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**THE POLITICS OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMING
AS A METAPHOR FOR THE CONDITION OF SOCIETY.
THE TV PROGRAMME “CHŁOPAKI DO WZIĘCIA”
AS AN EXAMPLE OF MAINTAINING
NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES
OF THE POLISH RURAL POPULATION**

Keywords: humiliation culture, media pathologies, social pathologies, negative stereotypes, rural population

ABSTRACT: The media policy of television stations treats attracting viewers' attention as the primordial principle of their operation. The use of pathological content that crosses the boundaries of the normative system on screen has become a new media practice and a strategy for increasing viewership. An example of such production is tv programme “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, described as ‘documentary’. Its protagonists are men and women from Polish villages and small towns who are looking for love. The author attempts to examine the ‘reality’ presented in the programme “Chłopaki do wzięcia” by means of content analysis, which is the starting point for the analysis of social representations. He uses theoretical categories concerning new media practices, such as: humiliation culture, victim show theory, stereotypes and media voyeurism. The aim of this article is an attempt to identify media images and specific interpretations of reality in the programme “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, which, in the author's opinion, contribute to maintaining a negative image of rural inhabitants by transmitting social pathology to television. Moreover, the author makes an attempt to outline the policies followed by the producers of “Guys for the Taking” to explain its popularity and the reasons behind its creation.

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INTRODUCTION

Exposure of pathological behavior is becoming increasingly common in television productions, thus creating new media themes as well as communication practices. The conscious transgression of the boundaries of the normative system by television stations has become a new tool for increasing viewership, attracting viewers and advertisers. These standards have been incorporated into the logic of the media and are based on the economic rules of the market. Noteworthy is the growing popularity of productions defined by the name ‘documentary’ in television. However, they do not present real events, but specific situations and a deliberate selection of shots attractive to the viewer. By fabricating images and highlighting behaviors characteristic of social pathologies, some television programs contribute to the widening of the boundaries of consent for this type of behavior in media discourse. One of the cases described above is the program “Chłopaki do wzięcia”.

The purpose of this article is to show the negative image of rural residents and present the transmission of social pathologies to television in the program “Chłopaki do wzięcia”. This choice is motivated by the immense popularity of this production – in 2018, the broadcast of the premiere and rerun episodes doubled the station’s average viewing figures. The program aired by Polsat Play was followed by 1.05 million viewers (Mk, 2019).

The title of “Chłopaki do wzięcia” refers to Janusz Kondratiuk’s film “Dziewczyny do wzięcia”. The film shows one day in the life of women from the countryside who come to Warsaw and try not only to have fun, but also to find the love of their life. The heroines do not find themselves in an urban environment and do not understand basic social codes. Rydlewski states that Kondratiuk’s film, although is often considered as a comedy, shows the sad reality of the Polish People’s Republic. So it specifically shows human suffering and the desire to change one’s fate, which the characters are unable to change due to their low social capital and unfavourable circumstances. A similar message accompanies the show “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, which is treated as an entertainment program, but has its inner depths (Rydlewski, 2019, p. 115).

SPECIFICS OF THE PROGRAM “CHŁOPAKI DO WZIĘCIA”

The program “Chłopaki do wzięcia” directed by Irena and Jerzy Morawski, has been airing for 9 years, presenting the lives of single men (and women in the new seasons) from Polish villages and small towns who have trouble finding love. The official description of the show is: *Young people from small towns and villages are looking for partners for life. They are in a difficult situation because most of the girls they knew from school have left to work in bigger cities. They won't be coming back. The boys are left alone, working casually, “without registration”. On Saturdays and Sundays, they meet in front of stores in villages, walk around the market square of a small town, or stand at bus stations. Provincial Poland is woven with poverty, boredom and hopelessness (Ipla.tv).* Nineteen seasons consisting of 252 episodes were produced between October 7, 2012 and June 27, 2021. The duration of a single episode does not exceed 30 minutes. The time of broadcasting of the premiere episodes is always on Sunday afternoons. The creators categorize the program as a “documentary”.

The narrative of the series clearly suggests that people from rural areas have difficulty finding partners. These problems are caused by factors highlighted in the programme: poverty, rural background, lack of education and the characters' inadequacy. The program portrays the everyday reality that men face, ruthlessly penetrates their private worlds and accompanies them in their search for love. It also exposes their intimacy and failures. Rydlewski states that it is clear that the characters do not understand the social reality that surrounds them, and are not familiar with the cultural codes used by television.

The show's producer, Jerzy Morawski, comments:

We are very pleased with the phenomenon of popularity of our series. It shows that our work makes sense. The strength of “Chłopaki do wzięcia” is that it shows the fates of authentic people. Our heroes are not actors, but they present their own lives, which are not usually strewn with roses. An important feature of this project is that it has the characteristics of a soap opera – each of the characters can be followed by viewers for many episodes. However, “Chłopaki do wzięcia” is not only the fate of men who are

looking for love. The show also gives viewers a glimpse of the contemporary Polish countryside, as well as the problems and challenges faced by its residents (Mk, 2019).

Morawski presents the strengths of “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, citing the show’s authenticity, its soap opera-like structure, and its portrayal of the image and problems of the “contemporary” countryside. These aspects will serve the author’s further deliberations. The last sentence of the producer’s statement is particularly interesting, as it shows a strong conviction (even pride) in the “extraordinary” idea of the Polsat Play production. The director also reports on the situation of the participants of “Chłopaki do wzięcia”: “They do it for their own pleasure. However, if our team sees that one of our men is very poor, he receives a little help, for example in the form of buying food or coal for heating” (Mk, 2019). Thus, Morawski exposed the principles of the program’s logic and the appearance of quite a clear financial incongruity towards people coming (usually) from the countryside who sell their image to the media and do not receive appropriate compensation for it. What is more, the last sentence proves that the production staff is aware of the poor conditions and poverty of the participants, and yet they show them to a wider audience.

In considering the transmission of social pathologies and the maintenance of negative stereotypes in the programme “Chłopaki do wzięcia” it is important to begin with the operationalization of the terms deviation and social pathology. Adam Podgórecki stated that social pathology appears as this type of behaviour, this type of institution, this type of functioning of a social system or this type of structure, which remains in fundamental, irreconcilable contradiction with world-view values accepted in a specific community (1969, p. 24). On the other hand, sociologist Jerzy Kwaśniewski defined deviant behavior of individuals as their specific feature, which is expressed in the fact that a given behavior is to some extent different from some pattern or norm of behavior (1983, p. 9).

The author of the article considers that it is necessary to start from theoretical sociological and psychological terms. This choice is motivated by the fact that the transmission of pathological behavior to television is strongly correlated with phenomena arising from sociology and psychol-

ogy. The juxtaposition of humiliation culture theory, victim show concepts, and stereotypes will therefore illustrate the transmission of social pathologies to television and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes in the show “Chłopaki do wzięcia”.

THE CULTURE OF HUMILIATION AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE VICTIM SHOW

As a theoretical framework for considering the transmission of social pathologies to television and the popularity of the show “Chłopaki do wzięcia” the author has chosen the concept of humiliation culture proposed by Andrzej Szahaj. It has its source in the theory of the spectacle society constructed by Guy Debord. The French sociologist and philosopher links the emergence of this specific form of community to the capitalist evolution, which has turned almost every aspect of everyday life into a product. Debord highlights “visibility” as the most desirable feature of the society of the spectacle (Szahaj, 2012).

Progressive capitalism has developed the ideal of a businessman or businesswoman, characterized by individualism and material achievements in society. These have grown into a measure of value, a kind of measure of success and happiness in the modern world (Markiewka, 2020). People who do not fit into the standards of the neo-capitalist trend are marginalized by the “society of common trade”. According to Szahaj, observers derive satisfaction from watching individuals who fail to achieve the aforementioned successes in certain fields and who, through public humiliation (for example, on screen), are stigmatized for their dreams (Szahaj, 2012).

Szahaj argues that television programs, which rely on participants gaining recognition from audiences and jurors, are a desperate attempt to gain social advancement by members of socially disadvantaged groups where other means of advancement have been blocked. These individuals are most often judged by people who belong to socially privileged groups. The whole situation appears in the optics of the researcher as an implicit reflection of social relations typical of a non-egalitarian society, in which class

divisions are clearly outlined and the dominance of the privileged class is unambiguous and undisputed (Szahaj, 2012, p. 6).

Describing in detail the specificity and nature of entertainment programs, Szahaj states explicitly that representatives of the dominant class openly demean individuals from lower classes who aspire to social advancement. Behaviors aimed at insult and dishonor reveal the truth of class society, which treats inequality and humiliation as a natural, ordinary aspect, almost inscribed in the functioning of the modern collective. These acts expose the nature of the contemporary social model, which is governed by the metaphor of the world as an arena of ruthless competition, where the loser endures humiliation and defeat, and the winner gains fame, money and public attention defined as media visibility. Another belief is that each individual is the author of his or her own life and therefore should not complain about their own fate. Inequalities in this view are treated as normal, because people are believed to be inherently unequal (Szahaj, 2012).

People raised on the above-described set of values of class society are most likely to endure humiliation in their private lives and at work, especially in corporations that follow the neoliberal logic of “profit over people”. In Szahaj’s research view, they watch the humiliation of others on public television and feel pleasure from it. The humiliated want to watch others being humiliated in order to endure better their own humiliation (Szahaj, 2012, p. 7).

The Polish philosopher compares the culture of humiliation to the invisible glue that binds the society of unequal classes: “It can solidify into a hard shell only where inequality is considered a sign of social health, and therefore where there are those who have a natural right to humiliation and those who naturally have to endure it” (Szahaj, 2012, p. 7). The researcher concludes that popular television programs and the behavioral patterns presented in them are like a mirror of the condition of society and the ideology that dominates it. The values that have changed through the prism of class society are also highlighted – the more unequal the society, the more tendency to humiliate and aggression in its mass culture and the less trust and willingness to cooperate (Szahaj, 2012, p. 7). According to the Polish philosopher, Polish society is one of the most stratified

nationalities in Europe and thus is particularly vulnerable to the invasion of the culture of humiliation. The researcher sees that the reason for the escalation of this phenomenon is not only in the actual lack of competence of people who are presented in public. The cause should also be attributed to poverty, social exclusion and differences (e.g. sexual).

From the perspective of developing a culture of humiliation, it is important to refer to the new media genre of the victim show. This term was introduced by Michal Rydlewski to describe television programs in which creators ruthlessly exploit people who are often helpless and powerless toward reality (Rydlewski, 2019). The term was inspired by a term coined by Brian Winston – victim documentary.

Rydlewski states that the key to this genre is sociological and economical. Namely, it is also related to the class differentiation of Polish society, as in Szahaj's theory. The role of the victim show in this approach is the opportunity to observe the "exotic" world of individuals coming from the "periphery" of the world of consumption by people from the upper or middle class. The term "exotic" has, in this case, a pejorative overtone, because it includes people who are less educated, poor, look worse and have economic problems, who become attractive to the audience because of their marginal character or deviations from the social norm.

Rydlewski states that very often the narrative presented in the broadcast blames the people from lower social classes for their poverty and individualizes the causes of their life failures. This is because creators do not pay attention to circumstances beyond the control of these individuals (e.g., parents' economic circumstances, illnesses, or place of birth). It is important to highlight the characters' image problems associated with the post-production process. Victims, i.e. people stigmatized by television, cannot specifically manage, influence, or control the form of their representation by the creators or their reception by the public. In a sense, they are like marionettes whose strings are pulled by the creators of the program (Rydlewski, 2019, p. 107). What's more, the team behind the program ruthlessly exploits these individuals for their own ends, with complete disregard for the fact that they are dealing with people who are expecting some form of help. The characters presented on the screen are, in Rydlewski-

ki's view, merely a pretext to provoke a laugh or entertain the audience (2019, p. 108).

In this context, it is worth to recall the category of *homo videns*, proposed years ago by the Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori. In his critique, television and the messages delivered through it are purely entertaining, and even allow viewers to relax in front of the screen. The researcher states that man as a playful and fun-loving animal (*homo ludens*) is now highly satisfied, because television appears in his perception as a spectacle, a place of entertainment. Thus television fabricates images that destroy great ideas through entertainment, weakening the ability to think abstractly and with it the ability to understand and analyze the events presented on the screen. The metaphor for such a man is *homo videns* (the man who is constantly watching). In Sartori's view, the excess of seeing and the multitude of images presented on screen overwhelms the viewers, who are overstimulated. Therefore, abstract thinking is eliminated in favor of quick, entertaining messages that do not require thought or analysis (Sartori, 2007). According to the author of this paper, Sartori's theory will be very helpful in analyzing the logic of the program, guiding the determinants and motivations of post-television.

STEREOTYPES

Another theoretical category, the stereotypes, will also be helpful in analyzing the "Chłopaki do wzięcia" program. The author refers to Krzysztof Mudyń's definition in "Encyclopedia of Sociology": „A stereotype is a system of simplified beliefs (perceptions, expectations), with clear emotional and evaluative connotations, shared by members of a group or community, expressed in symbolic, verbal and non-verbal communication, derived from secondary social messages rather than based on direct experience, concerning a sufficiently important class of objects for this community, perceived in a global way, characterized by rigidity and resistance to change despite information that does not confirm them, as they perform important adaptive functions of sociobiological and psychological nature” (Mudyń, 2002, p. 119).

On the other hand, Wojciszke defines a stereotype as a schema representing a group or type of people singled out because of some easily noticeable characteristic defining their social identities, such as gender, race, nationality, religion, social origin, or occupation (Wojciszke, 2009, p. 76). This construct is characterized by oversimplification, persistence, and generalization. It is also an element of the culture of a specific collective and is not susceptible to change under the influence of information that contradicts a predetermined schema (Wojciszke, 2009, p. 76). Stereotypes are therefore a set of beliefs and judgments about a specific category of people. Most of these thought patterns, but also discriminatory and prejudicial tendencies, are absorbed by a person from their social environment from an early age. In this sense, stereotypes act as a depository and transmitter of social knowledge about different groups and types of people (Wojciszke, 2009, p. 78).

Stereotypes and prejudices are perceived as useful and functional schemes from the social point of view. They justify the established order in the community and enable the use of knowledge of other individuals to interpret the framework of reality. However, from the perspective of social functioning, stereotypes are most often characterized as dysfunctional schemas that can develop strong negative prejudices in individuals. Stereotypes contribute to stereotyping, i.e. reducing someone or something to a stereotype, but also to exacerbating social conflicts, marginalization of people perceived as “other”, xenophobia, homophobia, and unfair treatment of individuals and groups to whom society has assigned negative traits or roles (Wojciszke, 2009, p. 100).

METHODOLOGY

The main idea of this paper is an attempt to identify media images and specific interpretations of reality in the program “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, which are related to the research problem, that is, the deepening of the negative image of rural residents and the transmission of social pathology to television. The terms ‘media images’ and ‘specific interpretations of reality’ are understood by the author as frames, camera shots, comments

of the narrator, and statements of the characters, which are edited in each episode in a purposeful and non-accidental way. They constitute the units of analysis in the conducted research.

In order to achieve such a research goal, the author based his study on the narrowest of the three perspectives of mediatization distinguished by Małgorzata Molenda-Zdziech. The author attempted to analyze certain fragments of reality, case studies, which can be defined as the mediatization of the image of people coming from the countryside, mediatization of privacy and mediatization of deviant behaviour (Molęda-Zdziech, 2013, s. 35).

The study was constructed as an implementation of the initial concept in order to identify selected methods, tools, and theories that can be used to analyze the same or related topics. The research material consisted of episodes of the show “Chłopaki do wzięcia” available on Ipla.tv (excluding the 8 and 9 series, not available online). When selecting the research sample, the author was guided by the average number of premiere episodes per season – 12. The analysis was therefore conducted on 12 episodes selected through a random sample using an online random number generator. Analyzed episodes: 1, 26, 35, 36, 54, 60, 69, 73, 119, 138, 155, 204.

The author divided the study into two stages: quantitative and qualitative. The research methods used to analyze the aforementioned reality in the program “Chłopaki do wzięcia” were: classical content analysis (quantitative stage) and social representation analysis (qualitative stage). The author constructed a categorization key for the purposes of the study. Thus, it became a tool for the first research method. It consists of 30 specific questions relating to: the specific behaviors of the characters (e.g., language they use, daily activities), aspects of social deviance (e.g., alcohol abuse, unemployment, criminal aspects, sex), and intentionality of camera movements and close-ups (media logic). The quantitative data obtained through this method made it possible to determine which aspects of the daily lives of the characters in the program “Chłopaki do wzięcia” appear most frequently, how many times social pathology is referenced in the scenes, and how often the camera captures privacy. In the construction of the categorization key, the author was guided by an inductive approach, which involves adding new categories to the created key as the empirical

work progresses and the researcher's knowledge of the analyzed issue develops (Szczepaniak, 2012, p. 99).

Content analysis is the researcher's starting point for the qualitative stage, which consists of the verbal (linguistic) and visual (symbolic) layers of the "Chłopaki do wzięcia" program. The author used Moscovici's critical analysis of social representation to incorporate the language used by the characters, the voiceover comments, and specific representations of rural residents (aspect of religion, gender stereotypes, place of residence, rural customs, personal culture) into the scheme of analysis (1984, pp. 3–69). As the analysis of representation integrates verbal and non-verbal elements, the researcher also focused on the extra-linguistic component mediated by television, i.e. the frames and images presented on the screen. The tools of analysis were emotional and thematic anchoring, objectification and anchoring in antinomy. The author, following the complex form of Moscovici's theory, divided the analysis of social representations into 2 layers: the linguistic layer and the extra-linguistic images of reality expressed in the logic of the program (camera shots). The researcher used methodological triangulation to illustrate the logic of the program "Chłopaki do wzięcia" in a more precise way.

THE LANGUAGE LAYER IN "CHŁOPAKI DO WZIĘCIA"

The linguistic layer of the program consists of the characters' statements and the voiceover (narrator) added in post-production. The content analysis allowed to categorize the protagonists' utterances and the lector, thus showing the degree of saturation of the program with factors that may maintain negative stereotypes of the rural population in the language layer. The unit of analysis was a scene, which the researcher understands as a set of shots in which one person (the protagonist) anchors. The created categorization key allowed to highlight the linguistic tendencies appearing in "Chłopaki do wzięcia". In each of the analyzed episodes, the characters used a rural dialect or regionalisms. The author also noted that almost every character had a pronunciation problem, probably resulting from speech therapy neglect, congenital speech defects, or carelessness in

expression. The content analysis allowed to accurately transcript the characters' utterances, and thus became a starting point for exploring the linguistic images of the world of the characters presented in the show "Chłopaki do wzięcia". The author selected the most characteristic and linguistically significant fragments of the speech transcript:

- I am looking for a woman for my home and for me.
- If I wanted just for sex, you know, trucks' ladies, escort agencies. You'd find that penny for it. You'd eat that bread with margarine. Bread with tea... And it would be good too.
- You know, when the baby comes into this world, there's no shitting in the bushes. You'll just have to roll up your sleeves, as they say. And even work three fucking shifts to keep it all going.
- You want to lead your child to the poorer side?
- Stop drinking, stop smoking and within a month you've got it.
- I'm not an alcoholic, I'm a gourmand.
- I said that I dress smart, that yah ain't no scumbag or no drunk or no poor guy. I will not wait. The years are flying by and there is nothing in my crotch.

These and other passages served as material for analyzing social representations using tools such as thematic anchoring, by metaphor, and anchoring in antinomy. Moscovici uses the concept of theme/motif to capture the basic, general thought patterns and primary ideas of a community that, in interaction with a particular context, generate and structure new social representations (Zbróg, 2017, p. 76). Based on the linguistic layer of the program, guided by the thematic anchoring, the author came up with several themes that take the form of beliefs, categories or symbolic dimensions. The primary theme that most often appears in the language of the analyzed episodes of "Chłopaki do wzięcia" is the search for a partner. The concept of looking for love in many scenes is linguistically broken by sexualization, subjectivity, or the fulfillment of social expectations ("I will not wait. The years fly by and there's nothing in my crutch"). The protagonists very often planned their parenthood without having a partner yet. In the analyzed episodes of "Chłopaki do wzięcia", there is a clear motif of poverty as an inherent element in the everyday life of villages and small towns, which is very often personified

and constitutes as a problem, an obstacle in finding love. Characters attribute causality in the path of amorous failures to this factor.

Another theme in the show is the identification of finding a partner with success in life and the essence of life (e.g. “Maybe I will succeed in life and I will not be alone”). The linguistic layer of “Chłopaki do wzięcia” shows that family is considered a high value in society, so the characters feel excluded from social group structures because they are alone. Women very often become objectified in the language layer. In many scenes, the characters speak about women, listing the assets they should have and the expectations they must meet. Most of the demands relate to managing the household and performing household chores (“Maybe there will be a woman who cooks someday, if not, I’ll have to live on those soups”), so the woman appears in the ‘housewife’ category.

Almost every analyzed episode also featured strong sexualization of women (“I will not wait. The years fly by and there’s nothing in my crutch”). Even in the opening credits one of the characters, Bandziorek, talking about his dream woman, says “Well, the ideal girl is to be pretty, shapely. Here (points to hips) and here (points to chest)”. The sexual issue plays a huge role in the show. In one episode, a character unabashedly talks about the details of his sexual adventures with a younger partner (“You can see her in pornographic films and then she shows her role”). The topic of prostitutes also appears quite often: “(...) I have some of these call girls. They will call me to make an appointment, as they say, for sex”. The linguistic layer also shows the strong connection of women with the city and its enormous demands. One of the characters states that all the women from his village have left for the city and that is why he has a problem finding a partner (“In my village there are currently eight bachelors and zero girls for every one of them”). Bandziorek even says: “I would like to meet a girl with an apartment and get out of this house as soon as possible, packed my bags and went away from here with pleasure”. Interestingly, the thematic anchoring very often includes the issue of matrimonial agencies as a ‘way out’ of difficult relationship situations and the only way to find a partner.

The topic of problems with work is also frequently mentioned. Guided by the linguistic layer, the analyzed characters can be categorized into

those who have manual labor (mainly on construction sites), work in the fields on a farm, or are unemployed.

A special role in the programme is assigned to the narrator, who comments and gives his opinion on the 'reality' presented on the screen. The following excerpts from the narrator's speech illustrate well the manner of commentary/ narrative construction:

- He has been posting matrimonial advertisements in newspapers for a dozen or so years. Every minute he tries to get rid of the memories that torment him, but they appear again and again. Just like eggs appear in the henhouse every day.
- And although everything so far indicates that they would sooner build several houses in the neighbourhood than find candidates for wives, they do not remain in search and their plans are extensive.
- The content of Mr. Jacek's life has become writing matrimonial advertisements and waiting for love, waiting for hope and waiting for a soul mate, with whom he will eat a tasty broth from a duck that he will pluck himself.
- For a few months now, Jarus has been a regular visitor to Warsaw, he does not do sightseeing, does not take in its beauty or admires the animals in the zoo. Jarus has one goal – a marriage bureau in the center.
- The three gorgeous ones do not spark either love or fire.

The narrator's comments above show the linguistic tendencies of the voiceover and the anchoring through metaphors. The opinions and comments on the 'reality' of the programme are very often accompanied by disco-polo songs, which, according to the author, additionally influence the narrator's words and thus they acquire an ironic, mocking and humorous character. The cited examples show that the narrator very often tells about the hidden details of the main characters' lives (e.g. criminal past or economic problems), accompanied by metaphors or ironic additions.

Metaphors make things and phenomena understandable. Anchoring social phenomena in metaphors can serve informational purposes (Zbróg, 2019, p. 77). However, in some of the utterances, the comparisons are somehow grotesque depictions of personal problems that lack an informative dimension but serve to entertain. This is particularly evident in the

first example, where the appearance of tormenting memories in the main character was compared to the appearance of eggs in the henhouse.

Using the anchoring in antinomy in relation to the language of the characters and the voiceover of “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, it is possible to describe clear tensions in the social representation of people coming from small towns and villages, which is in line with victim show theory. In the linguistic layer of the show, there is a clear polarization on the economic level of ‘poor-rich’. Poor people are identified in the program with people coming from the countryside. Some characters talk about themselves: “I am a poor boy from the countryside”, while rich people are identified with the city. The antinomy ‘rural-urban’ is also visible as a source of disproportion, conflict, and tension. This is best illustrated by Bandziorek, who sees a chance for a better life in the city. The clear polarization is also present in the verbal layer itself and in the manner of expression. The voiceover has correct syntax, and is read clearly and slowly, in line with the diction of a TV announcer. On the other hand, the protagonists’ utterances are often disorganized, chaotic, and full of phonetic errors, dialect expressions and neologisms. An exception in the analyzed episodes was the character of Alex, a transsexual, who made a kind of coming out in the program. The camera shots, the music, and the language layer did not present the protagonist in a good light, and even ridiculed him (“I suspect that no one will want me because of the image of my brother, because it scares girls away; you, brother, have to accept me as I am”).

Also noteworthy in terms of language are the opening credits of “Chłopaki do wzięcia”. The narrator’s words are a constant element of it, being a background of edited fragments of shots from the program: “They don’t like the word single, considering it too sophisticated for their taste. They prefer the familiar bachelor. Out of the thousands of singles scattered around villages and small towns, the bachelors to be taken are the ones who, in order to break free from the clutches of annoying loneliness, talk about their desires, in which women reign”. The description is biased and stigmatizes men from rural areas right from the start. The beginning of the lector’s speech: “too sophisticated for their size, in the author’s opinion”, is clearly stigmatizing for those coming from the countryside and small towns, as it harms their social status and intelligence. Irony, hyperbole,

ridiculous sayings, and juxtaposition of intimate details with misplaced metaphors are the most common linguistic treatments in the program.

EXTRALINGUISTIC IMAGES OF REALITY

The linguistic layer, which is the carrier of verbalized reality, is only one component of the theory of social representations. Just as important in social and media discourse is the extralinguistic, nonverbal dimension, which refers to the world of symbols, images, and social practices. Thus, the extralinguistic images of reality in the program “Chłopaki do wzięcia” were analyzed. The author used objectification to deepen the consideration of visual aspects.

Objectification makes the ‘unknown’ become ‘known’ by transforming it into something concrete, something that we can see and experience with our senses (Zbróg, 2019, p. 77). Thus, it represents the materialization of ideas that are abstract and presents ineffable issues as concrete phenomena in the physical world. The camera shots in the show “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, and thus the ‘reality’ of the production are particularly important aspects in the analysis of social representations due to the intentionality and bias of the scenes depicting people from rural areas and small towns. The content analysis allowed for the highlighting and categorization of shots that were repetitive and allowed for an in-depth penetration of pictorial representations of the program’s ‘reality’.

‘Reality’ created by the program is the most interesting media treatment, in the author’s opinion. The most numerous extra-linguistic motifs visible in “Chłopaki do wzięcia” were: poverty, farm work, addiction problems, and exposure to intimacy and privacy. These phenomena have an abstract dimension, so they were interpreted by the production and shown in the form of images and symbols. The camera used numerous close-ups of the characters’ surroundings while filming them or while they were speaking. Zoom became a biased tool for the viewer to see every detail, even the smallest, in the characters’ surroundings. More often than not, the details shown on the screen alluded to the objects of povertyfication. The camera especially showed neglected rooms, peeling wallpaper,

dirty walls, dilapidated tables, old tiled stoves, outdated furniture, dilapidated beds, old carpets, or no toilet. Many of the characters analyzed did not have a television in the home. Most of them traveled every day by bicycle or scooter. Only one of the characters had a car. The camera unscrupulously showed all these details of the apartment, even though they did not look representative. In the 12 analyzed episodes, there were only 2 places that were neat and tidy. The close-ups of the camera were also concerned with the physiognomy of the characters, so very often the screen was dominated by shots of dirty nails, neglected hair, problematic complexion, dental defects, and damaged clothes.

The analyzed episodes of “Chłopaki do wzięcia” featured many characteristic scenes that clearly alluded to the maintenance of negative stereotypes about the rural population and the transmission of social pathologies into the media structures. The camera always accompanied the characters in their daily activities, which can be compared without hesitation to reality shows. Particularly noteworthy are the shots that, in the author’s opinion, exceed social norms, such as filming in the shower, in prison, in bed, in the kitchen or while eating meals. Thus, the total penetration of privacy in production and the objectification of intimacy are evident.

The objectification of addiction problems was manifested by the frequent exposure to alcohol and cigarettes in the shots. Many of the characters had problems with drugs, which was visible in the linguistic dimension, however, much more often the reference to addiction appeared in the extra-linguistic, visual dimension. The camera very often showed characters drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes without any commentary from the narrator or the protagonist, as it was a natural ritual of everyday life of people coming from villages or small towns.

Farms and the reality of Polish villages and small towns are a particularly important televisual representation of ‘reality’ in “Chłopaki do wzięcia”, which was highlighted in each of the analyzed episodes. The viewer accompanies the characters in their daily chores such as chopping wood, collecting eggs, tending cows and pigs, plowing fields, sowing, and others. These shots show the objectification of farm work, which is demanding and time-consuming. Nevertheless, just like houses, farms were very often neglected. The reality of the Polish countryside in the

extra-linguistic dimension was quite clearly connected with the symbols of poverty, hard work, union and financial problems, and even social pathology, as three of the characters had a criminal past. The camera showed neglected places, roadside shrines, sacred paintings at home, family heirlooms, dilapidated bus stops, wells, tractors delivering compost, or stone roads. It also used numerous close-ups on clothing, stained shirts and pants, rubber boots, thus creating a kind of 'standard', a specific image of the village and people from the village with a specific interpretation.

CONCLUSION

The show "Chłopaki do wzięcia" gathers one million viewers in front of TV screens every year. Radosław Ślawiński, director of Polsat Play, says that this is the most-watched program in the history of thematic channels in Poland (Mk, 2019). Content analysis followed by the analysis of social representations allowed the author to understand the logic of the Polsat production, write down observations and draw conclusions.

The following theoretical approaches were particularly helpful in understanding the structures of "Chłopaki do wzięcia": Andrzej Szahaj's culture of humiliation and Michał Rydlewski's victim show. The main protagonists of the show are people who do not fit into the standards of the neo-capitalist movement and thus, in a way, constitute a marginalized group. Rydlewski's concept of the victim show speaks of using powerless and helpless individuals in such productions, which is confirmed by the author's observations. The protagonists of "Chłopaki do wzięcia" were usually unemployed people who have difficulties in many areas: economic, criminal, emotional and psychological. Even the title itself belittles the characters and infantilizes the men – "Boys for the Taking", not "Men for the Taking". In each episode the maintenance of negative stereotypes of the rural population was evident in the linguistic layer (incorrect syntax, rural dialect, unusual speech logic, and speech therapy problems) and visual layer (e.g. poor housing conditions, neglected appearance, and cavities in the teeth). The role of the victim show is to show the reality of the countryside as an exotic world in which individuals from the periph-

ery of the consumer world live. In the analyzed episodes, only two characters (of 18) particularly cared about their physical appearance and lived in neat places.

Referring to Rydlewski's words, the protagonists are, in a sense, like marionettes, unaware of the logic of the programme, whose strings are pulled by the creators. For this reason, the participants can be called 'victims' who have been used by the production of "Chłopaki do wzięcia", which is further confirmed by the fact that they do not receive any remuneration for their participation and have no insight into post-production. The content analysis and the analysis of social representations, combined with the analysis of the show's audience, allowed the author to conclude that viewers of "Chłopaki do wzięcia" probably derive satisfaction from watching individuals who are humiliated on screen and who fail to succeed emotionally and economically. This also references Sartori's theory of men as "constantly" watching individuals (*homo videns*), which involves the dominance of entertainment over higher values. From this perspective, "Chłopaki do wzięcia" appears as a show created to entertain the audience, treating humiliation as a natural element of class society. The phenomenon of the huge viewership of Polsat's production can also be supported by Szahaj's words: "The humiliated want to watch others being humiliated in order to better endure their own humiliation".

The author's observations show that the program ruthlessly penetrates the private worlds of the protagonists, and the camera accompanies almost all their activities, even washing. The shots are very biased, focusing on and highlighting the smallest details that deviate from the social norm (such as dirty fingernails, an extremely neglected house or cavities in the teeth). These images can, in the author's opinion, deepen stereotypes about individuals coming from the countryside. In "Chłopaki do wzięcia" there is also a clear transmission of pathological and deviant behavior of the protagonists, such as conflict with the law, deliberate breaking of the law, alcoholism, drug addiction, use of vulgarisms or violence towards people. This was most evident in the three characters analyzed. The show, on the other hand, portrayed prison realities twice during the analysis of 12 episodes from a pool of 252. It can be concluded that the show "Chłopaki do wzięcia" contributes to the transmission of social pathologies to television.

Following Szahaj's concept, it can be concluded that we are dealing with the overt and deliberate humiliation of individuals from the lower classes, which reveals the nature of the contemporary social model with its characteristic metaphor of the world as an arena of ruthless competition.

The musical layer is also an interesting observation. The programme places particular emphasis on disco-polo music. Each episode used songs from this genre as a "background" for the narrator's speech, or as a "transition" to the story of another character. Disco-polo music, which is often identified with kitsch and low culture, can, in the author's view, contribute to maintaining a negative stereotype of people from rural areas and small towns in the presented television 'reality'.

According to Szahaj, Polish society is particularly vulnerable to the invasion of the culture of humiliation, which is reflected in the popular production "Chłopaki do wzięcia". This program presents only snippets of rural and small-town reality. The very description of the program ("Provincial Poland is Woven of Poverty, Boredom and Hopelessness") profiles how the production interprets the images presented in the program. Content analysis and analysis of social representation helped to clarify the conclusion that the narration and camera shots were particularly biased and could be stigmatizing toward the people depicted on screen. The protagonists were most often ridiculed by the choice of shots, media creation or statements made by the voiceover ("He has been posting matrimonial advertisements in the press for several years. Every minute he tries to get rid of the memories that torment him, but they come back again and again. Just like the eggs appear in the henhouse every day"). The images presented by the production may also stigmatize people coming from the countryside. One can conclude that the programme does not function according to the assumptions presented by the producer, Jerzy Morawski, who said that thanks to this programme the viewer also gets to know the image of contemporary Polish province, as well as the problems and challenges of its inhabitants. The viewer gets to know only a fragment of the image of the contemporary Polish province, which is in addition interpreted by the production staff and expressed with specific simulacra.

"Chłopaki do wzięcia" is a production that presents the problems and challenges of rural and small-town dwellers in a humorous and ridiculous

approach, which is connected to the concept of humiliation culture and victim show. Thus, the show may reinforce the negative stereotype of people from rural areas as less educated, clumsy, extremely poor, deviant, and prone to substance abuse and lawbreaking. The purposefulness and bias towards the presented images of rural 'reality' and the deliberate selection of scenes by the production team in "Chłopaki do wzięcia" show only fragments of reality, fragments of rural realities, extreme cases that are generalized. Thus, they may reinforce or perpetuate negative stereotypes, contributing to the strengthening of social antagonisms.

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