

# *Polish Journal of Political Science*

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# *Polish Journal of Political Science*

Volume 5 Issue 4

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## **The images of “Rainbow Friday” in liberal and conservative online media**

### **Abstract**

Communication in public spaces has a tremendous influence on every single aspect of the society: education, politics, culture. A crucial role in this communication is played by the media which present to the public a precise interpretation and valuation of given information, thus creating specific images of the world. In 2018, “Rainbow Friday” – a social initiative coordinated by the civil rights group Campaign Against Homophobia – has become a widely commented topic which attracted a lot of from the media. Thanks to the analysis of such publications we can observe mechanisms of creating and consolidating specific world images by the media and to better understand how different world views validate the topic of sexual education. The main goal of this article is to look into the narrations of liberal and conservative media with regard to “Rainbow Friday” and to highlight the connections of those narrations with the already realized researches on the language used to describe people from sexual minorities.

**Keywords:** Linguistic image of the world, discourse, heteronormativity, media, Rainbow Friday

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## Introduction

Social communication is ever-changing. It is a complex process that creates the society, sets mental boundaries and cognitive abilities. Therefore, its alterations are the main origin of social and cultural changes. Furthermore, it is a source of valuable information about the ways the world is perceived and its images organized by diverse social groups. For these reasons, it is crucial that researchers examine the ways of communicating, especially regarding topics that polarize the society.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are one of the threads that is repeatedly brought up in public debate. In Poland, it is still a controversial topic. It is linked to many crucial aspects of existence of not only humans as individuals but also social units and the society as a whole – procreation, family, education, biology and psychology. Since the school and the system of education combine all those facets they are a perfect field for examining the topic. Taking all of the above into consideration, this article will focus on the image of “Rainbow Friday” (social action initiated by the Campaign Against Homophobia) as presented by liberal and conservative media in Poland in 2018.

The main goal of the article is to look into the narrations of the said media with regard to “Rainbow Friday” and to highlight the connections of those narrations with already realized studies of the language used to describe people of sexual minorities in Poland.

Thanks to this analysis a few questions may be answered:

- What differentiates the images of “Rainbow Friday” presented by liberal and conservative media?

- Do the opinions presented by said media suggest the possibility of implementing sexual education regarding non-normative orientations into the educational system in Poland?
- How do the images of "Rainbow Friday" correlate with different studies describing the situation of homosexual people in Poland?

To realize those goals qualitative methods of research have been used. The presented approach is based mainly on the theories of critical analysis of discourse, but they will be supported by the methods of content analysis and linguistic analysis. Using them together in an approach called bricolage will ensure that this publication of a qualitative nature provides reliable answers to the set questions.

The techniques used consist in multiple reading of the gathered material, isolating repetitive categories of meaning, and then trying to decipher their meaning in the context and in relation to the entire discourse (liberal or conservative). Those techniques allow look fully and reliably into the discussed topic.

### Theoretical issues

Following Waldemar Czachur's thoughts, an analysis of world images can be an effective method of expanding our understanding of the role of the media in creating and reinforcing social opinion. Czachur states that social opinion is "a reflection of public opinion, generated and stabilized by media."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the media construct various discourses which later set

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<sup>1</sup> Czachur (2011), (author's own translation).



the dimensions and directions of communication for different social groups.

If one intends to analyse the images of the world, it is important to define the term of discourse as it is an ambiguous word. Because of the extent of its use in different fields of social sciences it can be described in many different ways but in a constructivist perspective proposed in this article it can be referred to as a complex structure. It is not a single sign, a word, or even a word string but an entire constellation of meanings placed in a specific communication context. The importance of a context has been stressed by Jay Lemke, who states that:

When we want to focus on the specifics of an event or occasion, we speak of the text; when we want to look at patterns, commonality, relationships that embrace different texts and occasions, we speak of discourses.<sup>2</sup>

As we refer each and every new information to all the information about the world our brain already contains, we interpret it in unique ways. The same qualities may be deciphered and valued in an endless number of different manners that are a direct result of discourses consolidated for example by the media of different political profiles. Referring to Ernest Laclau, Maciej Gdula explains that the discourse is a collection of interpretations and contexts and is of crucial importance for the society and its life<sup>3</sup>. What is important, the language (understood more widely than just a single sign or symbol) cannot be consciously altered

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<sup>2</sup> Lemke (1995), [cit: Wodak, Krzyżanowski, 2011].

<sup>3</sup> Gdula (2009): 72–73.

by people who function in the discourse. They can try but multiple layers of meanings and context are beyond their control as they originate in various texts, connections and interactions. Therefore, a human is closed in in the space with borders set by utterances, written texts and entire institutional systems. All of those are in different ways produced and distributed by the media.<sup>4</sup>

The space described above cannot be understood only as a physical system of possible movements. It is, first and foremost, a cognitive territory. As Gdula explains:

Elements are organized by the rules specific for a given discourse. A special structure arises and sets functional boundaries for a given social system, thus regulating, for example, the ways of describing social world and its impressions.<sup>5</sup>

An analysis of media discourses allows for examining cognitive barriers and ways of organising the knowledge about the world by the media. In the words of Waldemar Czachur:

in every cultural and political space they [the media] have a set of world view profiles and in the public discourse present fixed points of view. In consequence, voices of people affirming the adopted ideological lines are allowed there.<sup>6</sup>

Maintaining objectivity is certainly one of the primary elements of a journalistic code. Still, media messages always

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem: 69–72.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem: 74, (author's own translation).

<sup>6</sup> Czachur (2011): 85, (author's own translation).

“contain elements of author’s creations and serve presenting specific ideological and political options,”<sup>7</sup> regardless the attempts of the creators. They need to select and process information so that it has a length and form suitable for a given medium. In this way a journalist’s own worldview is not irrelevant. It also has to be taken into consideration that media workers themselves function in the set discourses. In consequence, their images of the world always influence the picture seen by the recipients of media content.

In addition, many media describe themselves as independent to implement freely their chosen programme line, believing at the same time in its objective validity. This way, using a language, selecting information, or simply choosing quoted entities of the secondary degree (people influencing media content in a non-direct way<sup>8</sup>) they construct an image of the world. A given image is, in turn, situated in the frames of a particular medium and at the same time it creates a discourse and closes its recipients within.

On the basis of communication of specifically classified media (for example: conservative), we are able to distinguish various images (for example: conservative) of “the same” reality and, if needed, expose a hidden system of power. As Michael Foucault wrote: “Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.”<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly, the media are such an educational system: their main task is to inform, explain and interpret for their recipients. In this way “the fourth estate” can decide what knowledge is possessed by the society and does

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<sup>7</sup> Bartmiński (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Czachur (2011): 85.

<sup>9</sup> Foucault (2002): 32.

it by selecting information. This, in turn, becomes a discursive image of the world described earlier and contains ways of thinking comprehensible for people. Therefore, it not surprising that Barbara Jabłońska states that:

“a critical approach [to the discourse analysis]<sup>10</sup> has one more goal. Its aim is also to change the reality described and explained by the researcher of communicational acts. [...] The goal of the research has, therefore, not only a scientific but also a social and political character. In accordance with the critical approach, a sociologist aims to debunk violence present in the language and hidden relationships of authority.”<sup>11</sup>

Thus, one can hope that the analysis of media discourses which refer to “Rainbow Friday” will contribute to a better understanding of the processes of constructing the image of the world by the media not only in the context of a singular event but also in other areas connected to human sexuality – discrimination, law or education.

### Review of existing studies

Public opinion and the images of the world are the object of studies conducted in various fields of science. This topic is discussed by sociologists, media scholars, anthropologists. In the context of non-heteronormativity most of the analyses conducted in Poland touch the threads of stated opinions, acceptance or discrimination. They point out, among

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<sup>10</sup> Author's explanation.

<sup>11</sup> Jabłońska (2011): 46.

other things, the lack of legal regulations, the lack of sexual education in the core curriculum implemented in schools and the influence of the Catholic Church on the attitudes of the society towards nonheterosexual people (Jabłońska, Knut, 2012; Burek, Klaus, 2013; Felisiak, 2017; Świder, Winiewski, 2017).

There are still few publications regarding linguistic or communicational phenomena surrounding the topics of sexual orientation and gender identity in public communication in Poland. Two of them, analysing the language and contexts of communication, should be discussed in more detail.

In 2012, Karolina Lachowska and Marcin Pielużek published their article “Lesby i pedały – konteksty komunikacyjne związane ze środowiskami LGBT wśród użytkowników Internetu”.<sup>12</sup> In this publication the authors extensively describe the linguistic picture of homosexual people which is constructed in the texts published on online forums. They analyse the language used to describe members of LGBT communities and their conclusions suggest strong negative connotations of many words and also that the described language is surprisingly rich. What is interesting, more synonyms are used for gays than for lesbians. For those researchers the main reason is marginalisation of women’s role in the society.

This publication describes all contexts of communication with respect to two events that were, at that time, important for public existence of non-normative people: EuroPride2010 and the marriage of a Polish couple of lesbians that was organised by the SAS airlines. Categories of the language used

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<sup>12</sup> “Dykes and faggots – communicational contexts related to LGBT communities among users of the Internet” (author’s own translation).

on online forums are mostly negative: "conditional tolerance", "normal-abnormal", "disease" and "elimination". Lachowska and Pielużek identify explicit connections between the discourse that excludes and criticizes non-heterosexual people and conservative discourses:

Therefore, communications are used to marginalize the right of homosexual people to exist in social spaces. Aversion to sexual minorities is used to manifest conservative or even nationalist attitudes. In extreme cases the totalitarian rhetoric is used to strengthen the function excluding this social group.<sup>13</sup>

In consequence, the analysis of the conservative media discourse in 2018 can give us knowledge on how, if so, it correlates with the communication of Internet users in 2010 and 2011.

"Przecież jesteśmy! Homofobiczna przemoc w polskich szkołach – narracje gejów i lesbijek"<sup>14</sup> by Marzanna Pogorzelska and Paweł Rudnicki is a second publication that is important in the context of the linguistic or discursive image of homosexuality. It was published in 2020 and contains the authors' critical discourse analysis based on students' stories. Thanks to that adapted conception (critical discourse studies) the authors expose most important qualities and contexts of communication (or non-communication) on the topic of homosexuality in Polish schools. Focusing on the discourse present in schools those are mostly: absence and silence,

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<sup>13</sup> Lachowska, Pielużek (2012): 154 (author's own translation).

<sup>14</sup> "Still, we're here! homophobic violence in Polish schools – gays' and lesbians' narrations" (author's own translation).

pathologizing, homosexuality as a sin, pogrom language and heterosexuality without an alternative.<sup>15</sup>

Pogorzelska and Rudnicki highlight the lack of an official curriculum which would reflect on sexuality and identities different than heteronormative. If those threads exist, they are classified as deviations and presented next to HIV and venereal diseases. The authors associate this observation with the history of changes in the curriculum in Polish education which omitted the analysed topic or countered it, in the name of sustaining the traditional and natural, in the government's interpretation, with the existing status quo. Those changes were implemented successively by the following ministers of education: Roman Giertych, Ryszard Legutko, Katarzyna Hall.<sup>16</sup>

So, if sexual education that covers topic of non-heterosexuality is not implemented under the official "top down" core curriculum, the reactions to "Rainbow Friday" as a "grass roots" initiative may suggest that according to the media there is room for such topic in schools.

### Analysis of publications describing "Rainbow Friday" in 2018

"Rainbow Friday", an event that in 2018 aroused lively interest of the media and generated research material, is a civil initiative of a Polish foundation Campaign Against Homophobia and its first edition took place in 2016. According to the words of the initiator it is:

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<sup>15</sup> Pogorzelska, Rudnicki (2020): 61–81.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem: 28–36.

a cyclical action which take place every year on the last Friday in October [...]. The initiative is a chance to show that regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity every student can feel safe, count on the support and go to school with pleasure.<sup>17</sup>

Campaign Against Homophobia declares that the action may be launched exclusively by members of a given community: teachers, students and parents. The foundation provides ready-to-use supplies: posters, pins, information brochures and publications. In 2018, the media particularly animatedly commented on the topic, in consequence triggering involvement of their recipients and reproducing, strengthening and modifying the already existing images of the world.

In order to reconstruct and describe those images, assumptions of critical analysis of discourse have been used. This approach is widely applied in the areas of *queer linguistics*<sup>18</sup> and therefore it seems suitable for the analysis of media publications regarding "Rainbow Friday". In addition, reflections of Waldemar Czachur have been used.<sup>19</sup> This is why finding key words and repeating phrases has become the basis of this work. This makes it possible to identify ways of organising knowledge<sup>20</sup> and describe the images of the world more precisely d.

For the purpose of this analysis six web portals have been chosen (*Frona, Do rzeczy, Niezależna, Queer, Gazeta Wyborcza, Polityka*). In 2018, the creators of those portals

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<sup>17</sup> Kampania Przeciw Homofobii, URL = <https://kph.org.pl/teczowypiatek/> [access: 06.05.2020].

<sup>18</sup> Pogorzelska, Rudnicki (2020).

<sup>19</sup> Czachur (2011).

<sup>20</sup> Fleischer (2018).



published 70 texts describing “Rainbow Friday”. Three of the above websites may be classified as liberal<sup>21</sup> (*Queer, Gazeta Wyborcza, Polityka*), three – as conservative<sup>22</sup> (*Fron-da, Do rzeczy, Niezależna*). All of them have used citations in an extensive number, in consequence shifting the weight of argumentation onto the entities of the secondary degree and achieving freedom in drawing a picture of “Rainbow Friday”.

After having read the gathered material multiple times, a few sets of categories of the language used were distinguished: education–agitation, relation “we–them”, truth–false, risk–chance, propaganda–freedom, parents, children. The analysis is illustrated with examples from publications precisely described in the bibliography section under “The sources of research material”. The parts of the citations that in my opinion are crucial were boldfaced. Also, all of the material was translated with caution and precision as I am well aware of the dangers of varying semantics in different languages.

### Conservative media

In 2018, the conservative media were much more engaged in commenting “Rainbow Friday” – 43 out of 70 texts in the analysed media were published on conservative platforms. It accounts for 61.4% of all publications.

They call into question the educational worth and character of “Rainbow Friday” by taking in quotation marks every word indicating any cognitive values and omitting terms usually

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<sup>21</sup> As “Cambridge Dictionary” defines: one that emphasizes the need to make new laws as society changes and the need for government to provide social services.

<sup>22</sup> As “Cambridge Dictionary” defines: one that does not trust sudden changes or new ideas.

associated with the educational process. Thus, "»educators« will be telling", not teaching. Pupils will **"listen to the shop-talk"**. The media also state that **"let's not be deceived by repeating that this is just a »tolerance lesson«"**. Instead of treating "Rainbow Friday" as an educational action, the authors classify it as **"a canvassing action"**. They also highlight that:

in accordance with the content of Article 108 § 2 of the Electoral Code, canvassing addressed to students is illegal in schools. Brochure distributed during the campaign may be judged as electoral canvassing conducted against the rules prescribed by law in the Electoral Code.

In the areas of politolinguistics, canvassing is described as a sub-type of the language of politics, which in the words of Janina Fras:

differs from propaganda not only with respect to goals that are set ad hoc for canvassing and far-reaching for propaganda. Canvassing texts are more aggressive, their language is highly emotional.<sup>23</sup>

This way, without pointing it out directly, conservative media suggest hidden political motives of the organizers of "Rainbow Friday". The language that is used brings about a specific – negative – interpretation of actions.

Of crucial significance is the way the non-heterosexual orientation is described. It is named as **"customs"** and **"behaviours and manners of LGBT"**:

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<sup>23</sup> Dudek-Waligóra (2018), (author's own translation).

The anti-discrimination education is **nothing more than promotion of behaviours and manners of LGBT** which is described by Kochanowski in his book as “sexual politics”. Under these politics **parents, children, teachers are being convinced** that homosexual relations are as good and normal as a marriage between man and woman.

According to this, the non-heterosexual orientation is considered by conservative media as specific to a given community with a typical culture and behaviours separate from the rest of the society. What is more, people responsible for preparing informational brochures are **“ideologists of this subculture”**. Behaviours and manners are commonly understood as something freely chosen – one decides what manners will be specific for them. As a result one can also choose to abandon such a way of living. In this way, the media strengthen the belief that a distinct group of people decides to behave in a “non-heterosexual” way and therefore represents an attitude adequate for this lifestyle. In addition, those categories build antagonistic relation “we-them” which automatically positions non-heteronormative people as “different”, “peculiar” and support stigmatization already described by Karolina Lachowska and Marcin Pielużek.

The sexual orientation and “Rainbow Friday” are portrayed also as a threat. Positioning an event this way does not allow for any possibility of a positive value generated by the initiative to exist. Conservative media urge to **“defend children”** and inform that **“the devil reaches out for them”**. Recipients of conservative media are encouraged to perceive a given event as a threat by the descriptions of actions of representatives

of the educational system – they **"intervened"** and were **"monitoring the situation"**.

The parents of students of eight upper secondary schools and one primary school (!) in Masovian Voivodship **intervened** at the Warsaw Board of Education in regard to this event.

The strongest, most present categories used in conservative media to portray "Rainbow Friday" are propaganda and indoctrination, i.e. a concealed and conscious action used to instil ideas. This suggests that recipients of this initiative are not willing to receive those ideas and that those are forced onto them. This construction enhances the idea that "Rainbow Friday" should be treated as a threat. Positive reactions of students are explained as a result of conversations with a teacher who **"in good time managed to train children"** The presupposition (an implicit assumption present in the statement, even in its negative form) used in this information is also present in one of the headlines: **"Finally there is a reaction to the homopropaganda in schools!"** In this context, there is no doubt that propaganda in schools does exist only when there is any reaction.

In addition, the term "propaganda" may suggest withholding some facts. This leads to discrediting any information provided by the supporters of "Rainbow Friday". **"Campaigning Against Homophobia confesses"**, **"Dorota Kania reveals"**, **"The question arises: why is it done quietly?"** All those quotes emphasize hiding the truth.

In all pictures of "Rainbow Friday" there are two really important elements: students and parents. The latter are shown in two ways – as naive and deluded (which emphasises that

“Rainbow Friday” should be perceived as propaganda) or outraged, tricked and deprived of their rights.

In my opinion, parents should react. The Constitution guarantees the right to raise children in accordance with one’s own values and beliefs. **Here, without informing parents beforehand** the leftist Polish Teachers’ Union headed by Mr. Broniarz says that they organize “Rainbow Friday” in 211 schools. **This is a serious infringement of the rights of parents** – a Member of Parliament from the Law and Justice Party does not hide her indignation.

Students, on the other hand, are “**directed**” towards a specific world view by the teachers or they behave “**ostentatiously**” and “**demonstratively**”.

Students involved in the action **were ostentatiously carrying paper rainbow banners**. Students were wearing black outfits. Blackness of the clothes was sometimes broken by rainbow leggings.

Therefore, they are tricked and declare their views “for show”. In this way, the problem of homophobia (specified by Campaign Against Homophobia as a main reason for the initiative) is marginalized. What is important, the categories of discrimination and homophobia are present in the publications of conservative media only in quotes. In addition, those citations are criticized and their credibility and sincerity of intentions are called into question. The most important conclusion is, then, that in the conservative image of the world “Rainbow Friday” is an event relating to an unimportant or

non-existent issue. Robert Biedroń does not provide details about suicides of LGBT+ people so discrimination is “alleged”.

### Liberal media

When observing “Rainbow Friday” through the words of liberal media, one can notice that the liberal image is by far different from the conservative picture. Although it does refer to similar aspects, it presents them in a contrasting manner.

First, liberal media highlight the educational character of the initiative and describe it as “**tolerance lessons**” and “**learning tolerance**”. Furthermore, “Rainbow Friday” is designated as a tool that can be used by teachers. Those media also mention promotion, but it is promotion of tolerance and not – the LGBT community or ideology.

I would like to see the day when there is no need to organize lessons or actions about LGBT in schools. I long for the day when there is an atmosphere of friendship and respect for every person in Polish schools. The school is a miniature of the society. **This is a place where we are raised, where we wish to educate better people to create the society with room for friendship and respect for people who are different and whose difference does no harm to others.**

Also the role of Campaign Against Homophobia is depicted in a different way. In this picture of the world, Campaign Against Homophobia only coordinates this worldwide initiative. Liberal publications emphasize that this organization sets itself in the role of an advisor and leaves decision-making to teachers, students and headmasters. The initiative is also

repeatedly called “an opportunity”, i.e. something that one can use only if one has such will. Also the needs signaled by students are present in those descriptions of “Rainbow Friday”:

“Being a student who belongs to the LGBTQ+ community, I know how difficult it is to live in an ignorant society. At school, among peers **who aren’t taught** that every love should be accepted – it is difficult to live.” – writes Wiktoria to the Minister of Education Anna Zalewska. **This is only one of a few hundred of voices of students of both genders, teachers, parents and their allies – in defence of not only “Rainbow Friday” but first of all equality, acceptance and tolerance in school education.**

Liberal media define the goals of “Rainbow Friday” as adequate for the problems occurring in Polish schools. Basing on the researches, they are certain that **“in Poland the rights of LGBT people are violated and their social situation is bad”** and that **“the lack of tolerance in schools is a common phenomenon”**.

The attack on “Rainbow Friday” is a **symptom of a deeper problem – the lack of actual anti-discrimination education in Polish schools**. After all, if there were legitimate classes on the topic of preventing discrimination, nobody would be concerned about the fact that once a year students decide to pay a little more attention to LGBT people, wear rainbow symbols and demonstrate that the school is a space open to diversity. **Maybe Dominik from Biezuń, who committed suicide in 2015, would now be preparing himself for his graduation exam.**

At the same time, the described media emphasize that teachers may provide facts or leave them unsaid. This, being a presupposition, suggests that the problem of homophobia at schools is real – even if we try to negate the above sentence.

In the liberal image of "Rainbow Friday" the word "propaganda" is also present, but it is always put into quotation marks. It indicates that the authors of liberal publications do not treat that word seriously in a given context, especially when it is a part of a cited expression. Journalists state that **"telling about something, educating is not yet propaganda"**.

First of all, massive congratulations and my respects to all the activists, especially teachers and parents, who in spite of **the most serious risk of harassment and repressions** organized "Rainbow Friday" in 211 schools throughout the country!

Liberal media describe a **"manhunt"** and **"crusade"** of the government, the Ministry of Education and Boards of Education, and name them as restrictive and attacking. They write that **"a lot of schools have not given up"**. In this image of the world the government carries out hateful activities and behaviours adequate for the regime which persecutes the democratic opposition. As a result, as an opposition to that regime "Rainbow Friday" seems to be a manifestation of democracy. This image is strengthened by pointing out the grassroots character of the initiative and the entire social movement which supports the action. **"Headmasters and students have not succumbed to the pressure"**, so they have shown strength against **"threats"**.



## Conclusion

The goal set for this article was to deconstruct the narratives of liberal and conservative media relative to “Rainbow Friday” and to compare those narratives with the knowledge gathered as a result of researches already conducted with regard to this topic.

There is no doubt that although conservative and liberal media refer to similar categories in assessing “Rainbow Friday”, their interpretation and validation could not be more different. If two groups of recipients read only conservative or only liberal media and that was the only way they gathered knowledge about this initiative, its image would be completely different for each.

Conservative media create an image of the propagandist, dangerous and rights-violating action – especially the rights of parents and students. The most important factor underlying this way of organizing knowledge is the lack of the problem of homophobia in schools, which is a result of unnaturalness and abnormality of the concept of sexual orientation other than heterosexual. The communication of the supporters of “Rainbow Friday” is therefore a lie, propaganda and indoctrination – a process of repeating and consolidating untruth. All important elements of the communication of conservative media may be observed in the following quote:

October 26, in more than two hundred schools in Poland there is said to be organized so called “Rainbow Friday” coordinated by Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH) – organization that promotes the customs of LG-BTQ groups. The action may involve infringement of educational law and the constitutionally guaranteed

right of the parents to provide their children with upbringing in line with their beliefs, and most of all –putting students in danger of harmful content.

Liberal media construct a picture of the initiative responding to the actual needs and problems of school communities which is, at the same time, only a non-offensive proposition for the educational programme. In this perspective, students, parents and teachers communicate the problem of homophobia and social exclusion, and the need for educational measures. Therefore "Rainbow Friday" is a response to the reality of Polish schools. In this image of the world the initiators of the action have to face hate, censorship and political regime if they want to exercise their democratic rights. This category is the most substantial one present in liberal publications. This could suggest that those media have not communicated on "Rainbow Friday" on their own but only in response to the image created by conservative media. The most important threads in the narrative of liberal media are well visible in one of the quotes:

What every school needs is reliable education about the fact that people have various sexual orientations and various gender identities. Education free from superstitions and prejudice. Young people need to feel safe at school. A manhunt conducted by the ministries and superintendents causes even a vaster aggression and a larger sense of danger among the LGBT+ youth, who already fight an "uphill battle". People responsible for the Polish educational system cannot stoke the already immense homophobia in Polish schools.

Thinking about all of the already discussed publications, what is thought-provoking is the lack of any references to the categories of disease or faith in the analysed publications. Those two threads were present in most of the past researches, often constituting the basis of the argumentation and construction of a given image of the world. Political correctness may be the cause of such absence, as it marginalizes extreme statements in public debate. It may be concluded that as the opinion of the World Health Organization (which does not classify homosexuality as a disease) and the changing position of the Catholic Church in Poles' lives, those categories may be the first ones to disappear from the language used to describe non-heterosexual people.

Finally, it is worth to once again recall the thoughts of Barbara Jabłońska who postulates a critical approach not only in the academic but also in the social and political dimension.<sup>24</sup> Knowing the results of regularly conducted researches (Świerszcz 2012; Świder, Winiewski 2017; Felisiak 2017; Pogorzelska, Rudnicki 2020) and having analysed the conservative image of "Rainbow Friday", is surprised that those media still deny the occurrence of homophobic actions. They may lead not only to injuries but even pose a threat to life and are a symptom of the lack of basic knowledge about non-normative orientations and gender identities. Of course, we have to take into account the complicated legislation – which tries to organize the complex system of education – and the systemic design itself – each and every change shall entail more alterations. Still, we should hope that the growing number of academic publications and research will help raise the awareness about the problem of homophobia and

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<sup>24</sup> Jabłońska (2011), (author's own translation).

will encourage not only academics but also politicians, people managing the Polish system of education, and journalists to examine more closely the attempts to educate the Polish youth with attention and compassion.

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