

SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SEXUALITY

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Abstract: Sexuality has intrigued people from the most ancient times. This article examines some of the most significant sociological aspects of human sexuality. The introduction presents the relationship between gender and sexuality and the need to problematize sexuality in view of its *timeliness* and *mediatization*. The analysis of sexuality in sociological perspective goes through very significant and overlooked categories in sociology as sexual socialization and sexual identity. Besides outlining the main terminology apparatus in sociology of sexuality, the analysis attempts reflection from scientific point of view, offering different paradigms devoted to sexuality in chronological perspective, taking into account the specific socio-historical conditions and their impact on the sociological reading of sexual relationships and identifications.

Key words: sociology; sexuality; gender; socialization; sexual identity.

Introduction

Most of the studies on human sexuality, including the sociological approach are strongly dominated by social constructivism within the last 30 years [Kimmel, 2011]. Human sexuality is related to gender identity on a very important and decisive level. Biological characteristics and the dichotomous basis: *masculinity and femininity*, determine the so called *compulsory heterosexuality*. Reproductive organs are the main dividing line between individuals and they define the so called *normal* gender identity and respectively *normal* sexual identity [Weeks, 1986: 13; Bourdieu, 2002: 34]. Gender gives the codes for the so-called “normal” sexuality. In Western societies it is perceived that female sexuality is associated with *passivity*, while men’s sexuality with *activity*. Bourdieu says something very important in this regard, stating that the penis and the vagina as opposition elements legitimize what is known as a man and a woman, but on the other hand, the meaning of the genitals is that they are social constructs themselves.

¹ “Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian experience.” – *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 5: 631-60 [Rich, A., 1980].

Sexuality in the sociological context can be explored in two main aspects. One is *subjective* and concerns who we are and what kind of sexual desires we have experienced. The other one is connected with social norms, health, prosperity and influence of social regulators. This dividing line provides a starting point for macro and micro trend in sociology of sexuality [Weeks, 1986: 34]. The sociological study of sexuality is always contextual. Human sexuality cannot be studied without historical, cultural and political context. History of sexuality in this line of thinking is very important. Dynamics and changes in the public attitudes toward sexuality is a leading methodological principle of the sociological approach for studying sexuality [Bhattacharyya, 2002].

One of the most prominent researchers of human sexuality from a sociological point of view, Jeffrey Weeks, emphasizes that nothing is sexual until named as such, which underlines the social nature of sexuality, created by one of the most powerful tools of the human civilization – language. Weeks stresses that for a better understanding of human sexuality, more attention should be paid to the history and development of the term perversion [Weeks, 1986: 78]. The term *perversion* appeared in the 16th century and later, as considered by Foucault, the modern state using science and psychiatry in particular, constructs the “image” of the abnormal social phenomenon. Therefore, the meaning of the term perversion has change dramatically. According to Foucault, the perversions are among the most important factors for social control of sexuality in the modern states, using repressions and limits. The “**difference**” in term of human sexuality was used in the beginning from the sexologists to define different types of sexualities and later it was used in the so called “modern sciences” to legitimize the so called “*abnormal*” sexual identities. From a specific type or variation of sexual identity, the different sexual identity became “abnormal” in a negative sense.

Building on this, Weeks argues that sexuality and power are related in the following three aspects:

– **Class differences:** this relationship can be traced back from the slave system [Foucault, 1993]. The basic assumption in this dimension is that representatives of different classes not only have a different type of sexual behaviour, but they also form a different discourse to sexual practices. Referring to the studies of Kinsey, Jeffrey Weeks claims that class differences are an important factor defining the sexual behaviour of men in a greater sense than the sexual behaviour of women.

– **Gender dichotomy** also defines sexual behaviour as gender identity sets different types of sexual behaviour, characteristic of men and women. Usually this category could be considered as a dynamic one. Are women nowadays more sexually active than men? The traditional view of women as sexually passive subjects must take into account the hidden sexual practices and the powerful influence of the media in the 20th century.

– **Race** is another, third consideration, where sexuality is studied in relation to different ethnic and racial groups and the way racial or ethnical identity (or both) affect people’s behaviour, attitudes and expectations of sexuality as practices and attitudes.

Weeks claims that there is no such a term as sexuality in a singular form when exploring human sexuality. It should be *sexualities* instead, in order to encompass all the aspects and variation of sexual behaviour and attitudes. There are many types of sexualities defined by factors such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. The sociological approach must be based on this framework and examine sexual behaviour and human sexuality as complicated and multifactorial phenomenon, taking into account all the social and demographic factors.

Early theories of sexuality in social sciences

The importance of Bronislaw Malinowski in the contemporary sociology is associated mainly with the creation of functionalism as direction and approach [Fotev, 2002]. Moreover, he was the first researcher who introduced the use of participatory observation as a research method. His idea consists in examination “on the spot” – only in this way one can understand the motivation for any action and cultural characteristics of a community. The variations of sexual dimensions and desires are presented in his books *Sex and repression in savage society* and *The sexual life of savages in northwestern Melanesia*. Malinowski and Margaret Mead broke down the stereotypical assumptions about Western model of sexuality and its social dimensions.

In 1948, Alfred Kinsey, American biologist and etymologist, published his book *Sexual behavior in the Human Male* and a few years later *Sexual behavior in the Human Female*. These books are known as the *Kinsey Reports*. He is considered to be one of the pioneers studying the sexual behaviour from a scientific perspective. Kinsey, as a typical follower of the reigning positivism and functionalism in the US at that time, collected a huge database to come up later with an opinion about the sexual preferences of men and women. What makes the study of Kinsey remarkable and important from a sociological point of view is that he used personal interviews. His main objective was to overcome people’s embarrassment to talk about their sexual life and he believed that the main task of his research is to replace the topic of sex from moral framework and to study it with scientific methods. He had the ambition to interview 100,000 people but he managed to take only 18,000 interviews. Besides the representativeness of the survey, his desire to explore as many as possible representatives of different social classes and groups, makes his research one of the first sociological explanations of human sexuality and behaviour.

His findings have made a significant change in both the American culture and the study of sexuality in general. It shows that practices such as homosexuality; pedophilia; sexual practices in different age groups; prostitution are common practices that occur in real life. Another much revolutionary feature of his discoveries is the practices of homosexual behaviour. According to his findings about 13 percent of men and 7 percent of women of the American society by that time identify themselves as homosexual. That is why it is considered and widely believed that on average 10 percent of people are homosexual [Smith, 2001]. This is very misleading perception, which is not scientifically proven, but its usage on a large scale in mass media today still impose framework and opinion

that creates patterns and even conclusions, on the base of which public policies are made. He is mainly criticized for his methodology. Many authors think that his conclusions are not made with sound statistical methods and his respondents were people with “deviant sexual behavior”. Others accuse him that his studies have been made in cities where there is a concentration of homosexuals, prisoners and rapists. Regardless of the criticism, 60 years later, his works are still cited and used in different contexts. Kinsey set up the modern scientific framework for sociological explanation of sexual behavior and practices.

Sexual socialization

To analyze human sexuality is a difficult task. It is also very difficult to specify on the object of sociology of sexuality [Weeks, 1986: 13]. Every culture has its own norms and prohibitions on sexuality. It is multi-factorial and diversified phenomenon that must be viewed contextually. Therefore, one should investigate the process of sexual socialization. This is the process in which a set of mechanisms, based on cultural, religious, economic, political, educational and media-based factors, educate and promote a certain type of sexual attitude, beliefs, and behaviors. In this regard, Michael Kimmel, paraphrasing Michel Foucault says, *There are only bodies and pleasure, everything else is a social organization and interpretation.*

Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the 20th century debunked the ideals of the divine nature of man and his moral identity by his concept of the unconscious. He claims that the unconscious is underestimated, and the conscious is a central framework for analyzing sexuality. Freud claims that conscious is only a small invisible part defining human actions. The unconscious is submitted to passions and inclinations. Inclinations are constant and they always have a “final mission” and thus cannot be prevented and controlled. They are generated as a result of mechanical and chemical processes in the body. Of all inclinations he attaches the greatest importance to the sexual ones. In the first chapter of “Psychology of sexuality” he even mentions the absence of a term for sexual hunger and he calls it “libido”. According to him, the libido is the main source of energy, which determines human affairs, motivation and actions, initiatives and incentives. According to Freud, there are two major periods in human sexual development: before and after the genital stage. Before Freud, it was believed that human sexuality occurs in puberty, but according to him, from the very birth the child feels the need to satisfy his own, albeit unconscious sexuality. The period between three and five years determines the sexual development of the child and he calls this period autoeroticism: erogenous zones in this period are “anus, thumb, index finger, mouth and skin”. He introduced the concept of “Oedipus complex”, which describes the desire of the child in the aforementioned period. According to Freud, the child begins to feel attracted to a parent of the opposite sex to satisfy their appetites and experiencing strong competition to those who threaten it. At a later stage the child realizes that these kinds of attractions are highly immoral and contrary to social norms. So the child is forced to redirect their desires to another

sexual object. The principle of pleasure happens to be in a conflict with the principle of reality and the social norms, with the result that leads to the principle of repression or suppression of the desires. But these oppressed desires do not evaporate and remain in the unconscious area of human consciousness and begin to form pulses, which are crucial in future life of the individuals. Successful handling of the Oedipus complex largely determines the future life of the human beings. From a sociological point of view, the structure of consciousness, which offers Freud is interesting and deserves attention. There are two models – spatial and functional. The first is divided into unconscious and conscious, and the second is structured on the notions: “Id”, “Ego” and “Superego”. “Id” denotes the unconscious, and the “Ego” is the intermediate link between “It” and “Superego”. “Superego” embodies all the social norms, which the individual learns and obeys. In the beginning, these norms are set by the parents, and later – by the institutions. Interesting for this analysis is the contradiction between reality and pleasure. On micro sociological level, these are all the consequences of socialization processes, and the way they happen. Social norms governing sex are culturally defined and their formation in an individual is crucial. On the other hand, every individual creates his own sexuality: he is not just a passive recipient.

Weeks [Weeks 1986: 115], criticizing Freud, argues that psychoanalytic tradition has not managed to give satisfactory answers in three main aspects of human sexuality. *First of all*, naming the subconscious as the domain of norms, desires and morals and their collision, this tradition, along with anthropology, Essentialism or biological determinism, ignores any social nature of sexual desires. *Secondly*, says Weeks, biologically deterministic perspective which Freud uses makes his arguments unconvincing. Instead, Wicks maintains that not the biological differences predetermine the sexual orientation for girls or boys but the meaning given to them in a particular society and culture. This viewpoint is shared by Margaret Mead, who claims that Freud’s theories are a kind of legitimization of Western model of sexual and gender identification, which are strongly influenced by Christian moral norms. *The third aspect* is connected with the development of standards for male and female, which are not fixed and could be considered in historical and socio-cultural aspect and the concept for subconscious only gives justification to the dichotomous hetero-normative idea of sexuality without paying any attention to the dynamics of the notions and social interpretations of sexuality.

From macro-sociological point of view, the regulation of sexuality varies depending on other socio-economic and political factors. Sociology of sexuality is the way in which sex as a phenomenon is allowed and legitimized on an institutional level. In postmodern society the way we talk about sex is totally different than the way it was done 200 years ago, for example. Sexual socialization constructs sexual behaviour by incorporating social norms in human bodies. Looking at the social construction of the bodies within the idea of male dominance, Pierre Bourdieu argues that biological differences in men and women are taken as sufficient reasons and justifications for natural gender dichotomy and the social construction of the body. Male identity is associated with sexual

power; with the superiority of the phallus as “inflating” and fruitful symbolic tool. In the context of the classification of the body as “frontal active part” and “posterior passive part”, respectively, Bourdieu spoke of “the primacy of masculinity” in a sexual act. These are sexual practices guided by the principle of similar contrasts, where man is always “on top of the woman”. In the spirit of the conflict theories approach in Bourdieu’s idea man is presented as exercising power. Two pairs that describe sexuality in its social form of power are “active-passive” and “top-bottom”. All words associated with copulation and penetration, in the most sexual sense of the word, are used in a negative subordinating position (“to fuck”) and are associated with predominance and supremacy, and with “spoof” by the active part. In the light of gender roles, sexual dominance is associated with the desire to prove yourself as well as with the act of heroism and bravery. Bourdieu very precisely notes that these “manifestations” of masculinity can be legal or illegal, which takes the theme in a contemporary perspective on the relationship between gender and deviant behaviour, but this, of course, is subject of another analysis.

Male sexual acts are connected with the ability to “own” and “subordinate” and this manifests itself as a “misunderstanding” when in the later stages of their lives women tend to associate love with emotional experiences, while men sought mainly physical dimension and potential to demonstrate and reinforce “masculinity”. Bourdieu gives as examples the “simulation of orgasm” and sexual harassment: in the first case there is a symbolic activity which aims to prove the male power, and in the second way to use this power without necessarily be linked to a particular sexual pleasure. Speaking of incorporation of domination, he mentions that gender as a social construct uses seemingness of natural laws and thus talk about sexuality, and as he says “marriage against nature” in terms of same-sex marriages. The basic idea is that gender is constructed from natural differences between men and women and therefore legitimizes such statements and arguments. In this connection [Bhattacharyya, G., 2002: 18], analyzing sexual practices described in Eastern philosophy and especially in Kama Sutra teachings, says that sexuality is masculine and hegemonic and each role in sexual play is a cultural product, strictly defined and framed.

Researches on sexuality and human culture generally take an enormous turn after 1920 thanks to the anthropological field studies which have demonstrated that sexual behaviour is mainly socio-cultural product. Socio-biological and essentialist views are important, but sexuality take shape and meaning within the social relations. Every society, group or community constructs different cultural code and sense of sexuality, building a model for its practice and understanding [Weeks, 1986: 34]. Weeks also notes that there are five basic essential factors in the analysis of the social organization of sexuality in the process of its social application in the form of prohibitions, limits, norms and attitudes.

– *The family institution* in different cultures sets different types of sexual relationships. The family builds sexual notions, while the educational institutions teach sex education. This difference is important in relation with the values and approaches used in these processes and practices. Another major dividing line,

which is methodologically very useful and can be used as a direct indicator, is the attitude, made in the family, toward the public and private side of sex and sexual practices. How individuals “acquire” their ideas about sexual practices in connection with shame as a social norm. Kenneth Plummer speaks about the role of the family in today’s society as the place where talking about sex is a ritual; where the partners have to confess their desires; to tell their sexual preferences as well as sexual preferences, problems and practices of other people. The family has become a place where the individual is revealed as a homosexual and it has built up a discourse: (coming out) – “to reveal” [Plummer, 2005]. In the circle of a community, a very important indicator toward the family is the presence or absence of “talking” about sex.

- Economic factors predetermine the class differences in sexual practices and way of thinking and all the other factors that influence sexual behaviour and its codification.

- Religion and culture are important factors for the study of practices that turn a sexual act into shameful and forbidden one, as well as those practices which oppose these prohibitions, as “petting” or having sex in public.

- Political factors are associated with the entire range of legal prohibitions. This is a very important aspect regarding the reference legal - legitimate. Another important component is education and sex education policies. Sex education in modern times considers sexual practices only as reproductive ones, not as a pleasure. What is taught does not include diversity and pluralistic dialogue on sexuality [Bhattacharyya, 2002]. Formal sex education in most countries around the world “suggests” that heterosexuality is “normal” sexuality. Moreover, formal sex education moralizes sex and excludes all differences and variations. This process, of course, undergoes changes and young people react differently depending on socio-economic factors and the regions which they live in, and the opportunity to be informed by the media [Bhattacharyya, 2002: 127].

- Culture of Resistance: these are all methods and practices invented by a society or sexual minority to oppose the prohibitions related to sexuality. These are the fights of feminism, gay and lesbian movements, actively developing in the late 60s and in the 70s of 20th c.

These factors mentioned above give us very important directions for the sociological study of the sexual practices but we cannot overlook the influence of media on the sexual socialization. Media over the past 50 years have turned sex into one of the leading topics. The media are highly sexualized [Plummer, 2005: 4], respectively sexuality is medialized. The media is this that give sex its importance in striving to be fashionable, important and likeable [McMahon, 2001: 70 in EHS]. Outstanding are the three main characteristics of the contemporary sexual practices that are directly influenced by television and media. These are: depersonalization of sexual partners; commercialization of sex services and attributes and the aggressiveness in the sexual act. Furthermore, pornography is studied in a relation with what Plummer called “gender determined sexuality”. According to him pornography emphasizes the reluctance of women to have sex and often they are assaulted or raped. He thinks that pornography shows

a false image of the woman, but the real one of the males. All this is gender determined. Gender conditioned sexuality leads to the dominance of men over women. Genitals are those who give legitimacy to gender, on the other hand, just gender roles and stereotypes makes sexuality gender determined. Gender determined sexuality is to a great extent “responsible” for sexual violence such as rape and sexual harassment.

Michael Kimmel argues that in the last decades of the 60s of the 20th century, under the influence of the technological revolution, sexual revolution and movements such as feminism, the difference between men and women in terms of sexual preferences, practices and behaviour becomes more diminished and utilized. It is becoming increasingly masculinized.

Important methodological starting point concerning sexual socialization is the “*sexual double standard*”. The core of this concept is based on the idea that women should resist male sexual desires, while men should actively look for sexual encounters and be supported by “sexual athleticism”. Double standard, in the words of Kimmel, is one of the essential parts of gender inequalities and is determined by themselves [Kimmel, 2011]. Sex in this discourse becomes a game and competition. This is one of the most typical forms of social influence on sex. If we refer to Foucault, this is sexual power play. In the most general sense, based on “compulsory heterosexuality”, there are social norms that value the same sexual practices in different ways, depending on whether they are performed by men or women. The common perception is that what is taken for a man sometimes is unacceptable for a woman. From the studies carried out until now, the majority of girls complain that they are called “twat”, if they have multiple sexual partners, while in a similar situation boys are just “lucky”. Another dimension of the double standard is the treatment of the sexual practices of both gender in the ageing process. What is regarded as natural for a man who grows old is unacceptable for a woman of the same age.

In the theory of social construction of sexuality [Foucault, 1993; Kimmel, 2011; Weeks, 1986], sexual fantasies show that gender is the basic principle of its construction. Considering the fantasies of men and women, Plummer (2005) stresses that male fantasies are *more visual, aggressive and polygamous* while female ones are *intimate, emotional and passive*. Plummer’s methodology is based on the understanding that the questionnaires in the study of gender aspects of sexuality are not appropriate. Instead, he uses descriptive research, in which respondents describe their own sexual fantasies. Four components were important in his research: *language; emotional involvement; sexual body sensitivity and sexual poses*. Here the technique of content analysis has been used. The conclusion reached by Plummer is that men and women use different language talking about sexuality, which shows the social nature of sexual attitudes.

In the process of sexual socialization it is important how a society sets codes to the individual as an actor, using the terms of Parsons. In sociology Kimmel introduces the term *sexual scenario* [Kimmell, 2011], which explains that even small children learn sexual behaviour which is strictly defined and targeted. The main things that every culture teaches about sex could be summarized in the answers of the questions: Who takes part in sexual activities? Where is it al-

lowed to practice them? What is sex? How is sex done properly? And the critical “why” are we having sex? Therefore, stresses Kimmel, one should not be surprised that sexual behavior is not the same in different cultures.

Using the theory of Zimmerman of “doing gender”, we can talk about “doing sexuality”. It is no accident that sexuality becomes gender identification factor, because men in general are socialized to talk more and fantasize more about sex, than women [Kimmel, 2005]. Doing sexuality, adapting the conceptual logic of Zimmermann, is to act and talk about sex from gender perspective. Using interpretive theories and approach, Plummer spoke of “sociology of stories”. Regarding sexuality and sexual practices, he claims, people can be divided into three major sections of the interactive process: *sexual storyteller or those who tell their sexual stories; agents or people who maintain the collection of information from the stories; and the audience that “consumes” these stories.*

That’s why it is very important how individuals are involved in the process of sexual socialization. What is their attitude towards sex as a practice, as the possibility to impose control over women by men in the desire to “legitimize” the patriarchal masculinity; freedom to talk about sex and the family’s role in preparing the young person for sexual life; values that a group, community or society accept and internalize in the process of socialization.

Sexual Identity

This is one of the most complicated characteristics in sociology of sexuality, simply because most studies devoted to sexual identity, as well as those which implicitly explore this phenomenon show that sexual preferences do not always coincide with the statements and behaviour of a particular person [Vance, 2001 in EHS]. Very often people with a homosexual orientation would say they are heterosexual because of the public pressure. According to Connell [Connell, 2005: 146], the best research method for the study of sexuality is observation because sexuality is a delicate topic to be registered with other methods. Postmodern thinking about identity, including sexual identity is fragmented and cannot be registered using only one approach. It is really important for the sociological study of sexuality to take into account the personal positioning of an individual regarding their sexuality. This relationship is very important and takes into account the position of what we call “sexual person” with all the subjective feelings and attitudes. This can help use prevent comprehensive conclusions about sexual practices, behaviour and thought of a particular group or community, only on the basis of macro-sociological structures. In this vein, sexual identity becomes “sexual identities”. The need of plural is justified by the fact that sexual identity is extremely individualistic subjective category, described with different terms. For the purposes of this analysis will make a brief analysis of heterosexuality and homosexuality as sexual identities.

Heterosexuality is often referred to so-called “normal” sexuality. The sociological problem is rooted in its “normality”. “Invented” in 1901, this term is highly discriminatory and legitimizes a sexual identity which is called “normal”, without having a legitimate reason for this. Foucault gives a brilliant

answer to authoritative intention of the modern state, which makes sodomy in identity based on certain types of sexual preference. The question here is why it took so long to invent the terms “normal” and “abnormal” sexuality. In most cases they are described as the *right, positive sexuality* and *inappropriate, negative sexuality*, respectively. The reason for this is that sexuality is not only associated with sexual activity but rather to the identity of an individual. Sexuality becomes line pressure in the early 20th century. It becomes a political tool [Foucault, 1993; Rich, 1980; Butler, 1999], used to characterize some people as evil and insane, and the other as normal and good. Adrian Rich coined the term *compulsory heterosexuality* and says that sexuality is not only a biological concept, but a social institution that categorizes based on the notion of male and female, which as already mentioned many times, are social constructs. In this regard terms *heterosexism* and *heteronormativity* reflects on the social invention of the sexual identities. Judith Butler coined the term *heterosexual matrix*, a term which analyzes the ways in which cultural norms produce discourses regulating our desires, bodies and gender, and legitimizing the idea that heterosexuality is the “normal” biologically set. Heterosexuality is a “universal model” of “normal” sexual practices. Dominant heterosexual principle itself is symbolic violence and domination, manifested primarily in non-recognition of a group in society. It is subject to the social construction of the body as active and passive. The biggest problem of homosexuality is the feminization of the male body and respectively of male dominance through sexual practices. This in turn leads to an internal reproduction of the heterosexual model, where homosexual implicitly divided into “male and female” on positions in sexual intercourse. On the basis of this division nowadays there is a phenomenon called “internal discrimination” among gay men, where persons who do not meet the “masculine, muscular” type based on heteronormative model of masculinity and successfully promoted by the media, are rejected and insulted.

One of the main reasons heterosexuality to be legitimized as normal is its procreation function [Bhattacharyya, 2002]. The author added that heteronormativity incorporates a great paradox: while the discourses and analysis of heterosexuality are not very informative about sexual practices themselves, in the criticism and discourses of homosexuality, this is the main focus. From this perspective, we can conclude that heterosexuality is the “right”, publicly legitimized “normal” sexual identity which has nothing to do with primal pleasure and sexual attraction. This argument is one of the strongest arguments against socio-biological view explaining the “normality” of heterosexuality.

Homosexuality is a term coined in 1890, but its popular using dates back to the very early years of the 20th century. What refers to the socio-structural nature of heterosexuality is true for homosexuality as well. Foucault demonstrates unequivocally that the power operating in the field of sexuality creates this term and respectively the homosexual identity only to differentiate from the “normal” sexuality. Science has always been associated with power and from this perspective the science of sexuality was a political act of categorization in a negative direction. Homosexuality is the “bad” side of heterosexuality. As Fou-

cault would say, this is the tendency of repression, which, however, unlocks new horizons and spread these practices even more than expected.

Weeks (1996) argues that perversion is strongly morally encoded by religion, while homosexual is a term invented by modern political discourse in the experience of medicine to analyze the difference. This process attributed to the homosexual individuals three negative characteristics of identity *own history, physical appearance and life failure*. Thus the active political intervention in the 20th century focused on homosexual man as an object in order to reinforce legitimacy to the patriarchal masculinity.

Describing the power dimensions of sexuality, Bourdieu proves that homosexuality is a perfect example of obedience where *active-passive* opposition is represented in the same way as in a heterosexual intercourse. This, on the other hand, complements the idea about another dimension of sexuality: *as a punishment*. Bourdieu provides many examples of the use of homosexuality and the act of penetration as a humiliation. These are all modern practices in prisons and other (mostly male) places and institutions where the penetration aims this punishing and demeaning effect. Kimmel [Kimmell, 2011: 45] insists that homosexual people completely reproduce heterosexual practices and behaviour. He calls gay people gender conformists, which means that gays emphasize on masculinity, while lesbian practices, actions and appearance are typical for the mainstream femininity [Kimmel, 2011: 18]. From a sociological point of view, it is interesting why the majority of lesbians mimic social order imposed on men such as a short hair, dress code, etc. We have to consider whether this is an attempt to imitate men in order to reinforce and identify with them or rather a reaction to the constructed femininity, obeying the feminine code. Or may be both?

In the modern theory of sexuality, and homosexuality in particular, the term “queer” becomes more and more important. Before 1980 and during the AIDS epidemic this term was mainly related to the negative discourse against homosexuals. Today, under the influence of theorists like Butler and many gay movements, the term *queer* is associated rather with political position, which is based on reacting against any discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation [Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004]. Not surprisingly, today the big NGOs and movements, that included a gender platform in its activity, use the abbreviation LGBTQI, where besides known lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender include Queer ideas and intersex people.

Postmodern theories of sexuality

Today we speak of “masculinization of sexuality”. It is expressed in the desire of women to maintain multiple sexual contacts, to separate sex from love as a concept and to seek pleasure for the sake of it [Kimmel, 2005: 20]. This, according to Kimmel, is a pattern of behaviour that has been inherent in men. The basic assumption of masculinization of sexuality is that women today under the influence of feminist ideas and media seek intimate contact with the single purpose of pleasure from sex. In other words, women in recent decades seeking sexual pleasure like men: for the sake of pleasure. This thesis, on the other hand, is generalized and does not include traditional societies and communities

in which this model is not valid, or at least to the degree which Kimmel claims to be. There is another problematic point of this concept and it is in the fact that a woman's sexual experience is conceptualized and compared by the male sexual experience. Using of the word 'masculinization' can be considered as idealization of the male sexual experience that women seem to have strived to catch up with. In this line of thought the author did not mention the other trend opposed to the masculinization of sex – "feminization" of sex. A typical example of this is the man that Elizabeth Badinter [**Badinter, 2002**] calls "reconciled with himself man." Usually, these are the men who do not seek sexual pleasure to prove their masculinity and share household chores with their marital partners. These two concepts should be used very carefully because they can vary among different regions and cultural patterns around the world. Masculinisation is a process and varies depending on the social and political factors and it is typical primarily for the Western societies.

Changes in intimacy and sexual behaviour that occur within the last 50 years are extremely intensified. Weeks called this *the crisis of sexuality*. He also argues that sexuality is becoming more of an issue for politics and its realities. He highlights three main factors that "contributed" to this crisis. The first he calls *the secularization of sexuality*. The separation of sex from religion and growing "sexual market" and marketing (pornography, advertising objectify the female body, etc.) are a leading factor in this change. The liberalization of sexual behaviour that occurs after the 20s of the last century is the other key factor. It involves changes leading to more liberal attitude toward abortions, divorce, homosexuality, etc. The crisis of the family is the third major cause of change in the bosom of human sexuality. The nontraditional family, which is smaller than the Victorian one, includes a smaller number of children and advocates for equality between partners.

Of course, this concept is not universal and comprehensive. It should be noted what we have mentioned above: *ethnicity, class and gender* as important factors in the process of sexual socialization. Along with this change there is an increasing development of the so called *sexual panic* [**Weeks, 2986**] in a moralistic sense. These are movements, events, speeches and philosophical ideological processes that oppose these changes, and the change in the basis of sexuality itself. The most significant element of this panic is the connection of sexuality with STD's². A typical example is AIDS. It provoked many policies in countries that have undertaken training policies, while many others deliberately have not taken a position on this issue because it is considered immoral and it is even more disastrous leading to serious health issues of a big party of the population in these countries. The AIDS' crisis in the 80s is one of the best indicators for the interrelation between politics and sexuality. It shows the attitude of a power to a disease and a specific sexual minority. Weeks says that the modern gay movements are a leading legitimizing factor in the liberalization of the sexual policies and attitudes. According to him, there are five main factors for the ap-

² Sexually transmitted diseases.

pearance and the activism of the gay movements: *many people with the same sexual identity; geographical location and concentration; identified groups and influences against them; unexpected events in the lives of those groups (such as AIDS, Stonewall) and intellectual leadership.*

Sociological framework for sexuality should be based and public attitude towards it. It is a vision that is not interested in the origin of sexuality and the sexual identities but rather interested in the ways in which these “desires and longings” are reproduced and regulated by social institutions. So in addition to how to talk about sexuality, a very important aspect in the context of sociology is sexual behavior and its relationship with the media in this century. As Foucault notes that homosexuality is a constructed identity, it must be noted that sexuality today is used for identification, but not from the power of the state and political-medical discourse, and by individuals themselves. To belong to a sexual community or identify with a certain socio-philosophical platform is personal, individual choice [Weeks, 1986: 125].

Globalization and urbanization led to what is today called *geography of sexuality* and is associated with big cities as places where people feel free and unlimited to practice their sexuality without being controlled and censured [Bhattacharyya, 2002]. From this point of view the settlement also has great significance for sexual socialization and sexual practices of an individual in nowadays societies.

Sociology of sexuality should study not only the ways in which knowledge for sex and sexual practices is transmitted on a daily level and in the family, but also the influence of all other macro factors such as education, politics, economics, etc. Knowledge about sex procured by sociological research is not only important in view of the knowledge as an epistemological perspective. This must be knowledge in favour of the contemporary societies and the public policies, taking into account data from a study of the attitudes and perceptions of sexuality, sex education and attitudes towards sex and use this knowledge to achieve the highest possible efficiency of the public policies and the measures which are prescribed and recommended in a given society or community.

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