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Formation of homosexual orientation of men in adolescence

Abstract: *The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of homosexual men connected with the formation of their sexual orientation in adolescence. A comparative study of 27 young adult homosexual men and 28 heterosexual men of similar age used a categorised interview questionnaire consisting of two parts: the first with questions regarding sexual dreams, fantasies and erotic encounters; the second with questions on family and social circumstances.*

The study yielded an abundance of interesting data on the psychological circumstances of homosexual men during the formation of sexual orientation and its awareness as well as differences and similarities in that area between homosexual and heterosexual men. For instance, it revealed experience patterns concerning the formation of sexual identity and personal attitudes toward one's sexual orientation characteristic of homosexual persons. The study verified the main hypothesis that mental-internal experiences precede behavioural-external ones both in homosexual and heterosexual persons.

Key words: *homosexuality, sexual orientation, adolescence, mental-internal and behavioural-external experiences*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is often a difficult time for many teenagers, who tend to experience a lot of anxiety and stress. At this stage of life, an individual goes through a number of biological and psychological changes, combined with a rapid development of his/her sexuality and sexual activity. A young person becomes aware of his/her own sexual needs, starts looking for objects that might satisfy such desires and engages in activities aimed at releasing sexual tension. This is a long-term process. It begins with a growing erotic interest in another person, accompanied by searching for information about sex and human sexuality and engaging in activities that are sexual in nature, from innocent caresses to complete sexual intercourse. The majority of young people direct their sexual desires at the opposite sex, some however display interest towards the same sex. Those individuals are homosexual.

The subject of the research study presented here is homosexual experiences of men related to the formation of their sexuality in adolescence, when they first become aware of their sexual needs and the fact that they differ significantly from the sexual needs of their peers. The analysis comprised both their internal (mental) experiences,

such as thoughts, fantasies, dreams, reflections, emotions, desires, and external (behavioural) experiences, including sexual relations with others and activity related to seeking out and finding information.

Sexual orientation is defined as a general pursuit which is sexual in nature and a sense of being sexually attracted towards persons of the same, the opposite or both sexes (Bem, 1996; Lew-Starowicz Z., Lew-Starowicz M., 1999; Imieliński, 1989;). From the biological standpoint, sexual orientation is related to the direction of sexual drive and may be directed towards the same, the opposite or both sexes. From the point of view of psychology, sexual orientation includes feelings, sexual fantasies, daydreams with sexual content, sexual preferences, the choice of a particular style of sexual behaviours and other forms of sexual activity (Bohan, 1996; Graber, Archibald, 2001; Klein 1999).

Sexual orientation is formed as a combined result of biological, physiological, and cultural-psychological factors working together (Dube, Savin-Williams, Diamond, 2001). As a process, it is secondary to sexual identity, which is formed by around 6 years of age. Sexual orientation is closely related to innate sexual desire, but the process of its formation undergoes many different developmental

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stages. It is initiated in the first months of the child's life, as demonstrated e.g. by infant masturbation, erotic fantasies, early childhood exhibitionism, etc. only to become fully developed in late adolescence or early adulthood (Rotheraw-Boras, Langabeer, 2001).

The term homosexual orientation traditionally denotes a phenomenon involving an emotional relationship between two individuals of the same sex, in which those individuals find each other physically and psychologically attractive and which may involve a sexual intercourse leading to both partners achieving sexual satisfaction (Bohan, 1996). The definition excludes bisexuals and minors. Homosexual behaviour, on the other hand, occurs when any form of sexual activity, whether psychological, physical or both is directed towards another person of the same sex (Lew-Starowicz, Lew-Starowicz, 1999). It should be noted that homosexuality is not merely a sexual, but a psychosexual orientation, which implies that it is related to the general human desire to satisfy the need for love, tenderness, sense of security, as well as sexual needs, and is fulfilled through relations with persons of the same sex (Bailey et al. 1997; Boczkowski, 1988; Dube et al., 2001; Lew-Starowicz, Lew-Starowicz, 1999).

In the case of minors, the term "homosexuality" is not used; instead, we refer to developmental homosexuality, a phenomenon involving sexual activity (e.g. mutual masturbation) between same sex adolescents. This phenomenon occurs relatively frequently in adolescence, among older children and young people, and may be related to the homophilic phase, the process of learning sexual behaviours, spending a lot of time in the company of a same sex peer group, friendships evolving into intimate relationships, as well as strong sexual tension. Developmental homosexuality does not necessarily point to homosexual preference; it is a temporary phase, although it might be a symptom of a persistent sexual orientation – recognizing one's identity through the first sexual experiences. Sexual drive in children is often undifferentiated, rather than unequivocally directed towards the one or the other sex, and is often referred to as bi-directional. Between 8 and 12 years of age, peers often engage in reciprocal sexual practices (this is a natural developmental stage called the metatropic sexual drive stage), and the dominant direction of the sex drive is determined between 9 and 14 years of age (Bailey, Zucker, 1995; Boczkowski, 1988, Kitzinger, Coyle, 2002; Rivers, 2002).

RECOGNITION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS EXPERIENCE

The difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals rest in the expression of sexual preferences, and not in the mechanism that conditions those preferences. Based on their own studies, Bell, Weinberg and Hammersmith (1981 in: Kimmel and Weiner, 1995) called into question earlier assumptions about the parents' influence on their child's sexual orientation (cf. Lew-Starowicz, Lew-Starowicz, 1999). The hypothesis of seduction and forcing the child to engage in sexual practices as the

cause of his/her subsequent homosexuality has never been scientifically proven as well (see: Kimmel, Weiner, 1995). The most probable explanation is that homosexuality, like heterosexuality, is an innate preference (Risch, D'Augelli, 2001). It would mean that homosexual orientation is formed similarly to the heterosexual one, the only difference being the object of sexual feelings and, probably, the subjects response to his/her different sexuality. Besides the nature of the phenomenon itself, such responses are determined to a large extent by socio-cultural factors. Bem's EBE theory (Exotic Became Erotic) (Bem 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001) is the example of connections the biological and social factors in shaping of human sexual orientation.

When teenagers reach puberty, their sexual preferences are already determined, even if they have yet to be activated or realized. They either sense or fully realize their sexual orientation even before they are able to name it, and they can quote childhood experiences which, in their opinion, demonstrate that already as children they knew which sex they were attracted to. Sexual feelings (internal experiences) from childhood are much more significant than it was previously thought, and sexual orientation expressed during puberty manifests itself already in childhood or at the very beginning of puberty. An individual senses the direction of his or her sexual interest earlier. It follows then that in the process of becoming aware of one's sexual orientation, sexual behaviour, i.e. behavioural experiences, are less important than feelings, erotic fantasies, i.e. mental thoughts. Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith (1981 see: Kimmel and Weiner, 1995) found that sexual orientation (homo- or heterosexual) was recognized by subjects before they were sexually active. According to subjects, it was not sexual activity that subsequently determined their sexual orientation. In their opinion, sexual orientation is determined and realized long before sexual initiation. The choice of a sexual partner is the result of previously determined sexual preference and merely a fulfilment of already existing needs.

This notion could be described as the concept of adolescence needs. Discovering, forming and achieving fully shaped sexual needs is part of this phenomenon

One starts feeling the mentioned desires and pursues the physical and emotional closeness with a person outside of his family circle. That means greater sensitivity to sexual incentives, fantasies, dreams, daydreams. This is the first stage, which falls on through out childhood period is growing up and the beginnings of growing up, that is when the body is preparing to puberty (*or puberty spurt*). The next phase is the first stage of behavioral activity (as opposed to mental) and is different in boys and girls. It is referred to as a disintegration phase of psychosexual development (Kernberg, 2007; Beisert, 2001, 2006). The boys are looking to relieve sexual tension and take action to satisfy or reduce it. Such activity is often performed in the company of other boys and has the cognitive-exploratory nature. It should be noted that it is not only in the nature of homosexual, heterosexual boys also try it, driven by the motive of satisfying their curiosity concerning human sexuality and defuse tension. However, part of the boys begin to realize

that the object of their sexual desires are people of the same sex, that is one's different sexual orientation. At that stage girls tend more to choose an emotional contact with some erotic context rather than perform sexual activities in same sex group. The transition to the third stage occurs when trying to establish contacts with a person who is mainly subject of romantic, emotional interest. This motion is accompanied by a desire to build intimate ties. In the case of gay people this means building a relationship with a person of the same sex. Initially, these compounds are not persistent, but they are accompanied by anticipation of exclusivity and loyalty, although associated with relatively frequent change of object.

The theory that sexual orientation is determined long before sexual initiation seems to correspond with the hypothesis of genetic and biological basis for the genesis of sexual drive (Hammer et al., 1993; LeVay, Hammer, 1994, Petterson, D'Augelli, 2013). As noted by Jaczewski (2003), if we adopt this hypothesis, which is shared by the majority of sex therapists today, we must reject the popular notion that experiences of social interactions might direct the sexual drive of an individual towards homo- or heterosexuality. Homosexual caresses frequently occurring among pubescent youths will not result in establishing homosexual orientation in a heterosexual individual. In addition, Kimmel and Weiner (1995) point out that homosexual men and women in their studies engaged in heterosexual experiences in childhood and during puberty, and were actively seeking such experiences. Some of their sexual experiences were heterosexual in nature, and sexual initiation was rarely a homosexual experience. Significantly though, their heterosexual experiences were not gratifying, and were experienced as unpleasant and unsatisfactory. Homosexual persons initially engaged in heterosexual behaviours, despite having felt their different sexual preferences since childhood. A sexual act with a person of a different sex was meant to confirm (or refute) their feelings about their different sexual orientation and verify whether those feelings were true, which was to be achieved by engaging in standard, generally and socially accepted sexual activity.

The first homosexual experiences usually occur during playing with same sex peers. They are typical and appropriate for the stage homophilic phase (Bohan, 1996). The object of one's attention, individuals of the same sex, is the variant in the second phase of the development of sexual needs, according to the above outlined in the model.

Later in life, heterosexual persons engage in heterosexual relationships. The difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals may consist in the fact that future homosexuals are more likely to engage in romantic relationships with people of the same sex, mostly schoolmates, before the end of puberty, i.e. around 14 years of age. According to Boczkowski (1988), it is true of 75% of homosexuals. Between the first premonition about one's sexual identity and full understanding of one's homosexuality, there is usually a period of time filled with dreams, fantasies and feelings related to the growing sexual need, which are treated here more as internal experiences, rather than mental ones.

When analysing the process of identifying homosexual orientation in men, we can assume that in the early years of life (3-10 years of age), they gain experiences that are suggestive of their actual sexual orientation. Some feelings about the direction of their sexual drive may also emerge, and around 12-14 years of age the initial stage of conscious determination and analysis of one's sexual identity begins (Bohan 1996; Graber, Archibald, 2001; Klein, 1999; Rotheraw-Boras, Langabeer, 2001). At that age, orientation is often not yet named, but a precise, clear-cut sense of one's needs and desires is present. Young men usually learn about the term "homosexuality" around 13 – 16 years of age. The process is gradual and involves noticing the first signs of homosexual needs. The next stage is the realisation that such needs appeared earlier, in childhood, and then comes the full awareness of one's sexual identity, and finally the stage of seeking information about homosexuality and trying to understand it (Kimmel, Weiner, 1995; Klein, 1999; Rivers, 2002, Ueno, 2005).

Further on in the sexual development of a homosexual, there emerge the first experiences related to the process of accepting one's homosexuality. This is a particularly difficult period for a homosexual, involving significant psychological costs. It brings a number of negative emotions – fear, anxiety, frustration, which in turn trigger defensive behaviours (Cochran, Mays, 2013).

To sum up, we can conclude that homosexuality is inborn as much as heterosexuality is, and the direction of one's own sex drive is recognized prior to engaging in any sexual behaviours. We can therefore accept the hypothesis that in the first phase of evolution, the need to discover, homosexuals direct their desires towards people of the same sex. The object of their dreams and fantasies are boys or men, unlike for heterosexuals, who dream of girls and women. The difference between gay groups and heterosexual ones is the response to one's emerging and evolving sexual orientation. Consequently, what differs homosexuals from heterosexuals is their attitude towards their emerging sexual orientation.

With respect to the formation of sexual orientation, we have introduced the terms internal and external experience, defined as follows (cf. Katra, 1996). We assume that mental (internal) thoughts involve mental interpretation of external signals and the individual's mental activity, such as reflections, deliberations, experiencing and analysing sexual feelings, fears and anxieties, as well as unconscious dreams with erotic content and symbolism, and conscious dreams in the form of erotic fantasies. Behavioural experiences (external) are experiences related to behaviours and interactions with others, as well as engaging in activity directed towards the outside, the purpose of which is erotic. Among the behaviours related to the realization of one's sexual orientation, we have included, among others: seeking contact with a partner, interactions whose nature is erotic or sexual, interactions whose goal is to obtain information about human sexuality, as well as seeking contact with associations and clubs for homosexuals, and attempts to establish contact with other gays, etc.

In the second phase of the development of sexual needs both heterosexuals and homosexuals pursue

contacts with the opposite sex. The motivation for this differs between the two groups. For heterosexuals seeking interactions with girls is a natural consequence of their desires. Homosexuals try such contacts to confirm their different sexual orientation, *while* desiring and seeking an intimate relationship with a man. This is a very difficult time for gay boys, who must deal with accepting being different as well as adjust to a possible intolerance and rejection from their social and family circles. Experiencing a range of negative emotions, anxiety, discomfort, disbelief, fear, and suffering is a significant part of this phase. The possible psychological reaction is suppression or repression, and on the behavioral-level – searching experiences to confirm their heterosexuality, which carry sexual satisfaction and fulfillment, while having romantic contacts with persons of the same sex.

To sum up, the development of sexual needs of homosexuals and heterosexuals is similar in terms of stages and forms, and different in terms of content being the object of erotic desires.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

In order to answer the questions posed above and verify research hypotheses, a new research tool was developed in the form of a questionnaire consisting of open and closed questions /40 items/, grouped into three sections (Engel 2006). The first section consists of 6 questions with additional subsections and is concerned with 1) first erotic experiences, 2) seeking information about sexuality, 3) mental thoughts of erotic nature (e.g.: *Describe your first sexual experiences. When was the first time they happened?– How old were you more or less at the time? Have you ever had sexual dreams or fantasies? - Around what age did they start... What was your source of information about human sexuality? Parents..., peers..., books and pamphlets..., pornographic magazines or films... . Tick the appropriate items.*). Questions with additional subsections comprising the second part of the questionnaire (13 questions) concern issues related to the formation of the subjects' sexuality (e.g.: *Describe how your sexual activity developed? At what age did you experience your first caresses that were sexual in nature... Age of your sexual initiation... What was the sex of the person with whom you had your sexual initiation...*) and provide for the analysis of emotions arising in connection with the realisation of one's sexual orientation (e.g.: *Describe your first emotions and feelings related to the emerging sexual need. What emotions did you experience during first sexual encounters? What feelings did you experience with respect to you sexual preferences?*). The third section of the questionnaire comprises 21 sociological questions, taking into account age, place of residence (general), education and the family. As the above examples clearly demonstrate, the questionnaire contains both open-ended and closed questions. Open questions invite the subject to express his opinion about particular issues and describe his feelings.

The participants' free responses were subjected to frequency analysis, which yielded the following categories:

1) mental thoughts and behavioural experiences related to the formation of sexual identity, 2) objects of erotic need, 3) content of erotic dreams, 4) type of the first erotic encounter, 5) reasons for defining one's orientation as homo- or heterosexual, 6) thoughts, opinions, judgements related to the subjects' realization of their sexual orientation, 8) engaging in sexual contacts with men or women. Note that choosing multiple items was allowed in the majority of closed questions.

Subjects were 55 males: 27 homosexuals (from the "Lambda" Homosexuals Association) and 28 heterosexuals. Homosexuals completed the questionnaires at the association's office or at home. The control group was comprised of students of the Warsaw University of Technology, who completed their questionnaires in a group, at the premises of the University. All participants were guaranteed anonymity and discretion. There was no time limit, and subjects took between 30 and 90 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

RESULTS

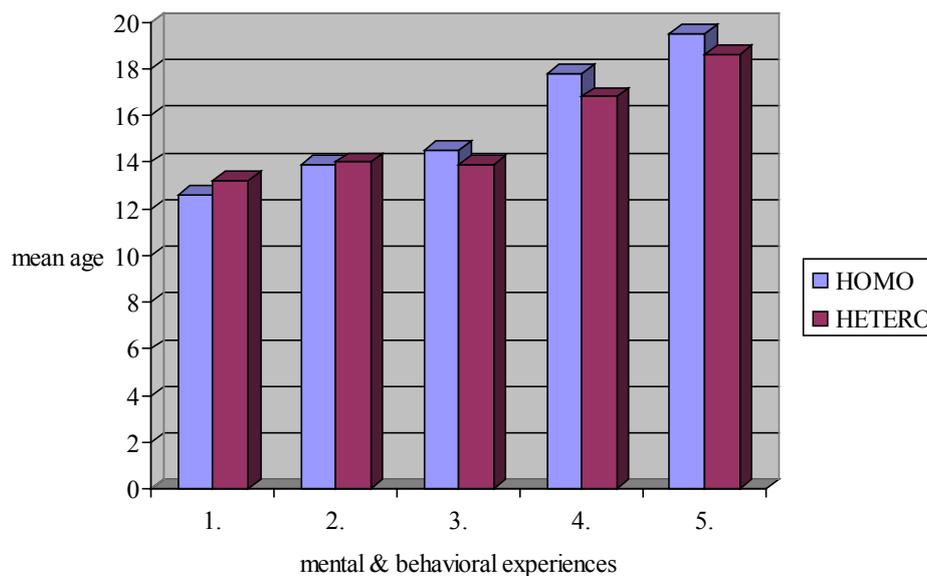
The results confirmed the adopted hypotheses, and the data obtained reflect the complex psychological situation of homosexuals during the formation of sexual orientation in adolescence.

The main hypothesis: the formation of sexual orientation in adolescence is similar in homo- and a heterosexual was confirmed. The first signals of the awakening sexual need appear at the same time in homo- and heterosexual men, and significantly precede any sexual relations with others. In other words, mental thoughts precede behavioural experiences. In both groups, homosexual (Group1- Homo) and heterosexual (Group2 - Hetero), the first feelings related to the subjects' sexuality emerged in early adolescence ($M_1=12,6$ lat; $SD_1= 2,1$; $M_2=13,2$; $SD_2=2,7$; $t(53)<1$, ns), and in both groups they preceded the initiation of sexual activity. Sexual behaviours appeared in the second stage of adolescence ($M_1=17,8$; $SD_1=4,9$; $M_2=16,8$; $SD_2=3,5$; $t(53)<1$, ns). At the same time it should be noted that 77.8% of homosexuals claim that from the time they had their first experiences of erotic tension, they were certain of their different sexuality.

Erotic daydreams and fantasies, i.e. conscious mental activity with sexual content, also appeared at a similar age for both groups. In both groups, experiencing erotic tension independent of the subjects' will emerged a little earlier (12.6 years for the homosexual group and 13.2 years for the heterosexual group) than conscious, wilful mental thoughts in the form of erotic daydreams, which emerged later: mean age was 14.5 for the homosexual group and 13.9 for the heterosexual group (Figure 1. - see page 330).

It means that the course of sexual development is similar for homosexuals and heterosexuals. Differences emerge only with respect to the object of sexual need and the subject of dreams and fantasies. Daydreams of homosexual men are usually more diverse than those of heterosexuals. They usually dream about other men (Homo

Figure 1. First mental and behavioral sexual experiences



Note: 1. First sexual feelings, anxieties, tensions; 2. First erotic dreams; 3. First conscious erotic fantasy; 4. First sexual relations: caresses, kisses, petting; 5. First sexual intercourse

Table 1. Reasons for declaring one's orientation as homosexual or heterosexual

Reason for declaring one's orientation as homosexual or heterosexual	Homosexuals	Heterosexuals
Wanting to have an emotional and sexual relationship with a man	77.8%	-
Lack of sexual attraction towards women	33.3%	-
Wanting to have an emotional and sexual relationship with a woman	-	64.3%
Lack of sexual attraction towards men	-	39.3%
I found my sexual needs natural and normal, and I did not think about the reasons	11.1%	10.7%

– 96.3%; Hetero – 3.6%), but also about women (Homo – 29%), while heterosexuals dream about women exclusively (Hetero – 89.3%). Sex-related fear and anxiety in erotic daydreams emerge only in homosexual group (Homo – 7.4%; Hetero – 0%).

These results confirm the proposed phase model for the development of sexual needs in adolescence, in which it is assumed that the run of this process does not depend on the nature of sexual orientation.

The hypothesis about the presence of mental thoughts in which one's homosexuality is recognized or at least contemplated has been confirmed. The majority of homosexuals in the study had conscious mental thoughts which were homosexual in nature, experienced as dreams about being physically and emotionally intimate with another person of the same sex.

Some homosexuals had similar dreams about relations with women. Heterosexuals dreamt almost exclusively about emotional and sexual relations with women (one person admitted to dreaming about relations with a man). Overall, in the homosexual group, mental thoughts with homosexual content were dominant. Dreams about sexual relations were accompanied by analyses of

one's sexual orientation, i.e. becoming aware of factors that could determine whether one is homo- or heterosexual. Participants revealed that they recognized their sexual orientation on the basis of internal thoughts, such as being attracted to people of a given sex, wanting to have an emotional relationship with a woman or with a man, etc. (Table 1.). It should be noted that in both groups, a similar percentage of subjects considered their orientation to be natural, which was coupled with a relative lack of reflection about their own sexuality.

The results obtained clearly demonstrate that sexual mental experiences emerge a few years prior to behavioural ones, i.e. erotic relations with another person. Sexual drive in both homosexual and heterosexual men is active some years prior to the initiation of sexual activity. The difference is similar and statistically significant in both study groups. These results clearly disprove the hypothesis about seduction as the cause of homosexuality in men. Young homosexual men are aware of their different sexual orientation a few years before engaging in sexual relations with another person, and their motives for initiating such relations are similar to the motives of heterosexuals (Table 1.)

The above results clearly speak for the concept that sexual orientation is determined by congenital factors or/and in the very early stages of the child's life. These considerations are not mutually exclusive, and can co-occur and affect the evolution of sexual orientation. Presented research does not allow settling this issue. Further analysis shows however that the development of sexual needs, and the discovery of one's sexual orientation is similar in homosexual and heterosexual women.

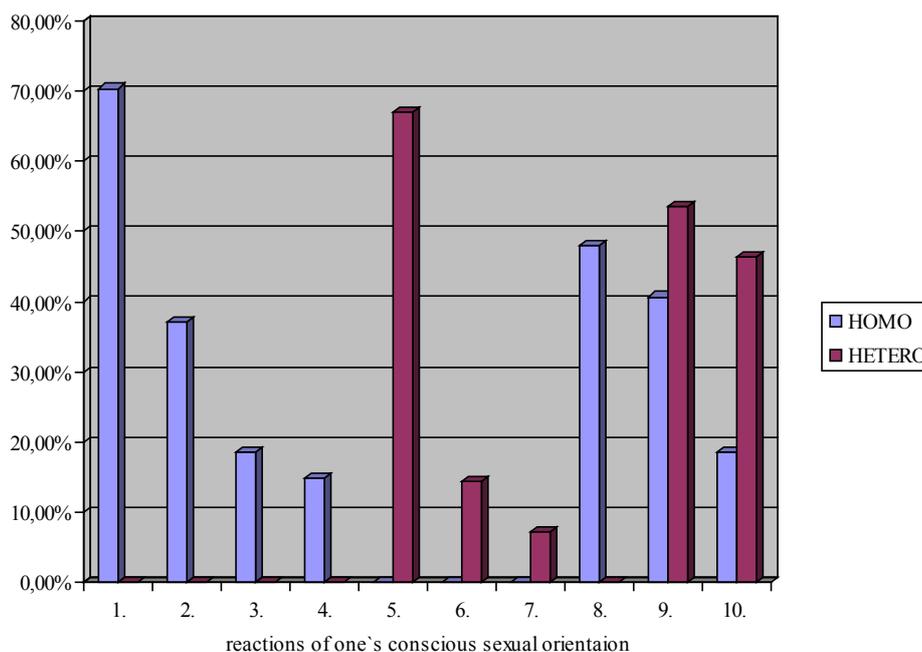
The analysis of behavioural experiences related to sexual activity shows that they are more varied among homosexuals than heterosexuals. The first sexual partners of heterosexuals were women, except for one person who admitted to having had incestuous homosexual relations. The majority of homosexuals in the study (81.5%) had their first sexual relations with persons of the same sex, i.e. in accordance with their sexual orientation, and only 14.8% with women. By contrast, 48.1% of homosexuals admit to having had sexual relations with women. It follows that some of them (33.3% of all homosexuals in the study), after sexual experiences with men, sought such relations with women, which suggests that they felt the need to verify their sexual orientation and/or a tried to suppress or deny their homosexual inclinations. This pattern of reacting might be interpreted as an attempt to undermine or deny homosexual desires and pretend to oneself or delude oneself that one's orientation is not homosexual or that it can be changed. The above results confirm the hypothesis that when initially satisfying their sexual needs, homosexuals do not avoid heterosexual relations (this is true of 48.1% of homosexuals in the study), however, these relations do not give them sexual gratification, but rather confirm their homosexuality.

The second issue concern the reasoning of taking the sexual relations with sexual partners. Homosexual men engaged in sexual relation with a man because they feel sexual desire and sexual needs (70.4%), and emotional relation with a partner and need to express feelings (59.3%). It is similar in the heterosexual group, where men take the sexual relations with women, because they feel sexual desire and needs (67.9%), and because they love their women and need to express these feelings (53.6%). 25.9% of homosexual men and 14.3% heterosexual engaged in sexual relations with women for to prove that they are not homosexual.

Another aspect of sexuality formation is the emotional reaction to the realisation of one's sexual needs and tensions. Comparison of data on the subject suggests that there are differences in the way homosexuals and heterosexuals react to their sexuality. The range of emotions arising from the realisation of one's sexual orientation is much broader among homosexuals, but it is also emphatically negative (Figure 2.).

It should be emphasised that nobody in the homosexual group did consider own sexual orientation as natural and normal, and only as few as 18.5% of subjects accepted own sexual orientation. The dominant attitudes in this group were fear, sense of loneliness and of being sexually perverted. 48.1% of homosexuals reported that in the first few years after realising their sexual orientation, they tended to avoid sexually charged situations, in the hope that their attraction to men might be temporary and would go away. Altogether, the realization of their sexual orientation provoked negative, unpleasant mental experiences for as many as 70.4% of homosexuals in the study. Participants quoted such thoughts as the sense of self-

Figure 2. Thoughts, judgements arising from the subject's realisation of his sexual orientaion



Note: 1. Negative feelings; anxiety, emotional breakdown, despair, etc.; 2. Sense of alienation; 3. Acceptance of one's sexual orientation; 4. Sense of being exceptional and unusual; 5. Orientation considered natural and normal; 6. Relief at not being homosexual; 7. Increased sexual drive; 8. Initially, avoiding sexuality and intimacy in the hope the orientation will shift to heterosexual and the attraction to men will subside; 9. Growing the sexual need and the need for emotional and sexual intimacy with a partner; 10. Realizing my sexual orientation did not change anything in subjects' life and did not provoke their specific behavior

hatred, of committing a sin, being a bad person or doing evil things. They were accompanied by such feelings and emotions as fear, emotional breakdown, despair, and hatred towards oneself. 37% of subjects experienced a sense of alienation and fear of rejection. Among other feelings and emotions, there was sense of loneliness, of being alienated from closest friends and family, of having to live with a tiresome secret, of having to hide something bad from others (Figure 2.). Only 18.5% of the subjects responded that they thought of their homosexuality as of an integral part of their personality, something that is not changeable. It should also be noted that the participants in the study could have been aware, for example, that homosexuality is their natural, integral characteristic, and still feel alienated from their surroundings or scared of being rejected, or feel sad and depressed because of it. By comparison, 67.9% of subjects in the heterosexual group regarded their sexual orientation as normal and natural. According to them, their sexual orientation emerged naturally, and they felt no need to reflect upon it. Interestingly, 14.3% of subjects in the heterosexual group confessed to having felt relieved for not being homosexuals, as that would have subjected them to additional pressures and problems resulting from intolerance for homosexuals in the general public.

In order to illustrate notable differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals in terms of attitude and behaviours related to the realisation of their sexual orientation, we compared the responses of subjects from the two groups in terms of what they did and how they behaved after becoming aware of their sexual orientation. In the responses of homosexual subjects, there was a recurrent motif of denying one's sexual desires and needs, having negative thoughts related to sexual orientation and wishing the attraction towards same sex partners disappeared (25.9% of responses). At the same time, both groups reported that with the realization of their sexual needs, their sexual drive grew stronger, as did the desire for emotional and intimate relationship with a partner (40.7% of responses among homosexuals and 13% more – 53.6% among heterosexuals). Notably, realisation of one's sexual orientation was not a life changing experience for 46.4% of heterosexuals and did not trigger any particular behaviour, while among homosexuals only 18.8% marked this category.

Generally, the growing the sexual need in adolescence is similar in homo and heterosexual group men, but the difference deal with their internal and external experiences following conscious and realisation of their sexual orientation. Homosexual men feel a few negative emotions: anxiety, despair, alienation, loneliness and fear of rejection. Somebody in this group did hope that their orientation would shift to heterosexual and the attraction to men would subside, and they engaged in sexual relations with women, but these sexual contacts were not satisfied.

CONCLUSION

These results are neither conformed the biological theories (Muscarella, 2000) nor constructivism theory (Kitzinger, 1995), nor for example Bem's (1996, 1998,

2000, 2001; Peplau et al., 1998) theory. They show that the development of sexual need is similar in the time. The differences concern thoughts, feelings and behaviour following emergency of own sexual orientation as homosexual or heterosexual.

70.4% of homosexuals and 96.4% of heterosexuals in the study were aware of their sexual orientation prior to sexual initiation. The results presented here confirm the hypothesis that homosexuality is acknowledged prior to initiation of sexual activity and that sexual preferences are for the most part determined already in adolescence, with the first mental thoughts emerging independently of sexual activity around 12 – 13 years of age. Thus, sexual orientation is formed in adolescence in roughly the same manner, regardless of the direction of sexual drive.

Homosexuals, even if they engage in sexual relations with women, are usually aware of their incompatibility with their preferences. They do it out of their emotional obligations towards their female partner or in order to deny, alter, verify or confirm their sexual preferences. 48% of subjects in the homosexual group had sexual relations with women, and for 14.8% of them, women were their partners in sexual initiation. When considering the possibility of having a relationship with a woman, 33.3% of homosexuals realized that such a relationship would be unrealistic due to the fact that they were not attracted to women. Interestingly, a significant proportion of heterosexuals (39.3%), when asked about the reasons of declaring their orientation as heterosexual, pointed out their lack of sexual attraction to men. It could mean that these men considered hypothetically the possibility of being homosexual or were watching for any indications to that effect.

The feelings arising from the realisation of one's sexual orientation also differentiate homo- and heterosexuals. The latter experience their preferences as natural, and are for the most part certain of their sexual orientation before initiating sexual activity (96.4%). By comparison, 70.4% of homosexuals were confident of their sexual orientation before their first sexual relations. 14.8% of homosexuals became aware of their sexual orientation as a result of a sexual act, and 14.8% of them still had doubts. In the light of results with respect to objects of sexual desire and erotic fantasies, we can conclude that homosexuals who are unsure of their orientation perceive their different sexuality as unacceptable and respond with repression. By contrast, almost all heterosexuals in the study had no doubts about their orientation before starting sexual activity, and only one person (3.6%) realized their orientation after the initiation of sexual activity. Realising of one's sexual orientation and admitting that fact to oneself is a source of negative emotions: fear, emotional breakdown, and self-hatred. There is a sense of committing a sin, being a bad person, doing evil things or experiencing one's sexual orientation as perversion. These emotions are accompanied by a sense of alienation and fear of rejection. Faced with their homosexuality, young people feel lonely, alienated from the closest friends and family, and burdened with the task of having to keep a secret from others. Moreover, some

young homosexuals hope that their feelings are temporary and will fade at some point. Behaviourally, they adopt the strategy of avoiding any sex-related situations, often perceive their sexual orientation as a disease, which in their own opinion means that they are inferior, and regard themselves as “freaks”. Only 18.5% of subjects reported that from the beginning they regarded their homosexuality as an integral part of their personality, as something normal and natural.

The initial theoretical assumptions were confirmed in this study. Despite the fact that homosexuality has been officially removed from the list of sexual diseases and disorders, a large portion of the society and often homosexuals themselves still perceive it as a disease, a sexual deviation or defect. The study revealed the fact that homosexuals grow up with the burden of anxiety and fear of being stigmatized and rejected by their closest friends and family (Ueno, 2005). They deal with doubts and dilemmas not experienced by heterosexuals. They grow up hiding a secret, which they themselves perceive as dark and evil, and they often live with the sense of isolation, believing that there is no one they can trust and confide in. The process of self-acceptance tends to be difficult and may take years.

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