



WHEN IS SEX FUN? SEXUAL SATISFACTION AMONG SLOVENIAN YOUTH*

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The main aim of the paper is to provide, on the basis of a survey of youth sexuality in Slovenia, support for the thesis that sexual experience, including sexual satisfaction, is largely socially constructed. First, the indices of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among Slovenian respondents with their first and most recent sexual intercourse are presented and compared to the results of similar surveys conducted in Austria and Germany. Then, some cultural and social causes of variation in the levels of sexual satisfaction of Slovenian youth are analysed in the next two parts of the paper. The analysis focuses on two sets of variables influencing sexual satisfaction – the first represents the socio-cultural context of sexual communication, and the second, the internal dynamic of sexual communication. The analysis is motivated by a hypothesis that both sets of variables are strongly linked to the level of sexual satisfaction, although it can be expected that the link will be more obvious for the second set of variables. This hypothesis is only partly confirmed by the available data. The variables related to the socio-cultural context of sexual communication are not systematically linked to the level of sexual satisfaction among Slovenian respondents, whereas the other set of variables has some influence on the level of sexual satisfaction, but less than expected. The findings do not allow any broad conclusions. Nevertheless, they suggest that the explanation of the "social construction of sexual satisfaction" should be sought mostly in the dynamics of communication within sexual dyads.

I.

The fact that human beings engage in sexual activities not only for procreation, but also for recreation is an unmistakable differentia specifica of their sexuality (see Diamond, 1997). Human sexuality therefore "involves the things people do alone for pleasure and stimulation and the things they do with other people" (Schwartz, Rutter 1998: 2). Owing to this intimate link between human sexuality and pleasure, it seems almost impossible to define, even in one cultural framework, the scope of activities that can be labelled as sexual. Although all cultures set normative standards that determine the legitimate ways to achieve sexual pleasure and even define pleasure expectations, human sexual life is empirically highly diversified; it seems "that there are as many sexualities as there are people" (Schwartz, Rutter 1998: 34). That is why the concept of pleasure that lies at the centre of the definition of human sexuality makes this definition both theoretically and empirically demanding. As this paper is mostly concerned with analysis of some empirical aspects of sexual pleasure, some of the dilemmas encountered in measuring sexual pleasure should be briefly outlined.

Social science studies of human sexuality predominantly suggest that the simplest way to measure sexual pleasure is to rely on the reports of individuals. It is assumed that respondents are able to report events and experiences that represent an information base from which researchers can assess the level of respondents' sexual satisfaction, or that respondents are able to assess and report their satisfaction with their sexual life or with certain aspects of it. According to Laumann (see Laumann 1994: 112), the first measures can be considered as objective and the second as subjective.

Subjective assessments of sexual pleasure depend strongly on the respondents' expectations regarding their sexual pleasure and on their concept of equity in sexual relationships. It is often unclear whether the subjective measures tell more about the respondent's expectations regarding sexual pleasure than about their experienced satisfaction. Among subjective measures, an overall assessment of respondents' sexual satisfaction is widely used in surveys due to its parsimony. Its obvious shortcoming is that it provides no information on how their different sexual activities contribute to his or her sexual satisfaction. Of course, this general measure can be supplemented by detailed surveys of the behavioural basis of sexual satisfaction, but such examinations (no matter how complex) can nevertheless miss the idiosyncrasy of respondents' sexual lives. The failure of surveys to take sufficient account of the idiosyncrasies of individuals' sexual lives also applies,

in a specific way, to objective measures of sexual satisfaction.¹ There is no doubt that, for instance, the occurrence of orgasm during sexual intercourse (as the most often used objective measure of sexual pleasure) is as an important measure of sexual pleasure, but there can be also numerous other measures. By selecting objective measures of sexual pleasure researchers always risk imposing on respondents their view of sexuality and sexual practices, and even their own ranking of sexual activities in terms of pleurability.

These general remarks apply equally well to the research approach and data collection on which our analysis is based. Our data on sexual satisfaction were collected in the framework of a survey of sexual behaviour of youth and their responses to AIDS risks, conducted in three Slovenian cities.² As the aim of the survey, the first on this subject in Slovenia, was to provide basic information about adolescent sexuality, it provided no detailed insight into the structure of sexual pleasure and satisfaction of Slovenian youth. The respondents were only asked to describe experienced satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their first, and the most recent sexual intercourse, from a choice of 16 given statement items. The items ranged from "It was great experience" and "I was happy", on the satisfaction side, to "I felt guilty" and "It was repulsive", on the dissatisfaction side. To limit the measurement of satisfaction only to the respondents' self-assessment of their satisfaction with their sexual intercourse was dictated, on the one hand, by the scope of the survey, and, on the other hand, by a broad consensus in the relevant literature that the first sexual intercourse is one of the particular milestones not only in the sexual life of adolescents, but also in their entire socialisation process (see Neubauer 1990: 107).

Our survey of the sexual behaviour of youth in Slovenia has closely followed two studies which have been conducted between Austrian and German youth in the beginning of the nineties (see Schmidt et al 1993; Nöstlinger, Wimmer-Puchinger 1994).³ This has made possible a comparison of our data with the results of these studies. One of the most important patterns found out by these and some other studies (see Neubauer 1990: 74; Kluge 1998: 63) is that female respondents describe their first intercourse as less satisfactory than do male respondents. Nevertheless, the majority of male and female respondents perceive the first sexual intercourse as an overwhelmingly pleasurable event. The most recent intercourse is experienced both by male and female respondents as more pleasurable and positive than the first one" (Wimmer-Puchinger 1994: 138, see also Schmidt et al 1993: 118), and the gender difference in satisfaction level is less pronounced than in the case of the first intercourse, although female respondents still express a lower level of satisfaction than the males.

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On the basis of comparison of 1990 data with the results of their study conducted in 1970, the authors of the German study have identified a substantial decrease in the level of sexual satisfaction of female respondents, and almost no change in the satisfaction level of male respondents in the last twenty years (Schmidt 1993: 28). This comparison has also shown that in Germany the sexual activities of female respondents are characterised by a much higher degree of autonomy and initiative in the nineties than in the seventies. As the 1990 study also included respondents from an East German city (the study was conducted just before German reunification), a comparison of the satisfaction level in both German samples is also possible. It shows that there is almost no difference between the West and East German male respondents, but a significant difference between the female samples. Although the East German female respondents reported a significantly lower level of sexual autonomy and initiative than their West German counterparts, they were much more satisfied with their sexual life than the West German ones. In their discussion of these rather unexpected results, the authors of the German study indicate that a general explanation of the decline of sexual satisfaction of West German female respondents can be sought in the change of the *zeitgeist* from "sexual liberation" (prevailing in the sixties) towards "gender conflict". This far-reaching change in sexual culture has made young women both less obliged to express high levels of satisfaction and "more sceptical or realistic as far as the results of sexual contacts with men are concerned" (Schmidt et al 1993, 6). From this perspective, the decline of young women's sexual satisfaction is related to their realistic and "disenchanted" attitude towards sexuality. But it can also be argued that the change in sexual culture has led to less clear-cut definitions of sexual roles, at the beginning, especially, of women's sexual role. This can result in emotional and cognitive inconsistencies in women's sexuality (see Štulhofer 1999, 15). From this perspective, the decline in young women's sexual satisfaction can be interpreted as a consequence of the contradictory nature of women's sexual desires and expectations.

In our paper not only will we use these findings as a comparative background for the presentation of the Slovenian data, but we will also rely on theoretical ideas from the German studies in formulating our research hypotheses. The descriptive presentation of our data will make up the next section of the paper. In this part of the paper, the indices of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of Slovenian respondents with their first and most recent sexual intercourse will be presented and compared to Austrian and German findings. On this basis, some social causes of variations in the levels of sexual

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satisfaction of Slovenian youth will be analysed in the next two parts of the paper. The analysis will focus on two sets of variables influencing sexual satisfaction: the first will represent the socio-cultural context of sexual communication, and the second one the characteristics of sexual communication. It will be hypothesised that both sets of variables are strongly linked to the level of sexual satisfaction, although it can be assumed that this link is more obvious at the second set of variables than at the first. The main aim of our analysis will be to provide some empirical support for the thesis that not only the forms of sexual behaviour, but also the sexual experience, including sexual satisfaction, are socially construed.

II.

The Slovenian data are congruent with the other studies in the matter of the difference in sexual satisfaction with their first sexual intercourse between the female and male respondents. The Slovenian female respondents also express a lower level of satisfaction than do their male counterparts. On all but one item offered to our respondents to describe their feelings after the first intercourse, the male respondents selected positive descriptions of the first sexual intercourse more frequently than the females. The only exception was the item "I was happy", which was selected more often by female respondents (30.9 vs. 26.3 percent). At the same time, female respondents more frequently report negative feelings related to the first intercourse. However, their negative feelings are mostly associated with experienced pain (35.0 percent for female and 1.5 percent for male respondents). In general, in Slovenia the first intercourse is seen by both groups of respondents as a rather pleasurable event, a finding which is similar to that in other countries.

The results in Table 1 show that Slovenian data regarding satisfaction with the most recent sexual intercourse only partly follow the pattern established by the Austrian and German study. The only trend, which is in accordance with our expectations, is an increase in sexual satisfaction of female respondents between the first and latest intercourse. The female respondents more frequently select all items denoting positive feelings except one ("It was a great experience"), to describe the most recent intercourse than the first one. But the male respondents report a lower level of satisfaction with the last sexual intercourse as compared to the first sexual intercourse. Most obvious is the reduction on the items "It was a great experience" and "I wanted to do it again soon". Thus our data on satisfaction with the most recent intercourse offer a picture that differs significantly from the German and Austrian findings. The gender difference in satisfaction level with

the most recent intercourse in the Slovenian case is not only reduced by the expected (when taking into account the results of the Austrian and German studies) increase in satisfaction of female respondents, but also reversed by the unexpected decline in satisfaction of male respondents.

| Feelings | First intercourse | | Last intercourse | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------|------------------|------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| A nice experience | 37,4 | 60,6 | 54,3 | 55,4 |
| I was happy | 30,9 | 26,3 | 39,7 | 20,0 |
| A nice and satisfying experience | 20,5 | 30,7 | 41,6 | 27,8 |
| A great experience | 24,3 | 28,9 | 21,8 | 17,2 |
| I wanted to do it again | 15,2 | 28,1 | 20,8 | 16,0 |
| I felt confirmed as a woman/man | 2,3 | 2,8 | 1,1 | 0,8 |
| It hurt me | 35,0 | 1,5 | 4,3 | 0,3 |
| I felt guilty | 11,6 | 5,5 | 3,5 | 4,6 |
| It was repulsive | 3,3 | 1,3 | 1,3 | 0,8 |

TABLE 1
Reported feelings at
the first and the most
recent sexual inter-
course (percentages
of selected answers)

The unexpected decline in sexual satisfaction of male respondents at the most recent intercourse demands at least some preliminary explanation. Taking into account the other results of our survey, it seems that the explanation can be sought in the general pattern of sexual behaviour of male Slovenian respondents (see Bernik, Godina, Hlebec 1996). On average, they have more sexual partners and fewer steady relationships than their female counterparts, and also a lower incidence of sexual intercourse. In all three respects their characteristics vary with regard to those reported for their Austrian (see Nöstlinger, Wimmer-Puchinger 1994: 121-123) and German (see Schmidt et al 1993: 86-87) male counterparts. Additionally, male Slovenian respondents report that they initiate sexual intercourse much more often than their partners. It seems that the low level of satisfaction of male Slovenian respondents with the most recent sexual intercourse may be largely attributed to their rather short, numerous and unstable sexual partnerships that do not make possible intensive sexual communication and adaptation between them and their partners. The data suggest that they lead a rather dynamic sexual life as far as "quantity" is concerned, but a rather poor one as far as "quality" is concerned. The increase in sexual satisfaction of female Slovenian respondents from the first to the most recent intercourse can be at least partly explained by the fact that, as our data suggest, their relationships are more stable than those of their male counterparts.⁴

A summarised picture of differences in sexual satisfaction between male and female respondents in all four samples (Austria, both Germanies and Slovenia) is represented in Table

2. An index of sexual satisfaction for Austrian and Slovenian samples is calculated on the basis of the first six items in the Table 1 (see Wimmer-Puchinger et al 1991: 141). The index of dissatisfaction is constructed in a similar way; in addition to the last two items from Table 1, the index comprises the following items: "Regretted to do it", "Could not stand him/her after it happened", "It was unpleasant" and "Nothing special" (see Wimmer-Puchinger et al 1991:147). In the German study, the index of satisfaction has been calculated on the basis of five items, the item "felt confirmed as a woman/man" being omitted (see Schmidt et al 1993: 72). At the same time, no index of dissatisfaction has been created for the German sample.

TABLE 2
Index of sexual
(dis)satisfaction

| Index of (dis)satisfaction (min=0, max=6, res. 5 in W. and E. Germany) ¹ | Austria | | W. Germany | | E. Germany | | Slovenia ² | |
|--|---------|-------|------------|-----|------------|-----|-----------------------|------|
| | F+M | N=457 | F | M | F | M | F | M |
| Satisfaction I ³ | 2,01 | | 1,8 | 3,7 | 2,3 | 3,8 | 1,20 * | 1,59 |
| Satisfaction II | 2,14 | | 2,3 | 3,5 | 3,6 | 3,6 | 1,55 * | 1,19 |
| Dissatisfaction I | 0,64 | | - | - | - | - | 0,75 * | 0,23 |
| Dissatisfaction II | 0,15 | | - | - | - | - | 0,18 | 0,24 |

* $p < 0,05$

¹ The minimum value (0) means that none of six (of five respectively) are selected by the respondents and the maximum value (6 or 5 respectively) means that all 6 or 5 items are selected. The value of 1,20 (Satisfaction I for female Slovenian respondents) therefore means that on average 1,20 items are selected.

² The number of cases for indexes of (dis)satisfaction with first sexual intercourse was 387 for female and 393 for male respondents, and 370 for female and 366 for male respondents for the last sexual intercourse.

³ Satisfaction I denotes satisfaction with the first intercourse and Satisfaction II with the most recent one.

The German index values are not strictly comparable to the Austrian and Slovenian index values not only because of different composition of the indices, but also owing to different method of data collection. The German survey was based on structured interviews,⁵ but in the Austrian and Slovenian cases on the questionnaires administered in school classes. This difference at least partially explains the fact that the German respondents in general report a much higher rate of satisfaction than the Austrian and Slovenian ones. Even the comparison of Austrian and Slovenian data needs some qualification. The respondents' responses to the multiple choice answers may be influenced by many contextual factors, ranging from the diverse reading skills of respondents to subtle but important cultural differences. Leaving aside these limitations, the data in Table 2 show that Slovenian "exceptionalism" is not limited to the already indicated, comparatively low level

of sexual satisfaction of male respondents with their most recent intercourse, but is also affected by generally lower rates of sexual satisfaction than in the Austrian and German cases.

III.

As already indicated, the authors of the German study believe that the decline of sexual satisfaction among West German female respondents (and almost no change among male respondents) in the period of twenty years can be explained primarily by a radical change of the values and norms (*zeitgeist*) regulating gender and sexual relationships. The new socio-cultural climate, favouring sexual autonomy and initiative for women, and placing more stress on the conflictual side of gender relationships, should influence the growth of sexual expectations of young women especially, and diminish their readiness to report high levels of sexual satisfaction. This explanation suggests that there is an inverse relationship between the modernity of sexual culture and the expressed level of sexual satisfaction among young women, whereas the young men's levels of sexual satisfaction are so far not affected by the value change. Not only the West German but also the East German data fit well into this explanatory scheme. In East Germany, which was characterised by "delayed modernity" in attitudes concerning sexuality and gender relationships (Schmidt et al 1993: 7), female respondents expressed significantly higher levels of sexual satisfaction than their West German counterparts. At the same time female East German respondents were lagging behind the West German ones in sexual autonomy and initiative. As already indicated, the Slovenian data bear a greater resemblance to the East German than to the West German data. There are also many reasons to claim that Slovenian sexual culture is characterised by "delayed modernity".

We will take this general explanation of the trends in sexual satisfaction among young people as a framework to formulate hypotheses related to the influence of socio-cultural variables on sexual satisfaction. As our survey has not included any items that can provide immediate information on the characteristics of sexual culture in Slovenia, our analysis will include only two sets of contextual variables that, according to our hypotheses, influence the exposure of respondents to the prevailing sexual culture. The first set of variables is composed of the educational level of respondents' parents and the respondent's current school (i.e. three-year vocational, four-year vocational or four-year grammar school).⁶ The variables contained in the second set denote respondents' religiosity. One

variable relates to the respondents' church attendance and the other to their reported religiosity.

It can be assumed that these variables (i.e. education and religiosity) influence the extent to which the respondents are exposed to the standards of modern sexual culture favouring women's independence and initiative, providing that this culture exists in Slovenian society. We expect that respondents whose parents have a high level of formal education and those who attend four-year schools, especially grammar schools, are more open to these cultural standards. According to the modernisation thesis mentioned above, the difference in sexual satisfaction between male and female respondents should be most pronounced among those whose parents have high levels of formal education and those who attend grammar schools. Additionally, the female respondents in this group should also report a lower level of sexual satisfaction than other female respondents.

When one assumes that religiosity is incompatible with the values prevailing in a modern sexual culture, one may also assume that the same tendency to lower levels of sexual satisfaction can be expected from non-religious female respondents. But we hypothesise that the effects of religiosity in Slovenia run in another direction. As the Catholic Church forbids premarital sexual intercourse, we expect that religious respondents, both male and female, will report lower level of sexual satisfaction than the others. We also expect that the influence of any violation of religious norms regulating sexuality should be especially obvious in the low level of satisfaction at the first intercourse.

By establishing some aspects of the context in which the sexual activities are performed, these variables may have an important impact on the variations in levels of sexual satisfaction. But most sexual activities are performed in partnerships, and the nature of these activities and also the pleasure derived from them are mostly determined by the communication between partners (see Laumann et al 1994: 16). Therefore it should be expected that the characteristics of sexual communication influence sexual activities and sexual pleasure much more strongly than do sociocultural factors. In our study, only two interaction variables can be taken into account. The first one relates to the relative power of partners in initiating sexual intercourse. The values of this variable have been obtained by asking respondents whether the first and the most recent acts of sexual intercourse were initiated by them, by their partner or by mutual agreement. According to the cited German study, it cannot be expected that respondents who claim that their relative power in their sexual relationship is high also report a high level of sexual satisfaction.

As illustrated by the case of female West German respondents, empowerment may lead to growing expectations and to a declining level of sexual satisfaction. But in general it can be claimed that an "egalitarian" distribution of initiative in a sexual dyad facilitates sexual communication and thus enhances the satisfaction level. This implies that we expect that among Slovenian respondents a higher level of satisfaction will be reported by those who say that their first and the most recent acts of sexual intercourse were initiated mutually. We also expect that the satisfaction level of those who had more power than their partners in initiating intercourse will be lower than in the case of "egalitarian" distribution of initiative. Respondents who claim that the first and the most recent acts of sexual intercourse were initiated mainly by their partners should report the lowest level of satisfaction.

Our second interaction variable relates to the use of contraceptives. In classifying the use of contraceptives as an interaction variable, it should be noted that their use is not always negotiated by sexual partners and is therefore not always an explicit ingredient of sexual communication. Nevertheless, our data show that the vast majority (about 90 percent) of those respondents who used contraceptives at the first intercourse (about 50 percent of all respondents already having at least one intercourse) relied on condoms. At the most recent intercourse the use of condoms has decreased slightly, but they are still the most frequently used contraceptive by a wide margin. As the use of condoms includes at least some tacit consent between partners, in our case, the use of contraceptives can be considered as an interaction variable. It can be assumed that their use can significantly influence the sexual satisfaction of our respondents in two respects. On the one hand it intensifies (especially the case of condoms) communication and even consent between partners, and on the other hand it reduces the fear of unwanted pregnancy and – as far as the use of condoms is concerned – also the risk of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD). Therefore, we expect that respondents who claim that they used contraceptives at their first and the most recent sexual intercourse would report higher levels of sexual satisfaction than those who did not. As female respondents have much more fear of unwanted pregnancy than the male ones (Schmidt et al 1993: 147), we expect that the use of contraception will have an especially beneficial influence on the sexual satisfaction of female respondents.

IV.

Of variables that determine the socio-cultural context of sexual communication, the educational level of respondents is often seen as one of the key variables (Laumann 1994: 30-31).

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TABLE 3
Index of
(dis)satisfaction across
types of school

| (Dis)satisfaction index | Vocational school (3 years) | | Vocational school (4 years) | | Grammar school | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|----------------|------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| Satisfaction I | 1,04 | 1,46 | 1,24 | 1,83 | 1,21 | 1,58 |
| Satisfaction II | 1,49 | 1,04 | 1,79 | 1,43 | 1,49 | 1,29 |
| Dissatisfaction I | 0,69 | 0,23 | 0,78 | 0,18 | 0,76 | 0,32 |
| Dissatisfaction II | 0,30 | 0,21 | 0,16 | 0,25 | 0,09 | 0,31 |

There are no statistically significant differences.

As indicated, our analysis includes both the respondents' "background" educational level, i.e. the educational level of their parents, and their "destination" educational level as indicated by their current school. As far as the first aspect of the educational level is concerned, our analysis cannot establish any significant link between the educational level of respondents' parents' education and the level of their sexual satisfaction. Our expectation that respondents with highly educated parents would be more exposed to a modern sexual culture and thus would show lower levels of sexual satisfaction is not confirmed by our data.

According to some studies, more variations in sexual experience of youth can be explained by different sexual standards in different peer groups than by parental social status (see Neubauer 1990: 107). Therefore, we expect that the respondents' school affiliation would have more influence on their satisfaction level than the education of their parents. The data represented in Table 3 confirm neither our expectation that the difference in satisfaction level between male and female respondents should be most pronounced among students of grammar schools nor our expectation that female respondents attending these schools should report a lower level of sexual satisfaction than other female respondents. Moreover, the data do not reveal any systematic pattern of differences in satisfaction level between different types of schools. This is reflected in the fact that the students at three year vocational schools report in general the lowest level of sexual satisfaction, and the students of four year vocational schools, the highest. At the same time, the pattern of difference in the level of satisfaction between the first and the last intercourse is the same at all three types of schools; female respondents are in all three cases less satisfied with the first intercourse than their male counterparts, and more satisfied with the last one. The level of dissatisfaction is in all cases lower at the second intercourse than at the first one.

There are many reasons for expecting that respondents' religiosity and church attendance would provide more impor-

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tant information about the socio-cultural context in which sexual relationships are formed than the education variables. Religious norms contain at least latent instruction for choices in the sphere of sexual activities, and compliance or non-compliance with these norms can significantly influence the pleasure derived from sexual activities. This holds true especially for societies with a predominant Catholic religious tradition, among which Slovenia clearly belongs. Religious tradition is an important ingredient of a general cultural scenario, but it does not mean that all members of the society are exposed in the same way to the expectations contained in religious values and norms. It is not difficult to assume that the most exposed are those individuals who define themselves as religious and who attend church regularly, i.e., almost every Sunday and on religious holidays. This is the background of our hypothesis, according to which the respondents from our sample who define themselves as religious and who report being regular churchgoers, should experience lower sexual satisfaction than their non-religious and non-church-attending counterparts. This expectation is based not only on theoretical deduction but also on a preliminary analysis of our data, which has shown that the religious and church attending respondents have less sexual experience (petting and sexual intercourse) than the others (Vonta, 1998). These findings are consistent with the results of other studies of adolescent sexuality (see Moore et al 1996: 18).

The data presented in Table 4 do not provide much support for our hypothesis. Only male religious respondents report significantly lower levels of satisfaction with their first intercourse than their non-religious counterparts. All other differences are statistically insignificant. It is worth noting that there are no significant links between religiosity and church attendance and the level of sexual dissatisfaction of both female and male respondents, although the index of dissatisfaction includes items such as "had guilty conscience" and "regretted doing it".

The overall links between religiosity and church-attendance and sexual satisfaction compared to theoretical expectations turn out to be, almost non-existent. The "religious" variables obviously influence respondents in deciding for or against sexual intercourse, but they do not influence the level of sexual satisfaction of those who have already experienced intercourse on at least two occasions. Our findings speak in favour of the conclusion that the influence of religion on the sexual life of youth in Slovenia is weaker than one might expect on the basis of theoretical considerations and of commonsense knowledge. Although religiosity and church-attendance may to some extent determine the scope and timing of

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the sexual activities of young people, it does not obviously influence the "quality" of their sexual experience. But it can also be argued that in Slovenia the Catholic tradition is so deeply ingrained in dominant cultural patterns that everybody is exposed to it, and therefore that the difference between religious and non-religious individuals is of secondary importance. The data from a society of high religious homogeneity like Slovenia does not make possible an assessment of the influence of religion as a cultural ingredient in sexual life and especially on the pleasure derived from sexual activities. A recent survey of German youth has shown that the levels of satisfaction of respondents who belong to Protestant or Catholic communities differ in minor respects, but that there are significant differences between Catholics and Protestants on one side, and those who belong to other religious communities, or do not feel affiliated to any community, on the other side (see Kluge 1988, 138-139).

● TABLE 4
Index of sexual
(dis)satisfaction,
religiosity and church
attendance

| (Dis)satisfaction Index | Religious | | Church attendance | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|-------------------|------------|------|
| | Yes | No | Regular | Occasional | No |
| Female | | | | | |
| Satisfaction I | 1,18 | 1,24 | 1,29 | 1,15 | 1,16 |
| Satisfaction II | 1,64 | 1,70 | 1,62 | 1,77 | 1,58 |
| Dissatisfaction I | 0,76 | 0,74 | 0,81 | 0,77 | 0,70 |
| Dissatisfaction II | 0,19 | 0,16 | 0,25 | 0,17 | 0,12 |
| Male | | | | | |
| Satisfaction I | 1,42* | 1,72 | 1,50 | 1,66 | 1,53 |
| Satisfaction II | 1,11 | 1,24 | 1,01 | 1,37 | 1,12 |
| Dissatisfaction I | 0,26 | 0,20 | 0,18 | 0,24 | 0,24 |
| Dissatisfaction II | 0,21 | 0,27 | 0,24 | 0,18 | 0,29 |

*p < 0,05

As our variables related to the socio-cultural context of sexual communication explain a rather insignificant part of the variation in the level of sexual satisfaction of Slovenian youth, it can be expected that the "micro" variables, i.e. variables directly related to some aspects of sexual communication, will do a better job. We will first look at the links between levels of sexual satisfaction and use of contraception. As already indicated, this variable is not necessarily related to the communication in a sexual dyad, but can influence the course of sexual communication. There are many reasons to believe that the use of contraception significantly contributes to a more pleasurable sexual experience for young people. But the data in Table 5 again do not confirm this expectation. The only significant mean difference in the level of satisfaction occurs in the case of the last sexual intercourse of male respondents, where satisfaction is significantly higher if a contraceptive is used.

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However, data for females using contraception indicates significantly less dissatisfaction both with their first and the most recent sexual intercourse, than is recorded by their counterparts who do not use any contraceptives.

In general, the data in Table 5 convey the message that, for Slovenian respondents, the use of contraception is not importantly linked to the level of sexual satisfaction. Especially surprising is the absence of any significant link in the case of the first sexual intercourse for all respondents and the absence of almost any significant links between contraception use and satisfaction among female respondents, whose experience of sexual intercourse should, according to some studies, be strongly influenced by the fear of unwanted pregnancy (see Schwartz, Rutter 1998: 168). In assessing this data, it should also be borne in mind that the percentage of Slovenian respondents who do not use any form of contraception at the first intercourse (approximately 50 percent) and at the most recent one (approximately 40 percent) is much higher than in Austria and Germany (see Schmidt et al 1993: 147; Nöstlinger, Wimmer-Puchinger 1994: 139-141).

TABLE 5
(Dis)satisfaction and
use of contraceptives

| (Dis)satisfaction index | Contraception used | | No contraception used | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| Satisfaction I | 1,26 | 1,66 | 1,16 | 1,53 |
| Satisfaction II | 1,83 | 1,52* | 1,68 | 1,11 |
| Dissatisfaction I | 0,65* | 0,21 | 0,87 | 0,27 |
| Dissatisfaction II | 0,13* | 0,23 | 0,30 | 0,30 |

*p < 0,05

For want of a more thorough analysis of the influence of contraception use on sexual satisfaction, our findings can be explained only hypothetically. At least two lines of explanation seem promising. The first is related to the relatively high percentage of Slovenian respondents who do not use contraception. This fact may be interpreted as a sign that contraception is not seen by many Slovenian respondents as an important option in their decisions regarding their sex life. Because it is largely beyond the scope of their perceptual horizons, it also cannot influence their sexual satisfaction. The second explanation may draw upon a preliminary analysis of attitudes of Slovenian respondents towards AIDS (see Bernik 1998). This analysis has shown that their attitudes are characterised by a high level of fatalism. These respondents do not believe that AIDS related risks can be minimised by their own purposive actions, and although they are well informed about AIDS risks, they do not see that their decisions matter a lot. It may be assumed that the attitude of the Slovenian respondent towards unwanted pregnancy is characterised by a

similar fatalism, which pushes the problem of contraception to the margins of their sexual life. The marginality of contraception then results in its almost non-existent influence on the sexual satisfaction of Slovenian respondents.

The last two variables in our analysis, the relative power of partners in initiating sexual intercourse and the planning of intercourse, are both variables that epitomise important aspects of sexual communication. Therefore, it can be expected that they will be strongly linked to variations in the level of sexual satisfaction. As planning of sexual intercourse can sometimes be based on one-sided deliberations, the satisfaction variations are to be most obviously linked to the relative initiating power of respondents. The data presented in Table 6 do not in general contradict these expectations, but nevertheless offer a much more complex and more contradictory picture than expected. The data undoubtedly confirm our hypothesis that respondents' level of sexual satisfaction are lowest when they do not or cannot play an active role in initiating sexual intercourse.

The data in Table 6 show that the satisfaction level is roughly similar both in cases where sexual intercourse is initiated only by the respondents, and in cases where it is negotiated between partners. Moreover, female respondents report a higher level of satisfaction with the most recent intercourse when they played the decisive role in initiating it. It should be noted that 40 percent of male respondents claim to initiate the first sexual intercourse; 16.5 percent reported that their partners initiated it, and 43 percent reported shared responsibility. At the most recent intercourse, only 27 percent of male respondents claim to be the sole initiators, and more than half (55 percent) report shared responsibility. In contrast to male respondents, only about 5 percent of female respondents claim that they initiated both their first and the most recent sexual intercourse, and almost 60 percent report that their first sexual intercourse was initiated by their partners. But for the most recent intercourse, female respondents report a much more "egalitarian" distribution of initiative; only 28 percent of them report that this intercourse was initiated by their partners, and 66 percent (almost double the figure for first intercourse) claim that it was based on common initiative.

A similar picture is conveyed by the data related to the planning of the first intercourse (no data on the most recent are available). The male and female respondents who claim that their first sexual intercourse was planned are significantly more satisfied with it than are the others.

Nevertheless, as with the previous data, the data in Table 6 also do not allow us to draw any farreaching generalisa-

TABLE 6
Sexual satisfaction
level, initiation of
sexual intercourse
and its planning

| (Dis)satisfaction index | Initiative for intercourse | | | | | | Planning of intercourse | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------|-------------------|-------------------|------|------|-------------------------|-------|-----------|------|
| | Respondent | | Partner | | Both | | Planned | | Unplanned | |
| | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M |
| Satisfaction I | 1,40 | 1,62 | 0,91 ¹ | 1,44 ¹ | 1,58 | 1,67 | 1,61* | 1,75* | 1,06 | 1,52 |
| Satisfaction II | 2,26 | 1,27 | 1,27 ² | 0,93 | 1,93 | 1,51 | - | - | - | - |
| Dissatisfaction I | 0,80 | 0,31 | 0,95 ¹ | 0,23 | 0,50 | 0,17 | 0,60 | 0,18 | 0,82 | 0,29 |
| Dissatisfaction II | 0,18 | 0,23 | 0,30 ¹ | 0,41 | 0,14 | 0,24 | - | - | - | - |

* $p < 0,05$

¹ When compared to sexual intercourse initiated by both, sexual intercourse initiated exclusively by a partner, is perceived as significantly less satisfying and more dissatisfying.

² Sexual intercourse initiated exclusively by a partner is statistically less satisfying than sexual intercourse initiated by the respondents of both sexes.

V.

The aim of this paper has been not only to present, in a comparative context, data regarding the sexual satisfaction (measured as subjective satisfaction with the first and the most recent sexual intercourse) of youth in Slovenia, but also to discover whether there exists a pattern of variation in their satisfaction level. Moreover, following the findings of a German study (Schmidt et al 1993), we have also tried to answer the question in which respects this pattern can be termed as modern.

The presentation of the data has shown that Slovenian respondents differ from their Austrian and German counterparts in two important respects. Of all three samples, they report the lowest level of sexual satisfaction. They also differ from their foreign counterparts in the matter of the gender difference in satisfaction level with the most recent sexual intercourse. As in Austria and Germany, the gender difference in satisfaction level with the most recent sexual intercourse has narrowed as compared to the first intercourse, but in contrast to other two countries male Slovenian respondents report lower levels of satisfaction than do female ones. An ex-

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planation of the overall low level of sexual satisfaction is largely beyond the scope of this paper. The low levels of satisfaction of male Slovenian respondents with their most recent intercourse (lower than with their first intercourse and lower than for their female counterparts) can be explained mostly by their unsettled pattern of sexual life.

Our attempt to find a pattern of differences in the level of sexual satisfaction of Slovenian youth has proved somewhat unsuccessful. The analysis has shown that neither the educational level of the respondents' parents and the respondents' current school, nor their religiosity has any systematic influence on the level of their sexual satisfaction. Although we had expected that "micro" variables (contraception, distribution of sexual initiative and planning of sexual intercourse) would have more influence in the variations in satisfaction level than the "macro" variables, their influence has also been weak. Whereas the use of contraception has almost no effect on satisfaction level, the influence of the other two variables is more pronounced. As expected, a low level of empowerment in respondents in a sexual dyad (defined as absence of initiative in sexual intercourse and as absence of its planning) is related to the low level of sexual satisfaction for both male and female respondents.

Of course, on the basis of these results our final question, i.e. the question whether the prevailing pattern of sexual satisfaction can be termed modern, cannot be answered. But there remains also the question of why our analysis failed to reveal a clearer picture of variations in the level of sexual satisfaction. It seems that at least two general explanations are possible. The first is related to the design of our study. It may be that its design, primarily dictated by available data, was too elementary, and thus not able to take into account the most relevant variables. The second explanation is a substantive one. According to this explanation, sexual satisfaction is highly idiosyncratic and therefore largely inaccessible to social science analysis. The results of our analysis do not speak in favour of this radical conclusion. They suggest rather that the explanation of variations in sexual satisfaction should be sought mostly on the micro level, i. e. in the characteristics of communication within sexual dyads.

NOTES

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¹ In this case, the designation "objective" does not imply that this measurement of sexual satisfaction is independent of respondents' reports. The objective measurement means that respondents are asked to report experiences and events that are defined by researchers as indices of sexual pleasure.

² Interviews were conducted in Ljubljana (1995), Maribor and Koper (1997). The total sample comprised 1725 respondents, of which 802

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came from Ljubljana, 573 from Maribor and 350 from Koper. The sample was a representative sample of the 3rd grade secondary school population in these three cities. Among respondents, 50.6% were female, 42.8% were living in urban area, 23.1% in a suburban area, and 31.2% in a rural area. On average, respondents were 17.8 years old, 33.6% attending three-year vocational schools, 42.4% attending 4-year vocational schools, and 22.0% attending grammar schools. Data were collected with self-administered paper and pencil interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes. Interviews took place within randomly selected high school classes.

The questionnaire consisted of seven parts. At the beginning several questions about demographic characteristics of respondents were presented, including a set of questions about the degree of social control to which students were exposed at home. This was followed by a set of questions about their attitudes towards norms in sexual behavior and also toward the use of condoms. Thereupon some questions about their present or past steady relationships were posed, followed by a set of questions about their first sexual intercourse, latest sexual intercourse, substance abuse and sexual harassment. At the end a larger set of questions about AIDS (about their knowledge, behavior and attitudes) was presented to them.

³ The German survey was conducted in 1990 in three cities: two West German and one East German. The sample comprised 415 respondents in West Germany and 272 respondents in East Germany. The Austrian survey, conducted in 1991, encompassed 1108 respondents from different Austrian regions. In the German case, data collection was based on structured interviews, whereas in Austria it was based on self-administered paper and pencil interviews in selected school-classes. The majority of respondents in both studies were 17 years old.

⁴ In comparing the patterns of male and female respondents in Slovenia, it should be taken into account that on average male respondents choose slightly younger partners and female respondents slightly older partners. These age differences are the highest among respondents attending three-year secondary schools and the lowest among those attending grammar schools.

⁵ That is why the German survey includes a much lower number of respondents than the Austrian and Slovenian ones. Therefore, not only differences in data collection procedures but also differences in the sample size set some limitations on the comparison of the German data to the other two sets of data.

⁶ In Slovenia, young people enter secondary schools at the age of 14 after spending eight years in primary schools. Basically, there are two types of secondary schools – three and four-year schools. Grammar schools and some other four-year schools lead to universities.

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Kada je seks zabava? Seksualno zadovoljstvo među slovenskom mladeži

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Osnovni cilj ovoga rada je potvrditi, na temelju istraživanja seksualnosti mladih u Sloveniji, hipotezu da je seksualno iskustvo, uključujući seksualno zadovoljstvo, uglavnom društveno uvjetovano. Prvo, indeksi zadovoljstva i nezadovoljstva s prvim i najnovijim seksualnim odnosom u slovenskih ispitanika predstavljeni su i uspoređeni s rezultatima sličnih istraživanja u Austriji i Njemačkoj. Zatim, u sljedeća su dva dijela rada analizirani neki kulturni i društveni uzroci različitosti razina seksualnog zadovoljstva mladih u Sloveniji. Analiza je usredotočena na dvije skupine varijabla koje utječu na seksualno zadovoljstvo – prva predstavlja sociokulturni kontekst seksualne komunikacije, a druga unutarnju dinamiku seksualne komunikacije. Analizu je potaknula hipoteza po kojoj su obje skupine varijabla snažno povezane s razinom seksualnoga zadovoljstva, iako se može očekivati da će ta veza biti uočljivija za drugu skupinu varijabla. Dostupni podaci samo su dijelom potvrdili ovu hipotezu. Varijable povezane sa sociokulturnim kontekstom seksualne komunikacije nisu sustavno povezane s razinom seksualnoga zadovoljstva među slovenskim ispitanicima, a druga skupina varijabla donekle utječe na razinu seksualnoga zadovoljstva, ali manje nego što je bilo očekivano. Nalazi, stoga, ne dopuštaju općenite zaključke. Ipak, ukazuju na to da tumačenje "društvenog ustrojstva seksualnog zadovoljstva" valja tražiti u dinamici komuniciranja unutar seksualnih diada.

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Wann wird Sex zum Vergnügen? Sexuelle Befriedigung unter slowenischen Jugendlichen

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Das Hauptziel dieser Arbeit ist, aufgrund von Untersuchungen zur Sexualität junger Menschen in Slowenien die Hypothese zu bestätigen, dass sexuelle Erfahrung, einschließlich sexueller Befriedigung, hauptsächlich gesellschaftlich bedingt ist. Zunächst präsentieren die Autoren die Indizes der Befriedigung bzw. Nichtbefriedigung beim ersten sowie beim jüngsten Geschlechtsverkehr unter slowenischen Umfrageteilnehmern und vergleichen sie mit den Ergebnissen ähnlicher Untersuchungen aus Österreich und Deutschland. Im zweiten und dritten Teil der Studie werden einige kulturelle und gesellschaftliche Faktoren analysiert, die Unterschiede in der sexuellen Befriedigung slowenischer Jugendlicher bewirken. Die Analyse konzentriert sich auf zwei Variablengruppen, die das Phänomen der sexuellen Befriedigung beeinflussen: die erste Variablengruppe stellt den soziokulturellen Kontext geschlechtlicher Kommunikation dar, die zweite wiederum die innere Dynamik geschlechtlicher Kommunikation. Die genannte Analyse wurde angeregt durch die Hypothese, wonach beide Variablengruppen sehr stark mit dem sexuellen Befriedigungsgrad verbunden sind, obwohl durchaus zu erwarten wäre, dass dieser Bezug auch in einer anderen Variablengruppe erkennbar ist. Die verfügbaren Angaben haben die eingangs aufgestellte Hypothese nur zum Teil bestätigt. Variablen, die mit dem soziokulturellen Kontext sexueller Kommunikation verbunden sind, zeigen keinerlei systematischen Bezug zum sexuellen Befriedigungsgrad unter den slowenischen Umfrageteilnehmern, während die andere der genannten Variablengruppen einigermaßen den sexuellen Befriedigungsgrad beeinflusst, aber dennoch weniger als erwartet. Die Umfrageergebnisse lassen daher keine allgemeineren Schlüsse zu. Trotzdem vermitteln sie den Hinweis, dass eine Deutung der "gesellschaftlichen Bedingtheit sexueller Befriedigung" in der Kommunikationsdynamik innerhalb sexueller Diaden zu suchen ist.