

CORPOREALITY IN THE COMMUNICATION
OF YOUNG PEOPLE**KORNÉLIA JAKUBÍKOVÁ, VERONIKA ŠPIRKOVÁ**

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The study describes communication of young people with the emphasis on its content dedicated to corporeality and determines a content-based classification of topics from a normative perspective: what topics are regular, intimate, or tabooed; participants; and gender differences.

The study is divided into parts, which thematically describe: starting points, research, sample; communication content and topics; participants in communication; gender differences; factors of communication and the language of communication. The study is elaborated on the basis of information coming from professional literature and field research conducted by semi-structured interviews with university students and university educated people – 15 women and 15 men in age 22–28 (year of birth 1987–1993) coming from an urban environment in Slovakia.

Key words: communication, corporeality, young people, gender, intimacy, taboo

*New rules of propriety screened out some words:
there was a policing of statements.
(Foucault, 1999: 23)*

This study focuses on communication about corporeality but does not look at the direct communicative acts themselves. This is due to the fact that, given the research focus on corporeality concerning sexuality and reproduction, it would be difficult to make direct recordings of communication concerning such a matter while also abiding by ethical research principles. In place of this, the empirical database comprises statements and the thoughts of informants concerning their own communication experiences regarding corporeality. The informants reveal who they have talked with, what about, and in what manner.¹ Their statements include their own thoughts about

1 The fieldwork was undertaken by V. Špírková, a third-year student at the Department of Ethnology and Museology, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University. The research results were first presented in Špírková's bachelor's thesis entitled „Telesnosť v komunikácii mládeže“ [Corporeality in communication of young people] (2015), which was written under the supervision of K. Jakubíková.

the topics covered in this study. The main research method used here was semi-structured interview aimed at the contents of verbal face-to-face communication concerning corporeality and related topics.

The core concepts in this study are the body and communication. Even though “the body is a necessary element of culture and the subject and object of cultural reproduction” (Bourdieu, 1979: 182), it was ignored for a long time in the social sciences. This began to change in the 1970s, and from the mid-1980s there was such a significant volume of scholarly work on the body and corporeality being published that the conditions were set for the birth of new branches of academic inquiry, specifically the anthropology and sociology of the body. At present, cultural anthropology lies literally “in the shadow of the body”. This is also the case with the social sciences in general, where a somatization of social theories can be currently observed. One of the reasons for the heightened interest of the social sciences in the body is undoubtedly the current social reality, where the body has attained such an important status that it has become “the corporate brand of the second half of the twentieth century, [and] particularly its end” (Czaja, 1999: 7). The present situation has also been described with terms such as “the cult of the body” and even as a period of “body madness”. This obsession has been reflected in the social sciences, where the body is a current and frequently discussed topic. However, in Slovakia the body seems to have been very much on the margins of ethnological interest, which is a situation which stands in marked contrast to the ethnological tradition in other countries (e.g., Poland).²

As a contribution to the field, this study does not directly examine the body as such but rather communication concerning it. After all, as “the core phenomenon of human culture, communication says a lot about the culture of an examined community, as culture permeates all forms of communication” (De Vito, 2008: 56), and “culture happens in communication” (Winkin, 2007: 713). Communication has been defined in over twenty disciplines and in various ways in each of them (Winkin, 2007: 35). For the purposes of this study, one of the most apt definitions of communication sees it as a process which does more than just have the aim of sharing information; it is also a means of “forming and commenting” on it (Rothenbühler, 2003: 155). This is why, in addition to this study’s main focus on the content of communication, attention is paid to the verbal comments of informants.

The aim of this study is to analyse statements concerning the communication of topics concerning corporeality (specifically eroticism, sexuality, and reproduction) and determine a content-based classification of topics from a normative perspective: what topics are regular, intimate, or tabooed (what is not talked about); participants (family, friends, or partners); and gender differences. Given that the subject matter is verbal communication, there is some linguistic information provided concerning the terms used.

STARTING POINTS, RESEARCH, SAMPLE

A key point of reference for processing the empirical data is the model of communication put forward by H. D. Laswell and H. K. Platte in combination with additional insights provided by V. Lamser (1969: 11–17). According to Lamser, basic elements of the com-

² This theme became a stable feature of work produced at the departments of ethnology at universities in Wrocław and Kraków: particularly the works of A. Paluch, M. Brocki, Z. Libera, and D. Czaja (see the list of references accompanying this study).

municative act include the sender, receiver, channel, content, intention, and effect. He also mentions motivation and context. Given that the present article did not record any direct communicative acts, it was not possible to analyse all of these presented elements. For one thing, there will be no differentiation made between sender and receiver; these two elements will instead be merged into one element as “participants in communication”. Other elements which were not part of the research questions and which are therefore also absent in this article include motivation and context (even though these are important), the effect of communication, and non-verbal elements (e.g., gestures and facial expressions). Of the above presented elements of the model of communication, the present study primarily focuses on content, which has a central position. After all, there is “no communication without content” and it is “precisely through content that culture enters communicative acts” (Lamser, 1969: 146).

From the wide range of topics within corporeality, the research questions focused on eroticism, sexuality, and reproduction (first erotic contact, sexuality [specifically premarital sex], virginity, sexual orientation, menstruation, and contraception). The aim of this content- and topic-based analysis of communication about the body is to form a classification of groups of regular, intimate and taboo content and topics on the emic level, while also taking into account two variables: (1) the type of relationship among the participants (family, friends, or partners) and (2) gender.

In terms of the communication channel/medium, the research questions exclusively concerned interpersonal³ and verbal face-to-face communication. Therefore, no Internet communication has been included in this study, even though it does have a growing significance as a channel. Upon the basis of set propositions, the following research questions were set:

(1) What forms the content and topics of communication about corporeality?

Here it is assumed that the answers will mostly depend on the type of relationship among the participants in communication and their gender.

(2) What gender differences are there when communicating on corporeality, and how are they discussed?

There is an assumption of the application of gender stereotypes and sexism.

(3) Which factors positively influence the analysed type of communication (in a stimulating way) and which do so negatively (in a stultifying way)?

There is an assumption that a significant factor will (once again) be the type of relationship between the participants in communication, their degree of religious belief, and the given situation.

Given that the object of analysis is speech communication, it is legitimate to pay attention to linguistic issues concerning the terms used in the informants' statements which relate to the research topics. There is an initial assumption that the types of terms used (standard language, expert or medical terminology, slang, and vulgarities) in communicative acts will say something about the attitudes of the participants towards the topics under investigation.

The research sample was made up of 30 adults aged between 22 and 28 years and had an even gender balance (15 women and 15 men). All of them had a tertiary education (either still studying and part-time working or already working), and all came from an urban environment. All had had or were currently in a long-term relation-

³ Interpersonal communication is between two people (or more than two people in a small group) who have some sort of relationship with each other (De Vito, 2008: 188).

ship. This is essentially a homogeneous sample in terms of the presented data, which is why the cited statements are coded only by gender ([M] denotes a man and [W] denotes a woman as the source of information). It is also important to point out that the sample comprised of peers who were friends and acquaintances of the female researcher undertaking the fieldwork (however, the informants did not really form a group as such). The researcher has chosen a sample of her friends and acquaintances as informants because she considers their opinions and relationship with corporeality as steady enough and their ability to self-represent as authentic and because of her belief that their mutual relationships can play an important role in uncovering issues from the private sphere of their lives, as evidenced by the one of informants: "I answered you only because I know you, because I trust you and I like you, even after many years, when we meet very little." [W] The central method of their interaction with the researcher was through semi-structured interviews in Slovak language which were recorded with their informed consent.

COMMUNICATION CONTENT AND TOPICS

The content analysis had the initial aim of normatively classifying topics into regular, intimate and tabooed groups. However, the evaluation of statements showed that the determining factor for this classification was not so much the content of the conversations but rather the participants themselves; thus, a topic which was presented as a regular topic of conversation among partners (e.g., premarital sex) was classified as being an expression of intimacy in friendly relationships and was even tabooed in the family setting. It was problematic to find the definite boundary between what was regular and what was intimate, given that "intimacy is very difficult to define ... and its existence depends on the openness of the individual" (Barthes, 1994: 4). According to the respondents' own statements, a factor of certain importance is the number of participants involved in a communicative act: a smaller number saw an increased intimacy of topics. The participants in the communication of intimate topics are most often partners and close or best friends. Even though a clear-cut classification of topics cannot be established, it is nonetheless possible to present some characteristics. One of these was the declared assertion that there is an extensive presence of topics of sexuality and excrement within regular conversation among young people, as apparently "every conversation ends up with [a discussion on] sex and shit". Sexuality is recognized as a regular topic when it is presented in an ambiguous, exaggerated, comical, and even mocking way. Such a connection of erotica, sexuality and comedy is also present in the lyrical content of some traditional folk songs (see Hamar, 2004: 41; Hemelíková, 1999: 30). By contrast, if these topics were presented in a serious manner, and particularly in a more detailed way, they were mostly identified and classified as being expressions of intimacy. In a group of male friends, a regular and spontaneous topic was the evaluation of parts of the female body (particularly the breasts and backside); a woman's general appearance was secondary (Lettrich, 2015). Talking about one's feelings was a topic which was considered more intimate than topics just concerning the body.⁴

4 For comparison, "In the past, the word 'love' did not appear often in the vocabulary of youth in villages" (Komorovský, 1976: 29). Also note this statement by a woman who was over 80 years old from Vojvodina (Serbia), "With some shame, I must admit that we loved each other". From the documentary "Nehaňte ľud môj" [Do not insult my people], M. Veselský, 2015.

When focusing on content, one of the aims was to find out what (if any) topics are tabooed. The taboo category has various meanings depending on culture and context. In prehistoric and archaic cultures, taboos were connected to magic, rituals, impurity, and danger. Respecting taboos ensured protection from various “evils”, whereas a violation would have negative consequences in terms of religion, ethical sanctions, and punishments. In the context of European Christianity, taboos can be understood within the concept of Christian sin, which itself was connected to sexuality (Foucault, 1999: 16). Until the seventeenth century, a certain amount of sexual openness was common. However, by the Victorian period sexuality was kept under lock and key, and sex was not talked about (Foucault, 1999: 9). This is particularly true for central Europe, where a “real central European prudery” held sway (Lenderová, 1999: 103). However, in the present day, with various trends liberalizing society, there is a de-tabooization of a number of topics, especially those concerning sexuality.

The terms “taboo” and “tabooization” used herein are not meant in a strictly academic sense as cultural anthropological concepts, but rather in a broader meaning and context as is found in everyday communication and in media and professional texts; thus, taboos refer to topics which are not spoken about for a variety of reasons. The questions for the informants did not actually mention the word “taboo” but asked instead about what “was not talked about”. It was confirmed that there really is no clear-cut categorization of topics. None of the investigated topics constituted a taboo across all the types of relationships present in this study. There were isolated instances of information/recollections about previous sexual partners being shared in the presence of an informant’s current partner. Once again, existing differences in the tabooization of topics exist depending on the type of relationship as well as gender. Tabooization was the least present in communication between partners where there are no taboo topics, which is a state, considered by informants to be “self-evident and natural”. In other types of heterogender relationships (friendships), taboo topics included menstruation, masturbation, virginity, sexually transmitted diseases, and details of sexual practices. However, this is not the case in friendships among those of the same gender, where these topics sometimes form a part of intimate conversations with close friends. The highest number of tabooed topics was found in intergenerational communication within the family, and most typically in communication between children and parents (including adult children). An exception to this was communication about menstruation and, at a later age, contraception, where girls would receive information from their mothers or sisters. Fathers were generally left out of this discussion. For male respondents, fathers were not mentioned once as providers of information in such communication; although, in one case, a grandfather was mentioned in this way. A significant amount of tabooization was present among religious people, which among the research sample was respected but not considered correct. In their commentaries to the research topics, the informants stated that their main reason for tabooization was the character of the participants in communication (shyness), family upbringing, and religious faith. However, no one stated that these topics were tabooed in terms of morals, sin, or etiquette, which were still valid contexts for tabooization as late as in the twentieth century. The tabooization of topics in the present day is predominantly an individual decision and not something based on social norms.

As this study has so far primarily focused on the classification of content, the following will focus on each conversation topic dealt within the research questions. Given the age of the research sample (22 to 28 years), the first erotic contact (holding hands,

hugging, and kissing) is an activity belonging to the past (puberty) and is not given a significant place in informants' recollections. Informants had mostly talked about this topic only with their friends, less often with their mothers, and a number had not spoken to anyone about it, saying that it was unimportant, "embarrassing", or something which they had forgotten about it. The first sexual act (loss of virginity) is an experience shared within both genders and is primarily shared in a group of friends of the same gender ("At that time, it was the number one topic for every girl" [W]). The women in the sample had not divulged to their parents their experience of losing virginity at the time, whereas a few men had mentioned it in self-praise to their mother or to both parents. No one expressed a negative view on losing virginity in the sense of losing one's purity or innocence, or because it was seen as a sin. The women's statements showed that the primary motivation for having gone through the experience was to "get it over with" [W]). Sex before marriage was seen as both a correct and important act ("If it doesn't work in bed], everything falls apart" [W]) but primarily as a natural expression of love. The ideals of romantic love in Western countries have liberated sexuality from feelings of guilt (Giddens, 1992: 214, cited in Jenčová, 2006: 472). Premarital sex – both the act itself and talking about it – is not therefore considered to be a taboo among young people. However, they know about and have had experience of religious people preserving their sexual chastity before marriage. This is respected but is not considered a correct approach ("People should also get to know each other before marriage in this way" [W]). As has been confirmed by other research, this attitude is widespread among younger people: "Today the preservation of sexual purity in general does not feature among the requirements in a new partner. An exception to this is the environment of young Catholics" (Navrátilová, 2008: 274).

A specific topic within sexuality is having a different (homosexual) orientation, which was long regarded as an issue of morals and culture rather than one of human rights (Morris, 2006: 99). The research sample did not consider this topic to be a taboo. In their opinion, the opening up of communication about homosexuality has been greatly helped by media coverage, particularly the reporting on homosexuality among actors and singers. However, attitudes to homosexuality are not quite as clear-cut as they are regarding premarital sex. Most informants respected this type of sexuality, stating that everyone had the right to love ("Love is natural in every form" [W]; "It's love which is important, not what people have in their pants" [W]). Informants also presented examples of friendship with gay people. However, they also recognized the inadequate level of tolerance in Slovak public opinion, even though they admitted that some of the people who do not understand homosexuality at least do not condemn it. When in communication with those people who have prejudices and are opposed to homosexuality (primarily religious people, informants' parents, and older generations), informants would either stand up for LGBTI rights or avoid the topic altogether.

Menstruation was almost exclusively talked about among women. Girls first receive information about menstruation from their mothers, sisters, and friends. In addition, the sharing of experiences of one's first menstruation takes place in circles of female friends ("We talked about who had had it, and who hadn't"). At a later age, this topic is expanded to include their partners. From the partners' perspective, talking about menstruation is similar to contraception in that it is seen as something which is "self-evident, necessary, and unavoidable". In fact, some men said it was a prerequisite for a well-functioning relationship ("I do not want a partner who does not want to talk about it"; "I wouldn't like that sort of relationship").

Similarly, the topic of contraception was communicated primarily between partners as well as with doctors, and, among the female informants, also with their mothers if they had been previously informed about their daughters' relationships. In these cases, the mothers were usually the initiators of such conversations, whereas the daughters considered it an "embarrassing" issue to discuss. However, in communication among the young women themselves, contraception was considered a regular topic ("It is talked about quite normally").

PARTICIPANTS IN COMMUNICATION

The previous section, which focused on communication content, briefly mentioned the participants as a determining factor in the thematic content of conversations. The most intimate communication and the least amount of tabooization was found to exist between partners. In circles of friends of the same gender, there is also a significant amount of openness when discussing various topics, including intimate ones. However, gender (groups of both genders or of just one gender) is a factor which determines differences, as does the number of participants (smaller groups see a higher intimacy of topics).

The greatest number of absent or taboo topics directly or indirectly concerning sexuality were present in communication between parents and children. Presumably there is a continuance of the traditional model of intergenerational communication in families; even though there is a lack of exact and detailed information on this, it can be said from a number of sources that these themes were not talked about within the family environment. This is like in agrarian families, where those "who obstinately kept their silence on sexuality were the mothers of maturing daughters" (Brožovičová, 2013: 27). In this sense, it is as if until recently Slovak society had stayed on a similar level as primeval cultures, where "girls are not at all prepared for menstruation and sexual life. They only find out about it when the given situation takes place" (Podolinská, Kováč, 2000: 171). In the Slovak family environment, sexual life is still viewed in the same way. Research in the 1990s showed that the family was not prepared to educate its members about sexual life, healthy reproduction, or, in simple terms, sex education (Poliaková, 1997: 274). This has been confirmed by statements given in the present research. An exception to this is the topic of menstruation, and less frequently contraception, where mothers are a primary source of information ("Only with Mum, and only about menstruation, nothing else. I don't want [to talk about anything else]" [W]).

However, in topics about sexual life there is still a notable tabooization in the family unit, not only from the parents' side but also among the young people from both genders themselves: "I wouldn't be able to talk about it;" "It suits me when we don't talk about it;" "There is some discomfort;" "It is embarrassing." They considered their parents and the whole older generation to be conspicuously conservative and less open when talking about sexuality: "When my grandma said the word 'penis' for the first time, she made the sign of the cross" [W].⁵ The informants thought there was a widespread feeling of generational difference in this area, even though they admit-

⁵ This is a reproduction of the conversation by a granddaughter. It is apparent that the grandmother did not use this medical term but most likely a metaphorical alternative.

ted that there have been gradual changes towards an increasing openness among the older generation when talking about sex.

Religious people are seen to be a specific type of participant in communication concerning corporeality - "They are already blushing when the word 'sex' is mentioned" [M] - and they are seen to have an even greater degree of conservatism, prejudice, and tabooization on corporeal topics than that deemed present among senior citizens. However, there is recognition of individual differences in this group in terms of changing attitudes. Some of the respondents expressed the conviction that the attitudes and opinions of religious people would continue to reflect their religious beliefs: "It will never be natural for them" [W]; "They will always be against two men marrying" [W]. The dominant opinion was that religious belief significantly influences behaviour and communication about corporeality.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

The body is a gender-specific phenomenon, as are the topics of sexuality and reproduction. It is therefore logical to expect that communication on these issues will also be gender-specific. First of all, gender differences on the emic level as they are described by the respondents (who represent both genders) will be presented. Given its importance to the present study, statements are classified in terms of being single-gender (men talking about communication among men and women talking about communication among women) and heterogender (men talking about women and women talking about men).

The male informants revealed that a frequent and preferred topic of conversation among men was the female body, and particularly certain parts of it (the backside and the breasts). In general, they described this sort of communication as relaxed, full of confidence ("They are showing off"), and prone to exaggeration, particularly concerning quantitative information. Women described communication among themselves as having the following characteristics: openness ("They talk about everything"), seriousness, and the need to resolve their problems right down to the details ("Girls know how to dissect their problems").

Even though neither men nor women could know how the members of the other gender communicated among themselves, they nonetheless had certain opinions and ideas on what this communication was like. It was assumed that these would be mostly based on gender stereotypes. Men's descriptions of women's communication often presented the same opinions as those found in women's own self-reflections: i.e., a greater degree of openness and detail. However, some men did not think there was a gender difference as such, and others showed a total lack of knowledge on the matter ("I don't know"; "They are from another planet"). In describing how men communicate with each other on topics of corporeality, women mostly brought up things that were in contrast to their own methods of communication: matter-of-factness, brevity, superficiality ("They don't dissect the details"), and an overall lower level of openness. Another difference deemed to exist in men's conversations was self-praise, boasting, exaggeration, and a greater amount of humour. Like the men, some women doubted that there were any gender differences and stated that the most important determining factors were individual personalities, various life experiences, mood, and the particular situation.

The abovementioned characteristics are reflections on the emic level and can be supplemented by knowledge gained from comparing the men's and women's statements in terms of the etic level. In terms of communication content, there were no absolute differences. However, there was a difference in the frequency that certain topics were discussed. Whereas men frequently commented on women's bodies among themselves, there was a lack of this sort of thing in communication among women, or, in the men's opinion, the women "do not want to admit it". There was also a difference in the tabooization of certain topics; among men, virginity is a more taboo topic than it is among women, for whom the most taboo topic is masturbation (with the exception of those who use a vibrator). Communication content concerning corporeality does not appear to be as much of a significant gender difference as the communication's semantic and functional aspects. Women talk about these topics because they have a need to confide in each other and share information, whereas men tend to communicate about corporeality more for reasons of prestige and self-praise. In general terms, there were no significant gender differences when it came to attitudes concerning premarital sex.

Gender differentiation in communication does exist in the family (between parents and children). Menstruation is a purely female matter (between mother and daughter, and between sisters), as is contraception to a similar degree. For women, these are more common topics than what can be found in communication among men (between father and son) on similar matters, where there is a lack of any such information. This may be due to the fact that the researcher doing the fieldwork was a woman herself.

On the level of heterogender discussions on gender differences, there was an assumption that gender stereotypes would be applied. One well-known and common stereotype is the emotionality of women and the rationality of men (Urbancová, 2004: 208). This stereotype was not confirmed in relation to women. Women's sense for detail was a more dominant feature than emotionality in responses from both genders. The descriptions of men's communication confirmed stereotypes about their rationality, matter-of-factness, and greater sense of humour.

FACTORS OF COMMUNICATION

The previous sections confirmed the importance of the composition of the participants in communication as a significant determining factor: primarily the type of relationship between participants, their individual personalities, and their attitudes to a given topic. Other important factors include the situation in which the communication is taking place, family upbringing, life experiences, and even the type of communication (speech or written).

It is important to ascertain which of these factors had a positive effect on the examined content in a stimulating manner (in terms of facilitation and openness) and which factors had a negative effect (in terms of complicating or subduing communication). In terms of the participants, a significant amount of openness and intimacy was deemed possible in partner relationships and to a lesser degree in same-gender relationships with a small number of participants and with pairs of best friends. In addition to their lower number, the individual participants themselves (their level of tolerance; openness, which is determined by family upbringing; individual personality;

and previous life experiences) are particularly important in terms of having a positive influence on communication.

In terms of specific situations, the most mentioned factor was the consumption of alcohol alongside a greater level of openness and the loss of inhibitions. Communicating in written form (over the Internet or by mobile phone) was stated as a factor of facilitation and as a determiner of openness, even on tabooed topics. Media coverage and the overall broader openness towards matters of corporeality in public discourse is a factor which also stimulates communication about these topics. In contrast to these positive factors, the composition of participants can also be a negative factor: if participants have a negative attitude to these topics, start to lecture others on them, and particularly if they display a stance of ridicule. Another limiting factor was the participation in communication of members of the older generation and those who are religious. Negative individual factors included personality type (particularly shyness), family upbringing, and negative life experiences (ridicule).

THE LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION

Language is another essential aspect of any analysis of the content of verbal communication. Opinion among linguists varies regarding gender differences in language. One group asserts that men and women belong to different linguistic communities and speak with a range of “genderlects”, whereas other linguists doubt this is the case (Renzetti, Curran, 2003: 180–81). Given that the present study did not directly record any communicative acts, it is only possible to refer to the terms used in the informants’ statements regarding communication. For this reason, it is not possible to determine the validity of the sexist view that men frequently use vulgarities when conversing with each other, which has been presented as the most common gender difference (Bednárová, 2015). Furthermore, the informants’ statements were recorded by a woman, so it is possible that there was a deliberate change in the language used by male informants.

In general, topics relating to sexuality and reproduction were labelled as “delicate and sensitive”. This is presumably a legacy from the past, when such matters were tabooed. For the same reason, alongside academic and standard vocabulary, metaphorical terms were often used to refer to sexual matters. Thus, in addition to “having sex”, or the more academic term “coitus”, the act of sex is figuratively described as “sleeping with someone”. Using terms such as “screw” (*šukat’*) or the vulgar “fuck” (*jebať*) are less common. Men say terms like “screwing/banging” (*pretiahnutie*) or “fucking” (*kefovanie*), and, when discussing women, that “she gave it to someone”. Masturbation is referred to as “self-gratification”, and among men also as “wanking” (*honenie*) and “doing it yourself”. The metaphor for oral sex (a blow job) is “smoking” (*fajčiť, fajka*).

The richest and most diverse range of terms was for menstruation. In addition to the proper shortened term for menstruation in Slovak (*menzes*) and “period” (*mesiačky, perióda*), another frequent term was “the flow” (*krámy*); among the older generation, there was also the use of terms such as having “one’s days” (*svoje dni*) and “wearing it” (*mať na sebe*). Other terms (taken from a range of sources) confirm the large number of metaphors with positive and negative connotations. A number of terms (“red aunty”, “strawberries”, and “cherries”; and among older women, “the

Red Army” and “the Russians”) result from their similarity to each other. Negative contexts evoke statements such as “Bugger, I’m out of order” (*Mrcha, som pokazená*). Others express a situational specificity: “visit”, “holidays”, “instalments”, “vacation”, and “stop sign”. It is interesting to note that this display of female physiology attracts the used of linguistic metaphors which are also found in other (non-European) cultures.⁶

There were no recorded expressions in the statements referring to premarital sex which harboured any archaic terms reflecting a Christian worldview, such as “fornication, lust, or lecherousness” (Le Goff, 1998: 27). This is different to religious communities, where even now premarital sex is referred to as fornication (Grauzelová, 2014: 50). The linguistic situation (the diversity and metaphorical nature of expressions) is presumably the consequence of the tabooization of these topics in the past.

CONCLUSION

Communication is a multidimensional phenomenon of human culture which is affected by a large number of different factors. The findings of the present article highlight those factors which have been reflected upon and stated by the informants in the research sample, which, to reiterate, was composed of adults aged in their twenties with a tertiary education who live in an urban environment.

The answers to the first research question on the content of the topics revealed the participants in communication to be a significant determining factor. The most intimate and least tabooed topics were found to exist between partners, with there being a lower level of such intimacy among friends; the highest level of tabooization in communication was found to be in the family environment between parents and children. Conservative attitudes, and even the tabooization of sexual themes, is something which has been ascribed to the informants’ parents’ generation, older people in general, and religious people in particular. Premarital sex – be it the act itself or communication about it – was not a taboo subject among the informants in the research sample. This was also the case for homosexuality, where media publicity has helped in creating a more open discussion on that issue. The feeling of love is given as the source of legitimacy for both of the above phenomena. In addition, there is no total tabooization of other themes, such as masturbation, menstruation, and contraception. It is difficult to map the changes in the tabooization of these topics, given that previous periods in history have not left behind an adequate amount of relevant and exact data and that academic inquiry did not pay corporeality much attention in the past. However, on an emic level at least, the de-tabooization of these topics has been significantly reflected.

The statements concerning sexual themes lack any discussion or perception of these phenomena and communication on them in the context of morality, sin, or the violation of some ethical norm. When discussing gender differences, both genders recognized that female communication appeared to have a greater amount of openness and particularly more detail. When discussing themselves, female informants

⁶ Everyday communication among the Lacandon people includes a variety of common communicative codes which deal with sexual topics in a very veiled and tactful way (e.g., “Have you washed your clothes yet?”; “Have you bathed yet?”; and “I have a headache”) (Podolinská-Kováč, 2000: 167-189).

mentioned the effort to resolve problems that were being talked about in the communicative acts. By contrast, men declared self-confidence as well as exaggeration and self-praise.

Women saw male communication as being straight to the point and brief, even to the point of it being superficial. However, some informants from both genders did not think there were any gender-based differences in communication, putting any differences primarily down to the personal peculiarities of an individual's psyche. Factors of communication were also seen as being primarily influenced by participants' personal characteristics, the number of participants, the type of relationship, family upbringing, the particular situation, and the influence of public discourse (media coverage).

Connecting the above with Foucault's brief quote at the beginning of this study on a "policing of statements", the presented findings discussing communication on corporeality actually suggest a minimum respect for any "policing" as such. The determining factor behind the content of communication is perceived and declared to be an individual's personality traits, which are both recognized and respected. On the basis of the scientific realization that individuals are a result of socialization, this does not necessarily mean that there is a real absence of respecting norms. The above just documents the fact that the normativeness of individual behaviour (communication) is not something which is realized or admitted to, and that people declare their openness in communication about the investigated topics as an expression of their own individual free will.

The paper is an outcome of the project VEGA No. 1/0035/14
Spoločensko-kultúrna reflexia telesnosti v životnom cykle ženy
(The Socio-Cultural Implications of the Body in the Life Cycle of Women).

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