ljubljana municipal inspectors pointed out that this could mean a danger of Aids spread, since this group is one of the highest risk groups. In the opinion of the Council members, the Committee for Health and Social Protection and other bodies should take measures based on arguments presented by the medical profession in order to protect citizens against this disease. The conclusions that followed the long debate were that the warnings issued by the inspectorate do not suffice, so the authorities should prohibit the planned gathering. As has been noted in the standpoints adopted at this session, the reasons for opposing this manifestation are not only of social nature or related to health, but the point at issue is that such manifestation could also have significant economic consequences – especially in the area of tourism – for Slovenia as well as Yugoslavia.”

Once the issue of Aids was introduced, the Sarajevo weekly *Svijet* wrote:

“Are we threatened by Aids if the participants decide to test in practice the issues debated at the congress? ... Therefore, the irritation and strong emotional response of the domestic public is understandable. The public is scared of such threats and fears that participants could extend the agenda of this queer ball financed from the state budget to “practical activities.””

Fearing that Yugoslavia could become a “promised land for fags”, another Sarajevo weekly, *As*, suggested that every straight Yugoslav citizen should wear a tag reading “Faggots? No, thanks!” The article was supported by a picture showing three men naked from the waist up and hugging. The caption read: “Far away from us: taken at some meeting of American homosexuals.” The connotative part of this message is clear: homosexuals are promiscuous and carriers of HIV, therefore dangerous. In other words, homosexuality was sexualized and at the same time presented as something limited to foreign, western countries, and alien to us.

PICTURE 3.1.2.1. FRUITS, NO, THANKS!



The described coverage of homosexuality by the media in wider Yugoslavia, which, just like the media in Slovenia, should be analyzed within the historical context and situated in space and time, i.e. a time when Slovenia began to be constructed as an internal enemy of the common country, reveals the typical media representations of homosexuality during that period. During the first stage of the scandal, the bone of contention was the May 25 celebration, but that was just the tip of the iceberg. As a matter of fact, May 25 was viewed as a kind of sacred day on which “dirty” things were prohibited, so the scheduled beginning of the Magnus festival was seen as a provocation. The assumption behind it was that homosexuality was dirty and, on the next level, unnatural and pathological. In the language of politics, this meant “anti-Communist.” The following is an analysis of the events by Zoja Skušek Močnik in the weekly *Mladina*.

“The case in point is a classic example of instigation procedure: the reader is first stirred up by the issues of individual psychology, then personal and social frustrations are pressed upon, fuel is then added to the flames and feelings channeled towards intolerance and persecution of the minority ... The campaign is taken over by politicians, or, to be more precise, it is exploited by a certain faction within the ruling power. The achievements of the media instigation campaign are then used as the basis for a pogrom against the environment which allows such “provocations,” makes them possible and perhaps even encourages them. This environment then gets its name, the Slovenes, and sexual chauvinism is thus elevated to the rank of national chauvinism” (20, 1987).

The Council for Social and Health Protection, which designated homosexuals as a “risk group,” a notion that by that time had already become obsolete in the struggle to contain Aids, actually treated homosexuals through a prism of the two stereotypes that were typical of the media coverage of Aids during its early stages. The first presented Aids as a disease coming from abroad, so the main problem was the festival’s international character and foreign participants who would presumably bring Aids to Slovenia. In the second stereotype, Aids was a disease restricted to homosexuals exclusively, so every participant was a potential carrier of the virus. The motives that lurked behind these assumptions, the “entirely well-meaning warnings by the Ljubljana inspectors” as *Delo* described them (17, 1987), were purely political. Homosexuality became a tool of revenge in the hands of the opposing political factions in Ljubljana and Belgrade. In an attempt to get rid of such a political stigma and to preserve some of its political credibility on the Yugoslav stage, the Ljubljana political brass decided to add to the stigmatization of homosexuals by exploiting the always-at-hand issue of Aids and the popular, although scientifically uncorroborated, link between Aids and homosexuality. Homosexuality was thus again reduced to sexuality, a construction based on the assumption already suggested by the media in wider Yugoslavia that all homosexuals were promiscuous and were going to have sex en masse during the congress.

The media in Slovenia strongly resisted such a construct of the Yugoslav press, with the exception of *Delo*, “the bulletin of the SZDL,” as *Mladina* described it, which partly supported it. *Delo* “made haste to announce, with all seriousness and in italics, the absurd standpoint misinforming the socialist worker nation that the “congress could mean a risk of Aids spread, because the said group is the highest risk group”” (19, 1987).

The daily *Dnevnik* and the weeklies *Mladina* and *Jana* pointed out that “over the past two years since we have been confronted with this disease ... we should have realized that this is not a homosexuality-related disease but a social phenomenon” (19, *Mladina*, 1987). In an attempt to disqualify the statement of the Council for Social and Health Protection, these papers described the potential channels of Aids transmission.

"Given the several-years-old facts about the potential channels of infection, the safeguarding efforts by our sanitarians aimed at protecting us by all means from this fatal disease belong in the class of the most pointless and the least serious measures of the ruling power (i.e. its department responsible for health protection)" (18, *Jana*, 1987).

However, these several instances of media reporting in Slovenia and the alerting of the readership to discrimination against homosexuals cannot be considered a general trend of the time, neither can we say that since the early 1980s media representations of homosexuality have been invariably tolerant towards gays and lesbians. For example, even though in April of 1987 *Jana* pointed out that the "'well-meaning warning" became a weapon in the hands of those who are haunted by various fears of homosexuals and all types of things different", in September that same year it published several extremely homophobic views of its contributors writing for the advice column entitled *Prostovoljno pred poroto* (Be my jury), who in this specific example were responding to a certain Lea's request for advice concerning her erotic attraction to her female friend.

"You know what young miss? Go to the deuce. Take a look at television propaganda against Aids, don't read too many silly magazines and newspapers, and your attraction to or inclination towards women will go away. In addition, a doctor's advice may be of some help, especially so if that "doctor" turns out to be a good looking guy." (21, 1987).

"Perhaps it is not anything serious and you are just naïve and lusting for friendship. On the other hand, it could be a disease called lesbianism; you know, love between two women." (21, 1987).

"You are probably still very young and homosexuality has been very trendy recently, among both men and women. Calm down or take a closer look at your male schoolmates and you're sure to find something pleasant" (21, 1987).

"Retreat as soon as possible and forget such desires. But if similar tendencies persist, you'll have to seek advice from a psychologist." (21, 1987).

The bulk of the media coverage in the 1980s linked homosexuality to Aids, with many of those texts being articles translated from German and English magazines and featured by *Teleks* and *Mladina*. At least the first period of

the media coverage of Aids, when it was exclusively related to homosexuals, was characterized by a kind of moralistic revenge, particularly on the part of the guardians of morality (especially catholic) and advocates of the patriarchal family. In his analysis of the media response to the issue of Aids, Darko Štrajn, a renowned essayist, wrote:

"In short, Aids has conveniently turned out to be God's wrath, but with two "aesthetic flaws": it leaves lesbians aside, even though they would deserve divine intervention because of their exclusive inclination towards pleasure-seeking, non-procreative sex, while, on the other hand, it threatens those "honest" and God fearing citizens who happen to need blood transfusion. ... The media responded in the usual way. The stories about Rock Hudson, then about the episode of Dynasty which we will be able to see perhaps in 1987, and on top of that various "notices" in the "serious" daily newspapers, for example, "No Aids cases in Slovenia," are used as proof that we are immune to this western danger" (13, 1985).

The previously debated issues such as whether homosexuality was acquired or innate, completely disappeared from the media images of homosexuality that now came in Aids packaging. Instead, the media homed in on the gay lifestyle, presented as promiscuous.

In 1986, the media first reported the political demands of the Magnus group. This in effect means that Magnus managed to place on the media agenda the question of the human rights of gays and lesbians until then completely absent. Magnus demanded the repeal of those sections of the Yugoslav Penal Code that criminalized homosexuality and the insertion of a clause prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation into the Constitution. They also demanded that the government of SFRY should file a protest with the governments of those countries which brutally oppressed the homosexual minority, and that the school curriculum should include information that homosexuality had the same social status as heterosexuality.<sup>12</sup>

The late 1980s, particularly the years following 1987 when the organized gay movement was joined by the

12 The first mention of homosexuality in the Slovene educational curriculum dates from 1980, when courses on health education were introduced into first and second grades of secondary schools. In the textbooks on health, homosexuality comes in a package along with exhibitionism, fetishism, promiscuity, prostitution, incest and rape, under the common title "Unusual sexual behaviors." To put it differently, homosexuality was treated within the framework of psychiatric and medical discourses, similar to what we find in the media.

officially established lesbian organization LL, were characterized by a kind of revolutionary spirit that also suffused media reporting and was related to the preparation of the new constitution of Slovenia and the country's prospective independence. The issue at the forefront was the rights of homosexuals. The weeklies *Mladina*, *Tribuna* and most notably *Teleks*, ran longer articles about the history of the repression of homosexuality and the current social situation of the homosexual minority in Slovenia and abroad. One can also find clearly formulated demands for equal rights for gays and lesbians with special stress placed on the prohibition of discrimination. These appeals were supplemented in the Nineties with explicit demands for the legal recognition of registered same-sex partnership and adoption rights for homosexual couples, meaning demands that in the late 1980s were still only implied in public appeals for equality.

"In our understanding, the "political" initiatives by the Magnus section represent demands for equality and protection of rights. In other words, this is an initiative for the protection and exercising of civilizational achievements which is needed, among other things, precisely because of such opposition. It is obvious that human rights can be protected only by the state, i.e. by being proclaimed as civil rights" (25, *Teleks*, 1988).

The appeals for equality also included a number of other initiatives by the Magnus and LL organizations, for example, "An open letter to the president of the RK SZDL of Slovenia, Jože Smole." In this letter, Magnus and LL invited Smole to publicly express his standpoint regarding the homosexual minority. "Freedom to choose the style of (sexual) life is one of the fundamental human rights, so in our opinion, politicians are elected and paid to recognize fundamental human rights among other things" (22, *Delo*, 1988).

Smole never responded to this open letter, but readers' letters reflected a variety of stances ranging from supportive to opposing ones. Among these, one can find an example of the typical public reasoning which took the equality initiatives to be appeals for the recognition of additional or special rights for gays and lesbians.

"I don't understand what sexual orientation has to do with the Constitution. Article 33 doesn't mention the marital status. ... Heterosexual married couples and common law partners don't have any public spaces or pubs for special-purpose socializing. ... We should not persecute homosexuality, but neither should we advertise or place

special stress on it. ... Do you forget the fact that in our country the age of majority is 18, when young people still have a long way to go before they attain physical and social maturity? And do you forget that the recognition of homosexual marriage would become a fad among people still so very young, and that it would later embitter their heterosexual partnerships, perhaps even make these impossible, once they become fully mature and capable of such a relationship" (23, *Delo*, 1988).

As a rule, such responses overlooked that which is most conspicuous and lies on the surface but is invisible precisely because of that and, moreover, taken for granted. As a matter of fact, the heterosexual lifestyle is embedded in the social order of western civilization, so living conditions have long since been adjusted to it. Protests such as the one above express a suspicion, frequently suggested by the media as well, that homosexuality is just a fad, a transitory state that could prove to be an obstacle for young people once they become serious and want to begin normal life, that is to say, heterosexual life. In line with this reasoning, any addressing of homosexuality was understood as propaganda that was harmful, if only potentially, to young people, while the evident fact that virtually all levels of society, from culture to politics, functioned on the assumption of heterosexuality, was overlooked. The suggestions voiced towards the end of the 1980s that homosexuals should retreat from the public sphere did not come from readers only, but from the police as well. For example, in 1989 the Magnus group complained that "in the past two months [it has] obtained information that physical attacks on homosexual men who walk and gather in the park next to the Cesta VII. Korpusa street near the railway station have been increasing." The head of the police inspectorate with the Office for Internal Affairs in Ljubljana, Pavle Čelik, responded to this complaint in an interview for *Delo* on August 8, 1989. Among other things he stated that "the members of the said section, as well as other homosexuals, should adopt more self-protective behavior. In addition, they should move their "gatherings" from various public places that are not suitable for these. They should be aware that not all places are suitable for dating a partner, not even a heterosexual partner, let alone a homosexual one" (31, 1998).

The appeals for equality mainly coming from gay and lesbian activists and their civil society supporters, represented, in a way, a settling of accounts with a past dominated by discrimination. However, their attempts at convincing the

public probably had effect only on those who were already convinced, given that in the 1990s, with the dispersion and diversification of the print media, the media image of homosexuality once again returned in many respects to the “iron” decade of the 1970s and the early 1980s. While the new social movements played an important role in the run-up to the transition from socialism to post-socialism, they were also the first victims of their own victory. Their “dreams of a brighter future” disappeared into thin air with the adoption of the new Constitution. As a matter of fact, the forces which advocated a return to tradition and the inauguration of the family as a natural form of human living succeeded in expelling the explicit mention of the equality of all people regardless of their sexual orientation from Article 14 of the new Slovene Constitution.

### 3.1.3. *The Nineties*

As already mentioned, with the diversification and pluralization of the media in the 1990s, homosexuality was in many respects re-introduced into the media and often laced with sensationalism. The print media that had addressed these issues in the previous decade disappeared, most notably *Teleks*, a weekly that used to dedicate a sizeable portion of its space to serious considerations of homosexuality from the perspectives of society, culture and politics, thus paving the way for the treatment of homosexuality in terms of human rights. One reason for the folding of *Teleks* that could be heard at the meeting of the *Teleks* section of the Delo publishing company, was that “everybody said that *Teleks* turned into a “queer newspaper.”” The only magazine left on the scene was *Mladina*, which in the climate of the general subsiding of civil society activism and the market struggle for readership, often resorted to a kind of “revolutionary sensationalism.” As a result, reporting on homosexuality was often surrendered to the scandalmongering tabloid press and other newcomer magazines. In addition to the general increase in volume, another interesting feature of the 1990s was an increase in texts belonging in the category of “curiosities” (short notices), a genre unknown in the previous two decades. As regards the print media analyzed here, homosexuality appeared as a subject of short texts of the “Believe it or not” type in little less than 16% of the total number of references, regardless of whether or not the topic in question was a serious political issue. For example,

information about the first homosexual marriage in the world, about legislation pertaining to homosexuality and the like, was often presented within this type of media text. For example, specifically the subject of homosexual marriages, if considered in terms of the type of texts in which it appeared, was both “eliminated” and depoliticized 22% of the time by being placed in the category “Curiosities”.

In the 1990s homosexuality as a different sexual practice was turned into a fad, a peculiarity, once again highly stereotyped and in many ways confined to the same frame of reference as in the past, but with one significant change: it was increasingly demedicalized. It was also increasingly treated as a human rights issue, with two topics promoted by the gay and lesbian movement gaining particular importance: registered partnerships and adoption rights.<sup>13</sup> While until the end of the 1980s these subjects were only implicit in the demands for equality but not openly discussed, in the 1990s they became an unmistakable element of media representations. Even the official policy began to move in the same direction, so in 1997 a group entrusted with the drafting of the law on registered partnerships was formed within the Ministry of Work, Labor and Social Matters.

The media visibility of homosexuals continued to be linked to scandals throughout the 1990s. At least three of these deserve to be mentioned here. The first dates from 1991 when, without stating the reason, the Ljubljana Secretariat for Culture canceled the promised and already approved financial aid for the gay and lesbian magazine *Revolver*. Commenting on this event, Marjan Vidmar, the head of the City Council, stated that the town authority’s “decision not to finance *Revolver* was just like any other decision, for example, not to buy an ice cream to a child, never mind how strongly the child desires it or how thirsty it is; and that’s all there is to it” (37, *Dnevnik*, 1991).

This decision aroused much indignation on the part of the media, which expressed support for homosexual cultural production, describing it as equal to any other type of culture. In so doing, the media exploited the well-established

13 In 1993 the first action pertaining to the registered homosexual partnership that attracted media attention was authored by Aleksander Perdih and Silvo Zupanc. They submitted an initiative to the Constitutional Court for assessment of the constitutionality of several articles of the law on marriage and family relations, since as a same-sex couple they could not marry even though Article 14 of the Slovene Constitution stipulates that everybody is guaranteed the same human rights and freedoms. The government and the secretariat for legislation rejected their initiative and under the pressure and the realization that they didn’t have any chance of winning the case, they themselves retreated on the initiative.

method of listing renowned homosexual artists and people from the field of culture, particularly male, since women were usually excluded from such argumentative categories, and stressed that global cultural production would be much impoverished without “the “pink” artists.”

The town authorities were exposed to mockery, with the media also joining in, as is obvious from the extracts below. The first is taken from the daily *Dnevnik* dated September 10, 1991.

“Apparently the town authorities made yet another “brilliant” move: they turned to psychiatrists for an opinion on whether the number of homosexuals is sufficiently high to justify its support for the magazine mentioned earlier” (40, 1991).

The commentary in *Delo* of June 14, 1991 reads:

“The cancellation of the financial aid for the Roza klub (Pink club, R. K.) without explanation was probably a consequence of their dismay at hearing the news, and perhaps that is their way of justifying the democracy of the majority. This is their proof that the cancellation of funds “does not mean oppressive measures arising from some specific motives.” Oh, how cynical. Of course, the decision was not influenced by any motives, because it was directed by and suffused with prejudices, so the real arguments and explanation were not needed at all” (38, 1991).

An even more tempestuous debate followed two years later, in April 1993, when the educational section of the Roza club published a brochure entitled *Spolnost in aids* (Sexuality and Aids). Dr. Veljko Troha from the Expert Council for Education assessed this brochure as unsuitable for young people, stating that it did not “take into account our, Slovene, family mentality.”<sup>14</sup> The Association for the Democratization of the Mass Media headed by Prof. Anton Dolenc, a doctor of medicine and the president of the Slovene Medical Association, joined the criticism of the brochure on the grounds that it promoted group sex. Its statement, given by Prof. Anton Dolenc on behalf of the Association, said that “unnatural forms of sexuality, often involving abuse, ... are mainly practiced by people of different sexual orientation, who should be tolerated and who are also entitled to receive suitable medical treatment.

<sup>14</sup> Quotation taken from Lesbo (2002): “Enajst let države, enajst let homofobije” (Eleven years of the state, eleven years of homophobia), Lesbo, No 17/18, p. 4

These people are social degenerates because the forms of sexuality they practice can by no means produce offspring, meaning that they are destined to expire within one generation and are a dead branch on the tree of life. If, however, these “degenerates” already have children from their normal relationships and they accustom them to sexual perversities, then they are guilty of abusing their own children in the most sensitive area” (55, *Mladina*, 1993).

While the scandal provoked by the cancellation of financial aid for *Revolver* magazine reverberated through journalistic articles and commentaries, the brochure scandal remained primarily restricted to readers’ letters. When the Association for the Democratization of the Mass Media was “warned” that the equation of homosexuals with “social degenerates” was unacceptable, it responded as follows.

“The assertion that people with different sexual orientations (not only homosexuals), who also live their sexual inclinations, are social degenerates is undoubtedly correct if the term is understood in its original and non-figurative meaning.”

This is followed by the explanation of the etymology of the Slovene term “izrod” (a degenerate) showing that it is derived from “rod” (generation), “roditi” (to give birth), “izroditi” (to stop giving birth). The argument then proceeds as follows.

“A degenerate (izrodek) is especially a being that could give birth but chooses not to do so. Therefore, these are definitely persons with the right sexual capabilities, but committed to different sexuality owing to their psychological structure. In such a case it is also possible to use a figurative meaning: “izpreverči se” (to distort, R. K.), “degenerirati” (to degenerate, R. K.) – “seme se izrodi” (the seed goes bad, R. K.) (see the Lexicon of the Slovene Language from 1962)” (61, *Delo*, 1993).

Following the public appeal, the Slovene Medical Association distanced itself from Dr. Anton Dolenc’s statements given on its behalf, while the World Health Organization assessed this brochure as unproblematic.

One year later, in 1994, the gay and lesbian organizations were celebrating the tenth anniversary of their existence, and the party was planned to take place in the Ljubljana castle, a landmark of the town and a high-profile state-owned site. This plan caused still another scandal and “earned” the homosexual movement further media visibility. The party

in the Ljubljana castle was banned only a few hours before its scheduled start. Dejan Novak, who ran the bar located in the castle, explained the situation as follows:

“I did not get the right information from the škuc (Student’s Cultural Center). They said it was a škuc anniversary. Several hours before the party was due to start, I heard on the radio that it was an anniversary of homosexuals. The profile of this pub is different; it is a state-owned facility and I ‘m afraid that such a thing would have earned it a bad reputation. If we allowed that party to go on, we would probably have lost our regular clientele. They did not pick the right place” (66, *Slovenske novice*, 1994).

The scandal was covered by all mainstream media in Slovenia, and the homophobia of the town authorities once again came under attack.

“A ban on the homosexuals’ party that was to take place in the Ljubljana castle is the work of intolerant conservative groups within the town authorities. ... This event makes Ljubljana even more of a village than it was before. So our piece of advice to the town notabilities is to publish an announcement stating “No entry to the castle for Blacks, Faggots, Lesbians and Turks” (65, *Delo*, 1994).

While the media coverage of homosexuality in the 1970s was characterized by the citing of the opinions of mostly “qualified” professionals (psychiatrists, criminologists, judges etc.) and the same trend, with rare exceptions, continued into the 1980s, the discourse of the 1990s was co-created by gays and lesbians themselves.<sup>15</sup> In addition, homosexuality was increasingly treated in terms of human rights viewed through three kinds of lenses: demographic, political and psychological. The demographic perspective included argumentation that the number of gays and lesbians in Slovenia was not negligible, but this assertion was simultaneously neutralized by the argument that human rights should be ensured to every single (different) person. The discourses of political provenance found expression on two levels: in the second half of the 1990s, when the door to the EU already stood wide open, the implementation of the human rights of gays and lesbians was presented in the context of

<sup>15</sup> The trend was a consequence of the increasing number of public appearances by gays and lesbians, and of media greed for personal stories of homosexuals, which could supposedly increase social tolerance. The fact that precisely personal stories are the ones that sell best and boost circulation was, of course, not mentioned.

Slovenia's increasing alignment with EU policies. Equality had to be ensured, since it was what the EU expected from Slovenia and what would bring additional political points to it. In this context, the most frequently mentioned reference was the Scandinavian countries. On another level, the political argumentation was concerned with the practical aspects such as economic issues, family relations and the like, meaning the areas in which homosexuals are deprived compared to the heterosexual population. The psychologically tinged discourses can be described as including those lines of argumentation that drew attention to the invisibility of this population and the negative psychological impact of concealment on the personal integrity of homosexual persons and their mental health.

### 3.2. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MATERIAL AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The database used in this study, consisting of texts that appeared in the daily newspapers and magazines in Slovenia over the period of 30 years (1970-2000), was based on clippings provided by the Roza club, Magnus and LL organizations. These clippings are a reliable source of media texts about homosexuality which in our estimation account for more than 90% of all published texts. The database lacks primarily texts published in the local (regional) dailies, but in our opinion the share of these was insignificant.

The sample<sup>16</sup> consisted of 644 texts. The criterion for inclusion was the main subject of the text: the political, social, cultural and other dimensions of homosexuality. The texts that appeared in *Teleks's* supplement *Gay strani* (Gay pages) from the beginning of 1990 to the folding of the magazine in March of the same year, were not included in the sample. The gay pages were a predecessor of the gay and lesbian press (*Revolver*, *Pandora*, *Lesbo* and others), and the authors were mainly gay and lesbian activists, so these texts did not fit into our pattern of common media texts on this subject. Furthermore, the sample does not include short announcements of gay and lesbian films in television schedules and the like.

60% of the texts in our sample appeared in daily newspapers, and 39% in various magazines. Of these, 57

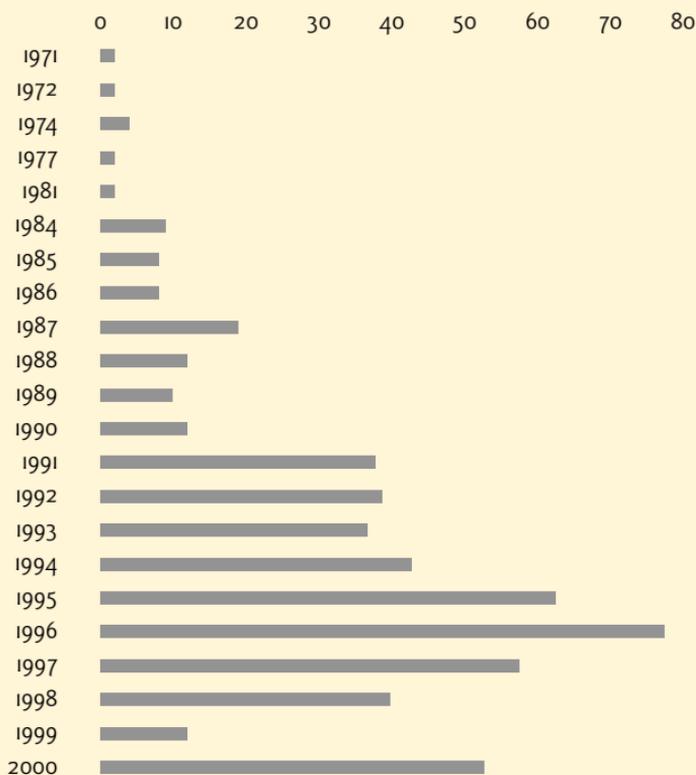
<sup>16</sup> Statistically, we could speak of the population. But given that our database is not complete, although quantitatively it exceeds the usual statistical understanding of the sample, we will adhere to the term "sample."

(8.9%) were readers' letters and 28 (4.3%) open letters, proclamations or appeals by the gay and lesbian organizations. 86.8% of the texts were written by journalists, among these 3% were translated texts or recapitulations of articles from foreign newspapers and magazines. In the further statistical analysis of the sample, we take into account only domestic and translated journalistic texts. The readers' letters and gay and lesbian movements' initiatives are excluded because these data would alter the frequency distribution figures and the statistical picture of the analyzed sample.

The majority of the texts included in our analysis appeared in the daily *Delo* (22.4%), followed by the weekly *Mladina* (17.5%), the daily *Dnevnik* (13.2%), the tabloid daily *Slovenske novice* (8.1%), the weekly *Telex* (5.4%) and so on.<sup>17</sup> The number of texts dramatically increased in the 1990s, primarily because of the diversification of the media space which led to a whole range of new print media. Homosexuality as a subject of media coverage entered the mainstream in the 1990s, which was another reason for the increase in the number of texts about homosexuality.

<sup>17</sup> The texts analyzed in this study were those published in the following newspapers and magazines: *Delo*, *Mladina*, *Dnevnik*, *Slovenske novice*, *Teleks*, *Republika*, *Večer*, *Jana*, *Stop*, *7D*, *Sobotna priloga Dela*, *Tribuna*, *Kaj*, *Razgledi*, *Ona*, *Slovenec*, *ITD*, *Primorske novice*, *Glamur*, *M'zin*, *Vikend Magazin*, *Nedeljski dnevnik*, *Problemi*, *Novi tednik NT & RC*, *Nova doba*, *As*, *Nedelo*, *Fokus*, *Mag*, *Družina*, *Antena*, *Demokracija*, *Naša žena*, *Stražni stolp*, *Katedra*, *Moški svet* and *Lady*.

CHART 3.2.1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEXTS ON A TIME SCALE



The number of texts increased until 1996, the year when the media in Slovenia extensively wrote about homosexual marriages (as many as 32% of all texts about homosexual marriages appeared in 1996). A significant decline in 1999 should be attributed to a database shortfall for this year, since we cannot think of any other reason for such a drastic fall. The number of articles increased at the outbreak of the scandals mentioned in the introduction to this chapter (this is especially true of the year 1987). Their number also rose during the summer season, probably on account of the doldrums in the work year of journalists, and in December, when the media covered World Aids Day and the gay and lesbian film festival held in Ljubljana.

The analysis of the gathered materials yielded 13 categories of subjects covered by the media (here listed in alphabetical order).

1. *Aids* (texts about Aids and similar issues).
2. *Celebrities* (texts about the public or private lives of famous gays and lesbians).
3. *Crime* (texts that appeared on crime pages and the coverage of various criminal offenses committed by gays and lesbians).
4. *Culture* (ratings and announcements of cultural events, e.g. gay and lesbian film festival, reviews of films, books and so on).
5. *Europe, the world* (texts about gay and lesbian activism, events, legislation and policies in the EU and other countries).
6. *History* (texts about the global history of homosexuality or the history of gay and lesbian movements in Slovenia).
7. *Lifestyles* (texts about homosexuality as a lifestyle, about homosexuality itself, and “pink money”).
8. *Politics* (texts about discrimination, equality, tolerance, legislation and the like; also reports from various conferences, round table discussions and camps organized by gay and lesbian associations).
9. *Registered partnership* (texts about the legislation pertaining to registered same-sex partnerships, homosexual marriages and adoption rights at home and abroad).
10. *Scandals* (texts about the Magnus festival, the termination of financial aid to Revolver magazine, a ban on the celebration of the tenth anniversary of homosexual activism, the publication of the leaflet Sexuality and Aids and the like).
11. *Scene* (texts about the gay and lesbian scene, events in clubs like K4 which ran a gay disco on Sundays and the like).
12. *Therapy and causes* (texts in which journalists seek the causes of homosexuality and report on various “treatments” that allegedly cure homosexuality).
13. *Other*.

The same text was often classed under more than one category, since longer articles covered more than one of these categories.

TABLE 3.2.2. TEXTS BY SUBJECTS AND DECADES

N <sup>o</sup> . TOPICS	THE 1ST DECADE (1970-1980)		THE 2ND DECADE (1981-1990)		THE 3RD DECADE (1991-2000)		TOTAL	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1 SCENES	-	-	10	11.9	43	9.2	53	9.4
2 AIDS	-	-	27	32.1	13	2.8	40	7.2
3 EUROPE, THE WORLD	-	-	-	-	53	11.3	53	9.5
4 CRIME	-	-	1	1.2	23	4.9	24	4.2
5 CULTURE	-	-	15	17.8	122	26.0	137	24.5
6 POLITICS	2	33.3	29	34.5	136	28.9	167	29.8
7 REGISTERED PARTNERSHIP	-	-	-	-	79	16.8	79	14.1
8 SCENE	-	-	1	1.2	60	12.8	61	10.9
9 LIFESTYLE	3	50.0	27	32.1	108	23.0	138	24.7
10 CURE AND CAUSES	4	66.6	7	8.3	22	4.7	33	5.9
11 HISTORY	1	16.6	4	4.8	14	2.9	19	3.4
12 CELEBRITIES	-	-	-	-	11	2.3	11	2.0
13 OTHER	-	-	4	4.8	40	8.5	44	7.8
TOTAL (BY DECADES)	6		84		469		559	

The six texts that appeared in the decade 1970-1980 were primarily concerned with the causes of homosexuality and treatment options, and attempted to answer the question of what homosexuality actually was. In the next two decades the most frequently debated subjects were political in character. In the 1980s the political perspective was a result of the operation of new social movements and newly formed gay and lesbian activist groups, while in the 1990s the contributing factor involved events related to the EU (and the world in general), particularly in the area of anti-discriminatory legislation. In contrast to other social movements that began to fade at the end of the 1980s, gay and lesbian activism preserved vitality throughout the 1990s, with workshops, protests, petitions and similar actions attracting considerable media attention.

The earliest text on Aids in our sample dates from 1985. Homosexuality first appeared on a crime page in 1989; the first report on registered same-sex partnership dates from 1992, followed by more and more texts about this area of legislation in Europe and elsewhere.

An important place in these texts is occupied by culture, where the gay and lesbian film festival and especially various books serve as a framework for the placing of homosexuality issues on the mass media agenda. The third most frequently treated subject is lifestyle, or rather, the question of who homosexuals are (the media answer to this question will be treated in more detail later).

In the next chapter the statistical data will be translated into content analysis in an attempt to establish how the media discourse presents homosexuality. The individual topics will be combined to show the five basic mechanisms of media representation of homosexuality: stereotyping, medicalization, sexualization, secrecy and normalization.

#### 4. STEREOTYPING

*“Since homosexuals don’t have children they are not very thrifty and like to spend money on most diverse pleasures; they are fervent visitors of cultural events and, as a rule, spend a lot of money on home decoration” (75, Delo, 1996).*

In July 1989, *Jana*, the most popular women’s magazine of the time, ran an eye-catching headline printed in large, bold typeface: “Is your son a homosexual?” (28, 1989). The article was unsigned, probably because it was a translation from a similar foreign magazine. “Concerned” parents could find in it an instant answer to their dilemma, while other accidental readers, who were confident about the correct (heterosexual) identity of their sons, could find a precise definition of a homosexual. This popular “psychological text,” whose presumable credibility rested on the claim that its “co-creators were young homosexuals among others” (28, 1989), actually listed a number of stereotypical feminine traits that pandered to a common-sense image of effeminate gays and of a “woman’s soul in the man’s body.”

1. “Does your son practice excessive body care? .... 2. Does he perhaps apply discreet make-up? ... Or dye his hair? ... 3. Does he have a very keen sense for fashion? ... 4. Would you describe his room as “tasteful and elegant” rather than “youthfully practical?” 5. Which types of TV programs does he watch? Does he prefer tearful love movies over brutal westerns? ... 6. Does he avoid tests of courage, for example, tree climbing and window breaking? ... 7. What do his gestures look like? Is his walk soft, springy? ... Does he prefer self-invented dance when in a disco? ... 8. Does he meet many sweet girls but all of them, without exception, have one mistake – none is suitable? ... 9. When he sees a picture of a naked woman, does he say “she’s ok” without even looking at it closely? ... 10. Do you have an indefinite feeling that your son has been hiding something from you? (28, 1989).”

Five “yes” answers do not yet “prove that your son is different.” In an ultimate situation, if no other solution is possible, the best the parents can do is “let the child know that they appreciate and accept him regardless of his erotic preferences” (28, 1989).

The concept of a stereotype was introduced into psychology in 1922 by the American author Walter Lippman. His basic idea was that stereotypes were simple, erroneous, resistant to change, and most frequently mediated (not a

result of a direct experience). The basis of stereotypes is economy of effort and the preservation of one's own social position.

*"We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception. ... [A] stereotype may be so consistently and authoritatively transmitted in each generation from parents to child that it seems almost like a biological fact. ... There is another reason, besides the economy of effort, why we so often hold to our stereotypes when we might pursue a more disinterested vision. The system of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defense of our position in society. ... No wonder, then, that any disturbance of the stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundation of the universe" (Lippman, 1922:67-71)*

Gill Branston and Roy Stafford (2001) write that stereotypes are always present, although their constituent parts change over time. A characteristic of a stereotype is that it includes both the categorization and the evaluation of the group to which it refers. A stereotype consists of simple, easily memorized and generally recognized properties of certain people or a group. Everything connected to such people or groups is reduced to these properties, both exaggerated and simplified by a stereotype. It fixes these properties as unchangeable and eternal. Hall (1997:258) argues that stereotyping "reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes "difference"."

The logic of stereotyping, which is used to reduce the complexity of the world in order to categorize it into tractable images, is simple: in defining some group, the most prominent place is given to certain selected characteristics presumably belonging to that group, which are then presented as inherent to all of its members from time immemorial. In the next step, these characteristics, which are usually a result of historical processes, become the explication of a specific position of that group in society. The power of stereotype thus lies in the fact that it is capable of presenting some property as realistic, that is to say, as typically belonging to that specific group. Stereotypes are reinforced through various media representations and modes of communication along with the belief that the attributed characteristics are central to a specific group and invariably realistic.

An important feature of stereotyping is segregation: the normal and the acceptable is set apart from the abnormal and the unacceptable. This boils down to exclusion which symbolically sets down frontiers and excludes anything that “does not fit in.” “Stereotyping, in other words, is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the “normal” and the “deviant”, the “normal” and the “pathological”, the “acceptable” and the “unacceptable”, what “belongs” and what does not or is “Other”, between “insiders” and “outsiders”, Us and Them” (Hall, 1997:258).

Quasthoff (1989), who analyzed media reporting on the minorities, writes that stereotypes take on the form of logical judgment, which exploits simplification or generalization to attribute or deny to some group of people certain qualities or behavioral patterns. According to Quasthoff, social stereotypes have a dual function: they are an integral part of an authoritarian system as described by Adorno (1999), while at the same time they serve the principle of the scapegoat. Stereotypes are further important for their cognitive-linguistic function, since they simplify communication within a specific group with regard to other groups, strengthen the feeling of belonging and simultaneously alienate other groups.

Quasthoff (1973, in Mitten and Wodak, 1993:7-8), distinguishes between four types of sentences incorporating stereotypes.

1. Sentences that, viewed from the analytical standpoint, express the truth. This is a basic form followed by the majority of stereotypes. It employs the simple attributing of certain qualities or types of behavior to a selected group. In terms of the sentence structure, such a group becomes the sentence subject and its quality the sentence predicate. Although such sentences have the form of a statement, viewed from the perspective of formal logic they are judgments. For example: “The Slovenes are hard-working people”.
2. The second group includes what are called “modified” statements, in which the power of stereotype is reduced through the use of signifiers appearing on the surface of the sentence structure. For example: *It is said* that homosexuals are promiscuous.
3. The third group consists of sentences directly expressing the subject’s opinion, meaning that the subject of the statement

attributes opinion to himself/herself. For example: *I think (I'm convinced etc.) that Black people are lazy.*

4. The fourth category consists of linguistic forms in which a stereotype is implicit. For example: *He is a Jew but very kind.*

Mitten and Wodak (1993) argue that today, owing to the predominance of latent and subtle prejudice patterns, stereotypes are mainly expressed using sentences of types 2. and 4.

The majority of stereotypes in media representations of homosexuality have been historically based on the notion that gender and its social implications are biologically determined by sex. The production of stereotyped media images of homosexuality, therefore, takes place within the cognitive framework of a social gender schema based on a dualistic and hierarchical model of the biological determination of sexes. According to Devor (1987), all people are presumed to be either of male or female sex, an affiliation which is permanent, while the physical attributes of a specific sex determine one's gender based on the related, inherent, attributes of femininity or masculinity. The basic tool and the criterion for distinguishing between the two is the presence or absence of the indicators of masculinity. In other words, if something is not masculine then it is feminine. In this formulation, sex and gender are so closely connected that they are perceived as inseparable. Although social scientists treat femininity and masculinity as culturally variable categories, social roles within the popular gender schema applied in everyday life are still understood as closely connected with biological sex.

*“Exclusion is based on a discourse about difference that shifts away or deviates from the norm; today, the basis of profound homophobia is a renewed fascination with the category of “gender” and a consensus on “complementariness.” The norm is based on an axiom that there are two sexes, male and female (a biological axiom) and that these are congruent (a social axiom derived from the biological one). This type of diction is extended to all other areas; accordingly, sexuality or sexual desire are both perceived as the linear consequences of the complementariness of the sexes and not of the complex cultural processes” (Velikonja, 2001: 396).*

In trying to answer the question of who gays and lesbians are and how to distinguish them, the media use precisely this rigid popular schema. This produces strict distinctions within media representations, where gays appear as effeminate and lesbians as masculine, resulting in disappointment when these images prove false in direct contacts with gays and lesbians.

“There is no obvious sign”, writes one *Jana* journalist, “that these two women are different; they do not “emanate” anything that could warn you that “something different” is involved there” (29, 1989). Similarly, the newspaper *Kaj* ran an article about Belgrade homosexuals, taken from the Belgrade magazine *Ilustrovana politika*. “He then appeared. Tall and slim, with feminine gestures. He introduced himself as Milanka (all homosexuals adopted women’s names)” (24, 1989). An article entitled “When he plays with teddy bears”, featured in *Ona*, opens with the journalist’s conclusion that “if a young man is fond of plush animal toys and likes tenderness without sex ... [it is] appropriate to ask whether, perhaps, he is gay, although things are not always what they seem on the face of it” (93, 2000). The journalist then proceeds:

“He has a tender, melodious voice, wears tight clothes, adores plush animals and collects objects that usually appeal to women. He always wears a soft, flowery fragrance. He never presses you to have sex. In fact, he prefers to be fondled like a baby. When talking to you, he never uses dirty references to female or male sexual organs. He rarely touches your intimate body parts. For him, you are a kind of intangible goddess. ... Your mother says that he is probably one of the queer club. ... The fact that he is fond of plush teddy bears and tenderness without sex does not yet point to homosexual preferences” (93, 2000).

“An original study of domestic feminists and lesbians” that was published by the magazine *7D* in five installments, is a mosaic of stereotypical media representations.

“Some are capable of accomplishing superbly a man’s work and like to take the lead. Others remain shy and tender, and retreat among their cosmetics. This resembles a man-to-woman relationship, but, in the given example, *a man is a woman*.<sup>18</sup> ... Many Slovene lesbians are invisibly integrated into the everyday social fabric and *are not quarrelsome*. Still others, particularly those who have established contacts with

<sup>18</sup> All parts in italics are stressed by the author if not specified otherwise.

Italian lesbians, have already bathed in the sea of misunderstanding and conflict. These conflicts have not ended in murders like those about which we can read in the stories about male homosexuals featured in foreign newspapers, where a (male) *homosexual cut his partner's throat with a golden dagger out of jealousy*" (26, 1988).

The division of social roles between homosexual partners is another issue repeatedly addressed by the interviewers of gays and lesbians, for example, the author of "A long interview with a homosexual."

"Tell me, in these relationships, are you passive? Are you more feminine, or, in everyday terms and categories, would you say that in a homosexual love relationship you would play the woman's role?" (1, *Problemi*, 1971).

In another article also dating from 1971, the stereotype is coupled with a confusion of terms resulting in transvestism being presented as a form of homosexuality. "Is it true that there are "she" and "he" male homosexuals, where "she" dresses as a woman, so that this type of homosexual can be distinguished when one meets him in the street?" (5, *ITD*, 1977). Dr. Jože Lokar rejected this assertion stating that "80% of homosexual men at the least do not show any apparent signs by which one can distinguish them at first glance" (5, *ibid.*).

Similarly, a *Jana* journalist asks: "Doesn't one of the partners take on the male role?" (29, 1989) and later admits that none of the stereotypes she had been aware of was confirmed in practice. "When Anja and Irena came in ... the first stereotype proved false, the one that all lesbians are masculine in appearance and somewhat robust and that they strive to resemble men as closely as possible although they do not like them" (29, 1989).

Stereotypes, as Mitten and Wodak (1993) concluded, frequently take on the form of modified statements, in which the property of a stereotype is attributed to some larger entity, while the journalist only checks the credibility of such representations.

"It is generally believed that male homosexuals are effeminate, while female homosexuals are masculine," writes a journalist in *Kaj*, and in the next step rejects this general belief stating that "research has not corroborated this; the findings show that homosexuals greatly differ in their looks, so generalizations are not justified" (76, 1996).

The manner in which we perceive the relationship between man and woman in western civilization is in many respects based on the traditional division of sexual roles. During the Middle Ages, Christianity placed a ban on and proclaimed sinful all forms of sexual act, both heterosexual and homosexual, which did not fit into the procreation formula. In addition, it prescribed the position of both partners during the sexual act allowing only the missionary position in which the woman plays a passive and the man an active role. This distinction was also extended to other social roles of both sexes. The woman is passive, dependent on the man, obedient and so on, while the man, seen as the opposite pole, is active, independent and the like.

Even though the media write about the division of roles in gay or lesbian relations and pose questions about it (frequently rejecting such divisions), the source of these divisions is, however, essentially sexual in nature. A homosexual relationship is problematic because one man is subordinated (and conversely, one woman takes on the active role). Past legislation was much more punitive of a man playing a passive part in a homosexual relationship, because such a man renounced his "real role" (which is supposed to be biologically determined), while the active men preserved it. It is precisely this division taking place in bed that is the point of departure in media representations of men as effeminate (because they assume the woman's role) and conversely, of women as masculine, because they play the role of the man. The application of a homosexual sexual act to a patriarchal heterosexual matrix obscures the borderline between the active and the passive roles in such a relationship, so both male partners are constituted as feminine and both women partners as masculine.

The notions of gays' femininity and lesbians' masculinity frequently transpire in the form of the fourth sentence type in Quasthoff's schema: one which expresses a stereotype implicitly, often subconsciously or unintentionally.

"Helena Blagne greatly fascinated gays and lesbians with the dreamy texts of her songs which, speaking about love towards men, seem the ideal mirror for the *suffering, suppressed gay soul*, so they made her into their icon" (68, *Slovenske novice*, 1995).

An entirely explicit feminization of homosexuality is present in the second part of "A long interview with a homosexual" from 1972.

"Since you like to be in their company [women's company, р. к.], does it feel like being among women of your age, well, men of your age? ... I'd say that you are close to them. Do you know why "close"? Is it because you are on their side of the river, on the women's side, so there is less of that bipolarity there" (2, *Problemi*, 1972).

A journalist writing for *Jana* visited the Roza gay club in 1993 and described gays using only positive stereotypes.

"After taking off his coat, the gorgeous guy went back to his boyfriend and kissed him on the lips." Or: "There were many young men who deserve praise for their trim looks, beauty and fashionable clothes" (51, 1993).

By contrast, the picture of lesbians is just the opposite.

"I remember Bojana from a disco because she was somewhat more attractive, although obviously none of the three women I talked to devotes much attention to her looks" (52, 1993).

An important component of stereotyping involves commonsensical explanations of various causes of homosexuality. These explanations, similar to the division of roles in a relationship, draw on assumptions of biologically determined innate sexual preference, where the reproductive imperative ensures that men love women and women love men. Those who do not fit into this schema undoubtedly hate those whom they are supposed to love.

"Take, for example, men with predominantly heterosexual preferences who have some sexual difficulty, for example, they fear women or are impotent. Many among them may become involved in homosexual relations [...]

*It is also said that some homosexuals actually flee from women whom they see as excessively strong or excessively emancipated partners.*

There is probably a grain of truth in this. To be a man is increasingly tiring. ... On the other hand, in my opinion, the press, the movies and television advertise a kind of hyper-sexuality, or a type of man that does not exist in real life. ... So, faced with these "exemplary models" but unable to live up to them, some men begin to believe that they are not normal, although, of course, they are. They begin to avoid women ... so such a man may choose to escape to a homosexual relationship in which it is not necessary to prove oneself in the way our information sources try to convince us we should" (4, *ITD*, 1974).

In addition to these semantics-based techniques of disguising stereotypes, another useful method, which often conceals implicit homophobia, is falling back on scientific evidence.

“Simon Levey has been aware that he is a homosexual since the age of 20. He had all the characteristics attributed to that group by psychologists: dislike of rough sporting disciplines, a hostile relationship with his father and excessive attachment to his mother – which is Freud’s tested recipe for homosexuality” (43. *Slovenec*, 1992).

Lešnik (1991: XII) writes that “scientific thesis and speculations in their simplified forms sometimes reverberate through popular images long after they have been discarded by science; in addition, they frequently take over popular images or become comfortable with them.” The presumably time-tested – and very distorted – *Freudian recipe for homosexuality* thus became part of the social representation of homosexuals. Among those who drew attention to this was van Dijk (1985), in whose socio-psychological schema stereotypes are not understood solely as a form of individual conviction or feeling towards a specific social group, but as a social representation of a specific group or its members shared by the members of an opposite group. Van Dijk argues that three types of long-term memory are involved in the production of stereotypes: semantic memory, episodic memory and the control system.

According to van Dijk, semantic memory is the social memory which stores the collective beliefs of a specific society. These beliefs are organized as attitudes towards something, and represent a cognitive basis for the processing of information about the members of external groups. Our own experiences and perceptions thus bear the framework of the general social cognitive schemas of representations and beliefs. The representations are invariably linked to an already existing model which is acquired at the time of socialization. In verbal statements these representations appear as generally accepted facts, usually isolated from the original context (e.g. Jews are good businessmen).

The episodic memory stores personal experiences and events along with the patterns abstracted from these experiences. Accordingly, general patterns are a result of the linking of personal experiences with the semantic memory. What is involved here is a simple logic of generalization, whereby, for example, one bad experience when doing busi-

ness with Jews leads to the conviction that doing business with Jews is invariably a bad experience.

The third part of the long-term memory in van Dijk's matrix is a control system. Its function is to link the communication objectives and interests, i.e. convictions, with the situational and personal social circumstances (e.g. one's level of education, gender, attitude towards the person to whom it refers etc.) The control system regulates the flow of information from long-term memory into short-term memory. One of the main strategies of this control system is the linking of the positive self-image with the existing negative attitude, in our example, the negative attitude towards Jews. The positive self-image thus finds expression through sentences such as "*I personally have nothing against lesbians, but neighbors say that...*"

The interaction of these three types of memory directly and indirectly influences the coding/decoding of images about minorities. Van Dijk's model can serve as an excellent explanation of the cognitive process unfolding in the reader of a given text (e.g. the reader of an article about homosexuality): the one-time experience, statements, symbols and the like are attributed to the general schema, thus confirming the existing stereotypes.

## 5. MEDICALIZATION AND CAUSES OF HOMOSEXUALITY

On August 7, 1993 the *Sobotna priloga*, a Saturday supplement of the *Delo* daily, ran a long (translated) article about the discovery of a homosexual gene. According to this article, this was the first, conclusive scientific evidence that homosexuality had a genetic basis.

"An immediate consequence of this news is that homosexuality is simply a defect or a disease, as it had been classified, until recently, by institutions such as the World Health Organization. The next development could be a test which would enable parents to abort a child with this gene, just as they do at present if the child has a gene for the fibrosis. (59, *Sobotna priloga*, 1993).

The reporting of scientific findings purporting to prove the biological determinants of homosexuality was a constant feature of the media coverage in the 1990s, and particularly in the case of the subject of a cure for homosexuality. As a matter of fact, through the use of psychiatric discourse, homosexuality had been turned into a medical problem, a disease that required a treatment, and as such it became an item on the mass media agenda. Seen as a counterpart to heterosexuality, it was constituted as a disease in order to enable the representation of heterosexuality as a biological fact and then as a healthy and normal sexual practice. What we actually have here is an exclusion policy that rules out the co-existence of both sexual practices and because of that disqualifies one in order to be able to accord to the other the supremacy of naturalness. The objective of the medicalization of homosexuality is to eliminate and eradicate it, and in order to be able to do this, homosexuality must first be recognized as a disease or a disorder.

In the process of medicalization, homosexuality first stopped being labeled as a sin and then as a social crime, a designation that prevailed until the end of the 18th century, and was eventually constituted as a disease. Accordingly, homosexuals were no longer regarded as criminals but as patients. The police and priests, formerly functioning as the agents of social control, were replaced by doctors, and society began to demand healing rather than punishment. After the French revolution this former crime punishable with death was turned by the newly emerging science of psychiatry into its subject of study.

Edward Albert (1999) has stressed that one essential consequence of such transformations is a change in perception. The transformation from the deviant into the pathological constructs new groups of people whose common denominators become, for example, mental disorder, alcoholism, drug abuse and so on. Even though the medical model of a mental disorder seems to be detached from the notion of punishment and is more compatible with humanitarian ideas, the process of medicalization does not necessarily lead to destigmatization. The patients are still held responsible for their disease and blamed for it. For example, those individuals who choose to adopt the type of behavior that seems to threaten the ethical norms of society, soon lose the label of patient and end in the category of deviants.

Even in the 1990s the media images of homosexuality could not completely shake off medical and psychiatric overtones. One reason was that many explanations about the causes of homosexuality coming from the psychiatric and medical circles had been immensely popularized, so they continued to reverberate through the realm of common sense perceptions even after they were discarded by science. The psychiatric discourse tailored the perceptions of homosexuals, while the media reproduced and reinforced these. At the beginning of the period analyzed here, the joint power of the medical and media discourses first constituted the homosexual as an (incurable) mental patient, and then, in the 1990s, began to affirm the opposite viewpoint – that homosexuality was not a disease. That was actually the only change that occurred within these three decades as far as the medicalization of homosexuality is concerned. In other words, the constant link between homosexuality and psychiatry, although eventually not in terms of disease, means that homosexuality was still forced into the context of psychiatry and repeatedly presented as an exclusively psychiatric and medical issue.

In the 1970s, journalists, assisted by their interviewees, put forward various theories about the causes of homosexuality. Acquired homosexuality, i.e. the free choice of homosexual practice, came to be related to perversion, and innate homosexuality to destiny. Those who were believed to have been born homosexuals were much better off, since that implied a degree of fatality and was understood as a fact of their identity, while acquired homosexuality implied free choice, and a wrong one at that. The following is the argumentation of the Supreme Court judge Mr. Šinkovec,

who in an interview in 1974 advocated the abolition of the second paragraph of Article 168 of the Penal Code which criminalized homosexuality.

"After all, many homosexuals, as indicated by many confidential columns in various magazines, want to be helped and *would like to get rid of such inclinations*. But with the Penal Code hovering above their heads, they have to face another obstacle – they live in fear of accusations and contempt and perhaps that is one reason why they decide not to seek help." (3, *ITD*, 1974).

Šinkovec's standpoint that homosexuals were free to do whatever they wanted as long as their sexual relations were consensual and did not threaten others, and his belief that the removal of the controversial clause from the Penal Code would help reduce violence towards homosexuals, turned out to be only ostensibly tolerant. His argument for the decriminalization of homosexuality actually revealed a wish to normalize homosexuality, that is to say, to encourage homosexuals "to get rid of their inclinations" (3, *ITD*, 1974). The abolition of this clause would thus function as pressure towards the normalization of the abnormal.<sup>19</sup>

The range of presumable causes of homosexuality is varied. While some held that homosexuality (could be) was the first sign that the "humankind as a species is moving towards its extinction" (1, *Problemi*, 1971), others argued that the culprits were possessive mothers who "enshroud their sons with deep emotions, enclose them in their excessively emotional women's world, which prevents them from becoming independent and achieving recognition through their male role. A boy thus becomes uncertain and incapable of independent life; he fears to adopt the role women expect from him, so when it comes to emotional relationships he prefers to retreat to his own world that is less "dangerous", less responsible and perhaps more easily comprehensible" (4, *ITD*, 1974).

The search for the cause of homosexuality is actually the search for an explanation of *what went wrong and who is responsible* for the development of homosexual orientations, since the point of departure in all of these theories is the idea that the only healthy practice is a heterosexual

19 When the interviewee from "A long interview with a homosexual" went to a doctor for a consultation, the doctor's advice was as follows: "I advise you ..., to lay one after another (woman, R.K); you may not like it ninety-nine times, but the hundredth time you will get to like it" (1, *Problemi*, 1971).

practice, so there must have been some mistake leading to homosexuality. Although medicine and psychiatry have abolished the prefix pointing to a disease, the search for the causes of homosexuality repeatedly constructs it as a pathological state.

Dr. Lokar, who in the 1970s virtually had the status of an authority in the media discourse on homosexuality, formally rejected the connection between homosexuality and disease, stating that “in this connection ... the term “disease” is usually avoided; in my opinion a more suitable term would be “a disorder” or “a deviation” (4, *ITD*, 1974). Yet his answers nevertheless imply that homosexuality is a disease. For example, when asked about the cure for homosexuality he replied:

“As a rule, all those who continue to be wholly homosexual despite their troubled experience, that is to say, those who have no heterosexual inclinations, are deemed to be beyond *healing*. ... You will never manage to make a *healthy heterosexual out of such men*” (4, *ibid.*).

Similar implications relating homosexuality to disease are also present in the replies of the Supreme Court judge Janez Šinkovec, in whose opinion homosexuality was not socially harmful, but spread rapidly. The use of the verb “spread” in this context connotes a disease or a virus.

“The social *threat* of homosexuality discussed here is obviously not large, since public prosecutors do not prosecute these offenders, although surveys conducted by some foreign sexologists indicate that homosexuality is *spreading rapidly*. Probably we are not an exception in this sense” (3, *ITD*, 1974).

In the 1980s, and quite often in the 1990s, media representations of homosexuality were closely related to the opinions of doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists, who scientifically rejected (or, more rarely, confirmed) the assumption that homosexuality was a pathological state. The issue of homosexuality was institutionalized, and the last and indisputable verdict was left to the representatives of these expert institutions. But their statements for the media often extended beyond the limits of their profession and touched upon other fields, particularly that of morality and ethics, at times even aesthetics. In an article entitled *Homoseksualci pod (ne)svobodnim soncem* (Homosexuals under the (un)free Sun) from 1984, which, as usual, was concluded with an ex-

pert opinion, Dr. Hubert Požarnik of the Center for Mental Health stated, among other things, that homosexuals were “by no means disturbed ... As regards lesbians, it is even believed that they are *better looking and more clever*. 10% of homosexuals at the most could be said to fit into popular representation patterns, that is to say, they have narrow hips, feminine voice, walk in a special way and so on” (7, *Nedeljski dnevnik*, 1984). Vinko Majcen, Msc, the head of the psychology section with the Territorial Defense Units gave similar moral judgments in 1991. The following is his statement taken from an interview given to the daily *Večer* about homosexuals in the Slovene army.

“We have studied this *problem* at the meeting of psychologists, and we all agreed that we in the military do not advocate homosexuality, but neither do we take any special measures to prevent it ... Probably the development carries with it *deviant phenomena* such as drugs and homosexuality ... but here it’s still only in its infancy ... However, this kind of sexual preference is *often connected with some other neurotic or emotional disorder*. Specifically *homosexuality is often connected with drugs* and becomes manifested as special forms of behavior” (49, 1993).

A textbook example of the popularization of psychiatric and similar theories about the causes of homosexuality is the Teleks article “Queers of all nations ....” from 1984, in which the author presented vague statements as scientific facts.

“Among the Slovenes and the Croats, and also the Serbs, the most frequent causes of homosexuality are fear of the partner (perhaps related to education) and disappointment over a boyfriend or a girlfriend, followed by despair arising from various life crises, curiosity, life in an all-boy or all-girl boarding school where it is not possible to meet the opposite sex, and mental disorder” (8, *Teleks*, 1984).

These supposed findings are even supported by examples.

“Suljo from Priština, now an older homosexual, told me that while he was still an adolescent he was approached by an older voluptuous woman, but since he was terribly scared he could not do anything. She ridiculed him calling him “faggot”” (8, *ibid.*)

Another convenient culprit is the emancipated woman.

“Two men, one from Maribor and the other from Ljubljana, both in middle age, resorted to homosexuality because their wives were too “equal” and found it “beneath them” to lie under a man’s body” (8, *ibid.*)

And in conclusion:

“Homosexuality, therefore, can be psychologically predetermined from birth, similar to what we find in transvestites, in flagellants, those who whip themselves in order to reach climax, and fetishists” (8, *ibid.*).

Although the media arsenal of the causes of homosexuality did not become depleted in the 1990s, owing to the growing acceptance of this sexual orientation and increasing tolerance, the center of gravity shifted towards the innateness of homosexuality. While an innate quality is fatal and one can do nothing to alter it, the acquired characteristic is a matter of free choice and as such understood as resistance to the social order. Homosexuality is acceptable if it is innate, but in all other cases one should choose heterosexuality instead.

“They are not guilty. It’s nature’s making them as they are that should be blamed” (67, *Delo*, 1994).

“I can imagine how young men look at this attractive girl and even try to court her. But all their attempts to win her love are in vain. Nature is stronger” (32, *Novi tednik*, 1990).

“Heterosexuals just are. And just like them also homosexuals and lesbians just are. They are now, they have always been and will always be. They live in the way that suits them best, by the laws of nature; that’s what we all are, simply the products of nature” (70, *Jana*, 1995).

“When speaking of animals, for example, they always say that they behave naturally, but if we look at them more closely we will see that a he-dog often mounts another he-dog (79, *As*, 1996).

“Research unambiguously suggests that sexual orientation is not chosen and therefore cannot be changed” (86, *7D*, 1997).

The notion of the innateness of homosexuality is bolstered by various scientific findings which attempt to link homosexuality with genes, the level of hormones, the chromosome blueprint of an individual and the like. In fostering such links, the media usually neglect to explain the limits

of these studies, pointed out by the researchers themselves, and present scientific assumptions (not corroborated by any conclusive evidence) as hard facts. This type of research is much more interesting for the media, much more plausible and, at first glance, thanks to the way in which the media present it, seems to be more commonsensical than theories about the social construction of sexual appeal.

“Proof that homosexuality is innate would reduce the intolerance that has accompanied homosexual persons throughout the past. ... Many members of the homosexual community support indications that homosexuality is inscribed in one’s chromosomes. Theoretically speaking, this could win for them the rights enjoyed by any other “natural” minority. In addition, it could relieve their parents from the burden of accusations. According to the genetic component of sexual orientation, “this is not a guilt, and especially not your guilt”” (43, *Slovenec*, 1992).

Such findings usually appear under sensationalist titles such as “Homosexuality to be eradicated genetically” (82, *Dnevnik*, 1998), “An antibiotic cure for homosexuality?” (80, *Delo*, 1996), and “A homosexual gene” (73, *Delo*, 1995). In his critique of the methodological flaws of these types of studies, in which the samples are often based on problematic psychiatric and other medical evidence (objectionable even in Freud), or on patterns shaped in such a way as to confirm the scientist’s assumption and the expected result, Gilbert Zicklin (1997) looks into the reasons that make the biologicistic research findings so interesting for the media, and that lead to the complete overlooking of the social dimensions of this phenomenon. In reality, studies of this type offer conclusions that already seem definite. Zicklin thinks that the power behind this is a political game. The politics involved here is liberal and based on normalization and inclusion. But inclusion is only apparent, since behind the biological explanations of sexual preferences stands a specific cultural and political assumption about erotic life which enables “normal” people to perceive their sexuality as innate. What is involved here is the overcoming of a fear that is undeniably inherent in the modern understanding of sexuality; this is the fear of not being sufficiently male or female. If sexual preference is innate, then all (suppressed) feelings of attraction towards the same sex are completely irrelevant, a long way from real, biological homosexuality. Therefore, the name of the game is the construction of

the perception that sexual identities are clearly delimited, and, of course, biologically determined. Just as a woman is either pregnant or not, and there is no state in between, so a person is born homosexual or not. The same, of course, holds true of heterosexuals. By promoting this kind of model, argues Zicklin, the media fulfill the hidden wishes of the public, including certain gays and lesbians, to be freed from perversities that could become manifested in their sexual desires. The members of both heterosexual and homosexual communities are thus relieved from the burden of the status of deviants to which they have been tied by virtue of their desires. Identity is shaped by dividing individuals into certain sub-groups sharing identical feelings, with culture and politics being built around these and materializing these identities.

The attraction of the genetic explanations of homosexuality thus lies in the fact that such explanations equip us with a kind of certainty and an unchangeable identity around which a supportive community is then established. And conversely, it is also the reason for our feeling of threat when confronted with theories of the social construction of sexual identity and sexuality. This type of explanation shatters our firm identities and describes our sexual preferences as an acquired practice rather than destiny. "The biological model functions conservatively to restore stability in sexual life: it fixes sex in an ahistorical order, resolves certain tensions and ambiguities of desire, and reinforces the gender system (males do not desire other males; females do not desire other females, unless they are born that way [in which case they are forgivable])" (ibid. 1997:393).

Another author that drew attention to this type of politics was Hall (1997). In his opinion, racist representations were characterized by the reduction of the culture of black people to the "natural". It was the naturalization of difference.

*"If the differences between black and white people are "cultural", then they are open to modification and change. But if they are "natural" – as the slave-holders believed – then they are beyond history, permanent and fixed. "Naturalization" is therefore a representational strategy designed to fix "difference", and thus secure it forever. It is an attempt to halt the inevitable "slide" of meaning, to secure discursive or ideological "closure". ...Laziness, simple fidelity, mindless "cooning", trickery, childishness belonged to blacks as a race, as a species" (Hall, 1997:245)*

## 5.1. AIDS AND MEDICALIZATION

In the 1980s media representations of homosexuality were closely related to Aids issues.<sup>20</sup> Their most conspicuous features were the fear of Aids and wild guesses about this disease, until then unknown to medicine and consequently unknown to the media. Aids aroused so much fear because it was transmitted through the sexual act, and the most horrible diseases, as Susan Sontag (1989) writes, are not those that are fatal but those that seem to be humiliating.

“While participants at Vogel talk to journalists about their plans aimed at making the life of Aids patients and infected people easier, you look around at the faces of young men and women and try to establish who among these homosexuals already holds a pass to the world of suffering” (60, *Slovenske novice*, 1993).

Edward Albert (1999), who analyzed fifty five texts about Aids that were published in 25 American magazines from May 1982 to December 1983, that is to say, the time when the issue of Aids first penetrated the media agenda, concluded that the focus of the media representations of the time was socio-cultural issues. The issue that forged ahead was the gay lifestyle as physically isolated (e.g. confined to bath-houses). A sense of distance towards the issue under discussion, both the disease and the homosexual social group, was produced through the three interlinked forms of media representation. The first involves the representation of homosexual behavior as being different from the norm and essentially, and inevitably, contrary to the “American” way of life. The second form of media representation portrays Aids patients, particularly homosexual men, as a closed group that lives under the threat of the growing number of Aids deaths and is overwhelmed by panic. Its institutions are beginning to crumble and its lifestyle is becoming increasingly miserable. A “group with a problem” constructed in this way is separated from the rest of society and has no relation to it. Aids thus appeared as “a faraway earthquake, a war involving others, or merely a great famine that sweeps across some other place” (Albert, 1999:397). By employing this method, the media only widened the already existing

<sup>20</sup> In the database of texts used in this study, the issue of Aids generally appears only in texts that deal with homosexuality. The texts about Aids thus do not make up a systematically organized database, so the scope of our conclusions is limited and can only be partial.

gap between infected and non-infected groups. This distance was further exacerbated through characterization, the third type of media representation, whereby a group of people is labeled as different. In the case of Aids, those people who were believed to have been more exposed to Aids were labeled as “risk groups” or “victims.” By contrast, other groups formed part of non-differentiated categories and were designated the general population.

Since media representations of homosexuality prior to Aids adhered to strictly codified forms, with the emergence of Aids the media were confronted with a virtually unresolvable situation: homosexuals were deviants and Aids was their disease. Such a situation simply forced them into a predominantly moralistic discourse which presupposes certain common values and notions about “human nature,” “normality,” and “decency.”

The theoretical framework to which numerous analysts of media representations of Aids resorted is based on the concept known as moral panic.

*“The mechanisms of a moral panic are well known: the definition of a threat in a particular event (a youthful “riot”, a sexual scandal); the stereotyping of the main characters in the mass media as particular species of monsters (the prostitute as “fallen woman”, the pedophile as “child molester”); a spiralling escalation of the perceived threat, leading to the taking up of absolutist positions and the manning of the moral barricades; the emergence of an imaginary solution – in tougher laws, moral isolation, a symbolic court action; followed by the subsidence of the anxiety, with its victims left to endure the new proscriptions, social climate or legal penalties” (Weeks, 1999:45).*

Cohen (1972:9) argues that, every now and then, society faces short sequences of moral panic. These situations occur when “a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges and becomes defined as a threat to societal values and interests.” These events are mainly communicated through the media, which are, according to Cohen, the main source of information about societal phenomena and the limits beyond which man should not enquire. Any one labeled as a threatening element is presented in the media in a stylized and stereotyped manner. Sometimes such moral panic dies down without any major consequences and then continues to live only in “folklore” and collective memory, but at other times it may have long-term consequences.

For example, it may bring about a change in politics and even influence the way a specific society looks upon itself. Moral panic is therefore a basic form of ideological awareness through which the “silent majority” scores victory, primarily with the help of repressive state apparatuses while lending legitimacy to a stricter usage of power than is usual.

According to Watney (1997), moral panic denotes the places of wider ideological conflicts that are realized through society and within all the areas of public representation. The hysteria that accompanied the emergence of Aids towards the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s was not, according to Watney, simply a reflection of moral panic limited to the Aids problem, but was part of a political campaign orchestrated by opinion makers with the aim of protecting the moral welfare and promoting the institution of the “real family.”

Since moral panic suddenly appears and vanishes, it cannot fully explain or conceptualize the mass media as an industry that is in itself related to excess and cannot explain all operations of ideology inside all representational systems. Representation is an arena of continual ideological struggle for meaning, where meaning is incessantly defined and redefined, while moral panic appears and disappears thus neglecting the continuity in the struggle for meaning. Moral panic is therefore an instrument that demarcates the current “battle frontline” in the ideological struggle for meaning.

At the turn of the 1980s the media wrote extensively about “risk groups,” filling the heterosexual community with a kind of hope that Aids was a disease affecting solely “those different.” In an interview for *Teleks* in 1985, the vice-chancellor of the Ljubljana University, Prof. Dr. Miha Likar thus explained his views.

“In our country the groups that are infected are risk groups – drug addicts, homosexuals, and hemophiliacs. So far we haven’t had a case that could be regarded as “purely ours.” Of the three cases mentioned earlier, two men work abroad and were here on vacation, and the third man was an African. This means that we actually don’t have a “domestic case,” although, given current knowledge about the disease, we should expect the emergence of such cases, but among the risk groups” (15, 1985).

That Aids was a disease coming from the west, meaning that it was occurring somewhere abroad and not here, and particularly that it was a “fags” plague” that left “normal”

people aside, was implied by many texts recapitulating articles translated from foreign magazines such as *The Economist*, *Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel*. To put it differently, the media added fuel to the flame of the “moralistic wave” which thus came full circle. The media of that time also frequently featured stories about foreign Aids victims, in which the component signaling that the “normal” majority stood at a safe distance from the problem was included as an additional piece of information that this or that person was a homosexual (with a promiscuous sexual past).

“The winter of 1981. The University of California hospital in Los Angeles. ... All four men are 30, all were healthy before they became extremely vulnerable to infections. All of them had homosexual relations, and three of them often changed partners” (12. *Teleks*, 1985).

This type of discriminatory media representation was followed by media counter-reaction which pointed out that it was erroneous to think that Aids struck only homosexuals. However, the frequency of references to Aids issues in texts about homosexuality led to a phenomenon that Mihelj (2001:12) described as the transmission of semes from one signifier to another. In this way the already existing link between the disease and homosexuality got its name. Homosexuality became Aids and vice versa. The following are extracts from *Teleks* dating from 1985 and 1986.

“The victims of hidden discrimination are the so-called risk groups. ... Fear of Aids boosted prejudices about homosexuals, so in some places the adoption of anti-discriminatory legislation was slowed down or even canceled. The Court of Appeal in Texas recently re-introduced the law against sodomy” (14, 1985).

“Intolerance towards homosexuals has increased all over the world as well as in Slovenia. ... The most tragic fact is that such intolerance is unjustified – Aids is not a disease of homosexuals, but of all people” (16, 1986).

In the 1990s, Aids ceased to be the arena of the ideological struggle for meaning. The episode of moral panic as defined by Cohen (1972) was over, but the media representations blending Aids and homosexuality, presenting the two as an indivisible whole, and signaling homophobia, were still frequent. In 1993, *Slovenske novice* noted that there were “still too many prejudices against difference, and ho-

homosexuality is still seen as something abnormal that also became *dangerous* with the spread of Aids” (60, 1993). A journalist working for *Jana* came across a friendly gay man when writing an article about homosexuality, so she could “ask him whether Aids, which most threatens homosexuals, hampers his free forming of sexual relationships and *what they do to protect themselves*” (52, *Jana*, 1993). In both examples, the implied idea is that Aids is limited exclusively to homosexuals. In the first example it transpires through the description of homosexuality as dangerous because of Aids (heterosexuality is excluded), and in the second through the exclusion of heterosexuals in the second part of the question where homosexuals are constituted as a separate group that must take protective measures (while others have nothing to fear). An even more explicit connection is found in an article entitled “Seven pink years” featured in *Slovenske novice* in 1996.

“Whenever I hear the word “homosexuality,” the first thought that comes to my mind is all the effort invested in the containment of the plague of this century called Aids” (77, 1996).

On the basis of available sources, it is possible to conclude that Aids was related to homosexuality in the 1990s as well, even though it was not as often presented as a disease of homosexuals exclusively.

## 6. SEXUALIZATION

*"I'd like to ask you how the student actually approached you?"*

He first started to embrace me passionately, and wanted to kiss me, nothing else.

*Nothing else? Nothing in the way of penis?"* (2, *Problemi*, 1972).

The question whets curiosity: how, in fact, do they do it? If it is true that "the male sexual organ ... is created by nature, and its purpose is to sustain humankind, to fulfill tasks such as motherhood, and not to rummage through shit, for which we have the ass," as a reader called Julija put it in her response to the article "Queers of all nations..." (10, 1984), how then is male-male or female-female sexual intercourse possible at all. Since sex is apparently the only constituent of homosexuality, this was an issue of great curiosity for the author of "A long interview with a homosexual" (1971), who found it indispensable to ask the "anonymous homosexual" (2, *Problemi*, 1972) how old he was when he first had sex, who stroked the sexual organ for the other to become aroused and how the sexual act proceeded. When he asked him whether he and his partner stimulated their sexual organs by hand, and the interviewee gave an indefinite answer, "No, not really, but we ... each has... no ..., in short, ..." (1, *Problemi*, 1971), the journalist interrupted him and demanded a precise answer. "Could you, please, be quite specific ... Are there any other interesting details relating to the physical aspect? ... What do you feel when you make love to a man? Can you describe that? Do you feel attachment, and do you feel lust?" (1, *ibid.*). The interviewee asserted that the sexual act itself was not entirely different from that between man and woman, and concluded: "In many cases I find the contact with the naked body sufficient, without any manual stimulation ..." (1, *ibid.*). But the journalists still thought this ambiguous and was not satisfied.

*"That is to say, of the naked body, a contact of the naked body with a naked body?"*

Naked body with a naked body, in order to reach the climax.

21 In the first part of the History of Sexuality, Foucault rejected the thesis that from the 18th century on debates about sex were suppressed. By contrast, argues Foucault, speeches about sex proliferated during this period. What was said about sex was not less, but more; the only difference was that those who now spoke about it were other people (doctors), that it was viewed from different aspects and with the purpose of achieving different effects. ...

*And ejaculation too, is it?*

Yes, ejaculation too, of course.

*And nothing else but contact?*

In many cases that's enough.

*Do you just hug, or how do you do it?*

We hug and hold each other tight.

*Nothing else, you just go on holding one another, even if you can't reach orgasm?*

Why do you say "can't"? We can. One can have ejaculation even when completely motionless.

*You just blend, press your bodies one against another?*

That happens too, but for me, that is proof of a complete blending.

*And then?*

As usual, I think that the most widespread practice is mutual masturbation; another possible and also very frequent method is oral ...

*Take his penis into your mouth?*

Yes, that's it, but we won't talk like that here.

*I want to use unpolished language, I mean, I will put it like that ...*

[...]

*What part do you like most? I must ask you this question, it is important for me.*

I like kissing most.

*And you can reach orgasm?*

Yes, I can.

*And that without manual stimulation?*

I stressed that before, without manual stimulation.

*That is interesting, isn't it? (1, *ibid.*)*

Where does this obsession with homosexual sex come from, and why do we find so many allusions to anal sex as something shocking, particularly in "fag jokes"? Victorian ethics instilled in us new morality, as Foucault pointed out (2000, 1976).<sup>21</sup> By debating the marginal forms of sexuality, and by translating "sex into speech", it expelled from reality all forms of sex that were not in the service of procreation. The only permissible (non-punishable) form was sex aimed at reproduction, that is to say, the form of sex prescribed by Christianity. The Protestant reformers indeed managed to bend this view by describing sexuality as God's blessing rather than a flaw of humankind or a potential sin, but this framework still left out all forms of sexual relations in which the sexual act did not represent the materialization of the love of a married couple. Foucault's poetic name for this is "the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie"

"But twilight soon fell upon this bright day, followed by the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. ... A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom. The rest had only to remain vague; proper demeanour avoided contact with other bodies, and verbal decency sanitized ones speech. And sterile behaviour carried the taint of abnormality; if it insisted on making itself too visible, it would be designated accordingly and would have to pay the penalty." (Foucault, 1990: 3-4).

The prohibited forms of sexuality became a weapon of social revenge and gave rise to aggressive ethics that was used to express anger. In relation to homosexuality this repression and suppression of forbidden pleasures, the choice of a same sex object, of which, according to Freud, all people are capable, and all of whom have already subconsciously made that choice at some point (Freud, 1995:27), functions in accordance with the principle of "despotic phantasms." The logic behind this principle is similar to that employed by Europe in its attitude towards the Orient. In the eyes of Europe, despotism is constituted as "greed for goods that converge towards the black hole of the despotic court, that presumable paradise filled with all kinds of pleasures. ... and last but not least, an incredible sexual greed, a presumable infinite pleasure at the center of that disposition, the infinite copulating of the despot with his innumerable wives. Despotism thus presents itself as a negative of Europe, its Other" (Dolar, 1985:210).

Similarly, homosexuality is a negative image of heterosexuality, a field that is primarily defined through sexuality. It is within this field that sexual perversities take place; it is a place of the convergence of excessive sexual energy. This excessive sexual energy is projected onto the subject with respect to which one establishes his/her own heterosexual identity, and precisely this is the cause of the hostile attitude towards that subject. Pleasure is perceived as a constant, so the Other can enjoy precisely as much excessive pleasure as the first (I) has renounced. The renouncing of pleasure produces a surplus which flows toward the "subject" supposed to indulge in pleasures. In line with this logic, Black people are excessively potent, the Orient indulges in sexual orgies, and homosexuals extract more pleasure from sex because their sex is nothing but pleasure, while heterosexual sex is

burdened with the task of reproduction. The heterosexual deficit becomes the surplus in a homosexual relation. “No, it’s different with you, you must be extracting more pleasure ...” (2, *Problemi*, 1972), insists a journalist in an interview with a homosexual. But, as Dolar (1985) says, a phantasm only says something about those who created it and almost nothing about its object. A journalist writing for *Teleks* in 1984 also draws attention to a similar perception of homosexuality as a generator of surplus sexual energy.

“In our country, particularly in rural areas, you can still occasionally hear voices underlined by resistance, claiming that homosexuals or queers have extremely long, gimlet-like sexual organs, crooked like Turkish sabers, sinewy like a snake, in short, that hidden in their pants are mallets or compression grinding machines” (8, *Teleks*, 1984).

Even though we have said that exclusively sexualized and medicalized homosexual representations of the 1970s shifted towards the contexts of culture and politics in the 1980s, during the first half of the 1980s entirely explicit sexualization was still present. One such example is the article “Queers of all nations...,” whose purpose reportedly was to present “an image of homosexuality as true to reality as possible” (8, 1984). Yet even in this article homosexuality came through as primarily a sexual phenomenon, despite the author’s claim that his intention was “to encourage homosexuals, homos, fruits and queers to unite within a club and begin to publish their own magazine, since homosexuality is not exclusively about sex but also about the freedom of public association of the like-minded without being exposed to condemnation and shock” (9, 1984). While we can believe the author that he sincerely wished to dismiss sex as the sole quality of homosexuality, by succumbing to typical media representations he managed only to reinforce that image. In this typical media representation, a series of medical and psychiatric conclusions coincides with the journalist’s own observations, crisscrossed with moral judgments and the victimization of homosexuals. This is combined with a description of the journalist’s encounters with homosexuals in toilets and parks, all of which point exclusively to the sexual component:

“He held the briefcase in one hand and unzipped his trousers with the other. But he did not take it out; he only vaguely pointed to something short and thick and then waited tensely. After some time he asked: “Are you waiting for someone else? I’m not your type?” I pressed my

“bushy” mustache against his ears and said, in an even more subdued and softer voice: “I’m sorry, I’m not homo!” (8, *Teleks*, 1984).

Another example:

“On the way I dropped into the public toilet at Trg Republike (in Zagreb, r. k. ). The next moment a man nearly two meters tall materializes next to my urinal, pulls it out of his pants and says: “Give me your hand!” I cut out, but with a bitter feeling, thinking about how our homos are forced to roam public toilets, which is the kind of thing that does not befit human dignity. Even the monkeys in Maksimir (a Zagreb zoo, r. k. ) have their love corner” (8, *ibid.*)

And one more.

“I spotted two men in the bush wrapped in one another’s arms ... The two men looked like cute beetles. The one behind pulled down the pants of the one in front, who was saying: “Ouch, be careful, use the Nivea cream” (8, *ibid.*)

Not having had any unpleasant experience during his “investigative” work, the journalist concluded that his encounters “with homosexuals reveal that they are not violent, rapists nor murderous psychopaths” (8, *ibid.*)

By representing homosexuality as a secret reduced to sex and confined to toilets and parks, and homosexuals as “well-mannered” even though they “are forced to ... gather in unsuitable places” (8, *ibid.*), the author indeed wanted to arouse feelings of sympathy, but on the connotative level such a representation produced an entirely opposite effect, as the letters of some (enraged) readers confirmed. At any rate, as Sabina Mihelj explained, compassion “is not indisputably positive; the ethics of compassion actually implies a certain degradation of the one for whom you feel compassion – compassion can be felt only after the subject of compassion is sufficiently degraded” (Mihelj, 2001:19).

The centralization of homosexuality around sex constituted its subject (i.e. a homosexual, almost invariably a male homosexual) as essentially or primarily a sexualized being, one concealing his doings because these are sinful (the Church), punishable (the police), or pathological (psychiatry). In this way heterosexual practices are constituted as correct. A sexual act in a public place, recreational sex, sex with several partners, and promiscuity and hedonism in particular, belong in the class of sexual behavior attributed to (male) homosexuality, by way

of which the latter is constructed as exclusively a sexual issue, or rather, as an impermissible/undesirable sexual practice which becomes stigmatized through its equation with homosexuality. A clear dividing line between the correct and incorrect usage of sexual pleasure has thus been established. This has also transposed the issue of homosexuality to the field of morality and ethics, as is evident from the following reader's response.

"Do we fell the badly needed trees in order to produce paper which is then used to present us with such things, and on top of that, to praise anomalies. According to my old-fashioned reasoning, all those who praise and support homos, onanists, masturbators, and derailed women should be placed into an institution and put to forced labor, since that must be the result of a surplus of spare time which they don't know how to use. If they are forced to sweat to earn their bread, as are the peasants, or as I myself was forced to do years ago, 14 or 16 hours a day, they will forget about such things" (10, Teleks, 1984).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the explicit sexualization of homosexuality or, to be more precise, the reduction of homosexuality exclusively to sex, began to ease off, even though media texts were still impregnated with implicit allusions to the promiscuity of gays. Such were, for example, the hints in the Belgrade and Sarajevo media in 1987 pertaining to the threat of Aids spread during the "congress of world fags" if the participants decide to translate theory into practice.

Sexualization is most frequently expressed through implicit or modified sentence structures. These enable the journalist to establish distance from the obviously stereotyped image and transfer the question to an imaginary third party. The stereotyped image, which is attractive for the reader because it maintains the social status quo, is thus perpetuated.

Distancing himself from the stereotype, a journalist for *Novi tednik* thus writes that "homosexuality is said to be linked to the lack of restraint" (33, 1990). In a similar way an anonymous author of the interview published in *Slovenske novice* used the adverb "reportedly" to resolve the predicament. "A lasting relationship between same sex partners is reportedly very problematic. Why is that so?" (63, 1994).

The author of the article "Homosexual entertainment in Slovenia" for 7D makes use of a similar, it-is-generally-believed technique, whereby the cognitive process as described by van Dijk takes care that the symbol, "one-night stand," is related to a general schema i.e. the sexualization (or even perversity) of the subject – a homosexual.

"But it is generally believed that socializing among them is not well developed and that they don't care much for friendships, because homosexuals can be generous towards the people surrounding them or towards their one-night stands, but not also towards other homosexuals" (64, 7D, 1994).

Towards the end of the 1990s the *Mladina* weekly came up with a unique idea of how to present homosexuality. It published a series of texts under the general title "Lifestyle." The author, who first introduced himself as bisexual and then as gay, adopted the standpoint of de-victimization. He chose to embody the stereotypical image of a gay, an approach which is in Goffman's (1990, 1963) schema one of the strategies used to combat a stigma. Disregarding political correctness or ethical reservations, the author of the *Mladina* series based his writing on the most obvious stereotypes without making an attempt to dispel them. On the contrary, he used these to build a story around them about gay love, and particularly gay sex. Another typical feature of his texts is his completely relaxed use of the term "fag".

"Although I have sworn at least one hundred times that I'll never again put my foot into a fag disco, a few months of abstinence and I started to long for those fagspots, or to be more precise, those places whose catch is, in addition to loads of entertainment, quick dates and plain fucking" (98, *Mladina*, 2000).

"It is a stereotype that gays constantly devour and undress men with their eyes. At least the majority does it. And again, there is that eternal "why?" All that I can say is that we like to cruise, preferably the streets, or in other words, like to watch anything in the teeming crowd that is palatable and wears pants" (98, *Mladina*, 2000).

"I did not come to the beach to fuck, because there is plenty of fucking everywhere. What to do with a married guy who leaves his wife and children behind the promontory and like a long-distance swimmer swims to the gay oasis, comes out of the water and first rubs his cock for three minutes to make it appear bigger and then wants to get it over very quickly behind some rock? Or, what to do with those who think that drinking water from a plastic bottle is an unmistakable sign, so they hurry off towards the nearest bush hoping that I'll follow. And what to do with a weirdo who mangles his cock five meters away from me and hopes that it is long enough to reach my mouth?" (98, *ibid.*).

“Are gays more obsessed with sex? Thinking of my gay colleagues, they indeed mostly talk about sex and particularly about long cocks and beautiful and talented partners” (98, *ibid.*).

When reporting on the Gay pride march in Rome in 2000, he finds it regrettable that there was no “party” at which “strippers would expose their unusually long genitals in front of the sizzling half-naked audience, or some other entertainment at which dancers in scanty clothes would display their tight asses and strong chests like exhibitionists accompanied by loud music, lots of drink and a host of other intoxicants” (97, *Mladina*, 2000).

While during the 1990s sexualization generally retreated from media reports (the texts published in *Mladina* should be understood as an exception), the graphic images carried entirely different messages. The development took an interesting turn: in the 1980s and early 1990s sexualization was present only in texts, while graphic images portrayed homosexuality as a secret (for example, a picture of a silhouette in a tunnel). But when the explicit sexualization disappeared from texts, it re-emerged through images (pictures of naked men, pictures from erotic homosexual shows and the like).<sup>22</sup> Speaking in percentages, in the 1980s and 1990s sexualization through graphic images appears in little less than one fifth of the total number of texts illustrated with pictures.

One theoretical instrument that seems particularly suitable for the analysis of photographs is Barthes’ model (1993) of representation which involves the denotative and the connotative levels of meaning. A picture does more than communicate information about the subject shown (the denotative level); the subject is also related to the wider set of the signified, i.e. our culture and history (the connotative level), and as such it conveys an ideological message. The picture thus functions on the level of myth. Undoubtedly, the meaning of a picture is ambiguous and unclear, since one and the same picture may communicate several different meanings and allow several interpretations that can be diametrically opposite. Yet none of these meanings is necessarily the right or the true one. Meaning is fluid and sliding. The task and the objective of any representative

<sup>22</sup> Our analysis of graphic images includes only photos that appeared as parts of the media texts analyzed here. Excluded are various photomontages in various magazines, most notably the weekly *Mladina*, which exploited homosexual sex, most often anal sex, for the purpose of ridicule or to discredit politicians or other public figures in contexts not related to homosexuality. Homosexuality is obviously still used as a tool for the disqualification, humiliation and ridicule of a political opponent.

practice is thus precisely to fix meaning whereby one of several potential explanations is given priority. The most important role here is played by the caption (or the title of an article including a picture), since it reduces the choice of interpretations to a preferred understanding of the picture (Hall, 1997:228).

Words are thus crucial for interpretation, since the importance of a picture does not reside solely in the picture itself but in the conjunction of the picture and the text. Barthes (1977) argues that for a meaning to be fixed, two discourses are needed: the discourse of the photograph and the discourse of language. Let us illustrate this with three examples. "The right to be different" is a title featured in *Slovenske novice* in 1992. In this text the author deals with homosexuality primarily from the perspective of human rights. But the graphic material communicates a completely different message. There are six explicit pictures of naked men. One of them shows two men in bed, and another picture typical of pornographic magazines appears twice on the same page showing oral sex between two men. Since the camera was facing the light the picture is slightly blurred and light in tone, which, to a certain extent, tones down its pornographic dimension and, on the connotative level, pushes homosexuality towards the area of the secret. But the overall connotative level of the graphic material is clear: sexualization.

PICTURE 6.1. SEXUALIZATION  
(*Slovenske novice*, DECEMBER 30, 1992)



Our second example also comes from *Slovenske novice*. The article entitled "Silent acknowledgment of difference" from 1995 is illustrated with a picture of two men kissing. One of them is naked from the waist up and has his

trousers unzipped so one can see white underpants and the label Calvin Kline. Thanks to the unmistakable allusions to sex, the naked body, unzipped trousers and underpants, the picture tells a great deal more than merely describing a love relationship between two men.

PICTURE 6.2. SEXUALIZATION  
(*Slovenske novice*, AUGUST 22, 1995)



The third example is taken from *Mladina*'s reportage about the gay pride march in Rome entitled "No sex in the streets." One of the pictures shows three men kissing, plus two men in the background leaning one against the other with their backs, all of them naked from the waist up. The caption reads: "Gay olympic games in Amsterdam in 1998", reducing the complex of events to naked bodies in a disco, to sex and promiscuity.

PICTURE 6.3. SEXUALIZATION  
(*Mladina*, JUNE 12, 2000)



All these pictures show gay men. By contrast, the graphic images of lesbians are quite different. As Susana Tratnik (2001) noted, the pictures of lesbians in the late 1980s were mainly asexual. The stylized images of lesbians were based on a depersonalized aesthetics with the stress placed on the emotional, non-sexual dimension of a lesbian relationship.

It should be added that, judging by the photographs accompanying the articles analyzed here, the visibility of lesbians in the media was much lower than that of gays. Excluding texts about a specific person or event, articles about homosexuality were mainly illustrated with pictures of homosexual couples, with the number of those showing a male couple being twice as large as that showing a female couple. 25% of the total number of pictures included the element of sexualization, and 77% of the time it was the sexualization of a male couple.

## 7. SECRECY

In 1984 the *Dnevnik* daily featured an article entitled “Tonight I’ll first say “yes”....” It was a report on Helena Blagne’s show in the Roza disco club. The article was accompanied by several photos from the show plus an empty, framed rectangle in the lower right corner that looked like a place reserved for another picture. The caption under this rectangle made it clear that the omission was not a mistake.

“Please no, don’t put in that photo, my mother would kill me if she saw me in the paper” said a young man in love pulling me by the sleeve (his boyfriend disappeared in the meanwhile). Unfortunately, that’s how our world is. Many mothers would rather see their sons dead than kissing another man” (62, 1994).

Another method of representing homosexuality in the media, in addition to stereotyping, medicalization and sexualization, is secrecy. A great deal of mystification of homosexuality is achieved through the silence of the media. In the texts analyzed here, the secrecy surrounding homosexuality is sustained through the anonymity of interviewees, the changing of people’s names, the media reproduction of the closet, the choice of titles, images and the like.

“The Ljubljana club, K4, staged a contest for the best looking gay man and woman. Fear of exposure was the reason that only five men and five women entered the contest ... They enthusiastically posed for photographs and were delighted to be the focus of attention. But once the spotlights went down, their concerns transpired through the question “This won’t be published in the media, will it?” The most worried were young men whose families did not know that they were gay. At any rate, our general impression at this show was that many declare themselves to be homosexuals because they wish to be “alternative” at any cost” (87, *Delo* 1998).

Another constant way of pointing to secrecy (shame, guilt, crime) is the recurrent use of the verb “admit” in connection with someone’s coming out. So, for example, the *Jana* article describes Elton John as a “popular Briton who in the 1990s finally *admitted* that he was gay...” (100, 2000). The same magazine arrived at the conclusion that “an increasing number of celebrity women *admit without hesitating* that they (also) like women” (92, 2000). Similarly,

in 1997 *Delo* wrote that “the British lady minister *admitted* that she was lesbian” (84, 1997). Two years before that, one could read in *Slovenske novice* that “there are many women in the field of culture who succeeded despite the fact that they *admitted their lesbianism*” (68, 1995).

Secrecy appearing on the connotative level of the media representations of homosexuality implicitly raises the issues of acceptability, normality, shame, and unnaturalness. On the social level, secrecy is linked to the issue of visibility and creates a vicious circle: as long as homosexuality is invisible, the realization of gay and lesbian identities is confined to closets and held at bay by the fear of the domination of heterosexuality as the principle embedded in the structure of the majority of societies. By remaining in closets, homosexuality remains invisible and the vicious circle is perpetuated.

By hiding their sexual preferences, gays and lesbians themselves undoubtedly contribute towards distorted media representations. However, in our opinion, the fatality of the vicious circle is also bolstered through the heterosexual structure of society, since the social cohesion is least endangered if homosexuality remains invisible. A correlation with Foucault’s explanation of how a criminal offender becomes constructed is clear: such a person is shoved to the social margin by society, which then identifies itself as a healthy core with respect to a criminal offender. The following is how Dr. Jože Lokar, a psychiatrist, explained this in an interview in 1974.

“Owing to express or concealed homosexual preferences, partial homosexuals frequently develop a feeling of guilt which in many cases causes strange reactions: they *publicly seduce* someone or *thrust themselves forward ...*” (4, *ITD*, 1974).

The secretive image of homosexuality also prompts journalists to establish distance from their subject of interest, by no means for the sake of media objectivity. A media article is invariably targeted at a specific audience, the heterosexual audience without exception, and shaped to appeal to its tastes. Media texts about homosexuality thus enable journalists to challenge the borders of the *acceptable*, which is manifested in their distancing themselves from the subject, or stressing differences or inserting remarks about gays and lesbians and the like. Although the journalists writing about

homosexuality appear to be open minded and have positive attitudes towards this topic, one should not overlook the power of sensationalism underlying this subject and eliciting a specific type of media representation. The fear that they could be “diagnosed” as homosexuals prompts journalists to frequently insert into their texts additional information identifying themselves as heterosexuals, or they prefer to remain anonymous. 26% of the texts we analyzed were not signed, while 16% were signed with initials only.

TABLE 7.1. TEXTS BY AUTHORSHIP

NO	AUTHOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	JOURNALIST (MALE)	164	29,3
2.	JOURNALIST (FEMALE)	133	23,8
3.	INITIALS	90	16,1
4.	TRANSLATED TEXT	20	3,6
5.	UNSIGNED TEXT	146	26,1
6.	OTHER	6	1,1
	TOTAL	559	100

Examples of distancing are numerous. A journalist writing for *Teleks* began an article entitled “I vote for the explicit” by informing the reader that “[she likes] a well-built and witty man rather than a good looking woman... but, so what?” (27, 1988). Similarly the author of “Queers of all nations ...” says:

“In London, a renowned personality from the world of theatre invited me to Hampstead, a fabulous “fruit” club. I was immediately approached by a fair-haired man wearing trousers so tight that one could see the contours of his balls. ... I openly admitted to this refined young man that I preferred women” (8, *Teleks*, 1984).

The author of “A long interview with a homosexual” also felt the need to distance himself.

“... It seems to me that *in your world* attraction is more commonly related to one’s inner world, that is spiritual world, and only then does it occur on the physical level, while *in the world in which I live* it often happens that the body is attracted by a beautiful woman, to put it plainly, and you don’t pay much attention to the spiritual side” (1, *Problemi*, 1971).

*Mladina* provides a unique example in this respect, since its journalist Anton Hrvatin was the first (and so far the only) newspaper journalist in Slovenia who, in a article about blood donation, from which homosexuals in Slovenia are banned, identified himself as gay and thus terminated the practice of enshrouding homosexuality in secrecy.

"I thought it somehow logical that I wouldn't be rejected by a doctor if I admitted that, for example, I've been living with a partner for ten years and that the concept of extra-marital affairs was unknown to us" (90, 1999).

Hrvatin's coming out did not provoke any noteworthy reactions except in his immediate environment. He described this in the next issue entitling the article "Exemplary tolerance".

"Some regular reader of *Mladina* whispered to them that it featured an article which explained in no ambiguous terms who I am and what I am. Who else would write articles about risky homosexuals, and have you ever heard of someone who would admit to his doctor just like that that he is a homosexual and has had a boyfriend for ten years? Even Americans would not write such a thing, not even for loads of dough. .... Indeed, no one pointed a finger at me or put me in the dock, or cast suspicion on me because of my report on the blood donor event. They instead hurried off to buy several copies of the "latest *Mladina* issue," probably had consultations with their wives, ascribed a partner to me, my childhood friend, and stuck a note on my father's car – he drops in every day to check whether I'm still alive. The note read: "the grower of fagots." Although my father has been in farming since he retired, he doesn't have that type of plant in his garden or vineyard. And since this didn't seem to be enough, they instructed him on the subject, in a bar, of course, showed him what kind of plant it was, expanded his horizons, gave him the latest issue of *Mladina* and convinced him by the force of their infinite compassion that they meant only well" (91, 1999).

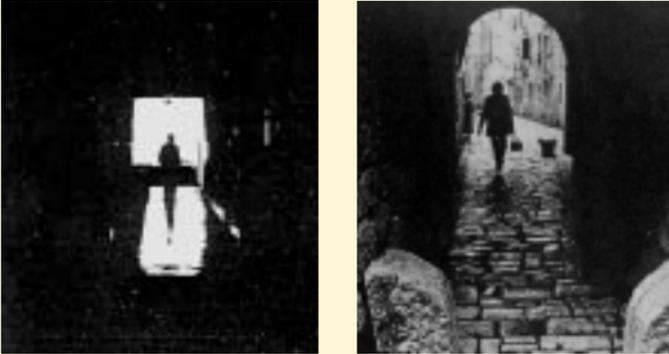
We have already mentioned that throughout the 1970s and 1980s the graphic images for the most part communicated secrecy and concealment. We shall now have a look at several typical examples.

An interview with Judge Šinkovec entitled "Between morality and freedom" (1974), is illustrated with a picture of a dark tunnel at the end of which one can see a man's silhouette. The picture is dominated by dark tones communicating the message that homosexuality is something that

is concealed (must be concealed), something belonging in the dark and indefinite spaces. A similar principle carrying similar connotations (a silhouette in a tunnel) appeared in *Novi tednik* approximately twenty years later, in 1990. Despite the two intervening decades, homosexuality obviously continued to evoke the same secretive images.

PICTURE 7.1. HOMOSEXUALITY AS A SECRET IN THE SEVENTIES AND THE NINETIES

(*ITD*, FEBRUARY 12, 1974, AND *Novi tednik*, JANUARY 11, 1990)



An article published in *Jana* in 1981 and dealing with lesbianism bears a very illustrative title: “The kind of love that must be concealed” (6, 1981) coupled with a matching image. The woman in the picture has her back to the camera, so her face remains invisible. Homosexuality without a face is a secret, something that must “remain hidden.” The same could be said of a picture featured by *Mladina* in an article entitled “As a virgin not yet beheld by man’s eye.” It shows two young men kissing while hiding their faces. The caption reads “men’s love.”

PICTURE 7.2. HIDDEN FACES IN THE EIGHTIES AND THE NINETIES  
(*Jana*, NOVEMBER 11, 1981, AND *Mladina*, NOVEMBER 13, 2000)



Similarly illustrative is a picture that appeared in *Mladina* in 1992, showing one man kissing the other on the face. The eyes of the two men (“Mladina’s models”) are concealed by black rectangles. This alludes not only to secrecy but also to crime, since faces with black rectangles over their eyes usually appear on the crime pages.

PICTURE 7.3. SECRECY (*Mladina*, OCTOBER 20, 1992)



## 8. NORMALIZATION

Watney (1997) writes that a homosexual desire, and particularly so the gay and lesbian identities, are allowed entry into mass media representations only in strictly codified forms, such as do not threaten the general public and media users but rather protect them from potential destabilization. Within the media repertoire of strictly delimited and defined images which mobilize notions of decency, human nature, normality and the like, homosexuality was constituted as something horrifying and threatening.

According to Watney, the main ideological task of the communications industry is the provision of pre-defined identities offered to media consumers to choose from. But the offering cannot satisfy all needs, so those who are left outside, for example Black people and homosexuals (although in different ways), begin to pose a threat to internal cohesion which, however, is not the “natural” state of things but a consequence of the media addressing an imaginary community that is primarily white and heterosexual.

The media construction of homosexuality as alien, different, at times even unnatural and abnormal, brings up the question of the causes of homosexuality. Swords cross over the issue of acquired vs. innate, but all the while heterosexuality remains unproblematized. Homosexuality, therefore, necessarily suffers certain deficits. The psychiatrist Dr. Jože Lokar explained this as follows:

“The life of a pure homosexual may be free of shocks in an understanding environment. Yet, of course, he can never be entirely happy. Even if we say to them “ok, that is your disorder, you live with it”, the fact remains that people of the same sex are not complementary ...  
*... that it is something that runs against nature.*  
 It is possible to put it that way” (4. *ITD*, 1994).

Ken Plummer (1996) thinks that the detail that separates and distinguishes homosexuality from the usual in the western world is a result of social prohibition. Homosexuality becomes deviant through the social reaction, which by no means implies that a reaction to deviant behavior creates that specific kind of behavior, but rather its meaning, including the categorization of a behavior as deviant, and its social position is produced through such a reaction.

“Therefore, it is possible that homosexuals practice pathological behavior, that they are promiscuous, excessively effeminate and so on. But if that is really so (and I presume that the truth is not always such), then the explanation cannot be sought in a homosexual experience *per se*, but in hostile reactions surrounding it” (Plummer, 1996:65).

Although Watney’s description of the ways in which homosexuality enters the media space could lead one to expect that the media images of homosexuals are mainly frightening, our analysis shows that media representations in the 1990s in Slovenia experienced a radical turn, one that could be described as a turn towards normalization. While in the past the image of a homosexual was at best that of an unhappy person, because owing to the nature of his relationship he could never experience “full harmony, so a gay man’s “happiness” can never reach the point attained by man and woman” (4, *ITD*, 1974), the homosexual of the 1990s is just like anyone else – one of us.

“Sonja looks just like those girls with whom boys most frequently fall in love” (32, *Novi tednik*, 1990).

“I was welcomed by a self-confident, radiant man in his late twenties, a young gentleman who embodies the woman’s ideal of an attractive, polite and attentive son-in-law” (101, *Glamur*, 2000).

“A relationship between the same-sex partners is no less emotionally fulfilling and fruitful than a relationship between opposite-sex partners. Moreover, on certain levels they are even more emotionally intense and loving than partners of the opposite sex” (54, *Dnevnik*, 1993).

“Homosexuality is also present among priests (in Ljubljana as well), as it was among Popes and many politicians. Homosexuals are found among kings and criminals” (64, *7D*, 1994).

The normalization we refer to fell like a canopy over the former images of homosexuals shown as criminals, mental patients and the like. In the media images of the late 1990s, homosexuals became normal people who can fully live their sexuality just like any heterosexual. It seems as if these representations want to convince us that it is possible to live outside the closet. But this normalization is still a “heterosexual” normalization. The more the image of a homosexual person (their looks, behavior and social image) resembles that of a heterosexual, the more readily they are

accepted by society. The media representation of normal homosexuality is in fact the representation of homosexuality in the image of heterosexuals, such as does not pose a threat to the heterosexual world.

One of the media strategies of normalization in the 1990s was victimization, where homosexuals appear as victims and heterosexuals as the majority that oppresses them.

“Yet a number of signs point to the fact that in this area our “Šentflorjan valley” (a metaphor for hypocrisy, р. κ.) perpetuates every characteristic of the expressly intolerant, repressive environment, not only thrusting the homosexual minority into a ghetto, but plainly compelling them to fake their identity and fall back on mimicry” (83, *Sobotna priloga*, 1979).

In defending homosexuality, the practice of discrimination was designated as non-democratic and attributed to Others (e.g. the Balkan people). For example, the following is what one gay activist said in an interview for *Dnevnik*.

“Well, what else can you expect from sub-Alpine herdsmen who would like to import their tribal relations, spells and punishments even into Europe? Why don't they rather join our southern brothers and put on war-paint” (56, *Dnevnik*, 1993).

The victimization of the 1990s coincided with relativization. Gays and lesbians were first represented as victims of the homophobic society in which they live, but that same homophobia was relativized with respect to the past and minimized.

“The life of homosexuals in our country is indeed not all milk and honey, yet despite this a progress in legislation can be noticed” (68, *Slovenske novice*, 1995).

“The Nazis did not like homosexuals, but in our country we show a relatively good deal of tolerance” (78, *Jana*, 1996).

Victimization as a media practice aiming at normalization calls for tolerance. But the controversy around tolerance lies in the position from which it is expressed. Only those who victimize can be tolerant (except in the case of self-victimization), that is to say, one who holds a power position with respect to the victim. As far as the victim is concerned, he/she continues to be in a non-autonomous and subordinated position, since his/her position depends

on those who are supposedly tolerant (their disposition). So, there is a wide gap between tolerance and acceptance.

*“Ironically perhaps, the opposite of intolerance, worth striving for and protecting, is not “tolerance”. She or he who is tolerated is not free. He (and it is more often a “he” than a “she”) who tolerates has all the power and the right to graciously grant concessions to the tolerated one as long as he sees fit. Then again, he can also withdraw that concession of tolerance when he no longer deems its concession to be in his own best interest. That interest furthermore is often disguised as motivated by a higher goal, e.g. the pursuit of the legitimate aim of protecting public morals, the defence of traditional family values, control over limited public resources, etc. No, the opposite of intolerance is not “tolerance”. Instead the aim of our common struggle against intolerance and discrimination must be the safeguard of the right of every individual to be treated with respect and acceptance on an equal footing” (Ytterberg, 2001:3-4).*

As we noted above, in the 1990s the homosexual became a normal citizen, yet still a member of a clearly distinct social minority, one that indeed should be tolerated but only as long as it does not challenge heterosexual domination. In his analysis of Hollywood movies featuring gays and lesbians, Sideman noted a similar trend of normalization and the tendency to tolerate homosexuals. Homosexuals became visible and permanent members of the American mainstream, but not without limitations.

*“The normal gay is presented as fully human, as the psychological and moral equal of the heterosexual, and accordingly gays should be integrated into America as respected citizens. However, the normal gay also serves as a narrow social norm. This figure is associated with specific personal and social behaviors. For example, the normal gay is expected to be gender conventional, link sex to love and marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride. Although normalization makes it possible for individuals to conduct lives of integrity, it also establishes a moral and social division among gays. Only normal gays who conform to dominant social norms deserve respect and integration. Lesbians and gay men who are gender benders or choose alternative intimate lives will likely remain outsiders. ... The normal gay implies a political logic of tolerance and minority rights that does not challenge heterosexual dominance” (Seidman, 2002:133).*

The paradox is interesting: while normalization has been the goal of the endless political and social effort made by gay and lesbian activists, it eventually turned against itself. Some authors have stressed that the more homosexuality becomes visible and included, the more invisible it becomes. Bersani (1995), for example, argues that gays became “de-gayed” in the process of their own visibilization. The 1990s also brought the commercialization of homosexuality. Gays’ and lesbians’ entry into the mainstream (the latter through lesbian chic) obscured the borders, so popular mainstream culture (music, fashion, movies) has become in a way more gay than the gay community itself. Homosexuality entered the mainstream at the expense of depoliticized gay and lesbian identities. The process is, however, not unidimensional. On the one hand, normalization destroys the homophobic culture, which encounters its opposite pole through the acceptance of anti-discriminatory legislation, weakens the feeling of shame, concealment and (self) hate and creates, at least in western countries, fertile soil for the inclusion of gays and lesbians as fully equal citizens. But on the other hand, normalization leads to new divisions and tolerance of selected individuals only, i.e. those who do not challenge heteronormativity. It ensures social tolerance in the narrow sense of the word, but not equality as well. In this respect it only ostensibly assists de-stigmatization and bolstering of gay and lesbian identities.

The process of normalization as implied here should be understood as one still hiding the notions of abnormality, unnaturalness, pathology and so on smoldering under its surface. Proof are the debates about homosexual marriage and adoption rights which once more lifted the carpet covering the (media) dumping ground of homosexuality representations. It will probably peak once the proposed law enters parliamentary discussion in Slovenia.

The homosexual community’s demand for the equality of the homosexual marriage institution and adoption was first mentioned in the media in Slovenia in a public notice issued by the Roza club and published in *Delo* of October 4, 1990. Before that there had been initiatives for equality, but the issues of homosexual marriage and adoption, even if implicitly present in these initiatives, were not the center of media attention. In the 1990s the media space became widely open to these topics, so homosexuality was frequently considered through these lenses.

"The conviction that homosexuals cannot be good parents is ungrounded. They do not differ from heterosexual couples either with respect to their psychological health or their views and methods of children's education ... Children need love, acceptance, warmth and understanding. And two fathers or two mothers are undoubtedly capable of providing it" (96, 7D, 2000).

The forms of homophobic media representation that are frequently present in the media in the form of pro and contra marriage and adoption arguments focus on two issues: family and children.<sup>23</sup> The refusal to accept the equality of diverse family forms is just a framework inside which homosexuality is once again labeled as an unhealthy (a moral category), or unnatural (a biological category) social fact. Swords cross primarily over the issue of children. The children's rights are given priority over the adults' rights, and argumentation mainly wavers between popular psychology and morality. Those who argue against adoption advocate naturalness, according to which a child needs both a father and a mother (disqualification of all other forms of family), while those who advocate adoption place stress on the problematic nature of the "natural" family form, which can be dysfunctional and hence unsuitable for children. The children's rights are thus exploited by two diametrically opposite currents. Although these appear to be in the foreground, it is actually the arena of old ideological conflicts between supporters and opponents of homosexuality, and ideological conflicts about naturalness and normality of homosexuality.

23 The media justify the use of the pro and contra principle with the balancing argument. In so doing they overlook the fact that the issue of human rights cannot be treated using such a media format. In reply to those who feel tempted to ask "why?" here is one anecdote. At the time when Ireland was adopting a law on registered partnership, one gay activist was invited to a pro and contra tv debate, where the topic under discussion was to be whether homosexuals should be allowed to marry. When he turned down the invitation and the journalist remarked that such a broadcast format was necessary for the sake of balanced reporting, he replied by asking: "Does this mean that whenever you report on Jews you have to invite to the broadcast a Nazi for the sake of balance?"

## 9. BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Public opinion surveys in Slovenia have been examining the attitudes of Slovene citizens towards homosexuality only since the 1990s. What these attitudes had been before that is guess work. It is very likely that the majority of people did not have any specific opinion on homosexuality, because it probably had not counted as a public category worthy of consideration. Homosexuals were an invisible minority thought of in terms of sexual perversion and mental disorder.

At the beginning of the 1990s, six years into the organized gay and lesbian movement in Slovenia, the picture of the public's attitude towards homosexuality became clearer. Surveys of Slovene public opinion assessed the attitude towards homosexuals using the scale of social distance (e.g. "whom wouldn't you like to have as a neighbor?"), and on the basis of the respondents' views about sexual relations between two adult persons of the same sex. The tables below show the aggregate results.<sup>24</sup>

TABLE 9.1. THE AGGREGATE RESULTS SHOWING VIEWS ON THE SAME-SEX SEXUAL ACTS

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT SEX BETWEEN TWO ADULT PERSON OF THE SAME SEX? (IN PERCENTAGE)

		1991	1993
1998			
ALWAYS BAD	45.7	51.4	39.2
ALMOST INVARIABLY BAD	11.5	9.5	10.8
SOMETIMES BAD	8.9	6.8	13.1
NEVER BAD	9.2	5.9	14.2
DON'T KNOW, NO ANSWER	24.7	26.4	22.7

TABLE 9.2. THE AGGREGATE RESULTS SHOWING SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALS

I DON'T WANT A HOMOSEXUAL AS A NEIGHBOR ... (IN PERCENTAGE)

1992	1993	1994	1995	1998	1999	2000
42.5	61.6	56.2	61.2	60.3	44.3	55.1

<sup>24</sup> The data are the results of a public opinion survey in Slovenia. See Toš, Niko et al. (1999): *Vrednote v prehodu II (Slovensko javno mnenje 1990-1998)*, (Values in transition II, Public opinion in Slovenia 1990-1998), Faculty of Social Sciences, CJMMK, Ljubljana.  
Toš, Niko et al. (1999): *Vrednote v prehodu III (Slovensko javno mnenje 1999-2002)*, (Values in transition III, Public opinion in Slovenia 1999-2002), Faculty of Social Sciences, CJMMK, Ljubljana.

The percentage of those having negative attitudes or, to be more precise, prejudices, towards homosexuals averages, with greater or smaller deviations, around 60%, with the positive trend indicating an increase in tolerance being obvious towards the end of the 1990s. This coincides with the results of the 2001 survey, in which 29% of respondents agreed and 47% disagreed with the proposition that “homosexual persons should be prohibited from publicly expressing their sexual orientations.” A look at three further phone surveys conducted by the research group Delo Stik and published in *Delo* shows that in 1995<sup>25</sup> 62% of respondents self-assessed their attitude as tolerant, and 60% opposed same-sex marriages. Opposition to adoption rights for same-sex couples was even greater: 68% of respondents opposed it, while 16% would grant adoption rights to homosexual couples. The results of the 1996<sup>26</sup> survey show a slight fall in these percentages: half the respondents did not approve of same-sex marriage, 32% approved of it, and nearly 18% could not decide on this question. 61% of respondents would not grant adoption rights to homosexual couples compared to 20% who would, and nearly 19% who were undetermined. In 2001<sup>27</sup> 43% of respondents, proportionally the largest part, thought that Slovene society was not sufficiently tolerant towards people of a different race, sexual orientation, religion and the like. At the same time, 60% of these respondents answered that they would not leave their child in the care of a homosexual.

On the basis of available results (and the obvious and telling absence of any serious social study of this subject), it is possible to conclude that homosexuality is plainly unacceptable for more than half of Slovene citizens. The more the respondent feels involved (having a homosexual as a neighbor or entrusting him with the care of the child), the more unacceptable he/she finds homosexuality. Accordingly, surveys examining social distance show a higher level of homophobia, so it is possible to conclude that one part of Slovene society is characterized by a kind of hypocritical tolerance; tolerance is a value of which one boasts, but it lasts only as long as homosexuality remains invisible and hidden or until the respondent has no contact, neighborly or similar relations, with gays or lesbians.

25 N=609, telephone survey conducted on March 12, 1995.

26 N=636, telephone survey conducted on August 14, 1996.

27 N=405, telephone survey conducted on July 12, 2001.

Surprisingly, the media attitude towards homosexuality seems to be much more benevolent than these surveys would suggest. Only a few reports in the three decades analyzed here clearly or explicitly instigated intolerance towards gays and lesbians. As a matter of fact, all such articles date from the 1990s and were a reaction to the increasingly visible gay and lesbian community in Slovenia and the obvious threat it posed to some.<sup>28</sup> Let us examine in more detail only two of these texts: an article published in *Slovenske novice* in 1996 entitled “A homosexual in Tivoli,” reproduced at the beginning of this book, and an article ran by *Delo* on the Crimewatch page in 1995 entitled “A new form of rape”. In the latter the author R. K., reporting on the rape of a man by another man concluded, without a second thought, that the rapist was a homosexual and exploited this conclusion as the basis for a comment in which the right to be different was described as provocative and boisterous, while at the same time generalizing his doubts and ascribing it to “many.”

“For example, many ask whether the promotion of homosexuality is really one of those necessary ways in which citizens have to prove their level of tolerance towards difference. ... The incessantly reiterated mottos about the right to be different, and about intolerance enshrouding difference, are not becoming given the real state of things, but are provocative and boisterous. ... The case has not been concluded yet and investigation is underway, but the silence in which the people who publicly declare that they are different have veiled themselves raises suspicion that the event has not been a good advertisement for their struggle for “privileges” and various homosexual gatherings in Ljubljana. At any rate, dirty souls are also found among those different” (371, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> We do not take into account the texts that appeared in the catholic newspaper *Družina* (Family), which belongs in a special category by virtue of the character of this paper. Let us just mention an article entitled “Inclination towards the same sex” that was published in two installments in 1998. The author, Petra, based her article on rigid social gender schemas, and among other things wrote: “The task of both parents, mother and father, is to assert for their son that he is a boy, male, and for their daughters that which is womanish, feminine in them.” She then summarized her writing as follows: “1. Homosexuality is a deviation from the normal, so it is not, and cannot be, a natural state. 2. A person who suffers from homosexuality is not guilty of that in most cases – but he is invited to become pure (as are, after all, all Christians). 3. Homosexuality is a disorder of sexual behavior which can be altered and is curable” (556, 1998). For more on *Družina*’s reporting see Greif, Tatjana (2001): “Spet èisto dekle: seksualnost v tedniku *Družina*” (Once again a pure girl: sexuality in the weekly *Družina*), *Èasopis za kritiko znanosti*, year 29, no. 202-203, pp. 381-393.

It is interesting that in addition to gay and lesbian activists, the magazine *Stop* also reacted to this article in a column entitled *Minus* (listing things that are “out”).

“The balanced editorial policy of the daily *Delo*. After they let homosexuals occupy the front, “don’t overlook” page, they counterbalanced their generous attention devoted to this topic with a front-page headline about same-sex rape and a matching report on the *Crimewatch* page, where it actually belongs. And since this is reportedly a “new form of rape,” the author R. K. found it necessary to opine on the organized activities of homosexuals to whom his newspaper dedicated the front page space, which obviously get on his nerves. Unfortunately, he either stopped thinking or recording his opinions before he found a link between the objectives of organized homosexual groups and sexual violence” (375, 1995).

One could agree with Nataša Velikonja’s statement (2001) that the only established editorial policy regarding homosexuality is the absence of such a policy. Homophobic media texts should therefore be attributed to individual authors rather than newspapers or magazines, since one and the same paper is capable of publishing, within just a few days, both a homophobic text and a text that dispels prejudices and stereotypes.

The discrepancy between media representations of homosexuality and the level of homophobia among citizens is possible because the media cannot be attributed an absolute power in the shaping of public opinion. It is true that in the past homosexuality was disqualified and the attitude towards it was negative, because value laden statements were presented as facts, leaving only little, if any, room for counter-argument. But the role of the media, here seen as a field of ideological struggle for definition, can only be the role of one that influences the picture but ultimately has no power to change it. In the long run, a change of attitude is in the hands of every individual who is autonomous although susceptible to media and other suggestions. The essential role here belongs to governmental institutions, i.e. the ruling power, which, instead of preventing discrimination, chose to fall back on public opinion before it decides to legally equate homosexuality, claiming that public opinion is not yet ready for such a change, while (purposefully?) overlooking the fact that the ruling power is one of those authorities that molds and influences changes in public opinion.

The relevant question in conclusion to our study is where inside media representations are located those precepts that enable the perpetuation of negative public opinion towards homosexuality. Which are those elements in media reporting that perpetuate the negative perception of homosexuality? In our opinion a partial answer lies in the categorization of media representations analyzed here. Stereotyping, medicalization, sexualization, the veil of secrecy and, after all, normalization too (e.g. they are just like us ... but not quite) are those areas within media representations where reporting breaks loose from the harnesses of political correctness and steps over the edge. It is precisely these areas that perpetuate and reproduce the negative attitude to homosexuality, even though generally they strive to change this attitude. Homosexuality still causes uncertainty and uncomfortable feelings, fear and apprehension. As a result, clear references to the issues of homosexuality in public or popular discourse are suppressed, subdued, and hidden within stereotyped images which can be comfortably integrated into the reader's or viewer's representations of homosexuality without causing a commotion.

This was the reason for our consideration of normalization as a practice ostensibly serving the function of overcoming stereotypes, but actually being just a kind of media representation formed according to the image of the heterosexual, one that does not threaten his world. Homosexuality is positively represented; a homosexual becomes one of us, but under the surface of these politically correct media images, the essential non-acceptance, non-approval and non-understanding of homosexuality still remain. It arises from historically determined concepts of normality, naturalness, social gender and the like. In fact it is a consequence of the system of beliefs delineated by the discursive frame of reference which obtains credibility and power from the historical relation between homosexuality and heterosexuality. The attitude towards homosexuality is constituted as the attitude towards "us", "normal people", or "heterosexual people", since media representations are still launched into the media space from the position of heteronormativity in relation to which homosexuality is constituted as "different," "characteristic of the minority," "marginal," or an "inferior sexual practice." Once it is described as characteristic of the minority and marked by deviant images of the minority and the margin, it can be overlooked. In this lies the power of this kind of labeling,

because it implies that we can perpetuate normality and re-institute the status quo.

Even though the subject of our analysis, the media construction of homosexuality, was partly limited because it included only the print media, our conclusions point to the direction in which attitudes towards this phenomenon are moving. While in the 1990s media reports were as a rule inclined to or indifferent (but not hostile) towards the issue of homosexuality, there was nevertheless enough room left for various forms of homophobia to creep into media representations. Given the number of debates and guesses about the “truth about homosexuality,” we can conclude that homosexuality is not an unproblematic concept. The position serving as the point of departure in these debates was the position of the normal, the natural and the heterosexual, while the point of departure in media texts about homosexuality was doubt about its normality and naturalness. These are the tensions which contribute to the media representations as described in this study. They also form the platform which enables and perpetuates the negative disposition of public opinion, prejudices and stereotypes about gays and lesbians in the otherwise well-disposed or at least neutral attitude of the media to homosexual issues.

## 10. THE LIST OF NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE TEXTS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY REFERRED TO IN THIS STUDY<sup>29</sup>

- 1 Dolgi pogovor s homoseksualcem (A long interview with a homosexual), Primož Žagar, *Problemi*, No. 108, December 1971
- 2 Drugi del dolgega pogovora s homoseksualcem (The second part of a long interview with a homosexual), Primož Žagar, *Problemi*, No. 111-112, March-April 1972
- 3 Med moralo in svobodo, Sodnik vrhovnega sodišča SRS Janez Šinkovec o homoseksualnosti (Between morality and freedom, the judge of the Supreme Court Janez Šinkovec on homosexuality), J. Lorenci, *I.T.D.*, February 12, 1974
- 4 Beg pred žensko?, Psihiater dr. Jože Lokar o homoseksualnosti (Fleeing from women? The psychiatrist Dr. Jože Lokar on homosexuality), Janko Lorenci, *I.T.D.*, March 5, 1974
- 5 Moška ljubezen, svobodna ljubezen (Men's love, free love), Bernarda Rakovec, *I.T.D.*, April 14, 1977
- 6 Ljubezen, ki mora ostati skrita, Pohodništvo lezbijk (The kind of love that must be concealed, Lesbian march), unsigned, *Jana*, No. 45, November 11, 1981
- 7 Homoseksualci pod (ne)svobodnim soncem (Kadar moški ljubi – moškega ...) (Homosexuals under the (un)free Sun; When a man loves another man), Marjan Vončina, *Nedeljski dnevnik*, July 5, 1984
- 8 Topli bratci vseh dežel ... (Queers of all nations ...), Miroslav Slana-Miros, *Teleks*, No. 30, July 26, 1984
- 9 Topli bratci vseh dežel ... (Queers of all nations ...), Miroslav Slana-Miros, *Teleks*, No. 31, August 2, 1984
- 10 Topli bratci vseh dežel ... (Queers of all nations ...) (a reader's letter), Julija Flis, *Teleks*, No. 32, August 9, 1984
- 11 Topli bratci vseh dežel ... (Queers of all nations ...) (a reader's letter), Dr. Mirko Škof, *Teleks*, No. 36, September 6, 1984
- 12 Aids: nevarnost narašča (Aids: an increasing danger), Die Zeit, *Teleks*, No. 35, August 29, 1985
- 13 Reagan, nato še aids (Reagan, then Aids), Darko Štrajn, *Mladina*, No. 28, September 5, 1985
- 14 Velik strah pred umiranjem (Big fear of death), Economist, *Teleks*, No. 44, October 31, 1985
- 15 Aids je in bo, pa če je to ministrom všeč ali ne! (Aids is and will be, whether or not the ministers like it!), *Teleks*, No. 50, December 12, 1985

<sup>29</sup> This list includes only the media texts from which quotations in this study were taken. For the full list of analyzed texts see Kuhar, Roman (2002): *Diskurzi o homoseksualnosti*, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana

- 16 Dvorezni molk (The double-edged silence), Mija Repovž, *Teleks*, No. 34, August 21, 1986
- 17 Aids in kongresniki (Aids and congressmen), Janez Kovačič, *Delo*, March 19, 1987
- 18 Zmaga nevednosti ali nov prispevek k slovenski blaznosti (The victory or ignorance or a new contribution to the Slovene madness), unsigned, *Jana*, April 1, 1987
- 19 Sveta preproščina in inteligentni virus (Holy innocence and the intelligent virus), Lidija Jurjevec, *Mladina*, No. 13, April 3, 1987
- 20 Homoseksualci, Judje, boljševiki (Homosexuals, Jews, Bolsheviks), Zoja Skušek – Močnik, *Mladina*, April 10, 1987
- 21 Prijateljica me vznemirja (Prostovoljno pred poroto) (I'm attracted to my female friend, Be my jury), *Jana*, No. 37, September 16, 1987
- 22 Odprto pismo predsedniku RK SZDL Slovenije Jožetu Smoletu (pismo bralcev) (An open letter to the president of the RK SZDL of Slovenia, Jože Smole, a reader's letter), Magnus in ul, *Delo*, February 6, 1988
- 23 Odprto pismo Jožetu Smoletu (pismo bralcev) (An open letter to the president of the RK SZDL of Slovenia, Jože Smole, a reader's letter), Nada Kostanjevic, *Delo*, February 20, 1988
- 24 Med beograjskimi homoseksualci (Among the Belgrade gays), Ilustrovana politika, *Kaj*, May 17, 1988
- 25 Homoseksualnost in država (Homosexuality and the state), Bogdan Lešnik, *Teleks*, No. 23, June 9, 1988
- 26 Drhtenje lokvanjev (pozdrav ženskam, ki ljubijo ženske 4) (The trembling of water lilies, greeting women who love women), Miroslav Slana, *7D*, No. 38, September 22, 1988
- 27 Jaz sem za konkretno (I vote for the explicit), Alenka Štebe, *Teleks*, December 22, 1988
- 28 Je moj sin homoseksualec? (Is my son a homosexual), unsigned, *Jana*, July 19, 1989
- 29 Razkritje slovenskih lezbijk (The coming-out of Slovenian lesbians), Sonja Grizila, *Jana*, August 2, 1989
- 30 Pismo Pavletu Čeliku (pismo bralcev) (A letter to Pavle Čelik, a reader's letter), Škuc Forum, *Delo*, August 3, 1989
- 31 Pavle Čelik o "Pismu Pavletu Čeliku" (Pavle Čelik on the "Letter to Pavle Čelik"), Žarko Hojnik, *Delo*, August 9, 1989
- 32 Črnolaso dekle iz lezbične sekcije (A black-haired woman from the lesbian section), Brane Jeranko, *Novi tednik NT & RC*, January 11, 1990
- 33 Kam hodijo homoseksualci s Celjskega (Where do gays from the Celje region go), unsigned, *Novi tednik NT & RC*, March 15, 1990
- 34 Posebne vrste Amerika (An America of a special kind), unsigned, *Kaj*, July 31, 1990

- 35 Maurice, Boštjan Malus, *Stop*, No. 4., January 25, 1991
- 36 Jaz sem homoseksualec (I'm gay), Ksenija Gerovac, *Kaj*, No. 9, February 26, 1991
- 37 Revolverju pa ne damo! (No money for Revolver), Sonja H. Vogrič, *Dnevnik*, June 12, 1991
- 38 Večinska demokracija (The majority's democracy), Nina Kozinc, *Delo*, June 14, 1991
- 39 Ko slišim revolver, vidim roza (When I hear "revolver", I see pink), Vesna R. Marinčič, *Delo*, June 25, 1991
- 40 O identiteti homoseksualne populacije (On identity of homosexual population), Meta Roglič, *Dnevnik*, September 10, 1991
- 41 Še pomnite tovariši in gospodje?, Samoiniciativno združenje homoseksualnih parov (Do you remember, comrades? Self-initiated association of homosexual couples), *Dnevnik*, November 12, 1991
- 42 Prihaja obdobje suhih krav? (Is it the era of starvation), Sonja H. Vogrič, *Dnevnik*, January 25, 1992
- 43 Ali je homoseksualnost prirojena ali privzgojena (Is homosexuality innate or acquired?), K. M. (po Newsweek), *Slovenec*, March 7, 1992
- 44 Bičaj me nežno (Whip me softly), Jaša Kramaršič - Kacin, *Mladina*, April 7, 1992
- 45 Dobre in zanimive imajo dovolj bralcev (No lack of readers for the good and the interesting), Janez Strehovec, *Delo*, April 17, 1992
- 46 Romeo in Julij (Romeo and Julian), Jaša Kramaršič - Kacin, *Mladina*, October 20, 1992
- 47 Anonimni mučeniki (Anonymous martyrs), Jaša Kramaršič - Kacin, *Mladina*, December 29, 1992
- 48 Pravica do drugačnosti (The right to be different), Grega Kališnik, *Slovenske novice*, December 30, 1992
- 49 En sam, ki je ljubil moške, (One lone man who loved man) Bojan Bauman, *Večer*, 28. februar 1993
- 50 Hrvaški homiči zasedli Ljubljano (Croatian homos occupy Ljubljana), unsigned, *Kaj*, April 10, 1993
- 51 One ljubijo ženske, oni ljubijo moške (She loves women, he loves men), Žana Kapetanovič, *Jana*, April 27, 1993
- 52 Poljubi na tromostovju (Kisses at Tromostovje), Žana Kapetanovič, *Jana*, May 4, 1993
- 53 Rozavizija (Rozavision), unsigned, *Stop*, May 27, 1993
- 54 Poroke med istim spolom ni (No same-sex marriage), unsigned, *Dnevnik*, June 2, 1993
- 55 Rizični Dolenc (pismo bralcev) (A risky Dolenc, a reader's letter), Brane Mozetič, *Mladina*, June 7, 1993
- 56 Kam s pravico do ljubezni (What with the right to love), Brane Mozetič, *Dnevnik*, June 22, 1993
- 57 O pluralnosti družinskih oblik (On the plurality of family forms), Miha Žužek

- 58 O homoseksualnosti naglas (pismo bralcev) (Speaking aloud about homosexuality, a reader's letter), p. l., *Nedeljski dnevnik*, July 4, 1993
- 59 Homoseksualni gen (A homosexual gene), *The independent on Sunday, Delo*, 7. avgust 1993
- 60 Aids na Voglu (Aids on Vogel), Mojca Kaučič, *Slovenske novice*, August 30, 1993
- 61 Spolnost in adis (pismo bralcev) (Sexuality and Aids, a reader's letter), Vinko Vodopivec, *Delo*, October 9, 1993
- 62 Nocoj bom prvič rekel da ... (Tonight I'll first say "yes"), Tanja Lesničar – Pučko, *Dnevnik*, April 19, 1994
- 63 Nobeni ne piše na čelu, Ženske in homoseksualnost v Sloveniji (You can't read it on their faces, Women and homosexuality in Slovenia, unsigned), *Slovenske novice*, April 26, 1994
- 64 Kako se zabavajo slovenski homoseksualci (Homosexual entertainment in Slovenia), Bojan Tomažič, *7D*, April 26, 1994
- 65 Umazano roza (Tainted pink), Jelena Gažević, *Delo*, May 30, 1994
- 66 Homoseksualci, ven iz gradu! (Homosexuals, get out of the castle!), Sabina Obolnar, *Slovenske novice*, May 30, 1994
- 67 Kmalu zakoni med homoseksualci? (Homosexual marriages soon?), unsigned, *Delo*, June 6, 1994
- 68 Tiho priznanje drugačnosti (Silent acknowledgement of difference), Ana Turk, *Slovenske novice*, August 22, 1995
- 69 Strpni in liberalni do drugih (Tolerant and liberal towards others), Ana Turk, *Slovenske novice*, August 22, 1995
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