Gender and Sexuality in Croatian Educational Institutions: Possibilities for Using Queer Theories and Critical Ethnography in Sociology

Pavao PARUNOV https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2470-1421
pparunov@unizd.hr
University of Zadar, Croatia

Valerija BARADA https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3579-0201
vbarada@unizd.hr
University of Zadar, Croatia

ABSTRACT

Gender and sexuality in the Croatian educational context occasionally resurface in the public discourse due to political instrumentalization but are largely neglected as a research topic. To address this absence, this paper presents original data on high-school and university experiences of queer persons collected in critically oriented research which examines social inequality of queer individuals in the Croatian educational institutions. Based on these data and drawing parallels with previous studies in an international context, the authors outline a theoretical approach that conceptualises gender and sexuality as interdependent social processes. Through showing how educational institutions actively marginalise persons of non-normative gender and sexual orientation, the authors point to the importance of conceptualising the everyday life of queer persons in education as a source of knowledge about these processes by highlighting the complex relationship between gender and sexuality – which authors do by establishing theoretical and methodological collaborations between sociology, queer theories as well as critical and institutional ethnography. The study's findings suggest that educational institutions have a mediating role in creating inequality based on gender and sexual differences since they function as spaces privileging heterosexuality and heteronormativity. This results in an ambivalent status of queer gender expressions and sexualities as they are simultaneously a subject of public negotiation and stigmatization and hidden in the private sphere of each person. (In)visibility and (non)acceptance of non-normative gender expressions and sexualities in the Croatian educational context imply a continuous process of managing one's identity between institutional and personal spheres of action.

Key words: gender, sexuality, queer, LGBTQ, education

1. INTRODUCTION

Research findings from international studies completed over several years have confirmed a link between educational contexts and gender and sexual identities. This body of research suggests that besides reproducing existing forms of marginalisation that relate to persons with a non-normative sexual orientation and gender, educational institutions also create new forms of marginalisation among those people. For those who cannot adapt to the required frameworks for sexuality and gender, everyday life in educational settings involves feelings of not belonging and uncertainty. However, despite the existence of a body of research in other disciplines,[1] a more thorough theoretical and empirically examined consideration of the entanglements of gender and sexuality is an under-researched topic in sociology – despite such entanglements being a socially relevant object for researcher reflection. Although the epistemological intersections of sociology and queer theory[2] point to a theoretical complementarity that can be applied to research in an empirically grounded way, a clearer critical perspective is still lacking in sociology.

Research in the Croatian educational context follows this trend, with the topic under-researched. Consequently, the gender- and sexuality-related inequality (of pupils and students) that emerges in the educational process is not visible on sociology's research horizons. To make a research contribution clarifying the links between gender and sexuality in the Croatian educational context, sociologists in Croatia need to develop a complete theoretical and methodological approach guided by selected concepts from queer theories and institutional ethnography as a form of critical ethnography. Indeed, the need to develop and give authority to a sociological theoretical and empirical approach to gender and sexuality emerges from the lack of a clear and critical understanding of gender and sexual difference in Croatia's educational context. This is because, despite the topics of gender and sexual diversity being present in the public discourse on education, the forms of marginalisation that pupils and students endure, which are based on those differences, are barely articulated at all.

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[1] Renn (2010) claims that research into the educational experiences of queer youth began in the disciplines of psychology and education sciences. However, despite the abundance of empirical results, a deeper theoretical (and sociological) understanding of that phenomenon is nevertheless lacking. This trend in empirical research also continued after Kristen A. Renn had drawn her conclusions, as is confirmed by several current meta-analyses of published research (Toomey and Russell, 2016; Myers et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2021). The empirically rich (and the principally theoretical) contemporary research confirms that, despite national and cultural variations, queer persons continually find themselves in multiply disadvantaged positions in educational contexts.

[2] In place of the phrase "queer theory" (singular), which implies a unified and agreed-upon field of theoretical thought, in this article the phrase is used in the plural. Indeed, the contemporary body of queer theories entails a multiplicity of paradigms – not only of thought, but also of disciplines themselves in which ideas develop and are used, and so the plural is more appropriate (Hall, 2003).

The use of critical ethnography or, more precisely, critical institutional ethnography building on concepts drawn from queer theories, facilitates detailed insights into the educational experiences of queer persons. In so doing, it brings to light new insights into the specific ways of organising everyday life in which educational institutions function as intermediaries. Indeed, the results of research into the educational experiences of queer[3] persons in the Croatian educational context – results that are in line with international research, albeit with several local specificities – reveal and confirm the mediating role of educational institutions in the marginalisation of gender and sexual difference. This article's intentions are therefore twofold: (1) to develop and confirm the conceptual basis and value of linking sociology with queer theories and (critical) institutional ethnography, and (2) to use the example of research into the educational experiences of queer persons to endorse such a research and interpretative enterprise. The establishing of a two-way link between research insights and elements in the approach taken, highlights the possibility of using queer theories and critical ethnography to gain fruitful research results when researching the experiences of queer persons in the Croatian educational context.

2. GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE CROATIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Educational institutions reproduce and continually create new constructions of heterosexuality, through which children and young people acquire normative knowledges regarding gender roles and gender features. In education "so too heterosexuality has been the unmarked, the norm, the assumed but invisible" (Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford, 2000: 128). While in the Croatian context there are no studies that could empirically confirm this,[4] there is a body of academic texts confirming that in many ways the politics of the creation of national identity during the 1990s has determined the discourse of sexuality and education, wherein heterosexuality

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[3]   "Queer" can be literally translated into Croatian as "nastran, čudan, bolestan, sumnjiv". Claiming "queer" as an activist identity and as activist politics occurred most often during and after the AIDS epidemic in the USA during the 1980s. As this phrase has no equivalent connotation in the American, Anglophone and Croatian social context, translating the phrase generates certain difficulties in terms of theoretical conceptualisation. In Croatia the queer tag is visible largely in the names of civic associations and in their activities, and they advocate LGBT+ and queer rights and cultural visibility (these include Zagreb Pride, queerANarchive and the festival Queer Zagreb, organised by a civic association named Domino). Over the years, linguistic equivalents such as *pederluk* or *kvir* were tested (Dobrović and Bosanac, 2007), but no version took root to a significant degree. This text therefore directly adopts "queer" as an adjective, assuming the activist and theoretical context that relates to a wide range of non-normative sexualities and gender identities. Using queer as a concept has an advantage over the acronym LGBT, as the latter establishes a clear division between various gender and sexual identities.

[4]   Jugović and Bezinović's (2015) quantitative research is worth mentioning, in which they highlight how "pupils who felt same-sex attraction experienced more relational and physical violence than pupils who have never had such feelings".

is understood as one of the key aspects of social stability and of a stable national identity (Đurin, 2012). On this view, stable and normatively determined gender and sexual identities are an expression of and mediate a stable social and national identity.

A more recent understanding of sexuality as a factor underpinning social stability in the context of education in Croatia partly emerged out of a process that began at the start of the first decade of the new millennium, when the issue of the queer community's marginalisation took form through a set of issues pertaining to the legislative treatment of the LGBTQ population. The forms of advocacy-based activism of that time were grounded in the EU-accession negotiation process, as well as in general European guidelines on encouraging social and cultural diversity. Activist-oriented advocacy was pegged to a liberal discourse on human rights, and the social acceptance of diverse sexual identities was interpreted as an indicator of national progress towards contemporary and more developed political systems. (Kahlina, 2013: 5). Yet in so doing, the political instrumentalisation of non-normative gender expression and sexualities began at the same time. This particularly came to the fore in public discussions over educational reforms, in which the dominant heterosexual and homophobic discourse nevertheless prevailed. This discourse was often based on a construction of a child or young person as a subject that had to be "protected" from queer sexualities (Hodžić et al., 2012).

Except for the health curriculum[5] for primary and secondary schools in 2013, whose implementation was blocked, clear, well-organised educational policies that take a critical position on the marginalisation of gender and sexual difference have not been implemented in Croatia. Only two moments are worth highlighting in negotiations over educational policies that relate to queer persons in the education system as members of socially marginalised groups. In 2016 the National Group for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education emphasised LGBT students as being a potentially vulnerable group in education (Nacionalna skupina za unapređenje socijalne dimenzije visokog obrazovanja, 2016). They also emphasised that there is no adequately detailed research that might indicate the scope of such vulnerability. Nevertheless, research completed as part of the project E-quality: Linking Quality and Social Inclusion in Higher Education in Croatia (Šćukanec, 2015) demonstrates that students have themselves highlighted the need to pro-

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[5]   The health-education curriculum in primary and secondary schools has provoked a series of public debates, but it nevertheless became the official and mandatory curriculum in September 2012. The curriculum content included a module on sex and gender equality in which the topics of gender and sexual diversity should have been covered in line with the guidelines for the third and fourth year of secondary school, i.e. the 16–18 age bracket (Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa, 2013). However, the constitutional court of the Republic of Croatia halted the implementation of the curriculum in May 2013 (Narodne novine, 63/2013), and its contents were never made part of the regular teaching programme. The Ministry of Science and Education (Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja, 2019) passed a new curriculum named Health for Primary and Secondary Schools, which did not cover the topics of gender and sexual diversity.

mote the positive visibility of queer persons in higher education. As part of other guidelines for attaining fairness and better social inclusion, the project report was used to advise higher-educational institutions to include LGBT students in their definition of vulnerable groups of students (Šćukanec, 2015: 30). Despite the mentioned recommendations, gender and sexual diversity has not been recognised to date in official educational policies.[6]

As concerns the introduction of potential educational policies in Croatia that focus on gender and sexual diversity, the authors Bartulović and Kušević (2014) advocate further caution. Indeed, from the moment of Croatia's accession to the European Union, educational policies have been based on guidelines grounded in the intercultural educational politics of difference and these are "stated in a generic form in all educational and political documents as an indicator of the Croatian education system's European orientation" (Bartulović and Kušević, 2014: 230). The authors of these guidelines name the proclaimed differences, listing them in a one-dimensional manner that does not demand active reflection on the role of educational processes in mediating social inequalities. Yet, to avoid gender and sexual diversity being treated in a generic manner in possible future educational policies, they push for multi-layered and clear research insights into the processes of the reproduction and the creation of those differences, with an emphasis on examining the role of educational institutions.

As concerns possible sociological contributions to the understanding of gender and sexuality in the Croatian educational context, the question could be raised of how to approach everyday sexual and gender diversity in educational settings both theoretically and empirically. An answer would be valuable in two senses: as an academic contribution that deepens knowledge on the institutional organisation of gender and sexuality in Croatia, and as a contribution to a critical discussion of education in Croatia that highlights educational institutions' structural dimension amid the inequalities that arise from gender and sexual diversity. While a theoretical apparatus for understanding sexuality and gender can be gleaned from various strands of sociological theories, a special field of sociologies that includes theories and conceptualisations of issues relating to sexuality and gender has, nevertheless, not been developed. To create this field, concepts developed in the 1980s and 1990s in critical theories of gender and sexuality – in queer theories to be precise – are essential. The research considered in the second part of this text confirms queer theories' complementarity with interpretive sociological approaches, thus confirming the epistemological similarities and the possibility of sociology drawing on queer theories' theoretical concepts.

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[6] The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology currently in force includes among its development priorities the development of intercultural education. Yet it does not emphasise education as a process that contributes to social justice nor does it deal with gender and sexuality as issues that concern the planned development of social justice. The implementation period for the current strategy lasts until 2025 (Ministarstvo obrazovanja, znanosti i športa, 2014).

3. CONCEPTUALISING SEXUALITY IN SOCIOLOGY AND QUEER THEORIES: THE POSSIBILITY OF DRAWING ON CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Only from the 1950s and 1960s did sociology begin to deal with sexuality as a social phenomenon in the USA[7] (Seidman, 1996: 167), when it was conceptualised as a biological assumption of an individual. Sexuality assumed a social dimension only in the physical expression of sexual attraction, which could but did not have to adapt itself to social norms. The formation of sexuality-related norms resulted in a binary understanding of it, and so the forms of sexuality that did not fit into those considered socially acceptable in public space were instead considered forms of deviant sexual expression. These included prostitution, pornography and homosexuality. Sociologists approached sexuality as "a specialty area like organizations, crime, or demography" (Seidman, 1996: 169). However, it is worth mentioning that such an approach to sexuality reflected a wider understanding of homosexuality itself. While in first half of the twentieth century, homosexuality in public space was construed in psychiatric discourse as a form of "pathological personality" (Seidman, 1996: 169), in the second half of the century – thanks to social movements – it began to be defined as a subculture, and thus also as a social and political identity.

Continuing to follow the USA's intellectual and activist scene, the sociological approach to sexuality changed in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet it retained a conceptualisation of homosexuality as a social identity, without critically examining the social categories of heterosexuality and the binary between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Sociology placed a focus on homosexuality as a practically exclusive contemporary social phenomenon that arose in social and political opposition to heterosexuality. Thus, even in cases where it focused on processes of marginalisation, it in fact contributed to the construction of homosexuality as a form of social Otherness. Yet, as queer theories became increasingly popular in the 1990s,[8] especially in the American academic context, questions were raised about

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[7] The topics of gender identity and sexuality in sociology feature most of all in the works of Harold Garfinkel (1967) and Erving Goffman (1963). However, the authors do not approach gender and sexuality as a complete social phenomenon, but rather as a basis for ethnomethodology, i.e. for developing the concept of social stigma at the microsocial level.

[8] Queer theories developed in part as a reply to lesbian and gay studies' focus on sexual identity. Indeed, while lesbian and gay studies focused on cultivating a constructivist paradigm for conceptualising sexuality, queer theories critiqued the simplified understanding of sexual identity as a concept that denotes the experiences of all gay actors, while leaving no room for race, class and gender differences in those experiences (Richardson and Seidman, 2002). These forms of argument conceal further argumentation proposing a theoretical collaboration between interpretative approaches in sociology and queer theories. Indeed, the social science are known to employ concepts more often from lesbian and gay studies – fields that continue to be oriented around identity – while queer theories are more often found in the humanities. Consequently,

the relationship between sociology and queerness and about the possibilities for theoretical collaboration between the two (Stein and Plummer, 1994).

In searching for an epistemological overlap between queer theories and sociology, Green (2007) pointed to interpretative sociology as an area in which theoretical approaches bear similarities, as demonstrated by the example of Goffman's conceptualisation of the self, which throws out the idea of the essential vis-à-vis the social in the subject, and which theorises the subject as a product of social interactions. Green (2007: 355) considers the denial of a pre-social and pre-linguistic self to be partly a "deconstructive impulse" that she contends is the foundation of the constructivism that these two theoretical approaches share. And Seidman (1996) and Epstein[9] (1994) assert that queer theories and interpretative sociology partly share constructivism as a paradigm.

Valocchi (2005) found epistemological differences between sociology and queer theory, above all in their conceptualisation of power and their influence on the individual. This is because interpretative sociology does not comment on conceptualisations of the self, instead claiming in a general sense that power is an exterior force expressed institutionally, increasing the chances and rights of one group at the expense of others, i.e. limiting or expanding individual possibilities and lives (Stein, 1989 in Valocchi, 2005: 755). Yet, for queer theory, as is the case with Judith Butler's theory of gender, power is not a mere exterior force and the self does not exist as a pre-social and original part of an individual; instead, the self is constituted through power itself. For Butler, the subject is – as Valocchi states (Butler, 1993 in Valocchi, 2005: 756) – immersed in a system of meanings and normative structures that construct it at the same time. Gender is thus constructed through a series of continual performances of gender[10] and "power operates as discourse" (Butler, 2004: 170) in this kind of discursive product. The continual performance of gender also enables certain gender markers to be inserted into the discourse in the form of new social enactments of existing gender norms, which are simultaneously shaped by other social norms at play (Butler, 2011).

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the central part of this theoretical and methodological approach suggested in this work confirms and analytically breaks down the entanglement of sexuality and gender. So, in suggesting such an approach it draws attention to queer concepts that make insights into such an entanglement possible.

[9] Epstein (1994) responded to critiques directed at sociology and wrote that it is incorrect to state that sociology completely neglected sexuality as a social construct, stating how in the 1960s and 1970s sociological works nevertheless conceptualised homosexuality along constructivist lines, i.e. outside of the biological and medical discourse. On the other hand, while the sociological problematising of sexuality and sexual diversity in a constructivist paradigm did not take root in the discipline, queer theories can also be critiqued for having been overly focused on discursive readings of various forms of cultural text, with little focus on the lived experiences of persons of non-normative sexuality and gender – queer persons (Stein and Plummer, 1994).

[10] Jasmina Husanović translated the phrase "undoing gender" into Bosnian as "činjenja roda" in her translation of the book *Undoing Gender* (Butler, 2004).

This conceptualisation of gender opens a space for it to be theoretically linked to sexuality, which can deepen the sociological conceptualisation of sexual orientation and identity. The conclusions of Rupp and Taylor (2003) also highlight the need to link up gender and sexuality theoretically. They researched the cultural drag scene in order to ascertain a link between sexual "orientation" and kinds of gender expression. In their theoretical framework, their research departs from a sociological understanding of sexual identity, which they limit to the individual expression of sexual orientation. Yet, after completing a comprehensive ethnographic study, they conclude that the acceptance and adoption of norms on this scene is too complex to analytically observe through the lens of sexual orientation. Indeed, the research participants express various sexual preferences, but also bring up the impossibility of separating sexuality from gender themselves. This is because gender functions symbolically as an expression of sexuality, indicating that it deals with individuals who cannot identify with the heterosexual orientation. Seidman's (1996) ethnographic insights into the everyday life of queer persons highlights how gender and sexuality are entangled. They analyse personal biographies with an emphasis on stories of "coming out of the closet".[11] The people concerned are from various generations in the USA, and the goal is to understand how gay persons construct the meaning of the "closet" and what knowledge they draw on when remembering their personal experience of coming out of the closet. The first-hand experiences gathered in Seidman's research speak to the inseparability of sexuality from gender. The everyday experience of "managing" one's own sexual identity in fact consists of managing a gender identity. Besides demonstrating that the homosexual subject is always constructed historically and therefore gains new discursive features, the queer approach in Seidman's (1996) ethnography points to the discrepancy between understanding homosexuality as a source of a monolithic personal identity and as a unit of a lived experience of social inequality.

The theoretical complementarity of interpretative sociology and queer theory is therefore grounded in the constructivist paradigm that both fields partly share and in understanding the self to be a result of social phenomena and interactions. Yet, a theoretical difference between the fields emerged in understandings of the relations between social power, gender and sexuality. Valocchi (2005) and Seidman (1996) recognised this as explaining how the sociological approach to gender and sexuality was based on an examination of the individual's belonging to a group whose members had gender and/or sexual orientation features in common, and on the position of an individual and group in relation to social norms. Yet, as Seidman (1996) stated, reflecting on gender and sexuality in this manner is unsatisfactory, because it leads to a one-dimensional, identity-based understanding of gender and

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[11] Coming out (of the closet), called "izlazak iz ormara", "autanje" or "iskorak" in Croatian is often understood as the act of declaring one's sexual orientation publicly to achieve personal liberation. "Coming out" is also often perceived as an act that will have an impact on one's everyday environment and make it more pleasant, while people who come out of the closet replace a feeling of shame with a feeling of pride (Seidman, 1996).

sexuality. Such an understanding does not encompass the complexity of experiences of learning, adopting and discarding gender- and sexuality-related norms. However, neither queer theories nor their application in research have focused greatly on the immediate lived experiences of persons with a non-normative sexuality and gender, both in relation to the discursive entanglement of gender and sexuality, as well as in reading off various forms of cultural text (Stein and Plummer, 1994). The immediate lived experience remains the research object of critical ethnography.

4. CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY IN RESEARCH INTO QUEER EXPERIENCES

Considering the shortcomings of sociology and queer theories in interpreting how gender and sexuality are entangled, critical ethnography can be used as a theoretical and methodological apparatus that emerges from the complementarity of interpretative sociology and queer theories. In this manner, it encompasses the multi-layered quality of labelling and organising gender and sexuality in everyday life in educational settings. In the broadest sense, critical ethnography can be described as conventional ethnography, but with a critical twist to it (Thomas, 1992: 23). Yet, Carspecken (1996) strengthens this explanation by differentiating between the basic aspects found in the elements of criticality in such ethnographies. The theoretical tradition of critical theory makes up the first aspect. The authors believe that they have discovered her ethnographic methods in critical ethnography. Critical ethnography recognises various forms of social inequality in social reality, which structure social relations and practices. The researcher's value position forms the second critical aspect, and it emerges from the researcher's entanglement in the epistemological traditions on which they rely, as well as their entire individual knowledge and experience. Therefore, critical ethnography openly "takes sides"; its critical approach is grounded both in theories and in reflecting on the researcher's position in the network of knowledge that organises society and cultural schemas. The third (critical) aspect relates to political and practical actions, i.e. to the specific application of the knowledge gained through critical ethnography in order to bring about social change.

A further critical aspect worth adding is the role that the researcher assumes in the research process. Critical ethnographic material emerges through an activist approach, in which the research clearly adopts the individual's position. The researcher strives to intervene in existing power relations, taking on the role of a person who reveals processes of marginalisation and their consequences (Fine, 1994 in Madison, 2005). Critical ethnography thus links the theoretical orientation's critical aspect with the researcher's own critical position. An excellent example of such a critical approach – in research into everyday educational settings – is that of CJ Pascoe (2007), which links queer experiences with critical theoretical concepts,

explaining how in everyday educational settings, social knowledge about hetero-sexuality and homosexuality and the gendered organisation of such knowledge conditions the institutional processes that label gender and sexuality. The author reveals that the word "fag" and its various derivatives are used to organise margin-alisation along identity-based lines in everyday life. One source of marginalisation for gay pupils, and sometimes also for the experience of physical and verbal vio-lence emerges from how gender expressions are labelled as "male" or "non-male". In the educational process, gender and sexual diversity is constructed through a contrast with normative heterosexual masculinity (Pascoe, 2007). Consequently, women or girls and men or boys whose expressions of femininity and masculinity respectively do not fit the normative ideal are set apart as different. Pupils, both materially and symbolically, express heteronormative features relating to gender and sexuality. This means that educational institutions should be thought of as in-stitutions that are "immersed" in a network of social knowledge on gender and gen-der characteristics. Pascoe's (2007) research insights demonstrate how a critical ethnography of educational experience must consider that educational institutions function as places through which the organisation of everyday life reproduces het-eronormative knowledges and practices.

5. INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY AS A FORM OF CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

To further sharpen the theoretical and research focus in researching gender and sexuality in educational institutions, institutional ethnography – as an especially directed form of critical ethnography – offers better insight into the everyday life of queer people in educational settings. Human activities in defined local environ-ments over a defined period form the research object of institutional ethnography (DE Smith, 2005: 23). The social is approached through the dichotomy of the lo-cal and the translocal, where local relations form in various domains of everyday life, including institutional ones. Translocal relations represent the entirety of social knowledge and their organisation through general concepts of opinions, practices and ideologies. Institutional ethnography considers human lives to be saturated with translocal relations that organise and coordinate everyday life. These relations are neither random, nor are they the exclusive result of individual perceptions; rather, they are socially organised. Existing translocal relations of power do not only create social knowledges but also regulate everyday experiences and thus develop forms of inequality by creating positions and subjugated subjectivities.

Starting from individual knowledge and experiences as a source of knowledge on organising everyday life, DE Smith (1987) elaborated the importance of the con-cept of "standpoint" for institutional ethnography. Understanding the researcher's standpoint facilitates "entry" into the domains of individual knowledge about current matters pertaining to everyday life, i.e. knowledge of the social from the subject's

viewpoint in the discourse of the everyday itself. In this way, we can understand the standpoint of the marginalised actor as a privileged position in the social hierarchy, because the experience of that actor can give an indication of the entire social reality. Thus, institutional ethnography does not seek out similarities or samples among individual experiences in order to objectivise them through interpretation, but instead departs from the standpoint of how all the individual perspectives must necessarily differ. Yet, institutions as objectivising forms of human action that produce forms of consciousness – "regulatory texts – laws, administrative rules, systems of accountability, policies" (DE Smith, 2005: 191) can overpower individual perceptions of their own experience and as such, remain undiscovered. Institutions, according to DE Smith (2005), develop institutional realities, that is, they develop their own language that is renewed and reshaped, and which intervenes in actors' subjectivity in settings governed by particular institutional principles.

Using the approach of (critical) institutional ethnography, GW Smith (1998) links individual experiences with how everyday life is organised in educational settings, researching the positioning of gay pupils' marginalisation in their everyday experiences. Smith names this form of marginalisation in everyday school life "the ideology of 'fag'" (GW Smith, 1998: 322), which Smith believes organises two subjectivities among all pupils. On the one hand, it produces and organises a heterosexual consciousness, which in both everyday interactions and textual representations expresses homophobia and violence. On the other hand, such an ideology also produces the subjectivity of a pupil with a homosexual orientation. GW Smith (1998: 324) attempts to gain a sample to implicitly confirm the "ideology of 'fag'" through his interlocutors' experiences, in order to reveal how the ideology is constituted in the school environment. He claims that a binary understanding of sexuality (homo/hetero) precedes it in broad, i.e. translocal social relations. A group of male students derive the word "fag" and related words, as Smith's interlocutors claim. This group uses the word to label pupils, as well as practices and types of behaviour. The binary between homosexuality and heterosexuality becomes part of the institutional organisation of knowledge and power relations. It is established only in the context of a material differentiation between what makes up the heterosexual and homosexual subject. The division in social relations between translocal and local, as GW Smith (1998) applied in his research, can help determine the links between the real and lived institutional realities (everyday school and university life), and educational institutions as social institutions and social relations of power.

6. THE ROLE OF RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY IN CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

The importance of reflection in research and in raising awareness of representation particularly comes to the fore in (critical) institutional ethnography where it relies on queer theories. Developing mutual trust with and taking a dialogic approach to interlocutors is therefore one further aspect that orients critical ethnography towards affirming marginalised knowledges and experiences. To emphasise the importance of how the researcher articulates themself, Huspek (1994) problematises understanding the Other in seemingly impartial ethnographies, listing shortcomings in understanding the meanings and practices of the Other. These shortcomings arise in the usual monologic "researcher–subject" relation. In this relation, the researcher does not feature as a social subject, but rather acts as a neutralised promoter of "a monological relationship in which Other is observed and recorded primarily in line with the rigorously enforced truth standards of the analysts' own scientific speech community" (Huspek, 1994: 45). Huspek (1994: 47) further advocates the idea of the researcher as a "dialogic partner", emphasising how the researcher's experience and knowledge can form part of the ethnographic process. Madison (2005: 6) has also reflected on researcher position in critical ethnography, as captured in their discussion of "the politics of positionality", which requires reflecting on representation and the researcher's ethical responsibility. Indeed, critical ethnography's ethical responsibility also calls for researcher subjectivity to be updated too: the researcher has to keep to the space between an exaggerated focus on oneself and an ethnography that is completely devoid of the researcher's self.

The politics of positionality (Madison, 2005) also features in the methodological domain. The choice of research methods depends on an evaluation of whether the chosen methods will contribute to establishing a dialogic relationship with one's interlocutors. The mutual trust that emerges in intersubjectivity in the practical or technical domain of field research (Youdell, 2010) does not only have a practical goal in the sense of revealing one's interlocutors most in-depth statements: it also entails the ethical responsibility of both the researcher and the research approach. Articulating the researcher's personal position and their presence in the research process is a crucial step towards ensuring research validity in critical ethnography. This emerges primarily from keeping to the paradigmatic and theoretical cornerstones, previous research insights and research strategies used in qualitative research. Yet, in contrast to qualitative research in which the researcher assumes a role as a "transmitter" of experience or as a mediator (Fine, 1994 in Madison, 2005), in critical ethnography the researcher follows previous insights in the framework of critical theories and intentionally adopts a critical standpoint. Thus, in seeking to ensure research validity, it is important that the researcher's personal position is indeed articulated as resulting from social structures and asymmetric power relations.

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The above-mentioned reflections demonstrate how critical ethnography exhausts its epistemological and methodological advantages precisely by negotiating its own research role, as well as the role of the researcher around the social phenomenon they are researching. As for critical ethnographies that take the concepts of queer theory as their theoretical basis, we might say that reflexivity imposes itself as a theoretical, methodological and ethical necessity. In the theoretical domain, the deconstruction of (hetero)sexuality and (normative determinations of) gender also accompanies the researcher's articulation as a subject who, like their interlocutors, is also a product of social knowledges and practices, and that – despite the principles inherent in the research process – always forms a certain kind of representation of the Other's experience, as well as of the Other themself. When researching educational experiences, that principle is even more clearly expressed. Besides the fact that a part-existence in educational institutions is a universal experience common to almost all individuals, that existence is nevertheless organised by the education systems in various ways that structurally and symbolically reproduce social relations of power and thus position their members in the overall social hierarchy.

7. AN EXAMPLE OF USING QUEER THEORIES AND CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY: RESEARCH INTO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN CROATIA

In this article, we apply the above-presented considerations on the topics of gender and sexuality in the Croatian educational context and in sociology more generally. More specifically, we apply here the basic principles of critical and institutional ethnography, as a theoretical and methodological approach to researching the educational experiences of queer persons and educational institutions in Croatia. Our aim is to ascertain how educational institutions operate as actors in creating queer Otherness. In the research completed during 2017, several techniques were used to gather rich material from four sources of data and in several stages. In this period, we completed eight in-depth interviews with queer persons who when interviewed had experience of secondary-school or university education. Drama scripts intended for the Lidrano festival (i.e. the annual festival for pupils' literary, dramatic theatre, and journalistic creative production), which one female interlocutor wrote and offered to us, accompanied the data. During the research, author one[12] made autoethnographic notes on their own educational experience. In these notes, he followed the basic framework that underpinned the experiences that the interlocutors highlighted in interviews. We also used an online conversation between the first author and two male student representatives at that time as a source of data. These linked to the first author's personal notes, which he made as a student rep-

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[12]   Author one completed the interviews with the interlocutors and is referred to in the rest of the text as the researcher.

resentative, and which arose in an institutionally mediated context during 2016 and 2017.[13]

It is important to mention that to complete this research, a queer researcher identity is not a necessary precondition. Yet, for (critical) institutional ethnography, it is necessary that the researcher articulates their own experience, which in this case *is* a queer educational experience. In following the principles of critical ethnography, the researcher should have access (reflexively) to their own experience, bearing in mind that their sexual orientation and gender experience, including their educational experience, results from social relations irrespective of how far the researcher deviates from social norms. The autoethnographic source of data results here from research decisions made, but it is surely not the only way in which the researcher can reflexively comment on their own educational experiences.

As concerns theoretical principles on gender and sexual inequalities in education, (Tierney and Dilley, 1998; GW Smith, 1998; Epstein et al., 2000; Ghaill, 2006; Pascoe, 2007), we approached this research from the critical position that educational institutions create and reproduce social inequalities regarding gender and sexuality, i.e. educational institutions are treated as institutional actors that create and maintain social inequalities relating to queer persons. Guided by the idea of institutional ethnography, educational institutions were conceptualised as mediators of everyday life, determined by local and translocal social relations, while queer persons' experiences were researched as specific and gruelling experiences that point to the heteronormative organisation of everyday life in educational settings.

Given how limited the sociological approach that reflects on the entanglement of gender and sexuality is in relation to the everyday experience of queer persons (Seidman, 1996; Valocchi, 2005), the theoretical research framework consists of selected concepts from queer theories. The concepts of gender performativity and the regulation of gender (Butler, 2004; 2011) describe the dynamic in the discursive shaping of gender. Heteronormativity denotes a set of social practices relating to the normative privileging of heterosexuality, which occur due to the actions of social institutions (Halley, 1993; Seidman, 1996; Berlant and Warner, 1998). Primarily, the mentioned concepts are used to avoid an essentialist understanding of sexuality as a stable identity, and to open a space for researching domains of lived experience in an institutional educational framework. In so doing, gender and sexuality are treated as objects that are continually symbolically negotiated at all levels of society, including in education. This kind of conceptualisation of sexuality understands it as the result of a symbolic negotiation within everyday life in educational settings, and not as an intimate aspect that queer people inherently

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[13]   All data gathered in the research for this text is used as part of an entire ethnographic and research corpus, from which collective conclusions and interpretations are derived. This text's intention is to confirm the usefulness of the theoretical and methodological approach developed precisely for the purposes of this research. This depiction of the data is believed to be the most appropriate for the validation of both the theoretical principles and the empirical interpretations.

"possess", thus creating an additional analytical space within which all stages of research into gender and sexuality are thought of as entangled and interdependent dimensions to the organisation of everyday life in educational settings, as well as in the educational experiences of queer persons themselves.

One form of interdependency between gender and sexuality lies in understanding an individual's gender expression as a symbolic marker of their sexual orientation. Given the performativity of gender (Butler, 2004), and observing the insights on the topic of sexuality in educational contexts, an individual's gender expressions are conceived here as symbolic markers of a different sexuality. The educational experience of queer people is thus approached as the experience of a person whose gender expressions are the potential subject of negotiation in everyday life in educational settings, precisely via the symbolic markers of sexuality. In relying on an understanding of gender regulation (Butler, 2011), we understand the social negotiation of queer persons' gender in this research as a process of approving or not approving of a personal gender expression and thus of the sexuality that this expression hints at symbolically. Given that educational institutions are agents of the heteronormative privileging of heterosexuality, everyday social life is organised in terms of a dichotomy between the public and private (Berlant and Warner, 1998). Non-normative gender expressions and sexuality are considered part of a private domain; however, research has shown that everyday life in educational settings is in fact a public sphere in the social life of a queer person, in which non-normative gender expressions and sexuality are labelled as undesirable features and, besides generating a feeling of shame and marginalisation, they force queer pupils and students into the private and intimate sphere.

In keeping with the principles of critical ethnography both theoretically and methodologically, the researcher's role was articulated as being an active performer of representations of experiences (Chang, 2006). Besides managing the research process, this role also includes their own educational experience as a queer person. The idea of positionality (Madison, 2005) guides how the researcher role plays out, as does the idea of establishing dialogic links between the researcher and subject positions (Huspek, 1994). The process was therefore also determined by the choice of source and the method used for gathering data. We used the semi-structured in-depth interview as the primary research method. This enabled the researcher to guide the conversation using a procedure they had drawn up in advance, while also establishing an "informal style" of discussion (Mason, 1996: 38). This opened a space for the researcher to share their own queer experiences and thus also fostered the interlocutor's trust, while also facilitating further discussion around the set topics. The interviews were completed with the interlocutor's informed consent to recording and transcription, on the interlocutor's terms, with the average interview length being 102 minutes. When choosing a sample of interlocutors, the researcher was aimed to gain a sample of institutional experiences and knowledges (DE Smith, 2005), where the basic relevant features for research

into this experience were taken to be interlocutors' self-identification as people of non-normative sexuality or gender expression. The educational experiences of the interviewees, and of the researcher themself, was the product of educational pathways through various educational institutions in Croatia. However, during the research period, all were staying in Zadar. The interlocutors were also at distinct stages in their education. One grouping among them had completed or just completed their secondary-school education in Zadar, or they were at the end of their higher education at the University of Zadar, while others had completed primary and secondary school in other places. The recruitment procedure was based on relationships established with the researcher through his involvement in public activities seeking to promote the public visibility of the queer community in Zadar. Thus, the experiences and interpretations that emerged should not be understood as educational experiences that emerged exclusively in the social reality of Zadar's educational environment alone.

Distinct procedures were followed for the interviews; there was one procedure for persons with primary-school and secondary-school experience, and another for people with study experience. Interview notes were used to establish a basic interview structure, with elements of in-depth interviewing employed as the interlocutors – after encouragement from the researcher – freely spoke about experiences and events that the interview notes did not initially cover. When analysing the data, all the research material was coded, first by developing descriptive codes, and then interpretative ones.[14] Based on the codes gained, two thematic units related to the educational experiences of queer persons were established: regulating gender in everyday life in educational settings and the personal positioning of queer persons in everyday life in educational settings.

7.1. Regulating gender in everyday life in educational settings

The analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material referring to school experiences ascertained that gender is continually symbolically negotiated in everyday life in educational settings, and that it is then actively regulated in everyday interactions. The collected experiences demonstrate how negotiating the gender of queer persons in everyday school life begins on the symbolic level with recognition of gender expression (style of dress, means of expression, bodily gestures, tastes in popular culture, choice of male or female friends etc.) as different, and this is later labelled with linguistic expressions. Irrespective of whether the phrases were used pejoratively, "endearingly" or perhaps as positive and affirming names, the mentioned expression labels queer persons as deviating from the gender ideals of masculinity and femininity. The process of labelling the gender of queer persons,

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[14]   Interview transcripts, the researcher's personal notes, online discussions with the researcher's study colleagues, as well as autoethnographic records.

as well as certain linguistic expressions used in educational institutional contexts illuminate the translocal social relations (DE Smith, 2005), which take on their own specific form through the pupil's linguistic negotiation of gender. According to the interlocutors' experiences, there is a distinction between how queer pupils and other pupils use names. According to the interlocutors, *peder* (fag) and *lezba* (lezza) were used predominantly by heterosexual colleagues. While the above phrases have a pejorative connotation like their English equivalents, their colleagues also used more pejorative, augmentative forms, such as *pederčina* (big fag/cocksucker) or *lezbača* (dyke). Yet, phrases such as *macho*, *femi* (fem) and *dajkara* (dyke) were phrases that were not used by declaratively heterosexual pupils, but rather by those who situated themselves within the queer spectrum.

These latter phrases were only used within the group of queer pupils for interpersonal labelling purposes. Their use further labelled a deviation in their gender expression from the gender norm. Therefore, the gender dichotomy of masculinity and femininity is part of a subjectivity that both heterosexual and queer people internalise in everyday life in educational settings. Based on the established dichotomy and on the resultant practices present in the language of everyday educational experiences, gender expression forms symbolic "proof" of a person's sexual orientation. This is indicated by the experiences of male interlocutors for whom their real sexual orientation did not necessarily fit the one that the pupil had been symbolically ascribed. Indeed, gay interlocutors who had become aware of their sexual orientation during their secondary-school education were not recognised as gay pupils then because, as they themselves highlighted, they managed to imitate "male behaviour" in their school environment. The interlocutors specified that one of the forms of "male behaviour" involves imitation by participating in sport as part of school activities. In these situations, gay pupils can engage in physical contact with members of the same sex without fearing the disapproval of those around them. While the forms of physical contact that the interlocutors expressed can be recognised in a broad sense as homoerotic, they occurred within the context of "male" behaviour and did not bring with them a risk of revealing the gay interlocutors' real sexual orientation. As masculinity (as a gender) is performative on all social levels, in everyday interactions it is contextually conditioned, while in this case, it is institutionally conditioned. Groups of male pupils often feature as actors expressing specific masculinities in the institutional reality, choosing between those masculinities available to them in the wider social relations, i.e. those that are socially and culturally available among the "hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities" (Messerschmidt, 2018: 29). Through being accepted into the groups of other male pupils, gay interlocutors can imitate forms of "hegemonic masculinity" made available to them, independently of their real sexual orientation.

Local heteronormative relations that are recognisable in the interlocutors' educational experience show that a larger deviation from the male norms of masculinity or femininity entail the pupil being more conspicuous in the school environment.

The research demonstrated that in everyday life in Croatian educational settings, gender acts as a normativising factor and so the reproduction of gender norms is rewarded (pupils are not victims of verbal or physical violence; they are accepted into social groups among their classmates and friends) or punished. The analysis of the research material demonstrates how, in the processes that regulate gender, educational institutions are actors that approve and punish gender expression. They mediate between translocal and local social relations, i.e. between heteronormative knowledges and practices. Besides offering institutional frameworks for everyday interaction – and thus also processes for the symbolic labelling of gender and queer persons – they often also directly assure a process of approving certain forms of gender expression, while punishing gender expression that deviates from the gender norm. According to the interlocutors' experiences, this is most often manifest in verbal violence among pupils not being sanctioned, but also in the teachers' use of homophobic phrases. Interlocutors recognised this as the "comic" part of classes at school, which were intended to create a relaxed atmosphere.

However, the highest level of active participation in regulating gender, as well as in protecting queer pupils, can be identified in the actions taken by educational institutions when gender-related physical violence occurs.

Interlocutors who had had indirect or direct experience of physical violence claim that the institutional actors at their schools (such as the headteacher, educational-guidance counsellor and psychologist) did not penalise acts of violence, and the motive for the act of violence was labelled as a "personal" problem between the pupils involved. Nevertheless, according to the interlocutors' experiences, even when someone working at the school wanted to help a pupil who was a victim of continual verbal violence, the options for taking action were exceptionally limited. Not all actors formally and publicly recognised violence directed at queer persons in everyday life in educational settings as a danger and as an aggravating circumstance in education. Consequently, when following practices for dealing with pupils who are still minors, the teaching staff attempted to handle the problem of violence only by recourse to the personal and private domains of pupils, which also includes parental activities. Yet, queer pupils, after having become aware of their sexuality, hadn't spoken about it with their parents, and so including the parents in punishing the violence also entailed their "coming out" to parents – for which, as they themselves stated, they were not ready at that age.

In regulating gender in everyday life in educational settings, educational institutions mediate between translocal and local heteronormative relations by ensuring the systemic privileging of heterosexuality and the establishing of gender norms. Throughout their education, queer persons find themselves in a long-term ambivalent position, as their identity is fractured, split between public and private spheres. On the one hand, in their everyday educational life, continual and negative public visibility is guaranteed – without their consent – thanks to the symbolic negotiation of gender as "proof" of sexual orientation. On the other hand, when they become

victims of gender-based violence, their sexuality and gender expression, which up to that moment had been a public sphere concern, become labelled as undesirable in that sphere of action. Through not being punished, violence was repositioned in the private sphere and was thus explicitly labelled as an individual's (or their family's) "problem", negating the educational institution's role as a public mediator of heteronormativity.

The institutional mediating of queer persons' positions by splitting them into public and private educational domains also featured in the ethnographic material related to higher education. In this context, more formal relations determine everyday educational experiences, and so the negotiation of gender and sexuality was not present in the interlocutors' experience to the same degree as in experiences of secondary-school education. However, through legal acts, higher-educational institutions formally define and organise students' life. It became clear that in that formal legal domain, higher-educational actors do not recognise the importance of ensuring the positive visibility of queer students. The university thus confirmed its own space as a public domain of heterosexuality, situating queer sexuality in a private domain labelled as an intimate issue relating to individuals. By acting along this dichotomy between the public and private, the university continues to mediate heteronormative knowledges and practices at local level. It regulates queer identity by describing it as being exclusively an issue in individuals' private lives, blocking the institutional recognition of queer students.

7.2. Queer persons' positioning in everyday life in educational settings

As concerns the ambivalent position of queer persons, which arises due to heteronormative practices in the educational context, the research showed that in everyday life in educational settings, queer persons have to conceive of ways of positioning themselves that avoid the negative consequences of their identity, or find a way of neutralising the consequences of their position.[15] The research results show that the process of queer persons' personal positioning in everyday life in educational settings is motivated by their negotiation of gender and the labelling of queer identities as undesirable. In other words, queer persons have to once again rationalise their everyday educational experiences and become more aware of their own gender and sexual identity. This form of personal positioning occurs in two ways: through the "coming out"[16] process in the immediate educational en-

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[15]   Interlocutors witnessed how the negative consequences of having a queer identity often included emotional difficulties. Some of them even also stated that their personal mental health had been severely harmed as a consequence.

[16]   Interlocutors used the phrase "autanje" (coming out) instead of the phrase "izlazak iz ormara" (coming out of the closet) or "iskorak" (lit. a step forward). The Croatian version of this text therefore retains the use of the phrase "autanje" in the section presenting the research insights gained, while this version uses the phrase "coming out".

vironment, and through understanding the institutional space of the school and university as a symbolic space that privileges heterosexuality.

Yet, the results also show that for queer people, "coming out" as part of everyday life in educational settings was not motivated by a desire to gain control over their surroundings as leverage for their "coming out", nor was it motivated by a search for approval from those in their wider social environment. Instead, our interlocutors' experiences demonstrate that the act of "coming out" is preceded by a process in which they develop an awareness of their sexuality and gender identity, which ultimately results in their "coming out" to chosen people they can trust to gain emotional support in the educational context. Indeed, simply confessing their sexual orientation in everyday life in educational settings, even for those interlocutors who had "come out" to a larger number of classmates, in most cases did not have a direct and transformative impact on the social environment. Irrespective of queer persons' sexual orientation, it seems that the early meanings that emerged in their gender negotiation and regulation were more crucial. In the period that precedes "coming out", queer persons go through a period of personal flux with respect to their sexuality and gender identity, especially if they had not become aware of their sexuality before they were labelled as queer and undesirable in the educational environment. The very process of labelling a queer person as a non-normative subject in everyday educational settings happens independently of their personal process, although the two processes are linked. As actors in everyday educational settings, queer persons often only retrospectively get involved in that process after having become aware of it. The experiences of interlocutors demonstrate that only then, because of identity markers assigned to them in everyday educational settings, did they become aware of their sexual orientation and gender expression, despite their having had the same feelings of attraction and sexual desire beforehand.

In this research, queer persons mostly do not have the opportunity in everyday educational settings to gain control over how they are labelled as Others. "Coming out" is thus the result of a fresh attempt at rationalising everyday educational experiences that arises through the internalisation of a heteronormative subjectivity. This is how they become aware of the identity of the Other, and by "coming out", they are seeking the emotional support of chosen persons in the educational environment. The experiences of interlocutors demonstrated that they often receive this sought-after support. Thanks to this support, they develop close friendships. The personal positioning of queer persons in everyday life in educational settings does not only entail additional emotional work in the form of an adaptation to translocal and local heteronormative relations that educational institutions mediate. Instead, it often entails the necessity of creating new local relations that arise as a response to the heteronormative organisation of everyday life.

Queer persons' further positioning within everyday educational settings and in creating new relations is manifest in how educational institutions are conceptualised as a symbolically organised space. According to the interlocutors' experiences, the educational space is organised as a symbolic space through the binary of "safe" and "unsafe" space, which depends on positive or negative experiences related to approval and disapproval. The symbolic organisation of space largely comes to the fore in experiences of the school space that interlocutors viewed as symbolically embodied in teachers as institutional actors. The queer persons who were research interlocutors experienced support from certain institutional actors and labelled them as "safe", while they encountered indirect or direct approval from other actors. Circles of friends, classmates and other acquaintances follow a similar pattern. The interlocutors' experiences show that close relationships with school friends and classmates are organised in line with their evaluation of "safeness" and approval, and so some of the interlocutors detected protection in their close friendship groups.

The descriptions and explanations of such a perspective on the school and university space and on institutional actors in Croatia shows that for queer people, this space operates primarily as a space of privileged heterosexuality in which they must additionally position themselves through everyday interactions in order to gain a safe space and support; the new social relations that they create are influenced by this positionality. In this way, the local and translocal quality of social relations in the educational context creates, maintains and labels all non-normative gender and sexual positions. The transformation of the heteronormativity of educational institutions for queer people occurs in limited, safe, almost private spaces, while a broader institutional and translocal transformation is lacking.

8. CONCLUSION

The research approach taken to the educational experiences of queer persons in Croatia here is grounded in the principles of (critical) institutional ethnography and queer theories, and it has proved to be a theoretical and empirically fruitful approach. By understanding educational institutions in Croatia as symbolically and physically fixed locations that operate in line with a translocal, heteronormative mechanism that privileges heterosexuality in its relations and practices, these educational institutions are conceptualised as mediators of a queer Otherness. In rethinking how researchers are conceptualised as persons who at the same time produce ethnographic representations, while also being queer persons who have their own educational experience, the interlocutor's trust was gained. This was necessary for access to more fine-grained and emotionally complex aspects of the educational experience. Ultimately, the interpretative linking of ethnographic and autoethnographic data was guaranteed, and so detailed insight into the educational experiences of queer people has been gained through this research.

A reliance on the concepts of heteronomativity and gender regulation when designing the research process and interpreting the data proved to be particularly valuable in analytically separating gender and sexuality. Instead of conceptualising sexuality as sexual orientations and queer persons' intimate spheres, a space was created for understanding the symbolic negotiation and construction of sexual identity through relations and practices in everyday life in educational settings. This was cemented by the actions of educational institutions and their actors. This approach has enabled an understanding of gender as a sphere of everyday life in which gender identities are symbolically formed wherein sexuality is constituted over non-normative gender expressions and sexualities via the hierarchies of heterosexuality. This kind of approach to the educational experiences of queer people in Croatia has also made multi-layered insights into the mechanisms of the gender regulation of sexual identity possible. It has also made it possible to map how educational institutions function not only as mediators of translocal heteronormative relations and practices, but also as institutional actors that directly contribute to the heteronormative organisation of education through creating new local relations in which queer persons find themselves in an unequal position.

This research and its conceptual approach confirms in the Croatian educational context insights gained in other countries (GW Smith, 1998; Pascoe 2007; Toomey and Russell, 2016; Myers et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2021). In the Croatian educational context too, queer persons find themselves in multiply disadvantaged positions that they have to manage every day, by investing additional emotional work in order to maintain their personal security and a positive educational environment. As research conducted in different contexts has shown, the process of negotiating gender and sexuality make up everyday Croatian educational settings too. In these settings, gender and heterosexual and homosexual subjectivities are regulated, with heterosexuality understood as the assumed norm. Compared with existing research in different contexts, this research has made an additional contribution to knowledge on the marginalisation of queer persons in the educational context by conceptualising educational institutions as direct actors in the local relations that maintain heteronormativity. This has enabled more detailed insight into the everyday actions of institutions, and this may have wider implications for reflections on the unequal position of queer persons in the Croatian educational context.

Indeed, the actions of educational institutions proved to be most important in maintaining the ambivalent position of queer persons by establishing a public and private sphere in everyday life in educational settings. Queer pupils and students thus find themselves at the intersection of local and translocal practices of heteronormativity, which entail a negative visibility in everyday life in educational settings, while a positive and affirmative visibility is lacking. Queer persons' ambivalent position especially comes to the fore in testimonies on verbal and physical violence. As local practices of gender negotiation establish queer persons' negative visibility, the high point of such symbolic labelling of non-normative sexualities

and genders happens in that act of violence itself. By not sanctioning violence and failing to formally recognise violence as resulting from social processes in the public educational sphere, educational institutions reproduce translocal practices of heteronormativity, by situating non-normative sexualities and gender in the private sphere of queer persons' everyday educational experiences.

This research knowledge brings us to the conclusion that a change in the unequal position of queer persons in educational institutions overall ought to include raising awareness of the direct role that educational institutions play at all levels in labelling non-normative sexualities and gender as undesirable. As they hide their own queer identity, queer pupils' experiences point to the impossibility of communicating with one's immediate family on experiences of violence because of fears of non-approval. Those experiences in turn point to the translocal relationship of heteronormativity, because of which a local-level space for establishing an affirmative visibility in everyday school settings is further closed off. A change in the unequal position of queer pupils in school institutions ought therefore to also include raising awareness of the indirect role that immediate family members play in the creation of such a position.

The confirmed consistency between this research's insights into the heteronormativity of educational institutions and research in other sociocultural and educational contexts, as well as the specific research insights into how public and private spheres are established in everyday school settings, suggests that this research's conclusions can be transferred to other context and can motivate a future research direction on the topic of the marginalisation of queer people in the Croatian educational context. Indeed, the mentioned consistency confirms earlier findings (GW Smith, 1998, Epstein et al., 2000; Ghaill, 2006; Pascoe, 2007) as the local practices of establishing heteronormativity based on the interdependency of gender and sexuality feature in educational institutions independently of possible differences between individual schools and higher education establishments. We can therefore speak of gender regulation as a set of local relations that are widely present, through the symbolic entanglement of gender and sexuality, within the network of Croatia's educational system as part of the heteronormative organisation of everyday life in educational settings.

The results of this research also offer a basis for a further deepening of the sociological understanding of the educational marginalisation of queer persons, in a manner supported by research. Future research work on this topic could focus on the additional dimensions of local and translocal social relations in everyday life in educational settings in Croatia. It could also critically conceptualise the entanglement of gender and sexuality with dimensions of class and ethnic relations, with the specificities of everyday school life in urban vis-à-vis rural settings, and with other social relations that contribute to the unequal position of queer persons. A research approach that relies on the principles of critical (institutional) ethnography and queer theories, whose procedures we have outlined in this article, can form the

theoretical and methodological basis for developing further lines of research. Such work aims to understand additional forms of queer pupils' and students' vulnerability in the Croatian educational context.

Translated by Andrew Hodges

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Rod i seksualnost u obrazovnim institucijama u Hrvatskoj: mogućnosti korištenja queer teorija i kritičke etnografije u sociologiji

Pavao PARUNOV https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2470-1421

pparunov@unizd.hr
Sveučilište u Zadru, Hrvatska

Valerija BARADA https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3579-0201

vbarada@unizd.hr
Sveučilište u Zadru, Hrvatska

SAŽETAK

Teme roda i seksualnosti u obrazovnom kontekstu zbog političke instrumentalizacije povremeno su prisutne u javnom diskursu, ali su istraživački nedovoljno zastupljene. To osobito vrijedi za izvorna i kritički usmjerena istraživanja koja bi utvrdila kako obrazovne institucije u Hrvatskoj pridonose društvenoj nejednakosti queer osoba. Ovim se člankom pokušava nadomjestiti ta podzastupljenost teorijskom raspravom o konceptualizaciji roda i seksualnosti kao međuovisnih osobnih i društvenih procesa te prikazom rezultata istraživanja u kojem je taj pristup korišten. Kako dosadašnje spoznaje u međunarodnom kontekstu pokazuju, obrazovne institucije imaju aktivnu ulogu u procesima marginalizacije osoba nenormativne queer rodne i seksualne orijentacije, zato je nužno razumijevanje obrazovne svakodnevice kao izvora znanja o tim procesima kroz promišljanje isprepletenosti roda i seksualnosti. Ta isprepletenost u svrhu istraživanja društvene nejednakosti nastale na temelju rodne i seksualne različitosti mora teorijski i istraživački povezati sociologiju, queer teorije te kritičku i institucionalnu etnografiju. Na taj se način uspostavlja cjeloviti teorijski i metodološki pristup koji je korišten u istraživanju srednjoškolskog i visokoškolskog obrazovnog iskustva queer osoba u Hrvatskoj. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da obrazovne institucije imaju posredničku ulogu u stvaranju nejednakosti na temelju rodnih i seksualnih različitosti. Obrazovne su institucije ponajprije prostor koji privilegira heteroseksualnost i heteronormativnost, dok su queer izričaji roda i seksualnosti s jedne strane predmetom javnog označavanja i stigmatiziranja, a s druge strane predmetom prisiljavanja na privatnu i skrivenu sferu. Ne/vidljivost i ne/prihvaćanje nenormativnih rodnih izričaja i seksualnosti za queer osobe u hrvatskom obrazovnom kontekstu predstavlja trajan proces pregovaranja između institucionalnih i osobnih domena djelovanja.

Ključne riječi: rod, seksualnost, queer, LGBTQ, obrazovanje