THE ISSUE OF INFANTILIZING OLD AGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD IN THE CONTEXT OF ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ADVERTISING MESSAGES AND MEANINGS "HIDDEN" IN THEM

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The subject of this work is the issue of infantilizing old age in the contemporary world, which is being considered in the context of analysis of selected advertising messages and meanings hidden in them. The main aim of this work is not only for the respondents to search for hidden meanings in messages, but also to decode them and give them their own senses and meanings. "Hidden" senses and meanings become crucial in this work and relate to concealed/hidden intentions, motives or transactions. Invoking the concept of "hidden" meanings, the authors were inspired by well-known concepts and theories, such as by Mary Douglas, Eric Berne, Basil Bernstein, and others. At the same time, meanings given to messages are considered in the intersubjective perspective which is based on the assumption that individual senses are never merely subjective and individual (based solely on individual experiences, sensations and thoughts), but are of intersubjective nature. Respondents' (the students of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Gdansk) interpretations on selected verbal and non-verbal messages that illustrate the problem of old age and aging, became the center of interest. Respondents note that meanings hidden in messages often indicate the phenomenon of infantilization of the issue, and sometimes reveal existing manifestations of gerontophobia (excluding both older people and the discourse of old age from multiple social and public spaces). In that context, we can see that aging is often treated with "a grain of salt", with indulgence or even mocking irony or contempt. It is often simplified, mocked/ridiculed (it shows older people in a distorting mirror as: infantile, helpless, clumsy, sluggish, unable to adapt to the requirements of the contemporary world, losers, old crocks, gawks – who require care, support and at the same time they are burden to their environment, etc.).Respondents also believe that the discourse of old age and aging is often ignored, displaced from public awareness as an uncomfortable topic, incongruent with the aesthetics of the contemporary, consumer world – a world that worships eternal, imperishable youth, efficiency and usefulness.

Keywords: Hidden meanings, Infantilizing, Old age, Messages.

Introduction

The issue of infantilizing[1] old age and aging is associated with the project[2] implemented at the University of Gdańsk with students of the Social Sciences Faculty. The results of the study point to

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[1]In the present work, the term 'infantilization' is connected not only with the phenomenon of infantilizing something or someone, but also with simplification, primitivization, trivialization, degradation, etc. "Infantilization" is also

different kinds of infantilization of the problem (ranging from "carnivalizing old age" – old age is deliberately trivialized, and its trivialization and simplification serve a specific purpose, namely to build the distance towards old age, to tame it (and at the same time to distance the indisposition, ailments, diseases, etc).

Such an approach is considered and presented in the context of Bachtin's concept of 'reversing the world upside down' that the students/respondents very often refer to. It is worth emphasizing that this concept (illustrating the 'logic of reversal') is used by them not only in the context of presenting certain messages that show 'carnivalization of old age', but also in the process of interpretation of research in which students/respondents use it as a tool that serves to unmask meanings/senses hidden in messages[3], as a concept that helps reveal a specific logic of messages – logic which is very often deceitful and twisted (eg. when meanings of words used are reversed).

Another approach indicates different treatment of old age and aging (e.g. with mockery, irony, trivia, banality, indulgence, and even with ridicule, degradation and vulgarity).

Respondents note that meanings hidden in many messages very often indicate the phenomenon of infantilization of old age and aging. At the same time, they notice different varieties of presenting old age and aging in messages and different kinds of their infantilization; from 'carnivalizing' them and reversing them upside down, creating distance to them and taming them (which refers to Bakhtin's concept of 'reversing the world upside down'); through treating them with a 'grain of salt', trivializing or depreciating them; up to irony, simplification, ridicule, degradation and even stigmatization of old age and aging.

"Carnivalization" of Old Age and Aging (Reversing Them 'Upside Down') in the Context of Messages Chosen by Students and Their Interpretations

Interpretations of students, concerning the issue of carnivalizing old age and aging, indicate that they associate old age not so much with chronological age of a person, but more with a "state of mind", general psychophysical condition and an attitude to life. It can be seen in the following statement and accompanying analysis:

> *"(…) Our interpretation refers to a cover photo of Aktivist Exclusive magazine. We can see a famous Polish model, Beata Tyszkiewicz. She's an icon of Polish cinema and the first Lady of*

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associated with naivety, lack of seriousness, immaturity and regression. Such an expanded definition allows to capture many shades of infantilization of old age. One of them is 'carnivalization', which on the one hand is in itself a form of naive, frivolous treatment of old age, and on the other – it is, paradoxically, a form of a protest against such simplified treatment – becoming, in this way, a peculiar kind of rebellion and resistance; another example is primitivization and trivialization of old age, and they can take different forms, such as ridicule, depreciation or limitation.

compare, etc, Skorupka (1968) &http://synonim.net/synonim/infantylizacja.

[2]The project is based on the concept of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic model of research illustrating the 'circular logic of the understanding process'. The participants of the project are investigating various messages observed in the surrounding world (but not only the issue of infantilizing old age in the surrounding world). It should be emphasized that there are several important questions about the project which determine the direction of research: *What does the message mean in the context of my individual experience? What does the message mean in the context of social, historical experience? What does the message mean in the context of the specific cultural habitus? What does the message mean in a specific context?, etc, compare,* Gadamer (2000), Śliwerski (2009).

[3]The issue of hidden meanings in messages refers to a number of concepts. Starting from the concept of Eric Berne's overt and covert messages (which turned out to be extremely important in the context of presented issue), through Umberto Eco, whose concept was used both at the level of 'reading the world' and at the level of giving meaning to it in the process of interpretation; up to Basil Bernstein who pays attention mostly to language which is a carrier of hidden meanings, Edward, T. Hall and Mary Douglas (who pay attention to cultural aspects of hidden meanings)*, compare*: Berne (1996), 1998), (1999,) 1996),(1997), Hall (2009), Douglas (2007).

Polish show business. We can admire her beauty from when she was young in the following picture:

web page: *www.google.pl/search?q=beata+tyszkiewicz-zd*

(...)For many years, Beata Tyszkiewicz was considered to be the most beautiful Polish actress, an aristocrat of Polish cinema – and indeed, she comes from an aristocratic family (...)".
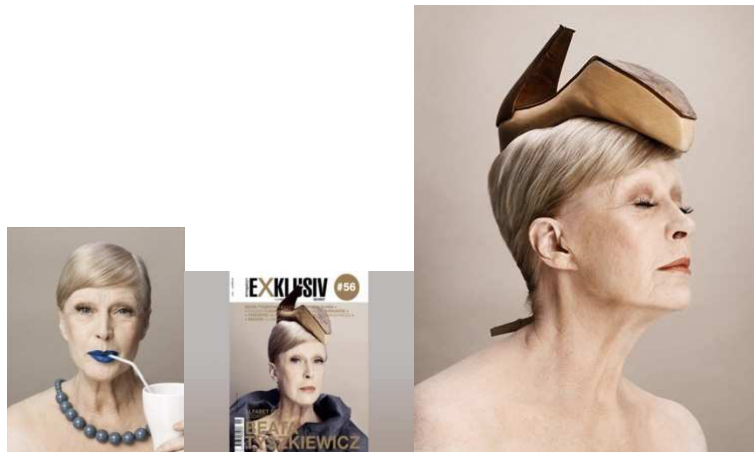
web page: www.google.pl/search?q=beata+tyszkiewicz+dystans+do+siebie

The statement of the actress: *'Age has nothing to do with anything. I meet a lot of young people who are older than me as far as their temperament and mentality are concerned. They lack energy, sense of humor and distance. They maybe live peacefully and they have regular jobs but all those things are so terribly obvious. Pretending to be 20 is simply pathetic'.*

" (...) She was offered a session without a Photoshop, and she agreed to it, despite the fact that this kind of session is always risky for artists (the risk of losing current position and status – in this case the status of the most beautiful Polish actress, or the risk of disclosure of something that artists usually don't want to reveal, that is the process of aging or unwanted changes). But she took the risk in grand style (with humor, distance to herself and with great class). And what's more, paradoxically, she turned everything to her own advantage (...) Carnivalizing her age, aging, passing physical attractiveness and not so fresh beauty (in the picture, she is 73), and even her position and professional status, she proved to be a real lady with a true, genuine class. She showed everyone that age is not only a birth certificate but mostly state of mind, mentality of a person, temperament, and sense of humor, which is clearly visible in her words: "I meet young people who are much older than me as far as mentality and temperament are concerned". A shoe on her head, blue lipstick, curled bubble wrap in her hair – remind more of a young, rebellious teenager who is protesting against something or someone, and thus wants to prove something to herself and to others (it is usually a rebellion against certain authorities – e.g. parents or teachers). In this way, young people generally try to prove that they can be independent and able to make their own decisions. The actress also rebels, but it is a very different kind of rebellion. She doesn't have to prove anything to anyone since she knows perfectly well who she is, she knows what she's worth and what she's capable of, and besides, her position is already established. Her rebellion serves a completely different purpose. It is a kind of protest against schematic and biased attitude towards old age which is shown in a simplified manner, and also in a "distorting mirror" and is usually one-dimensional. On the one hand, messages observed in the contemporary world show idealized, unreal and artificial images, in which age is infantilized, as seen in a series of messages – where all the signs of aging are covered up and hidden, all the imperfections and deficiencies of beauty are smothered because they are undesirable in the culture of eternal youth. On the other hand, old age is marginalized, pushed away, treated with disgust or satire, and only the negative aspects are highlighted. In this session, the actress rebelled against such unilateral and falsified messages of the contemporary world. What seems to be an interesting procedure in the session is an exposure of the tag on the necklace and a coiled bubble wrap, used as hair decoration (they spice things up and show great distance to herself, to her age, to etiquette and to what other people say). She showed that she is a person with an edge and sense of humor. Her consent to the lack of Photoshop in the presented session meant that the actress put up for the public view all the signs of passing time. All the details and deficiencies of her look have been exposed, like wrinkles, crow's feet, etc. However, despite such exposure, she looks great in the pictures and proves that she hasn't lost her real charm and beauty which really flow from the inside. At the same time, she is neat, carefully made-up, which is also important in this message because it shows that you don't necessarily have to neglect yourself (as it happens in case of older people who become unkempt and slovenly). She doesn't hide her age and passing time, and thus she has become the living testimony of the truth, authenticity and acceptance of herself. She doesn't deny her age, her story; she doesn't pretend to be someone she's not. She says openly and shows the true face of aging, yet paradoxically brings out its beauty. She proves that you don't have to pretend to be someone else at a push (for example to be younger than in reality), which we can observe in the statement: "Pretending to be 20 is simply pathetic". The actress shows that every age has its own kind of beauty and charm (...) This is a very valuable lesson for others (both young and older people) because every day we are surrounded by fake and photo shopped images of people (especially stars and celebrities). Such images do not tell real stories about old age and aging, but they attempt to falsify the truth and become a hoax. Beata Tyszkiewicz breaks away the distorted world and becomes a proof of authenticity, reliability and natural beauty. She also comforts older people (especially women) by showing them that old age does not have to be sad, dull and monochromatic. She shows young people that they shouldn't label and simplify old age. This attitude of the actress evokes great recognition and respect (...) People have had enough of false messages which they are stuffed with every day, they are already

fed up with them. Especially since those messages are usually frustrating for ordinary people because they show unreal world - "unreal reality" that is not possible to come true (...) Unfortunately, it turned out that there are also people who negatively reacted to the photo shoot, and even expressed their outrage at the actress' behavior. In their opinion, it is clowning, and it is not proper to behave like that being her age (such opinions could be seen in online forums). Fortunately, the actress (who is strongly distanced to life and herself) didn't care about such opinions, and despite all that, she constantly crosses borders resulting from conventions, norms and stereotypes strongly rooted in culture. In reality, they block activity of aging people and make them withdraw from life, instead of 'facing old age'. It is very difficult to define this special actress in any social context since she keeps escaping from any possible definitions and patterns, and goes beyond them all the time, 'turning everything upside down'. She's also known for her straightforwardness, repartee and a specific sense of humor (...)".

It is worth noting that in their careful interpretation, students/respondents evoked two concepts: *social conventions and social norms, stereotypes;* they pay attention to their immense power and the impact on people (in this case, the negative power that builds mutual alienation, reinforces superstitions and prejudices, as well as lack of mutual understanding, which we can observe in the final words of the statement).

Such reflection is all the more valuable that the *social norms* usually function as a kind of patterns internalized by people (and, at the same time, as guides through some ways of thinking, judging, acting).

They make people adapt to specific (and also established and accepted by the group) modes of behavior, response to behavior or behavior in mutual interactions. Norms established by people require individual members of society to obey and enforce them on others – for the sake of common benefits (e.g. in order to protect their public reputation or status).

In this way, they describe expectations of people belonging to a specific social and cultural group, so that they behave in a certain way, fixed in a culture, and obey certain obligations according to the outlined social expectations.

Similar functions are fulfilled by social conventions (cultural conventions) established in culture; they usually constitute a mainstay of sense of cognitive security for people, and at the same time, they are a testimony of their rooting in a tame (and also transparent and comprehensible) world – the world of transparent meanings, senses, signs and symbols.

Social conventions help people organize the surrounding world, indicate what they should and shouldn't do, what is and what isn't allowed, what is desirable or undesirable, moral or immoral, in a given cultural/social context.

It should be noted, however, that such conventions often produce accompanying prejudices, biases and stereotypes of thinking, which in effect reinforce multiple negative social phenomena. One of them is the phenomenon of social separation (in this case, separation and isolation of the elderly) which arises as a result of generated false beliefs, stereotypes or prejudices about them). In effect, such false beliefs and prejudices conduce strengthening of social inequality and injustice and reinforce produced stereotypes, Tomasello (2015), Douglas (2007).

We can also observe that students'/respondents' attention was attracted by the actress' inclination to go 'beyond', outside a *social context*[4], established in the culture, which in their opinion entails multiple social consequences, not only positive, but also negative ones (judgments, evaluations).

Such behavior does not always turn out to be socially accepted (it is sometimes assessed negatively by people, as extravagant, provocative, inappropriate, not congruent to the age, reversing the order of the world 'upside down').

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[4]Going beyond the *social context* usually means behavior contrary to or surpassing certain patterns accepted and recognized in the culture, that have been considered as desirable, appropriate, adequate, *compare:* Giddens, (2004), Morreale, Spitzberg, Barge, (2007).

In such a context respondents also direct their attention to specific verbal messages (which are common/popular in their culture, such as: *too old to…, it is not proper…, it is not fitting…*, or it is too late to… (eg. *too old to: certain behavior, clothes*, or *to have fun,* etc).They *become 'a kind of restrictions against old people'.* In this context they ask questions about the borders of *,reversing old age and aging upside down',* which is reflected in the following example:

Limits for Old Age in the Context of Messages Such as: 'Too Old to…' and Their Hidden Content

"(…) Such messages, as: *too old to…, it is not proper…, it is not fitting…*, or it is too late to… *become sometimes a kind of restrictions against old people – they are not always justifiable (…)".*

*web page:*www.google.pl/search?q=weso%C5%82a+staro%; www.google.pl/search?q=na+przekór+starości&biw

" (…)*Those people probably do not give up to any weaknesses. They can have fun, they enjoy life (…) Such an attitude is beneficial for everybody (for themselves, for their family and whole social environment). Because instead of groans and complaints, they become active and distanced to life. They take life with humor and show healthy distance to old age and aging. As you can see, they are all having great fun. Such an image doesn't violate any rules and moral standards. To the contrary, it is a form of resistance. In this way, older people express their rebellion and resistance not only against aging, but also against stereotypical perception and treatment of old age. In order to do it, they use the ritual of fun, carnival and the logic of reversing the world upside down (by means of provocative clothes and behaviors that are generally considered as inappropriate for them). Thanks to it, they break the schematic perception of old age, as well as symbolic meanings established in a culture; they become destroyed and replaced by new, non-stereotypical ones. Behind this visible resistance, there is usually an enormous courage, since this form of rebellion requires bravery to oppose certain expectations of other people, established moral standards, conventions and universally recognized principles and norms. Doing something in spite means behaving in an opposed way to what older people are expected to do. Rebellion and resistance are usually associated with taking a strong and controversial line, opposed to what was established and considered as legitimate before (for example, accepted by the majority of society). In the context of theory of resistance, we can see that such behavior often results from the need to maintain independence, autonomy, individual freedom or diversity. Although it is known that in different stages of life, rebellion plays different roles. In adolescence, it is mostly used by young people to build their own autonomy, to symbolically 'cut off the umbilical cord' from parents, to strengthen counter-dependency. While in the old age, rebellion is only maintaining what people were fighting for in the youth. Older people don't want to let anyone take from them what they earned for their whole life (that is their independence, freedom,*

possibility of free choice). They don't want to be treated as someone who is not able to self-determination (…). When we look at the people shown in the picture, we think that in everyday life, such behavior would be probably inappropriate, funny and bizarre. However, we would look differently at it, if we assumed that it is a fun time – then everything is OK. But we have to exercise restraint in everything and not exceed certain limits, otherwise you can expose yourself to ridicule (…)"

In view of the above statements, we can see that in their description, students refer to various theoretical approaches, to significant concepts and scientific theories which turn out to be extremely important in the context of a discussed issue (such as the theory of 'carnivalization' or the theory of resistance),[5] and which are used by them in the interpretation process.

It is worth noting that the students/respondents are aware of the importance of contexts that accompany the discussed messages, and that determine their ultimate meaning. They express it in their interpretation of the respect of boundaries established in culture which allow people to specify which kind of behavior is appropriate (conducing a balance, healthy distance to oneself without violating established norms[6] and avoiding ridicule), and which is not.

Older People in a *‚Distorting Mirror'*. 'Mohair Berets' as an Example of Messages Which Ridicule Old Age and Aging and Infantilize Them

Sometimes students have doubts: whether to perceive and interpret the message as carnivalization, or as ridicule? They notice that a number of messages show elderly people in a tendentious way: in a ‚distorting mirror', which sometimes causes difficulties in their reading, and sometimes even distorts their perception. This applies to many different areas and issues (their world outlook, appearance, physical and sexual abilities, intellectual abilities), which is reflected in the following example:

The expression 'mohair berets' refers to the unfortunate statement of Donald Tusk (PO deputy) who used the phrase 'mohair coalition' in 2005. It also refers to the image taken by Robert Górecki in December 2002 during celebrations of 11th anniversary of Radio Maryja, whose participants were wearing mohair berets. As noticed by the students/respondents, numerous verbal and nonverbal messages were formed on their bases. The messages carry very controversial and ambiguous meanings/senses (very often offensive and derogatory), which we can observe in the contexts of the following images:

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[5]It should be noted that students consciously and freely use previously mentioned concepts/theories (such as: theory of 'carnivalization' or 'theory of resistance). At the same time, they turn out to be very insightful observers and interpreters of the discussed issues. They consider them from a prospect of research. Students appear to be well aware of various mechanisms of rebellion and resistance, which is manifested in different situations and stages of human life. They know that rebellion and resistance appear in situations in which sense of independence and sense of agency are threatened, and when pressure is exerted on people, their autonomy and self-determination are violated. Then, they become a form of protest (e.g. against pressure exerted on them, posed barriers or absurd expectations). This results in exceeding established limits. This phenomenon is also explained by the theory of reactance (referring to the physical resistance) described by Jack Brehm; this theory explains the source of resistance and shows that people react in such a way mostly when their autonomy and freedom of action are threatened, or when they are exposed to loss, *compare:* Barker (2005), Oyster(2002).

[6]Violation of social norms means violation of certain important (established in a given society/culture) standards, rules, interactive rituals, and at the same time violation of specific expectations of people belonging to a given social/cultural group. These expectations stem from the belief that all the people belonging to a specific community will behave in a certain way, *compare,* Tomasello (2015), Goffman (2006).

'We would have gone to heaven, however in hell there are more friends'

web page:www.google.pl/search?q=moherowe+berety&biw=1348&bih=594

" (...) Actually, we are neither fans of Radio Maryja nor its listeners, but we think that some messages arising in this context exceed the permissible limits of decency and good taste. Especially that the 'mohair berets' evoke only pejorative connotations relating mainly to older people, associated with very conservative and radical views (which we personally do not support, and most of our peers abhor). It is commonly known that these views are part of the national-patriotic mainstream of Polish Catholicism, associated with backwardness, very extreme views and a very controversial figure of Father Tadeusz Rydzyk (...) However, a great amount of images (which is also visible in our visual presentations) 'throw everyone in one bag' and spare no one. And yet, in the group of 'mohair berets', there may also be people who do not identify themselves with such views (e.g. those who just like wearing mohair berets, or those who are simply practicing Catholics). Therefore, such approach can be treated as stigmatizing people wearing 'mohair berets' – where 'mohair beret' is a stigma. What is more, as can be seen even in the images above, there are also representatives of young and middle generation among them (...) 'Mohair berets' have become synonymous with very clear and unambiguous associations (and pejorative as well). They are, in fact, associated with old age, ignorance, backwardness, ridicule, infantilism, obstinacy (being at the same time a reflection of stereotypical perception of older people). They express a disregard for both feelings and views of the older generation (including religious beliefs of the elderly). In our perception, they are also a testimony of intolerance and backwardness which are, paradoxically, assigned to old people, but in fact describe those who create such sneering, slanderous and often nonsensical messages (...) To be honest, we also somehow contributed to reinforcement of such image of the elderly because, as it turned out, we laughed at this type of 'jokes'. But after further reflection, when we looked at it from a different perspective, we saw that these messages were often harassing, defamatory and unfair. And there are many sarcastic jokes. There's even a cabaret called 'Mohair berets' and it

presents quite unrefined jokes. A negative attitude is also provided in the lyrics of a song by 'Big Cyc', excerpts of which we quote below:

'(…)Mohair berets – rule the world
Mohair berets – they start a crusade
Mohair berets – victory and power
In a mohair beret, the world will be a better place(…)

This is a combat trail
So march and die
For Rydzyk to rule
And you along with him

On the mohair trail
Blood is shed again
Grannies still feel
The call of revolution
They drink tea
And fight the evil
The Prime Minister quickly scented
The mohair trail(…)'

web page: www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,big_cyc,moherowe_berety.html

A form of such messages is very biased, ridiculing older people, which is very visible in the passage quoted earlier, showing 'mohair berets' as obstinate warriors and militants who are willing to fight and even die for their ideas. In the pictures, we can see the usage of specific props (apart from mohair berets, there is an image of Virgin Mary, images of Saints attached to clothes and all different sorts of bags and bundles that pejoratively describe older people as collectors of garbage). A very specific procedure of covered eyes was used, and in the first thought it is associated with criminals (because criminals are usually presented like that in media). In another connotation, there is blindness with a hidden message: 'mohair berets' go blindly and without reflection in the name of their pseudo ideas'. A verbal message 'We would have gone to heaven, however in hell there are more friends' is very biased and unfair since it suggests that all older people who go to church are sinful and unworthy of going to heaven. Besides, such messages target at values very important to many people (faith, community, solidarity), which have been questioned and depreciated in such messages. Older people wearing 'mohair berets' have become scapegoats of political games (...)".

In the context of cited interpretation, we can see that young people (students/respondents) are extremely perceptive observers of the problem. They can easily break away from their own personal views, as well as from common thinking and established stereotypes.

They are able to consider the issue from the broader perspective (not limited only to the first, often schematic associations which turn out to be firmly anchored in everyday, common thinking). We see this clearly in the context of perceiving people wearing 'mohair berets' as 'scapegoats'[7], and at the same time as the objects of ongoing political games.

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[7]The phenomenon of '*a scapegoat'* has a collective dimension here; we can observe a collective, as well as dispersed certain social groups' responsibility for persecution (in this case it's a responsibility for persecution of 'mohair berets' that become a proverbial 'scapegoat', and who were considered guilty and responsible for certain evil (in this case - conservative views, religiosity, etc), *compare*, Rene (1991).

Respondents/Students see the paradoxes of messages created in such a way, as a result, the messages proof numerous inconsistencies and lack of reasonable justification.

The Question About the Borders of 'Reversing Old Age and Aging Upside Down' in the Context of the Issue of Old Mothers

At the same time, some messages evoke completely different feelings and reactions of students', which we can observe in the context of messages presented below (in this context we observe a common interpretation field). In this specific subject respondents' opinions turned out to be very similar):

In this context students/respondents present the messages according to Polish actress Barbara Sienkiewicz, 60 years old mother of twins, and other old mothers. 'They evaluate their decision about motherhood as the lack of borders' and '*reversing the world upside down'.*

web page: *www.google.pl/search?q=barbara+sienkiewicz+mama+po+60*

"If you have a child, death does not concern you. A part of you will continue living" – explained Adriana Iliescu (a retired Romanian literature lecturer), in an interview for "Daily Mail".

Maria del Carmen Bousada de Lara- explained: *"I've always dreamed of having a baby"*.

web page: www.google.pl/imgres?imgurl=http://

Adriana Iliescu gave birth to a baby girl in 2005. She was 66. A Spaniard Maria del Carmen Bousada de Lara gave birth to two children in 2006, at the age of 67.

Such women are very often perceived from the prospect of their biological features, and 'biological clock'.

Respondents very often point out the conflict of interest (between a mother and a child) - they emphasize that:

> *"an unborn child doesn't have any choice and influence on her decision – where she wants to have a baby at all costs (…) while the child needs young, healthy mother, who will be able to bring him/her up (…)'.*

Respondents very often show their disgust and their evaluation is usually very strict and uncompromising:

> *"(...) Sometimes* some doubts arise! (…) *You should know how to separate the ridicule or fun time from daily life and responsibility. Each age has its rights and obligations! In spite of the fact that it is a slogan, all people are obliged to fulfill the specified rules in their life and should behave adequately to them. So very important here is the question about the borders of 'reversing old age and aging upside down "(...)". Such mothers* are *irresponsible', ' infantile', ,crazy', ,stupid (...)"-* those are prevailing opinions.

> *" (…) Such women want to fulfill their dream of motherhood. Grandma, attempting at all costs to realize the dream of motherhood',* (…)"*, etc.

On second thought, another question appears: *what about the father? (*however, it doesn't include the issue of in vitro method). Respondents have noticed that in the ongoing discourse the figure of old father has disappeared:

> *" (...) It's very unfair that usually only the woman is blamed for such situation/ decision. And what about the old fathers? What about their responsibility? Who will bring up their children? Why are fathers overlooked in such discourse? (...) and what about doctors, medicine and their responsibility?" etc.*

We notice that in the context of above issue (an issue causing extremely vibrant and stormy reactions), a lot of questions appeared, questions that respondents left open and unanswered.

The Problem of Coexistence of Old Age and Youth in the Context of Messages Chosen by Students/Respondents

The problem of coexistence of old age and youth is presented by students/respondents in many different ways in the context of various messages chosen by them (from perceiving them as a condition of social balance/harmony, sustainable development of society and family – where young and old complement each other, derive mutual benefits in an unforced, natural way, support and need each other; to the exclusion of old age out of sight (discourse of old age treated as something inconvenient) – since it disagrees with the aesthetics of the contemporary world.

We can observe the influence of Bauman's concept here. A human is subject to a similar logic of treatment, reduced to his/her functionality and usefulness – he/she is treated the same way as everyday objects (for example, it is "replaced by a newer, better model"; its "expiry date has passed" – it becomes useless, unnecessary, cumbersome, uncomfortable – it is visible, among others, in social thinking, like "too old to...", "worthless", "useless", where we can observe both real and symbolic forms of old age exclusion (manifested through the conviction that certain things shouldn't be done any more, through sanctioning certain behavior of the elderly, when old people are treated as burden, etc.)

Students/Respondents notice a number of obstacles to the coexistence of old age and youth in the contemporary world (the world of consumer values).

At the same time, they often emphasize that such coexistence is the condition of social balance/harmony, sustainable development of society and family (because the young and the old complement and support each other, derive mutual benefits from such coexistence, they need each other). However, even in such a context we can observe some symptoms of infantilization of old age.

A representative example of this group is the following message (visual and verbal) and its interpretation by one of the group of respondents:

The photo taken by: Marta Klejna

" (…)This is a poster from the newspaper, exhorting people to give 1 percent of their tax to the elderly; a big inscription is a key here: "For old times' sake". This form of verbal message is strongly rooted in the mentality of Polish people, culture and language (refers to the Communist era and rule, when all kinds of connections were the basis of existence and "worthy" functioning, because almost everything was handled through connections).

Another important message is a visual one (clearly divided into two parts: a left and a right side, and also into: past – present, carefree and good fun on the one hand, and indisposition and dependency on the other. The left side of the image resembles an old photograph (we can see an elderly man – probably the grandfather who is carrying a boy (probably a grandson) in a wheelbarrow. Despite the colors used, the message is joyful – there is an atmosphere of fun.

On the right side, we can see the modern (colorful) photo which suggests that these are the same people after years. This message is not so cheerful and carefree despite vibrant colors. Instead of a wheelbarrow (symbolizing good fun), there is a wheelchair with an older man on it (grandpa), probably pushed by a grandson.

Comparison between a wheelbarrow and a wheelchair highlights a drama of the message, shows sad and irreversible human fate. We can observe the recurring theme of wheels that help people move in two outermost periods of life: at the beginning, it is usually a stroller (although it is a wheelbarrow here), and in the end it is a wheelchair. This message causes extreme moods, emotions and associations. On the one hand, it is associated with help, support, love, good relations in the family, will to support each other, gratitude (a grandson reciprocates grandfather's concern and support). On the other hand, there is a sad image of an old man in a wheelchair, in shortish trousers, old-fashioned hat, who seems to be absent and withdrawn. It's pretty simplistic and a bit infantile comparison. You can read this as an attempt to manipulate certain emotions of recipients of the message, especially in the context of referring to family values important for people (…). And all of this only to encourage people to give 1 percent of their tax (…)".

As it turns out, respondents understand the above message in an ambivalent way: on the one hand, as a form of help and support to the family and society; on the other hand, they recognize that this message is strongly simplified, somewhat infantilized (as proved, in their opinion, by the image of an older man, wearing old-fashioned hat and shortish trousers).

Moreover, a simplified, one-dimensional convention of the message that appeals to basic emotions (compassion, love, family ties) seems infantile to them. Students/respondents notice that created message was based on the scheme of reverse roles. On the one hand, a grandpa carrying his grandson in a wheelbarrow (associated with fun, childhood, and evoking good mood). On the other hand, a grandson pushing his grandpa in a wheelchair – illustrating incapacitation, dependence on others, evoking a sense of sadness, depression. According to respondents, such message manipulates the recipient, plays on his emotions. Old age is presented here one-sidedly and one-dimensionally, in a very pessimistic light.

Summary

In the context of presented issue, we notice that the images of old age and aging, constructed by means of many verbal and nonverbal messages are often rooted in schematic, simplified and stereotypical frames which, as a result, 'flatten' the problem of old age and aging, infantilize and trivialize them.

We can see this clearly in the context of proverbs, sayings and jokes strongly fixed in the culture. They were often evoked and interpreted by students/respondents, and sometimes subjected to deeper analysis (linguistic, cultural, sociological, etc.).

Similar pattern can be seen in the context of evoked nonverbal messages, referring most often to different visual representations (both the most simplified, appearing in the form of simple diagrams and drawings, and more complex ones, using modern technology, and various means of expression: cultural symbols, metaphors, media images, etc.).

In their interpretations, respondents analyzed *the form of messages* (referring at the same time to means of expression and ways of presentations used in messages); they also analyzed *explicit and implicit content,* as well as carried values which, as it turns out, are often put to the test (especially when values important for people are ridiculed, mocked, called into question, which was illustrated in the context of 'mohair berets' or mothers after 60).

Research attitude of the respondents proves that they are not only very attentive/careful and insightful observers but they are also sensitive to social injustice, exclusion, marginalization, stigmatizing, which in the discussed context takes the form of ridicule, mockery, making fun of older people and aging (as well as their infantilization and trivialization).

It is also worth noting that students/respondents proved that they are able to admit to mistakes made earlier (that they sometimes succumbed to common, stereotypical opinions, or images created in a certain way). It is visible in the following fragment of a statement concerning the issue of 'mohair berets': "(…) *Frankly speaking, we somehow contributed to reinforcement of such perception of older people, since we very often laughed at 'jokes' about them. But after further reflection, when we looked at the issue from different perspective, we understood that such messages are very often harassing, defamatory and unfair (…)"*.

In the context of the cited statement, we observe that the initiative to subject messages to deeper reflection and interpretation by the students very often brings surprisingly positive results, and encourages in-depth analysis of these issues and also leads to a change of attitude of students and will to explore the surrounding world (encouraging them to interpret the observed messages in different contexts and from different research and cognitive prospects).

At the same time, students indicate that they can consciously use knowledge available for them in the process of interpretation (and they can seek new knowledge), reaching for various concepts and scientific theories and searching for new solutions and answers to their questions (or to the questions that appear in the process of interpretation).

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