PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG SELF-IDENTIFIED LGBTQ INDIVIDUALS WITH HOMOPHOBIA IN CROATIAN SCHOOL SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Addressing the dearth of research into the connections bewteen sexuality and schooling in the context of the Republic of Croatia and working with the theoretical notions of "homophobia", "heterosexism" and "heteronormativity" as well as M. Foucault's theoretizations of discourse and power, it is the goal of this work to explore the workings of homophobia in the Croatian secondary school settings by means of investigating personal schooling experiences of young self-identified LGBTQ individuals. The time frame for my investigation is determined by my interest to focus on the more recent historical period (1990 onwards) and will encompass the time period between 1997 and 2007. With a view of bridging the personal and the contextual, my analysis will be moving between the wider socio-political and cultural context of the Republic of Croatia within the time period I am focusing on, the school as the site of various discursive and organizational practices forming the students' gendered and sexual subjectivities in particular ways, as well as the way these wider processes were experienced by the students on a personal level. Through the analysis of the personal interviews I will show the schooling discourses, both on the level of the official curriculum, as well as on the level of informal students' peer cultures to work in heteronormative ways, exposing at the same time the school as a complex site in which diverse and disparate discourses simultaneously play out and compete.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introductory notes – The School – "One Great Mechanism Destined To Say No?" [1]

> An afternoon in April. I'm interviewing Denis, a 22-year-old from Zagreb. We are sitting in one of Zagreb's caffees. The "official" part of the interview is drawing to a close and I ask him whether he has any questions for me. He says yes. He wants to know how different my answers would be from the ones he gave me, considering the fact that I, his senior, attended school in an earlier time period. He wonders whether I can notice any difference. At first, I say "No, not really." I am used to the Pride, to a few of Zagreb's gay-friendly caffees. I'm used to non-normative sexuality being discussed, mentioned in the press, political speeches, civil society discourse. But then, in my mind, I return to my own schooldays. I modify my answer: "Except… The difference is in the fact that I can't remember homosexuality ever being mentioned in my school. In any sort of a context. In any form: as an aside comment when it comes to some author in Croatian classes, or among us in the class. I can't recall any such occasions. So that's where I can see a difference."

The conversation I had with Denis brings me to the reasons and motivations that had lead me to conduct this research in the first place. Not only do I not recall homosexuality (on non-normative sexuality in a more general sense) ever being mentioned or talked about during my school years, apart from that ever-present insult, "peder"[2] (literally: "faggot", but also used as a general insult) ringing in the hallways and in the streets much like they do now, the same applies to my memories of doing a Pedagogy major in Zagreb as part of my B.A. studies I have recently graduated from.

At the same time, non-normative sexuality was part of the various discourses around me. From the already mentioned insult "peder", yelled in the streets, the trams, the parks (as well as being a pet name given to the coach of one of the biggest Croatian football teams by the team's very fans), to the speech from the pulpit, political debates, the media. It seemed to be the occupation of the citizens of the country as well, considering strong negative opinions

[1] Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I.* , pp. 12. New York: Pantheon Books.
[2] "Peder" is a derogatory word used in Croatian to denote a homosexual man. More recently, it has been re-appropriated by members of the Croatian LGBT community, who use it among themselves in a positive sense.

many of them had of homosexuality reflected in opinion polls[3], explosive debates in the Internet forums, as well as physical and verbal attacks on gays and lesbians taking place in various locations in the capital and the rest of the country[4]. However, when it comes to the connection of non-normative sexualities and schools, neither in the course of my studies, nor in the media, nor in the scholarly texts produced by the Croatian academic community could I find more detailed information on the subject[5].

My observations on the discourses on non-normative sexuality in the context of Croatian educational institutions, or more precisely, the (apparent) lack thereof, seem to go in line with those made by other recent researchers into the interrelations between (non-normative) sexuality and schooling, especially those working within the theoretical frameworks of cultural studies, feminist and queer theory[6]. Thus, Epstein and Johnson (1998), Wallis and VanEvery (2000), Renold (2005) note the (dominant) cultural discourse within which children are conceptualized as "innocent" and the school institutions as, appropriately, sanitized and devoid of sexuality. Epstein and Johnson, drawing on the work of Eve Sedgwick (1990) use the metaphor of education as a "closet":

> If, as Eve Sedgwick (1990) has argued persuasively, the closet can be seen as an iconographic metaphor for the late twentieth century, this is even more so in relation to education. Not only are teachers' sexualities (gay or straight), so to speak, "in the closet" but the whole of formal education (at school and university level) in Anglophone countries can be read in this way. (Epstein and Johnson 1998:132)

[3] See chapter 3.

[4] See, for example, the annual reports on the rights of gender and sexual minorities published by Kontra and Iskorak. Available (in English and Croatian) at: http://www.kontra.hr/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=22&Itemid=50&lang=hr

[5] The first research project known to me that was focused specifically on investigating the attitudes of high school students towards homosexuality in the context of Croatia (the sample consisted of schools in the capital, Zagreb) was finished in 2012, at the time of the writing of this work. The only other pieces of research I could find that included the connection between schools and non-normative sexuality were an earlier survey conducted by the NGO LORI on the members of general LGBT population which included questions on the experiences in school/college (the answers, however, were not shown separately for these two settings) and a survey conducted by the NGO GONG on the political literacy and the attitudes towards the EU accession of Croatia's high school students which included questions on the attitudes of the students towards homosexuality. Research that would investigate personal experiences of students within the school setting as well as the homophobia/heteronormativity of the latter was not and is not known to the author at the moment of the writing of this text.

[6] On which I reflect later in this chapter.

However, the same authors note the simultaneous presence of sexuality in various areas of the school life, from the curriculum to the informal peer cultures. They reflect on the ways in which the wider discourses on sexuality (some of which I have touched upon above, such as politics, the media, organized sports and others) impact on the conceptualizations, the discourses and the playing out of sexualities in schools as institutions of the society, while stressing at the same time the processes taking place on the level of individual schools as localized context with their own specificities and emphasizing the view of the school as an institution where identities (sexual and other) are not simply re-produced from the wider societal models, but also actively *produced* (on this see for example Mac an Ghaill 1996, Epstein and Johnson 1998).

In the light of what has just been said on the notions developed within the recent theoretical and practical work on the interrelations between sexualities and schooling and the interplay of "absences" and "presences" of sexualites in the school settings, it is my objective and the goal of this research to move past the discourse of apparent silence when it comes to the connection of non-normative sexualities and schools in the specific context of the Republic of Croatia and look into the ways, highlighted by the authors mentioned above, in which this apparent "silence" in this specific educational context "speaks" of the regulation of non-normative sexualities within schooling institutions as well as in the wider social context. In doing that, I will be focusing specifically on the ways in which the aforementioned processes might work in ways which can be understood as homophobic and heteronormative.[7]

Outside the borders of Croatia researchers and scholars have spent several decades already investigating the interrelations between (non-normative) sexualities and schooling. I see this body of research as divided into two broad "strains", each with its own starting points,

[7] On the meaning and application within my research of these terms I reflect later in this chapter.

its specific approaches to the study of (non-normative) sexualities and schooling and, thus, with its own set of conclusions and implications for the schooling practices.

What I refer to as the first of the aforementioned approaches to the study of the interrelations of sexualities and schooling is a body of work based in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, social work and education and focused, mainly, on mapping out the various negative effects and negative personal experiences faced by LGBTQ youths in the educational environments. Thus, the research belonging to this strain has been focused on the patterns of physical and psychological abuse such as isolation, verbal abuse, ostracism, prejudice, discrimination or physical assault directed towards and suffered by the young LGBTQ people in the school settings (see, for example, Warren and Trenchard 1984, according to Ellis and High 2004; Rivers and Duncan, 2002, Ellis i High 2004, King i McKeown 2003, Hillier et al. 1998, Mason and Palmer 1996, according to Warwick et al. 2004; Pilkington i D'Augelli 1995, according to Rivers and D'Augelli 2001; Takács 2006). This body of research, having been conducted over the last several decades, reports relatively high numbers of LGBTQ youth (percentages range from 30% to 60% of respondents or particular subsets of respondents) suffering negative experiences in their schooling environments. Apart from the focus on what I will refer to here as the personal experiences of homophobia, this body of work has addressed certain features of the schooling environment as well, reporting on the apparent "invisibility" of LGBTQ related topics in the school curricula as well as on the negative behavior of a certain proportion of the teaching staff towards the LGBTQ students (see, for example, Takács 2006).

The body of research I have covered so far represents a valuable contribution to the study of the connections and interrelations between (non-normative) sexualities and schools/the processes of schooling as it has addressed heretofore ignored issues and provided accounts of pressures and abuses faced by young LGBTs in school environments, issues that

cannot be ignored and can undeniably be said to both reflect the wider social processes, processes at play in the local schooling environment as well as, arguably, playing a role in the subjectivation processes when it comes to both LGBT and straight young people.

On the other hand, I agree with S. Talburt, E. Rofes and M.L. Rasmussen (2004: 4) when they point out to the tendency present, as they claim, in the social scientific discourse on LGBTQ youth[8] to view identities and institutions as "fixed" as well as to "essentialize" the former by seeing them as inherent, inborn, salient. I believe the arguments of these authors can be applied to the body of scholarship recounted thus far as it seems to approach the youth's identities as something that is present within, develops over time and surfaces in the process of coming out, along with discussing the processes taking place in institutions without paying sufficient attention to the ways in which they "channel" the wider social discourses or the ways in which power relations are produced and played out within their boundaries. As Talburt, Rofes and Rasmussen claim, these kinds of approaches on the one hand preclude the full understanding of the complexity and agency of LGBTQ youth (7) as well as prevent us from getting an insight into the processes wherein both subjects and institutions interact to produce identitites, to "mutually constitute each other" (3, 4).

It is to the type of issues and processes highlighted by Talburt and her colleagues that what I understand as the second strand of research into sexualities and schooling addresses itself.

Embodied in the works of authors such as D. Epstein, E. Renold, M.J. Kehily, M. Mac an Ghaill and others, this body of scholarly work takes its roots in the fields of cultural studies, feminist theory and queer theory, along with moving within psychoanalytical and poststructuralist frameworks. In practice, these theoretical groundings have several

[8] Along with, they note, educational practice and gay and lesbian activism (Talburt, Rofes, Rasmussen 2004: 4).

implications. Within this line of thinking schools are seen as sites of both reproduction as well as production of sexuali(ized) and gender(ed) identities of the subjects inhabiting them as well as the sexual and gendered hierarchies (Mac an Ghaill 1996, Epstein and Johnson 1998, Renold 2000). Thus, the authors working in this vein show how schools as institutions both reflect the discourses of the wider society (e.g. those of politics and the media – see Epstein and Johnson 1998) as well as function as local sites with their own specificities where different organizational practices, discourses and groups of subjects (such as students, teachers and others) interact and produce one another (Talburt, Rofes and Rasmussen 2004: 3, 4). So, in line with the objections raised by Talburt, Rofes and Rasmussen recounted above against the previously described line of research, this body of work takes neither institutions nor subjects as fixed or essentialized, but instead offers an insight into their constructedness and the processes of their production. This, when sexual(ized) identities of the subjects are concerned, applies to both the so-called non-normative identities as to the ones socially considered (and established) as the norm: taking its cue from queer theory, this line of research questions the ways in which sexual/gendered hierarchies and binaries are constructed in the first place, tracing and analyzing these production and normalization processes on the level of the school.

In their analysis of the intersection of sexualities and schooling many of the authors working within the line of inquiry I am now lining out draw on the work of the historian and philosopher Michel Foucault and, particularly, on his theorizing on "discourse" and power. Expanding on their own use of Foucauldian frameworks Epstein and Johnson (1998: 15) provide a useful explication of the notion of discourse. Discourse, they note, is a form of systematic knowledge, shaping the relations of power at the same time as it shapes us as subjects. "In this particular sense, "the authors contend, "power and knowledge as discourse 'constructs' social identitites." Thus, utilizing a Foucauldian analysis, as these authors and

others working in this vein do, enables one do undertake an investigation of the processes in which the wider social as well as more local forms of disourses, i.e. power relations and knowledges, work to construct the sexual(ized) and gender(ed) subjectivities of students (as well as other actors) within the school setting, while at the same time attending to the ways in which homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity, the notions I work out in more detail in the section to follow, might be importantly involved in these processes. Important to mention here in the discussion on how the previous researchers into sexualities and schooling have utilized the Foucauldian notion of discourse is the connection Epstein and Johnson make, quoting the work of others (Williams 1977, Fanon 1986, Zizek 1989, Benjamin 1990, Bhabha 1994 in Epstein and Johnson 1998: 15) between power and "structures of feeling", highlighting in this way the connection between the social/structural and the personal. This connection keeps coming out of the previous inquiries between sexualities and schooling and will provide an important framework for my own work.[9] Important to note as well, in line with my opening question as well as the answers to it provided by the existing research, is Foucauldian notion of "silence" as an element of discourse: silence, as Foucault claims in his *History of Sexuality* (1978: 27), does not stand outside of discourse, is not its "outside border" but rather part of it as much as speech, emanating from certain directions, engendering certain power relations and producing particular effects . This again, will be a valuable starting point for me, as I attempt to "read" the silences I have noted in the schooling system when it comes to non-normative sexualities and their sources and effects on individual actors and institutions. In addition to what has been said here, I provide additional explications of some of the tenets of Foucault's theorizing I will be working with in the next section of this chapter. Here, I go on with an overview into the what I have termed "the second strand" of scholarship on sexualities and schooling.

[9] See my discussion on the key theoretical concepts I will be utilizing in my work -"homophobia", "sexual prejudice", "sexual stigma", "heteronormativity" and "heterosexism" later in this chapter.

Moving from the broader theoretical underpinnings I have just covered and departing from the data collected through ethnographic work in schools, scholars working within the queer theory/poststructuralist/Foucauldian analysis of sexualities and schooling have examined various features of school life, exposing the discourses operating within the school environment, examining how they influence the formation of students' subjectivities and how the students participate in those processes. This work uncovers the heteronormativity present in the school curriculum as well as informal peer cultures (which, themselves play an important role in the processes of learning and subject formation – see, for example, Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford 2003, Renold 2005) and shows how the gendering and sexualization processes work together (Renold 2005), sometimes employing homophobia to achieve their normative effects.

The heteronormative workings of the curriculum have been illustrated in the literature based on ethnographic work in primary schools, recounting examples of sex education guidelines focusing on marriage, family and reproduction and ignoring gay, lesbian and bisexual identities (Renold 2005), as well as examples of schoolwork involving projects on weddings and imaginary futures in which heteronormative imaginings are encouraged (Renold 2005, Wallis and VanEvery 2000, Epstein and Johnson 1998). Ethographic work in primary schools has also indicated the ways in which the students informal activities taking place in schools can be imbued with heterosexual meanings. These include activities such as "kiss-chase" with the younger students (Wallis and VanEvery 2000, Epstein and Sears 1999), to dating and organizing group activities in part around discourses of heterosexual relationships, dating and romance (see the examples of "the band girls" in Epstein, O'Flynn, Telford 2003: 23, 24, and the "diary group" described by Kehily et al. 2002: 170 in Epstein, O'Flynn, Telford 2003: 22).

Finally, research in schools has shown the interrelations between gender and (hetero)sexuality in the processes of identity formation. Thus, Renold (2005) shows how the femininities in her primary school girls samples are formed in relationship with the normative, hyperfeminine, heterosexual femininity "infused" into the girls' cultures from the popular media by either adopting the normative pattern or engaging in one of the forms of resistance. A number of autors (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1996, Nayak and Kehily 1996, Pascoe 2005, 2007) have mapped out the connections between the formation/acting out of children's and adolescents masculinities, (hetero)sexuality and homophobia. Drawing on J. Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990) and the notion of multiple masculinities (Connell 1987 and Brittain 1989), they have pointed to the ways in which homophobic behavior enacted among boys figures in the formation of masculine identities and hierarchies of masculinity within a particular educational setting.[10]

As can be seen, over the several few decades a body of research has begun to be built up investigating the connections of sexualities (normative and non-normative) and schooling, as well as the workings and effects of heteronormativity and homophobia within the school settings, focusing both on the organizational and discursive practices of institutions, informal cultures of the students and their interplay with identity formation processes.

The engagement with existing research as well as with some initial insights into Foucauldian theorizing brings me back to the question posed by the title of this section: is the school, in Foucauldian terms, "one great mechanism destined to say no"? Does the silence I remember from my high-school and college days, as well as the dearth of the scholarly investigation of the topic in the context of Croatia signal exclusively omission and repression?

[10] Although I am primarily citing research conducted in primary schools, I believe (as can be seen in some of the literature on secondary schools as well) that the basic tenets worked out in this body of scholarly work can be applied to secondary educational insititutions, taking into account the specificities of different educational settings.

The theoretical and ethnographic work done so far seems to point to a negative answer. As aforementioned authors (and others) have shown, within school settings sexuality (both normative and non-normative) is present in different areas of school life, from the (official) curriculum to the dynamics of the student groups, serving various purposes and producing various effects. It is to these processes that I turn to in order to investigate their workings in a specific context – that of Republic of Croatia. What has to be reiterated here is the dearth of research dealing with the topic in this particular context – as I have noted, the sources dealing with non-normative schooling and sexuality in Croatia I have been able to identify are scarce and limited. Furthermore, most of the scholarly work on the interconnections between (non-normative) sexualities and schooling I am familiar with comes from the context of Anglo-American countries. What needs to be stressed is not just the truism that every context comes with its specificities, thus making it impossible to simply transpose insights into a phenomenon from one setting to the next, but, as scholarly work into sexuality has shown so far, the fact that even the basic categories one employs to study the phenomena at hand cannot be said to be constructed and to encompass exactly the same meanings everywhere. [11] Thus, this piece of research is aimed at inquiring into the specificities of the wider societal discourses at play in the context of Croatia, taking especially into account its post-socialist and war-ridden history, their interplay in the educational settings that produces heteronormative and homophobic effects, as well as on the processes of identity construction taking place in schools and the ways in which the familiar concepts such as "homosexual", "gay" or "homophobia" get constructed and given meanings in the Croatian social context. Thus, it is intended to complement the more general work on sexualities and schooling and

[11] See, for example, how the notion of "homophobia" comes to be differently conceptualized and carries different meanings in various settings in Murray, D.A.B. (Ed.). (2009b). *Homophobias: Lust and Loathing Across Time and Space.* Durham&London: Duke University Press. On the differences in the conceptualizations of the very sexual categories and meanings when it comes to non-normative sexuality see, for example, Boyce P. (2007). Conceiving Kothis. Men Who Have Sex With Men in India and the Cultural Subject of HIV Prevention. *Medical Anthropology,* 26(2), pp. 175-203; Howe, C. (2009). The Legible Lesbian: Crimes of Passion in Nicaragua. *Ethnos,* 74(3), pp. 361-378; Rofel, L. (1999). Qualities of Desire: Imagining Gay Identities in China. *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies,* 5(4), pp. 451-474.

add to what seems a very limited body of knowledge on sexualities and schooling in the post-socialist region and Croatia more particularly.

Before proceeding with my analysis, in the following section I will map out some of the basic concepts and theoretical tenets I will base my work on.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

In the previous section I have identified what I understand as two corpuses of research into the interconnections of schools and sexuality. In my work, I am informed and draw on both. As I look into the different ways in which non-normative sexualities and schooling merge, interconnect and clash, I will employ the concept of "homophobia" in its various meanings and inflections. In my use of the concept I am lead by the fact that it has long been one of the mooring terms for scholars and activists, as well as in the popular discourse, to discuss and investigate the adversary reactions of individuals, groups and societies towards non-normative sexualities, as well as having a significant political meaning in pointing out to the consequences of such reactions and mobilizing for social change. As can be seen from the previous discussion of the existing scholarly approaches towards the study of the interconnections of (non-normative) sexualities and schooling, in these interconnections several levels come into play: the structural level (and different elements thereof) as well as the personal level. As I will go on to show in the remainder of this section, the concept of "homophobia" since its inception connects the two levels in various ways in its analysis of the negative treatment of non-normative sexualities. Thus, combined with additional theoretical tools, it will enable me to tend to these multiple dimensions as I investigate how (non-

normative) sexualities and the schooling institutions interact in a very specific structural context – that of Croatia in the period between 1997 and 2007.

In 1972 the psychologist George Weinberg introduced the concept of "homophobia" in his book *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* (1972). Beginning his book Weinberg states: "This book is in part an examination of a *disease* called homophobia – an *attitude* held by many nonhomosexuals and perhaps by the majority of homosexuals in countries where there is discrimination of homosexuals" (Weinberg 1972 as cited in Wickberg 2000, emphasis mine). In a personal interview with Gregory Herek, recalling the coining of the term "homophobia", he asserts:

> I coined the word homophobia to mean it was a *phobia* about homosexuals….It was a *fear* of homosexuals which seemed to be associated with a fear of contagion, a fear of *reducing the things one fought for – home and family. It was a religious fear* and it had lead to great brutality as fear always does. (Herek 2004: 7, emphasis mine)

As can be seen from these two quotations, even in the original definition of the term more than one element was present: not only the individual, psychological but also something that could be defined as "social", structural, originating in society's structures and ideologies. Weinberg frames "homophobia" as a disease, a personal fear (irrational, a phobia) but also connects it to social structures like the family and religion.

Similar crossings between the social/structural and the personal can be seen in D. Wickberg's (2000) discussion of the emergence of the concept of "homophobia". Mapping out the development of "homophobia", Wickberg ties it to is the emergence of the concepts relating to other forms of prejudice, namely "racism" and "sexism" in the post World War II Western liberal context. Although these forms of prejudice tend to be viewed as locating the source of prejudice in the social structures and ideologies, the author goes back to some of the seminal texts of the period to show how they were actually conceived of in psychological

terms, as result of a certain type of personality: the "prejudiced personality". Wickberg sees the figure of the "homophobe" as a continuation of the earlier concept of the prejudiced personality and points to a continuity between the conceptualization of "homophobia" as a form of prejudice with the conceptualizations of other forms. From Wickberg's account we can glimpse the locatedness in the individual, the personal and the psychological of the different concepts of prejudice onto which then the concept of "homophobia" is mapped, and, again, the interplay of the personal and the social.

It is this very tension between the individual and the psychological and the social that will lie at the root of the criticisms of the concept of "homophobia" almost from its inception in the 1970s to the present day (see Adam 1998, Wickberg 2000, Herek 2004) and which has great weight when it comes to both the theoretical attempts to analyze homophobia as well as the practical, activist, politically charged attempts to combat it.

Criticism of the concept of "homophobia" that is consistently encountered in the literature (Adam 1998, Wickberg 2000, Herek 2004, Murray 2009a) focuses on the term's emphasis on the "psychological", the "individual" and "personal", the "irrational", as well as on the framing of the negative reactions toward same-sex sexuality as stemming from a "fear" or a "phobia". Thus, one might say, the responsibility for negative reactions is placed on individuals solely and, going back to Foucault's theorizing, the individual's placement in discursive structures and their influence on her/his subject formation and actions is ignored in the playing out of the negative attitudes towards non-normative forms of sexuality. The contributors to an edited volume of anthropological inquiries into "homophobia" (Murray 2009b) point exactly to the structural/discursive "rootedness" of homophobic behaviors/attitudes.

Constance Sullivan-Blum (2009), one of the contributors to the collection, examines the attitudes of members of the mainline Protestant denominations in the United States towards the issue of same-sex marriage. According to Sullivan-Blum, for the part of mainline Protestants closely relying on the Bible and its proscriptions, an accepting stance towards homosexuality would be in direct odds with their primary source of knowledge and one on which they rely to make sense of the world. "Homophobia" on the part of these subjects, then, according to Sullivan-Blum, does not primarily stem from a fear of "homosexuals" themselves but from a perceived threat to the structures and ideologies (an epistemology) underpinning their religious beliefs. Or, if the emotion and reaction is one of the fear of "homosexuals", Sullivan-Blum notes, it is from particular "social structures and discursive fields" that these "psychological roots" of the negative reaction emerge (Sullivan-Blum 2009: 51).

Introducing the concept of "political homophobia", Tom Boellstroff discusses the emergence of "homophobia" in the post-Soeharto Indonesia. According to Boellstroff, "historically [i.e. in the period prior to the fall of Soeharto's political regime], violence against nonnormative men in Indonesia has been rare to a degree unimaginable in many Euro-American societies" (2009: 126). In Boellstroff's account, after the fall of the regime, these same nonnormative men became targets of violent attacks, attacks marked by high levels of negative emotions and perpetrated by religious groups of men. What he identifies as the background behind these attacks is not purely affective, i.e. not simply an individual emotional reaction, however. Neither does it lie only in the religious structures and ideologies. Instead, Boellstroff points to a certain way in which, he claims, the nation at this particular point in Indonesian history was envisaged and the way in which (gendered) citizenship was constructed. Thus, the post-Soeharto Indonesian national identity, Boellstroff claims, came to be increasingly masculinized, the family form emphasized and underlined by the heterosexual

norm. In these socio-historical circumstances, he concludes, expressions of non-normative masculinity could be seen as threatening both the predominating vision of the ideal gendered citizen, as well as the vision of the Indonesian nation. Thus, in this account violence towards non-normative men appears closely linked to both the notion and construction of the nation, as well as the construction of masculinity and, again, cannot be reduced to exclusively personal, individual emotional responses.

The interplay between gender, sexuality and the nation and its connection with negative attitudes and behaviors towards non-normative sexualities noted by Boellstroff in the specific context of Indonesia has, in the more general sense, already been explored by a series of other scholars. I find it necessary to make a digression here and briefly recount some of this work as, along with the concepts used to denote and frame the negativity towards non-normative sexualities that I explicate in this section, it provides an important theoretical backdrop to my specific analysis in the context of the Republic of Croatia in the post-socialist, post-war period that I turn to in the later sections of this work.

As has been noted elsewhere (see Nagel 1998 and Mayer 2000), original analyses of nationalism, the nation and the state did not include the categories of gender and sexuality. However, in the past couple of decades, thanks to a large extent to the contributions of feminist scholarship, nationalism, gender and sexuality have been studied in their mutual connection. What these analyses, as well as the analyses of certain cultural historians, such as George Mosse, have consistently shown is a differential construction of men's and women's identities vis-à-vis the nation coupled with differential roles assigned to the each group in the production and maintenance of the national community and its differentiating toward other communities. Women are, thus, as authors such as F. Anthias and N. Yuval-Davis (1989) note, seen as biological as well as cultural reproducers of the nation, their sexuality controlled by the state and their status as mothers emphasized. Masculinity, on the other hand, is

constructed in terms of bravery and defense of the women, other dependents and the national territory. What are the roots of this differential construction and treatment of women and men and their roles and power positions when it comes to their engagement with the nation and state and what repercussions do these have in terms of sexuality?

In her analysis V. Spike Peterson (1999) goes back to the processes of "early state making" i.e. the period of transition "from kin- based to centralized political orders" (41) to show how binary and oppositional gender identities are institutionalized and normalized by the (masculine) elites, practically (e.g. through the division of power/authority and labor) and symbolically, accorded differential and hierarchical statuses and tied to the family constructed as heterosexual and geared towards the reproduction in the interest of the state. According to Peterson, this order has been carried over in time, thanks to the invention of writing and its effects, and has been present in the modern processes of state-making and nationalism (42, 43). Peterson points out to the insistence of the state on the binary and oppositional gender relations marked by an insistence on heterosexuality: this state of things is important for the reproduction of the population the state insists on. Also, the insistence on heterosexuality makes possible the hierarchical domination of men over women: homosocial bonding strengthens the ties between men, while heterosexuality binds them to women in reproductive families. At the same time, a ban on women's homosexuality ties women, hierarchically, to men. Homosexuality can be said to be banished from citizenship, according to Peterson's account; the citizen is constructed as heterosexual (and reproductive).

In his study of the relationship between gender, sexuality and nationalism, G. Mosse (1985) traces the interconnections of the processes of the formation of the bourgeois class and the nation, intertwining with religious and other cultural influences. In these processes the concept of "respectability", understood as "'decent and correct' manners and morals, as well as the proper attitude toward sexuality" (1) emerges as one of the cornerstones of the identity

of the new bourgeois class. As noted by Mosse, it gets co-opted by nationalism and, resonating with the sense of insecurity and the need for stability and control effected by modernity and its trends, with the need of nationalist ideology to "provide symbols with which people could identify" (16) as well as with the changes in religious notions of morality and the treatment of sexuality works to align nationalism, gender and sexuality in particular ways.

The development of the modern notion of manners and morals can, according to Mosse, be tied to the Protestant religious revivals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They, as Mosse notes, resonate with the needs of the emerging middle classes to distinguish themselves from the remaining echelons of the society as well as to build a distinctive class culture and build security in the face of a fast-paced and changing world. At the same time, notes Mosse, nationalism as an ideology appears, taking over the notion of respectability for its own purposes recounted above. It is to meet their respectable needs that "nationalism and respectability assigned everyone his place in life, man and woman, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner" (16). National stereotype of masculinity as virile but restrained as well as femininity as, among other significations, "the guardian of the continuity and immutability of the nation" (18) emerge. At the same time, the position of the nuclear family gains strength and this type of human community assumes the function of the perpetuation of gender roles and policing sexuality: "[t]he family gave support from below to that respectability which the nation attempted to enforce from below." (19)

At the same time as the delineation of the male and female roles and the strengthening of the (heterosexual) family, the definitions of the "normal" and the "abnormal" arise; the "abnormal" figured as an antipode to the ideals imposed by nationalism and respectability. These definitions and categories, as Mosse (10) notes, serve the puposes of maintaining control and security. As result of the changing religious definitions (with sexual deviance no

longer seen as simply an act but as pertaining to a certain kind of a person) as well as the new developments in the science of medicine the category of the "sexual deviant" is constructed as the "abnormal" and is defined as a particular "type" of person, with specific internalized and external characteristic. This sexual personage functions as an Other to the member of the nation. The "homosexual" appears as one type of this "national Other", excluded from the national membership.

As the accounts of Yuval-Davis, Peterson and Mosse show, the structures, such as the state and ideologies, such as nationalism and religion (see the role of religion in the shaping of the gendered and sexualized citizen in Mosse's account), are intimately linked to the conceptualizations of gender and sexuality in determining who is considered a citizen. They show how these processes can work in heteronormative ways. They resonate ,thus, with the accounts of "homophobia" worked out by C. Sullivan-Blum and T. Boellstroff, where homophobia, understood as negative attitudes and behaviors towards non-heterosexual sexuality, is conceptualized in relation to these very social structures and institutions and ideologies and their relation to the level of the "personal". These interconnections will be one of the focuses of my work as I explore what the individual experiences of homophobia of my respondents say about the structural, social, historical and cultural contextual elements, such as the interplay of nationalism, gendering of the citizen and sexuality in the specific context Croatia in a particular socio-historical period. The period in question was significantly marked by the processes of post-socialist transformation, the war and the processes of nation-building, in which some of the insights provided by Mosse, Yuval-Davis and others loom large, as well as by other structural and discursive influences, such as the impact of supra-national entities and the media. To all of these I turn in more detail in the next chapter. At the same time, on the level of the local and the personal, I will be looking into the processes through which the structural and contextual elements got "translated" into the expressions of

homophobia in the school settings, the consequences the latter might have had for the LGBTQ youth, as well as the effects they might have exerted in the processes of the students' subject formation.

The theoretizations of "homophobia" as provided by Sullivan-Blum and Boellstroff as well as the accounts on the interconnections of the nation and the state with gender and sexuality all stressing the role of social structures, institutions and ideologies in the spawning of the negativity toward non-normative sexualities and pointing to the interplay between the structural and the personal lead me to additional theoretical concepts I will be using in my work: the notions of "sexual stigma", "heterosexism" and "sexual prejudice". G. Herek defines "sexual stigma" as "the shared knowledge of society's negative regard for any nonheterosexual behavior, identity, relationship, or community" (2004: 15), which is "*embodied* in cultural ideologies that define sexuality, demarcate social groupings based on it, and assign value to those groups and their members" (14, emphasis mine). These ideologies, according to Herek, find their expression "through society's structure, institutions, and power relations", as well as get internalized by individuals and expressed by them as "attitudes and actions" (14). The former process has been termed "heterosexism" and the latter "sexual prejudice". Again, like the various conceptualizations of the concept of "homophobia" worked out above, these notions work to examine how the socio-structural and personal interact and influence one another in expression of negative attitudes/behaviors towards non-normative sexualities. They will assist me in my analysis as I examine how the cultural ideologies of the wider society get channeled and worked out through the structures and power relations inherent in the schooling institutions and processes and influence the subjectivation processes, attitudes and behaviors of actors in schooling environments.

While the concept of "homophobia" seems to operate with the notions of "heterosexual" and "non-heterosexual" as salient givens, the notions of "sexual stigma",

"sexual prejudice" and "heteronormativity" introduced by Herek do point out to the process whereby in a society negative value is assigned to non-normative sexualites and differential groups of subjects are formed. Another notion goes even deeper in its analysis, questioning the very construction of the "homosexual"/"heterosexual" categories and binary relations: the concept of "heteronormativity", defined as "the tendency of the contemporary Western sex/gender system to view heterosexual relations as the *norm* or the rule and all other forms of sexual behavior as a *deviation* or a departure from the norm" (Spargo 2001: 68, translation mine) B. Adam (1998) connects the emergence of the term to queer theory, whose object of study S. Seidman (1996: 13 as cited in Adam 1998: 388, 389) locates in "a study of those knowledges and social practices that organize "society" as a whole by sexualizing – heterosexualizing or homosexualizing – bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions". It is to the workings of those very processes that I focus in my specific geographical and historical context in order to map out the ways in which subjects and identities are produced within schooling environments, as well as how these processes engender discriminatory and adverse effect on some while putting others in favorable power positions.

To conclude this part of the discussion on the theoretical frameworks I will be utilizing it is important to take note of the ways in which all of the basic notions explicated so far tend to the intermixing and the interplay between the personal/individual experience/the subject and the social/structural/the organization of power and knowledge. This brings me back to the body of thought I have touched upon in my discussion of the existing research into schooling and sexualities – M. Foucault's theorizing on power and discourse. Here I will briefly add to that discussion to explain some of these concepts more clearly and to connect them to my own work.

In working out his view of history of sexuality in modern Western societies Foucault rejects the notion of repression as the predominant mode of dealing with sexuality. Instead, he claims, from the seventeenth century onwards, repression has been coupled with an intense production of discourses on sexuality emanating from various sources and institutions. "Discourse", as has already been defined above, can be understood as a form of systematic knowledge, shaping the relations of power at the same time as it shapes us as subjects (Epstein and Johnson 1998: 15). Along with medicine, psychiatry and the correctional system, pedagogical institutions are seen as one of the centers of this discursive production (Foucault 1978: 29-30, 33). The purpose of the repression/encouragement of discourse pairing is to make possible the workings of power which, in Foucault's view, is not simply a force operating from "the top down" in juridical way, but rather works in different directions and permeates all parts of the system. Discourses regulating and constructing sexuality, claims Foucault, enable the mechanisms of power to penetrate the finest interstices of one's personality and exert their influence on it (thus shaping one's subjectivity). In the light of my opening section, it is worth to reiterate here that "silence" in Foucault's view functions as part of discourse as well, uncovering power relations and producing effects as much as speech/action does (Foucault 1978: 27).

Following these tenets of Foucault's theorizing and on the heels of researchers into sexuality and schooling such as M.J. Kehily and D. Epstein I will be interested to see what kinds of discourses operate in schools in a specific social and historical context that is the aim of my inquiry, where these discourses emanate from and what effects they engender, what kinds of power mechanisms do they set in motion and how they work to shape the subjectivities of the students (and, subsequently, adults), understanding schools as "site[s] where a nexus of discourses in relation to sexuality are articulated and struggled over;

moral/religious, medical, political and cultural" (Kehily 2002: 39).[12] Doing so will enable me to draw a connection between the areas of the "personal" and the "institutional"/"structural" and to take account of the both elements of this binary present both in the conceptualizations of one of the basic terms I am using – that of "homophobia" as well as in the existing theories and research into the connections between (non-normative) sexualities and schooling.

Utilizing the theoretical concepts and bodies of literature mapped out above, it is the goal of this work to address the dearth of research into the interconnections between sexualities and schooling in the context of the Republic of Croatia. In pursuing this goal I will be examining the personal experiences of young self-identified LGBTQ individuals in the Croatian schools settings. Because of the limited nature of this study, I am primarily focusing on the area of secondary schooling. The time frame for my investigation is determined by my interest to focus on the more recent historical period (1990 onwards) as well as the methodological concerns connected with sampling[13] and will encompass the time period between 1997 and 2007.

With a view of bridging the personal and the contextual, my analysis will be moving between the wider socio-political and cultural context of the Republic of Croatia within the time period I am focusing on, the school as the site of various discursive and organizational practices forming the students' gendered and sexual subjectivities in particular ways, as well as the way these wider processes were experienced by the students on a personal level.

[12] To the specificities of these dicourses in the Croatian setting I turn in more detail in the next chapter, as well as throughout the analysis of the inteview material in the chapters that follow.
[13] As I have decided to undertake my research on young adults, the time frame I will be focusing on will also be determined by the age range I have set for the participants (19-29 years).

The interconnection of (non-normative) sexualities and schooling in the context of the Republic of Croatia is a heavily underresearched area. As I have noted earlier, I have been able to identify only scarce sources dealing specifically with this topic. Furthermore, most of the research I am familiar with seems to be mapping out the issues connected with sexualities and schooling in Anglo-American contexts. Additionally, the scholarship focused on the context of Croatia seems to be focused on the gender relations, mostly analyzing the position of women in Croatian society from various aspects, such as economic and political participation. When it comes to schools, the study of both the workings of gender relations as well as sexuality appears to be very much ignored. It is my conjecture that this fact, as least when the last couple of decades are concerned, has to do with the influences of the right-wing political options and the Catholic church and their traditional views of sexuality, coupled with the notion, elaborated at the beginning of this chapter, of "children as innocent" and schools as asexual. With a view of all that has been said above, this piece of research will work to complement both the existing accounts of the connection between sexuality and schooling more generally, as well as showing how these processes work in a particular post-socialist setting of Croatia. Furthermore, it will add to the existing scholarly accounts on gender, sexuality and education in the particular context of the Republic of Croatia.

1.3. Methodology

My project, as described above, stands at a complex intersection between the personal and the social. It aims at grasping the richness and details of personal experience, while attempting to infer from it the workings of the wider structural and ideological factors as well as power relations within a particular social context. In this sense, I will be moving within the post-structuralist, Foucauldian view of subjectivity as constituted "through material practices that shape bodies as much as minds and involve relations of power" (Weedon 2003: 126). Additionally, the project has a specifically political aim: to uncover the stories previously untold, as well as to contribute to a potential re-working of the school system and its approach to gender and sexuality more generally.

My aim, as defined above, has guided my choice of the methodological approach. I will be moving within the conceptual framework of qualitative analysis utilizing interviews as my method of choice. Commenting on the differences between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 4) note that quantitative approaches tend to abstract from the world and look into broad trends. They investigate measurements and causal relations between abstracted categories and treat "reality" as existing "objectively". In contrast, contend the authors, qualitative methodology emphasizes process and meaning and examines how reality is constructed and given meaning socially. Thus, the aim of my research, as described above, justifies the use of qualitative methodology as a method of choice.

In the process of inquiring into the experiences of young LGBTQ individuals I employed the method of semi-structured interviews. My decision was guided by the fact that I expected to enter the research process with some initial questions and areas I wanted to investigate. However, as I sought to minimize the inevitable imposition of my point of view

and my categories on the process and am aiming at getting at the personal meanings the participants give to their memories as well as at capturing as much detail of their experience as I could, I refrained from overly structuring the interviews.

For the purposes of this research I conducted formal interviews with eleven self-identified LGBTQ individuals: seven men and four women, out of which six persons identify as gay, two as bisexual, one as queer, one as lesbian and one "does not identify in terms of categories". The age range of the persons interviewed stretched from nineteen to twenty-nine years of age, with the larger part of my sample belonging to a younger age group (nineteen to twenty-four years of age). The persons I interviewed originate both from Zagreb as well as from different regions of Croatia, both coastal and continental. Consequently, some attended secondary school in Zagreb and some in other Croatian towns. I included questions on my respondents' early childhood and families of origin, the context of the location where they grew up and attended school, the processes of their early identity formation, the different aspects of their school experiences (e.g. the relationships with peers, the knowledge of homophobic incidents and behavior within the schools, the curriculum, as well as the behavior of the teachers), as well as their attitudes toward the current climate for LGBTQ- identified individuals in Croatia.

Following earlier analyses of the intersections of schooling and sexualities (e.g. Kehily 2002, Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford 2003, Renold 2005) at the local level of the school as an institution, I looked into several areas of school life and practice: the official curriculum, the so-called "hidden curriculum" and the processes taking place in students' own peer groups. I take the official curriculum to mean the knowledge proscribed by the state and its educational authorities, contained in textbooks and taught as part of the official course content, whereas I understand the "hidden curriculum" as different organizational practices within an institution as well as the ways in which the people within that institution communicate with one another,

including the behavior of the school administration and the teachers' communication with the students. I worked to examine the ways in which these reflect the discourses operating on the broader, social level as well as how they work to shape the students' geneder(ed) and sexual subjectivities in particular ways. Through my analysis I show these processes to, at times, have heteronormalizing effects.

In reaching my interviewees I employed my own social networks as well as the social networks of some of my respondents. Taking into account possible ethical and practical issues surrounding research with minors, only young adults were included. For reasons of the protection of my respondents' identities, pseudonyms are used throughout.

Limitations of the research stem from its limited range as well as the nature of the sample. Due to time constraints, I was not able to interview more respondents or to adjust the gender and age distribution of the group more evenly. Thus, in this account, the experiences of and members of the younger age group are overrepresented. Also, I did not have a chance to interview persons identifying as transgender, transsexual or intersexual and gain a view into their schooling experiences. The fact that I utilized my personal and social networks in reaching potential respondents might have influenced my account in several ways. The respondents might have been more willing to share different aspects of their life stories with me than they would have been had I utilized more impersonal sampling methods, such as posting calls on Internet forums. Furthermore, as some of my networks are civil-society related, this may also mean reaching respondents who are more involved in activism themselves (or more aware of the civil society issues) and thus, again, affecting both their willingness to speak to me as well as their views and analyses. Finally, all of my respondents are college educated and display an awareness of both the wider social issues as well as LGBTQ-related ones. Some of them are knowledgeable of the concepts pertaining to gender/sexuality. These facts were also sure to shape their analyses and responses.

Interviewing a different group of people, I would've collected a different set of stories and analyses.

Starting from the accounts of my respondents, I attempt to identify some of the processes at play at the intersection of (non-normative) sexualities and schooling in the context of the Republic of Croatia in the post-socialist period. The conclusions I reach are in no way general or all-encompassing. Taking into account the dearth of research into sexualities and schooling (especially the interplay between non-normative sexualities and schooling) in the Croatian context they do, however, offer a glimpse into some of the elements of the phenomena at hand. Further research, both in the qualitative as well as in the quantitative vein, will be necessary in the future to gain a more detailed and exhaustive picture.

I begin my analysis in the next section by mapping out the contours of the broader social, political and cultural context of the Republic of Croatia in the period after the transition from the socialist regime in which the processes at the level of schools were taking place.

2. "MAN, WOMAN, CHILDREN AND GOD" – GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POST-SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

As has been noted in the previous chapter, schools as social insititutions can be understood as the sites of both the reproduction and production of gender(ed) and sexual(ized) identities (Mac an Ghaill 1996, Epstein and Johnson 1998, Renold 2000). Moreover, as M.J. Kehily (2002: 39) has astutely pointed out, they function as "nodes" in which various discourses – politics, religion, the media – intersect and collide to form the sexual identities of the subjects inhabiting their spaces. As the time frame of my inquest into the patterns of homophobia (and, conversely, the possible heteronormativity) in the Croatian school system encompasses the period between the years 1997 and 2007 – a time period marked by intense political, social and cultural shifts, I will dedicate this chapter to an analysis of the interplay of those shifts, while at the same time giving an initial glimpse into some of the discursive practices of the schools themselves in order to map out the ways in which these discursive interconnections shaped the gender(ed) and sexual(ized) subjectivities of the students, paying specific attention to the patterns of heteronormativity and homophobia in the wider societal discourses as well as their changes over time.

2.1. Post-communism, The Nation and the Regulation of Gender/Sexuality

The period following the year 1989 has marked an important political, economic and socio-cultural change in Europe as Communist regimes in a series of Central and Eastern

European countries[14] gave way to alternative, multiparty political systems and neoliberal economies. Scholars have responded by looking into the mechanisms and effects of the shifts in the political and economic systems, the conceptualizations of citizenship in the newly created social systems as well as the new cultural meanings prompted by the economic and social changes. Under the influence of feminist analyses gender and sexuality have been recognized as important categories in these examinations. Thus analysts have looked into how the position of women and men had changed in relation to the previous socio-political systems in terms of their participation in the workforce and political decision-making, in terms of imagining and the relative positions of genders in the family, as well as in terms of tracing the processes through which men and women had been variously constructed and positioned in terms of citizenship. Sexuality has been shown to play an important role in these processes in various ways.

In their analysis of the post-1989 changes in the area they term East Central Europe, encompassing countries such as Hungary, Croatia and Serbia, Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2000) point to the connection between the regulation of sexuality (more specifically focusing on reproduction in their analysis) and the processes of state-making and authority legitimation in newly created states, after periods of transformation and rupture. Harking back to Foucault's notion and theory of "biopower", Gal and Kligman recognize the importance for the state of regulating the bodies of their populations, including the strategies that aim at sexuality. By the eighteenth century, they claim, the population is seen as the main source of state's power (Gal and Kligman 2000: 18). Thus, various parts of the states' governmental apparatuses, as well as individuals, families and social movements get involved into discourses centered on sexuality and the related processes of definition and regulation as well as resistance and subversion (20, 21). Discursive contentions over sexuality, the authors

[14] As is the case with other geo-political terms, the use of this one is contentious. I will, however, not discuss this problem here.

claim, can take place at any temporal point but are particularly pronounced in the moments of what they term the "political rupture" (21) as the discourses on sexuality (or, more particularly, reproduction) are utilized by the political actors for various purposes, such as the justification of the new political system and the establishment of a relationship between the state and its subjects. Finally, and importantly here, Kligman and Gal identify nationhood as an especially salient form of the aforementioned state-subjects relationship and emphasize the importance of the reproductive discourses and practices for these narratives as they work to create the boundaries of a nation (21, 22) and determine which subjects are to be considered its rightful members.

A series of scholars dealing with the events taking place in the area of the former Yugoslavia after the year 1990 (and before) have analyzed the processes highlighted by Gal and Kligman with respect to the former Yugoslav republics and now new states.

Discussing the state-formation processes in the post-communist East and Central Europe Žarana Papić (1999: 154) identifies "the ideology of state and ethnic nationalism (…) bec[oming] the most dominant building force" in those processes. She locates nationalism as expressed most intensely in the area comprising the former Yugoslavia. According to the analyses of the pre- and post-war situation in the states comprising the former Yugoslavia[15], with the stated exception of Macedonia and, to some extent, Slovenia, the new states in the area come to be imagined by their respective ruling elites as "pure" national states. What this means in practice is the establishing of the national borders – borders excluding those on the outside, as well as those on the inside who do not fit the mould of the newly established model of the "ideal/acceptable" citizen. As Kligman and Gal, as well as others theorizing the

[15] See, for example the chapters contributed by Žarana Papić, Tatjana Pavlović and Vlasta Jalušić in the volume *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet and the chapter "Sexing the Nation/Desexing the Body" by Julie Mostov in the volume *Gender Ironies of Nationalism* edited by Tamar Meyer.

connections between nationalism, gender and sexuality (see for example the work of Yuval-Davis and Anthias, G. Mosse and V.S. Peterson discussed in the previous chapter) have shown, the construct of what I have termed here the "ideal/acceptable" citizen is gendered and sexed.

In the context of the former Yugoslav states, including Croatia, under the influence of both the socialist system's legacies, as well as the processes of the post-communist transitions and, importantly, the wars, this has meant a construction of characteristic gender/sex arrangements:[16] as Papić (1999), Pavlović (1999), Mostov (2000) and others have noted, in the turmoil of the war and prompted by ethno-nationalist ideology women, men and sexuality come to be constructed in a particular way.

As Kligman and Gal (2000: 25) assert, biological reproduction is an important element in most of the variants of ethno-nationalism: "For most forms of (ethno)nationalism, making the members of the nation is not only a symbolic classifying process but also very much a material, corporeal one (…)." In this sense, in the war and the post-war period in the area of the former Yugoslavia women come to be conceptualized as the reproducers of the nation - in both the biological sense, as mothers, as well as the cultural, sense as the "carriers", guardians and "conduits" of sorts of the tradition of a particular ethnic group. Additionally, as various authors have noted, the discourses of the nation and reproduction in the circumstances of ethno-nationalism often take the form of the narrative of the "Dying of the Nation" (Gal and Kligman 2000: 27; for the context of Croatia see, for example, Đurin 2009) – the nation is in danger of disappearing if the number of its members fails to increase. Consequently, great stress is placed on motherhood, reproduction (and, in extension, reproductive sexuality) and the family (understood as the traditional, opposite sexed family). According to T. Pavlović, in

[16] What has to be noted, however, that these patterns are in no way limited to the area of the former Yugoslavia, as can be seen from the scholarly work done more generally on the connections between nationalism, gender and sexuality as well as the work on different geographical areas.

the post-communist period "[i]n Croatian nationalist ideology (…) the patriarchal nuclear family becomes the pillar of the Nation" (1999: 136). At the same time, men come to be conceptualized in a certain way as well. Pavlović writes about the construction of a cult of hypermasculine masculinity in the context of the wartime and post-war Croatia: the man in the image of "the father/defender/warrior" (1999: 134, 144).

The reproduction discourse in the post-war Croatia ties in with another factor: the newly strengthened position and role of the Catholic Church. The position of the Church in the socialist period was marked by suppression. The strengthening of its influence in the post-socialist period can be ascribed to different factors. Đurin (2009) stresses the role of the Catholic Church in the preservation of Croatian national identity in the period of state socialism (which did not show tolerance towards the assertion of separate and individual national identities), as well as its role as the point of differentiation of Croatian identity from the identities of other (non- Catholic) ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia and of the new regime from the old one (citing Salecl 2002: 35 for the latter). Because of these reasons, as well as its potential to reach the masses, contents Đurin, the Church becomes an important factor in the creation of the dominant social discourses in the context of the post-war Croatia, including the discourses focused on sexuality.

2.2. "One More Child for the State"[17]

The paradigm of the "Dying Nation", already mentioned above, becomes the center of the Croatian sexuality discourses in the war and the post-war periods. Thus, in 1992 the Ministry for Renewal was established with the Department for Demographic Renewal headed

[17] Pavlović 1999: 143.

by Don Ante Baković, a priest and "one of the most militant, nationalist voices against abortion, contraception and feminist groups in Croatia" (Mostov 2000: 99). In 1994 President Tudjman cites demographic renewal as "one of the important goals for the future of the Croatian people" (Tudjman 1994 cited in Đurin 2009: 141, my translation). In 1996 National Program for Demographic Revival was adopted, stressing the reproduction, motherhood, the (heterosexual) family (Đurin 2009: 142, Mostov 2000:99) and the "original values of this basic origin of life, the man and the nation" (National Program for Demographic Renewal 1996: 50 in Đurin 2009: 142, my translation). Đurin notes the fact that the Program aims at the young generation and schools as well: "Picture books for children as well as elementary school textbooks need to be enriched with the themes of marriage, family, child-rearing, mother, father. A positive attitude towards the woman, sexuality and new human life needs to be included in the textbooks." (National Program 1996: 41 in Đurin 2009: 142, my translation). Religious influences, along with the participation of clergy in the "demographic renewal" movement, can be felt in schools as well as, due to an agreement between the state and the Vatican, religious instruction enters practically every school in the country and sexuality with an emphasis on reproductive sexuality, as Đurin (1999: 144) points out, becomes the material of Religious Education textbooks.

As can be seen, the wider social discourses on sexuality in Croatia in the war and the immediate post-war periods can be read as heteronormative, with their emphasis on the (heterosexual) family, reproduction and marriage intertwined with religious values. These, in turn, as the examples recounted below from the conversations with several of my respondents point to, "trickle down" to schools – settings understood, as I have stated earlier, as "nodes" of intersection of various societal discourses (Kehily 2002: 39).

Ivan and Andrej are twenty eight years old and Martina is one year their senior. All of them attended secondary school in the more immediate post-war period, the late 1990s,

Andrej in Zagreb, Croatia's capital, Ivan in a larger industrial Northern coastal town and Martina in a small town near Zagreb. Despite the differences in settings, their schooling experiences show certain similarities.[18] Answering my question whether sexuality was ever mentioned in the school curriculum, Andrej recalls:

> Yes. We were the first generation to start learning about sexuality, in RE no more no less, in the seventh grade of elementary school. !!!It was [taught by] a teacher who was very nice but extremely conservative, so much so that she was embarrassed to tell us about anything. I can remember it: it was lesson number seven in the textbook. So every other lesson she would explain everything: "Jesus did this, and then Matthew did that…". But when it came to lesson number seven, on sexuality – everything was in there: masturbation and so on – she said "Here, read it by yourselves. I'm here if you have any questions.". So, o.k., we were reading – she was ashamed to teach it,… the RE teacher! That was elementary school RE. Biology – zero, only stamens and polen. Nothing. I mean, our fifth grade teacher would say: "Men have penises, women have vaginas."[19]

In secondary school Andrej's insight into the themes that had to do with sexuality was limited to the material taught by his freshman year Biology teacher, "outside the curriculum", on her own accord and a Biology class period dedicated to human reproduction in the fourth grade in the vein of "(…) the testes do this, the ova do that, and then it comes together…and that was it!". [20]

Martina's memory is similar. She, too, experienced the combination of RE and sex education, with the focus on, as she recalls, "fertile and non fertile days" and the supremacy of "the natural birth control methods". Again, as in Andrej's case, this is combined with material taught in Biology classes. Reflecting on her own experiences, she contends:

> There [in RE instruction] reproduction is the only point of existence and the coming together of the male and the female and if you don't want reproduction, you have fertile and non-fertile days. And that's the entire universe. (…) And in Biology, you don't have this ideological element being imposed on you; there's simply that physical, mechanical moment, but the bottom line is the same. That's the way it's explained to you. And nothing outside of that comes within view. You don't hear anything except that. (Martina, 29)[21]

[18] It has to be mentioned that some of the respondents answers recall their elementary schooling as well.
[19] Andrej, personal interview April 2012.
[20] Andrej, personal interview April 2012.
[21] Martina, parsonal intervie April 2012.

Ivan refers to the teaching on sexuality in elementary school as "sterile and minimal". In high-school, as he says, it was reduced to "male and female reproductive cells" and a general silence in Religious Education, interrupted with rare discussions on the moral attitudes of the Church on matters of sexuality "which are clear in considering sexuality not quite acceptable before marriage".

These statements seem to collectively point to several conclusions. Firstly, in the late 1990s there seems to be reticence, silence when it comes to mentioning sexuality within school walls – "sterile and minimal", "zero", "nothing", with some of the teachers embarrassed to teach about it, as Andrej's example shows. Secondly, when it takes place, it does so within the limits of biology and religion: the combined discourse of reproduction, conceptualized as heterosexual, and the discourses of religious moral values, some of which, again, espouse heteronormativity.

Finally, and importantly, recalling my own schooling experience recounted at the beginning of chapter 1 – this "zero","nothing", seems especially to refer to non-normative sexuality: none of my respondents attending school in the late 1990s recalls any mention thereof within the school curriculum or class content. Nor is the topic discussed in class, or found in textbooks. Andrej says:

> That topic never came up. It was before the first Pride. Actually, it was… when was the first Pride, 2002? I can't remember. I don't think so. If there was, it was maybe one sentence, like "That's something alien, a subculture we have no contact with" and that was it. So, a complete taboo. Complete tabooization. (…)[22]

Andrej draws a direct connection between the wider socio-political discourses espousing nationalism and "tradition" and the treatment of non-normative sexualities in the educational system of the latter 1990s. Explaining further, he goes on:

[22] Andrej, personal interview April 2012.

> We still had textbooks influenced by the 1990s then. After that set of politicians was removed, that was nationalist and conservative**,** things didn't just change right away, it wasn't like here, have the same kind of textbooks that they have in Germany and the Netherlands, it continued [its influence], it flowed over in a way [into the new era]. Whether that process has finished by now, I don't know. But, basically, that wasn't…there were no textbook chapters on that. And whether there was any discussion on that, if there was, I don't remember it, and if there was, it must have been really short. (Andrej, 28)[23]

2.3. The 1990s – "You Must Be a Croat Before All Else"[24]

Andrej's account, as well as experiences of Martina and Ivan, resonate with the rare written accounts of the treatment of non-normative sexualities in the 1990s post-war Croatian society.[25]

Writing about the position of gays and lesbians in the 1990s Croatia, Dean Vuletić quotes the statement of Croatia's almost 10-year president, Franjo Tuđman, uttered in 1990, during the campaign for Croatia's first multiparty elections:

> [h]omosexuality has also been a constant phenomenon ever since the humanity has existed. Therefore, whether you prohibit it or acknowledge it, it is ever present. From a humanistic point of view it is better to acknowledge it and to make it as unnoticeable as possible. (Vuletić 2008: 293, 294)

The same statement is reiterated by Tatjana Pavlović (1999) in her text Feminists, Nationalists, and Homosexuals, in which she reflects on the gender and sexuality politics in the 1990s Croatia. Both authors use the quote to illustrate what they see as the predominant social position of the 1990s Croatian gays and lesbians.

The 1990s, as both Vuletić and Pavlović claim, are the period of "invisibility" for Croatia's lesbian and gay population. The position of gays and lesbians is no concern of the

[23] Andrej, personal interview April 2012.
[24] Pavlović 1999: 152.
[25] The scarcity of these sourses being a topic and a meaninful clue in itself.

new Croatian (right-oriented) govermnent[26]. As both authors note, the post-1990 Croatian gender and sexuality politics, in concert with nationalist ideology and the processes of the formation of the ethno-national identity of the new "subject of the Croatian nation", assigns to homosexuality the place of the Other – where the woman is primarily conceptualized as the mother, the man as the macho "warrior" and an emphasis put on the marriage and reproduction, homosexuality is seen as a threat to thus envisioned "order of things". "The homosexual", contend both authors, shares this position of the Other with members of other ethnic groups, primarily the Serbs, as well as the West, perceived as an influence threatening to corrupt the traditional, wholesome Croatian values. Activism and gay and lesbian social life exist throughout this period: 1992 saw the founding of the first Croatian gay and lesbian organization, LIGMA, 1997 the establishing of the lesbian group Kontra. (Vuletić 2008: 302) In 1998 a publishing house translating and publishing lesbian-themed books emerged and in 1999 the first Croatian gay club opened its doors. (302, 303). However, as Vuletić and Pavlović note, gay and lesbian issues are not part of the political agenda; gays and lesbians do not have political influence and, to a certain extent, live "hidden" lives.[27] [28]

In the light of this account, seen in connection to what has earlier been said in this chapter on the formation of normative gender(ed) and sexual identities in wartime and the post-war Croatia, the experiences of those of my respondents who are now in their late twenties don't surprise. Rather, they seem to point to the ways in which the larger political, religious and social discourses working in heteronormative ways get "translated" and function in the educational settings of the period. To the question of the effects of these discourses on identity formation processes of my respondents as well as to some of the strategies of

[26] Nor, as Vuletić (2008: 304) notes, to a significant extent to the oppositional parties of the period.
[27] Thus, for example, Vuletić notes the unwillingness in the period in question even of some of the gay and lesbian activists to make their identities known in public for fear of the possible negative consequences.
[28] There is a "private" world of friendship networks, parties, cruising spots and the public world of invisibility, as Pavlović notes (1999: 146, 147).

subversion and resistance employed in the face of the predominant norm I will turn in the following chapters. In the remainder of this section, I will map out some of the larger contextual changes taking place at the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000s.

2.4. After 2000 – A Brave New World?

In the passage quoted earlier, a discussion with one of my respondents, Andrej, of the treatment of sexuality in the school curriculum in the period of his schooling, Andrej makes a reference to the year 2002 and the first Pride march. In his account there seems to be a more or less clear break between "before" and "after" the mentioned event. This motive is repeated in my conversations with virtually every of my respondents. Both in our discussions about the more general position of the LGBTQ people and community in Croatia and, in some cases more specifically, when it comes to school environments, the respondents spot the change taking place in the course of the last ten years, one, they claim, with some reservations, for the better.

As Dean Vuletić (2008: 306) notes, and as has already been mentioned in Chapter 1, the year 2000 marked a significant change in Croatian politics. Following the death of president Tudjman in late 1999, it was the end of the rule of the right-oriented HDZ[29]. The previously ruling party was replaced in power by a center-left coalition whose politics, claims Vuletić, rejected nationalism and authoritarianism and was geared towards the integration into the European Union. According to Vuletić, the changes on the level of the government were paralleled by the change in the political attitude towards gays and lesbians. Thus, SDP, one of the party in the coalition, had members promoting gay and lesbian issues in the parliament

[29] Croatian Democratic Union.

and in the 2001 local elections one of the contending parties made a direct reference to gays and lesbians in their campaign (Vuletić 2008: 306, 307). The political changes were followed by the legal ones – the law on same-sex unions was passed in 2003 and followed by a series of others banning discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (Vuletić 2008: 308, Izvještaj o stanju seksualnih i rodnih manjina 2010), making Croatia's system of the protection of gay and lesbian rights one of the most "progressive" in CEE at the time (Vuletić 2008: 308). The changes were reflected as well in an increased presence of gay and lesbian issues in the media and the appearance of more gay-friendly public places (Vuletić 2008: 309). In the activist sense, new NGOs dealing with the issues of gender and sexuality came to life in the course of the past decade: the gay group Iskorak, lesbian group Kontra, Queer Zagreb – an organization oriented towards culture, and Zagreb Pride, to name a few. And, most importantly, beginning in 2002, Zagreb has been host to the Pride march, held annually for the past eleven years.

Again, the experiences of my respondents reflects some of these larger socio-political shifts. Pride seems to be a watershed moment. Similarly as Andrej, Jakov captures this moment of change:

> (…) I went to school..when?...in 2008…no, from 2004 to 2008…to high-school.. and it was right then when it all started moving…Iskorak gained significance and all the Prides and people started talking about it [homosexuality] and I think the situation now is quite different. (Jakov, 22, small rural town, continental Croatia)[30]

Denis, a young man of Jakov's age, comments on the greater availability of what he terms "official" gay places – places for socializing such as bars and clubs, but also of various materials (on gay issues) as well as workshops "so that people can come and discuss their problems"[31]. In Denis's view, this makes the processes of "initiation" into non-heterosexual

[30] Jakov, personal interview April 2012.
[31] Denis, personal interview April 2012.

identities easier. He is cautious against overgeneralizing though, allowing for the possibility of the change being more pronounced in Zagreb, the capital, than other parts of Croatia.

Comparing the situation ten years ago and today, in terms of activism and change, Josip says:

> I don't know, when the Prides started, it was ten years ago, I was fourteen so I'd already started thinking about all that, but… I mean, I saw it as something that was out of the question for me, like "I would never go there", it's something too daring, too brave… and now it's almost become mainstream, so… I think we've made a big step in the past ten years… but there's… not an equal amount but much more work still to be done. (Josip, 24, larger coastal town, Northern coastal area)[32]

Along with an obviously valuable impact of activism and the results thereof, all of the young people I talked to almost without exception cite the media as an important agent of change, helping to both place LGBTQ issues on the agenda, but also to increase visibility and, in a sense, educate the general public. Or, as one of my respondents, Ivan, has put it: "(…) today when I tell my mom someone's gay, she knows what it means, whereas ten years ago she had no clue. So I think it's a big change. Ultimately, my eighty year old grandmother from […] knows what "gay" and "lesbian" stands for."[33] Ivan believes the greater presence of LGBTQ issues in the media has prompted at least some of the young people to reflect on the topic, search for information and become more accepting and open when it comes to non-normative sexuality.

Although temporal coincidence between the aforementioned shifts in Croatian public discourses on LGBTQ issues and the intensification of the relations between Croatia and the European Union[34] can be noted, it is interesting to mention the fact that only one of my respondents makes the connection between the two. Almost all of the others explain the positive changes as the result of the combined effort of NGO and personal activism and

[32] Josip, personal interview April 2012.
[33] Ivan, personal interview April 2012.
[34] http://www.mvep.hr/ei/default.asp?ru=132&sid=&akcija=&jezik=1.

increased media coverage. However, since much of Croatia's politics since the year 2000 has been geared toward the accession process and the harmonization of Croatia's laws and policies with those of the EU, I see this international influence as a probable motive for at least part of the modifications in the public discourse of the past ten years.

Not all shifts and changes in the period following the year 2000 can be said to be positive, however. As was already mentioned in the preceding chapter, and as can be gleaned from both the media as well as from the reports on the state of sexual and gender minorities, Croatia's LGBTQ population still faces negative attitudes, discrimination and harassment. Thus, the results of the European Values Study for 2008 (Rimac 2010) show approximately 67% of Croats to believe that homosexuality can never be approved of, a drop of only one percent from the same research conducted in 1999. In a sample of 999 Croatian high-school students surveyed in 2010 (GONG 2010) just under 30% of the girls and over 60% of the boys agreed with the statement that homosexuality is a disease, while 67% of the students agreed with the statement that homosexual persons should be banned from public activity because it negatively influences the upbringing of the youth. In the political life, as well, negative attitudes are aired, the 2006 parliamentary debate on the draft law on registered partnership being an instructive example. During the debate one could, for instance, hear that "[t]the general good requires the laws to acknowledge, support and protect the marriage between a man and a woman as the basis of the family, as the basic cell of the society."(B. Šolić, HDZ parliamentary member, as cited in Bagić and Kesić 2006: 98, my translation). Another parliamentary member ventured a claim that heterosexuality is the basis of the entire natural world, because "if there was homophilia, if the equals attracted and the opposites repulsed one another, the world would cease to exist" (Lucija Čikeš, HDZ parliamentary member, as cited in Bagić and Kesić 2006: 99, my translation). Connecting these examples to the discussion of homophobia in Chapter 1, I understand them as manifestations of what could

be termed "structural homophobia", my conclusion underscored by another statement uttered as part of the same parliamentary debate:

> PM Lučin said that we who have differing opinions on this topic [registered partnerships] are homophobic due to fear or ignorance. […] This is absolutely incorrect. I am neither afraid nor ignorant. […] I was opposed [to the draft law] because it wants to give to two unions that are neither biologically or anthropologically the same [,] that do not have the same meaning [,] the same features and the same rights. (M. Mlinarić, HDZ parliamentary member, as cited in Bagić and Kesić 2006: 98, my translation)

In addition to these examples, individual members of the church, as well as members of the sports establishment and various other public figures have in recent years been known to target the LGBTQ community with defamatory and discriminatory statements[35]. Furthermore, gays and lesbians in Croatia still face job discrimination[36] as well as various forms of violence.[37]

As was the case with the more immediate post-war period of the late 1990s, the changes taking place within the time frame beginning with the year 2000 on the wider socio-political level reflect on the discourses and practices of educational institutions. My interviews with the younger respondents - the young people who are now in their early twenties, point to a sense of a greater visibility of LGBTQ issues in the school environments, both when it comes to the official instruction as well as within the more informal student-teacher and student-student communication and praxes. However, as the insight into the wider societal processes has shown, the shifts cannot be said to be either one-directional or single-faceted: the discourses on non-normative sexuality change and transform at the same time as the vestiges

[35] For an insight into these, see the annual reports on the situation of gender and sexual minorities published by Kontra and Iskorak.

[36] For a recent example, a case of discrimination of an employee of one of Croatian higher education institutions, see http://www.gay.hr/magazin/8138.

[37] See Izvještaji o stanju seksualnih i rodnih manjina, as well as Pikić, A. i Jugović, I. (2006). Nasilje nad lezbijkama, gejevima i biseksualnim osobama u Hrvatskoj: izvještaj istraživanja. Zagreb: Kontra. http://www.Kontra.hr/cms/documents/NASILJE_NAD_LGB_HR.pdf (date of access 31 October 2010)

of the older ones are still present. That is fact that has to be taken into account on the level of schools as well.

After having provided, in broad strokes, an overview of the wider socio-political context of Croatia and some of the main discourses being produced and circulated on the broader societal level in the specific time period that is the focus of my analysis, as well as offering some glimpses into the ways in which these discourses were worked out and translated in the school context, it is to the more detailed analysis of the latter that I turn to in the following chapter.

3. THE HOMOPHOBIA IN CROATIAN SCHOOLS – PRESENCES AND ABSENCES

In Chapter 1 of this work I have drawn out some of the basic theoretical frameworks and concepts within which my work in the remaining sections will be located. I have identified two lines of research dealing with the intersections of (non-normative) sexualities and schooling. The first line of work is focused primarily on the negative personal/psychological consequences faced by LGBTQ students in school settings. While this line of research does reflect on the institutional factors as well (such as the absence of LGBTQ-related topics, for example), as the critiques leveled at it (see Talburt, Rofes and Rasmussen 2004) have pointed out, it seems to take both the subjects' identities and institutions as "essentialized" and "fixed", thus precluding the analysis of the complexity and agency of the subjects, as well as of the ways in which institutions and the subjects work to mutually constitute each other.

The other body of work departs from feminist and queer theory, as well as taking a psychoanalytic and poststructuralist approach. Building on the work of M. Foucault, it analyzes schools as influenced by the wider social discourses such as politics and the media (see Epstein and Johnson 1998), but also acknowledging the discourses and processes at the level of the local site of the school. Within this line of inquiry, schools are seen as sites where identities of the subjects involved in the schooling processes are not only reproduced but actively produced as well (see Mac an Ghaill 1996, Epstein and Johnson 1998, Renold 2000). Furthermore, schools, in this context, are understood as "site[s] where a nexus of discourses in relation to sexuality are articulated and struggled over; moral/religious, medical, political and cultural" (Kehily 2002: 39). As noted before, in my work I draw on both, tending to the ways

in which the personal and the societal/structural elements intersect in the formation of students as particular types of gender(ed) and sexual(ized) subjects as well as in the (re)production of knowledge(s) and power relations within the school settings that might have heteronormative and homophobic effects.

In going about this, I defined the basic theoretical concepts and frameworks I will be utilizing. The mooring notion I am departing from is that of "homophobia", understood as negative attitudes and behaviors towards non-normative sexualities. As seen in Chapter 1, it is conceptualized not simply on the level of the personal, as an irrational fear or phobia, but as having its roots in societal structures and ideologies, such as nationalism and religion. The notion of homophobia is supplemented with the concepts of "sexual stigma", "heteronormativity" and "sexual prejudice", defined as negative social attitudes towards non-normative sexualities expressed "through society's structure, institutions, and power relations" , internalized by individuals and expressed by them as "attitudes and actions" (Herek 2004: 14), as well as with the concept of "heteronormativity", as the tendency of the Western sex/gender systems to view heterosexuality as the norm/rule and homosexuality as a deviation/departure from the rule (Spargo 2001: 68). My analysis is, furthermore, informed by the theoretical concepts developed by M. Foucault, especially his theoretizations of power and discourse. Emanating from both "above" and "below" and present in all parts of the system, power, contends Foucault, is both repressive and productive (Foucault 1978). Discourse in the Foucauldian sense, can be defined as a form of systematic knowledge, shaping the relations of power at the same time as it shapes us as subjects (Epstein and Johnson 1998: 15). Importantly, both silence and "speech" are understood as elements of discourse, both producing particular effects.

In the interplay between the social/structural, i.e. the discourses on the wider societal level and the personal/the processes of the gender(ed) and sexual(ized) subject formation, I

have identified the importance of the nation and state as well as the ideologies of nationalism and religion in the construction of the gendered and sexualized subject. These processes, as I show in chapter 2, come to fore as especially important in the context of Croatia in the period I am focusing on, which was marked by both post-socialist changes as well as the war and the formation of new nation-states in the area of the former Yugoslavia. To some of these processes, delineated as the formation of specific models of masculinity and femininity, an emphasis on heterosexual reproduction and the family, and the construction of the homosexual as the "invisible" and silenced Other to the nation, and their effects in the schooling environment presented as the "absence" of sexuality (especially non-normative) and its treatment in the form of the biologized discourses of heterosexual reproduction and the moral (and, again, reproductive) discourse of religion, I have already turned in the previous chapter. I continue that analysis here, marking out the ways in which the aforementioned "older" (nationalist, conservative, traditional) discourses play out in schools in the more recent period. I attend as well to the changes in the wider society after the year 2000: the changes in the government and the processes of the European integration and the concomitant improvement in the political and social position as well as greater visibility in Croatian society of the LGBTQ community and the ways these influenced the praxes and the subject-formation processes at the level of the school.

To emphasize: on the basis of the earlier theoretical work on the interconnections of (non-normative) sexualities and schooling, especially the body of work based on feminist and queer theory and poststructuralism, as well as departing from the basic concepts delineated above, in analyzing my conversations with my respondents I will look into how the discourses of the wider society (especially political, religious and the media) get worked out in the educational environments, how they interact with the processes and discourses on the local levels of the schools, how gender/sexual hierarchies and subjectivites in schools are formed

and how all of the mentioned processes potentially work in heteronormative and homophobic ways. In that, at the level of the school, I focus my attention on several discursive levels: that of the official curriculum, understood as the knowledge proscribed by the state and its educational authorities, contained in textbooks and taught as part of the official course content as well as the level of the informal students' peer cultures, recognized, as I have previously noted, as an important element in the processes of students' learning and subject formation.

3.1. "But It Was Always Somewhere In The Background… Between The Lines, Right?"

My initial inquest into the interconnections between non-normative sexualities and schooling began even before my embarking on this project. Motivated by the seeming "silence" on the topic, as B.A. student of Education I started researching the literature on the topic, attempting to map out this area of inquiry. Most of the literature I encountered in this phase belonged to what I have described as the body of scholarly work approaching the interplay of non-normative sexualities and schooling from a positivist point of view, understanding institutions and individuals as "fixed" and focusing on personal dimension of homophobia – mapping out the acts and consequences of direct verbal and physical acts of discrimination and hate. Homophobia, in the light of this line of work, seemed to be something some individuals committed and other individuals suffered in direct interpersonal exchanges.

I was influenced by this approach when first embarking on this research. While I was acquainted by that moment with the scholarly work on sexualities and education based on queer and feminist theory and a post-structuralist approach and in my interviews included the

questions that aimed at the personal dimension of negativity towards non-heterosexual sexuality as manifested in the schooling environments as well as the questions that were focused on the structures and discourses of both the wider society as well as the local sites of the schools, I tended to keep my focus on the personal dimension still. Only through the conversations with my respondents did the structural dimensions of homophobia come into my view more directly.

This is not to say that direct physical and verbal violence didn't take place in my interviewee's schooling environments: from slaps and books being thrown at students by members of the school personnel, through crowds of boys from the neighboring school gathering to "beat up the faggot", to snickering and mimicking in the hallways and the ever present insult – "peder" (faggot) – so common that its sexual meaning sometimes gets completely obscured and it comes to stand as a general swear-word one uses for a person he or she dislikes. However, what was also uncovered through these stories is the school as a heteronormalizing institution – as a set and a node of normalizing/heterosexualizing organizational structures and practices. This process involved the interplay of the "visible" and the "invisible" I touched upon in the first chapter, where, for me, getting behind the "visible" and obvious manifestations of homophobia felt similar to Alice's walk though the mirror.

In our conversations only one of my interviewees spoke of their school in negative terms. Some of the others referred to their schools positively: high-school as a "protective environment" that "passed without bigger problems", as "alternative and, more open [to diversity]", or as o.k. in comparison to other (vocational) schools because people there had significantly more problems whereas my respondent had "no bigger problems, bigger incidents and they really did". Most of my respondents (luckily) didn't suffer physical violence. But did this mean Croatian schools were homophobia-free?

As the interviews uncovered, the absence of homophobia in the form of a direct physical attack does not mean its total absence. It means, so to speak, more *subtle* forms. Josip makes this very clear, making an interesting connection between the portrayal of the state of things in his school with the state of things in the region he comes from:

> … cause now when I tell someone that I'm from [a town in the Northern part of coastal Croatia] the reaction is mainly "Oh, lucky you; everyone is tolerant there, 'red [the name of the region]'" and so on…I mean, it, it, that story about tolerant [the name of the region]… perhaps [the name of the region] is more tolerant than other regions of Croatia but that doesn't make it tolerant… it's not a milieu, I'm talking about [town name] now, because I'm not familiar with the rest of [the region]… but in [town name], at least in the more recent period, last couple of years, nobody has been attacked because of their sexual orientation or molested or something… but it's something on a more subtle level… so there were some people who were out or were not out but about whom people knew with a rather high degree of certainty, and so, as I said, there wouldn't be any physical violence or anything but some sort of subtle teasing ["sitna podjebavanja"]. I mean, in my school, for example, there were no out people but there were a few people who were suspected or known [to be gay], one of them was in my year-group, in the parallel class, another was a year older… (…) and so, nobody would do anything to them, physically, but whenever they would enter a classroom with a notice-book, or whatever it's called, you could hear from the bottom rows "gay" or stuff like that, so it's not a milieu where you feel really free…(…)
>
> so it never came to somebody saying "Ugh, faggotry" or "It's evil" or something like that (...) but it was always somewhere in the background…between the lines, right?[38]

In the remaining part of this chapter I will map out these "subtle" ways and relays through which homophobia was uncovered to operate in the Croatian schooling context, harking back to the Foucauldian notions of discourse as an interplay of power and knowledge that shapes subjectivities and of silence as "speaking" equally loud as speech.

[38] Josip, personal interview April 2012.

3.2. The Power of the Book – Meiosis, Mitosis and Student Subjectivities

One of the discourses through which the learning in schooling environments takes place is that of the so-called "official curriculum". The official curriculum encompasses the content and manner of instruction mandated by the educational authorities: the school subjects to be taught in schools, their content and manner of their "transmission" to the students. Being proscribed by the state authorities, it is, therefore, linked in the most direct manner to the hegemonic discourses of the wider society. In the previous chapters I have identified the discourses of nationalism and religion as taking up an important position within those wider hegemonic discourses both more generally, as well as in the specific context of the Republic of Croatia in the period I am examining: that between the years 1997 and 2007. As mentioned, the period in question was significantly marked by the processes of post-socialist transformations as well as the war and the formation of new national states in the area of the former Yugoslavia. Obviously, both processes include the formation of new political entities and their respective subjects/citizens. Drawing on some of the scholarly literature on both post-socialist transformations and well as that on the formation of national states, I have shown both types of processes to include the state control of the subjects' sexuality as well as the engendering of the subject/citizen in specific gender(ed) and sexual(ized) terms: gendere(ed) roles are defined, as well as their (hierarchical) relations and "acceptable" forms of sexuality. The objective of the state is to reproduce itself through the reproduction of its citizen-body (the population), to control the populace through the creation and enforcement of gender(ed) and sexual categories and to delimit itself from other state entities.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, these discourses "trickle" down into schools through the official curricula. Thus, as could be read from the examples I have recounted, the

experience of my respondents attending school in the late 1990s presents a particular discursive pattern in the educational treatment of sexuality.

At the first look, in this time period sexuality, especially non-normative sexuality, seems to be "invisible" in the school curricula. Let me reiterate the words used by my respondents to describe this situation: "sterile and minimal", "zero", "nothing". It features exclusively in the limited spaces of Biology and Religious Education and is focused solely on reproduction. Non-normative sexualities are never mentioned and are absent from both the official instruction, the textbooks and class discussions. This treatment of sexuality seems to be curtailed and reductive, subdued, restrictive. However, this "lack" shows itself to be very productive if we go back to the Foucauldian notion of "silence" as discourse. The very limited treatment of sexuality as reproductive and tied, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, to complementary gender roles and heterosexual coupling ("the coming together of the male and the female", "the female and male reproductive cells", "the unacceptability of sex before marriage") as well as the silencing of non-normative sexuality works to impart very specific kinds of knowledge onto a learning subject and to form her or him in a very particular way.

Let me clarify this. One of the topics I discussed with my interviewees was the development of their sexual identities. I wondered about its trajectories as well as the sources of information my respondents drew on to form a sense of the self in sexuali(ized) terms. The interviews all seemed to exhibit a pattern: all of the persons I spoke to identified sources such as books, the Internet and other media as outlets through which they first came into contact with non-normative sexualities and which informed their processes of subject formation. School didn't provide them with this type of information. The effects of the discursive "silence" on non-normative sexuality in the earlier period can be "read" from my older interviewee's recollections of the influence of schooling on their identity development.

Andrej (28), a gymnasium student from Zagreb, recalls the students being "left to their own devices; to the influences of the street, influences of their homophobic parents". Identifying the media and the Internet as his sources of information and contact with other non-heterosexually identified individuals, he powerfully asserts: "If these spontaneous forms of organization didn't exist, like social groups, web portals, you would feel like an outcast, totally. Because you're not covered by the system." He goes on to recall some of the older-generation gays who, as he says, live unhappy married lives and "go cruising" as a consequence of the taboo on homosexuality they were exposed to and the resulting feeling of "being diseased, not feeling good in their own skin".[39] Martina (29) today defines her sexuality as "fluid", "not defined in terms of categories". In describing the development of her sense of identity, she tells me how, as a high-school student, she used to employ subcultural expression (being a punk) as a way of transgressing the gender and sexuality norms, but always, as she stresses, within the official limits of heteronormativity – "you experiment, but you always come back to the norm". She marks college as the point of becoming aware that there was a possibility of stepping out of heteronormativity but adds: " But when you're in high-school you don't think about [that]…You can't. I guess [in high-school, through the employment of subcultural forms of expression] people think 'O.k., I'm gonna experiment a little now, but I know how it's supposed to be done, what's normal and correct and natural.'"[40]

It is obvious from these accounts that the "invisibility" of non-normative sexualities from the discourses of the official curriculum in the period of the late 1990s isn't simply an elision with no effects. To the contrary, it is, in Foucauldian terms, "productive", transmitting particular types of knowledges: that homosexuality is "diseased", that heterosexuality is the norm without alternative possibilities. As Martina's example shows, individual subjectivities

[39] Andrej, personal interview April 2012.
[40] Martina, personal interview April 2012.

are shaped by the prevailing discourses: without being aware of a feasible alternative possibility, all one can be is straight.

As has already been mentioned, when it comes to the wider social context of education, the year 2000 has marked a significant "liberalization" in the public treatment of non-normative sexualities. As a result of the internal change of the government as well as the processes of the European integration, the rights of the "gender and sexual minorities" came to be directly addressed by the government in the form of the legal provisions guaranteeing a certain level of protection. Furthermore, the media coverage in this period increased significantly and LGBTQ activism gained in strength. What about the level of the schools?

As the conversations with my interviewees show, the same period marked a certain change in the school contexts as well. Whereas in the earlier, pre-2000, period homosexuality seemed to be thoroughly absent from any sort of an official school discourse, in the post-2000 era it makes its way into the schooling arenas. But the questions is – in what manner? Another question is – does the "change" really represent a change?

Speaking to my respondents and recalling both my own schooling experiences as well as those of the older subgroup of my interviewees, I was somewhat surprised to hear the stories of my younger interviewees of homosexuality making its way into the school curriculum in the post-2000 period. In Sociology classes same-sex unions were being mentioned. In Ethics, adoptions by same-sex couples discussed in the form of class debates. One of my interviewees' schools even had a Human Rights course in which, as he said, the questions of "gay rights, minority rights, women's rights" were being addressed in a way that was "totally o.k., totally affirming". Was this an important change in the official school discourse in connection with non-normative sexualities?

When asked about the mentions of homosexuality in their schools, my older interviewees would usually assert that there were none. But, although, as I have mentioned above, homosexuality seemed to have made way into the official school discourses in the latter period, many of my younger interviewees as well wavered and needed additional questions to prompt them to remember those mentions. They, too, stressed a certain "silence", lack of information when it comes to the treatment of non-normative sexuality in their schools. Additionally, what comes clearly out of their stories is that the earlier discourse of heterosexual reproduction remained in place in the post-2000 period as well, it didn't simply disappear, wasn't abandoned with the change of the political option in power.

What seems to be happening here is a versification of discourses on homosexuality in schools after the year 2000. A singular, dominant heterosexual reproduction discourse with the overtones of religious and traditional moral values now gets complicated and challenged by various others. But if one undertakes a cursory analysis of those additional ways of thinking about homosexuality in schools, they seem to fall into several categories: a minority discourse, a discourse of civil rights, as well as the treatment of the issues of (non-normative) sexuality as controversial and material for debate. There appear certain patterns in these newly emerged ways of discussing non-normative sexualities in schools and these seem to be concentrated in certain areas of the curriculum. Drawing on Gramsci's claim that hegemony is never total (1995 cited in Epstein, Telford and O'Flynn 2003: 7) and Foucault's assertion on the simultaneous presence of power and resistance (1977, 1980 cited in Epsten, Telford and O'Flynn 2003: 7) Epstein, Telford and O'Flynn point out that resistance to dominant discourse is possible within educational institutions. These institutions are, as they claim, "sites of cultural struggle" where more than just the dominant discourses operate. However, institutions, as they note, have strategies of maintaining their power in the face of resistance - one of them being the "containment [of resistance] into particular areas." As result, "in some

educational locations and within some discourses it is possible to speak about sex and sexuality, to be queer" but "closets are often built around these locations, which afford protection on the one hand but limit the challenge to the institution on the other."(7)

The very presence of LGBTQ-related topics in the school curriculum cannot be underestimated. At the very least, they provide a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse. As Epstein, Telford and O'Flynn note, these "pockets" of presence and visibility allow for some form of resistance, and this opportunity is taken up by both the teachers and the students, as will be seen in the following chapter.

However, the predominant sense garnered from my interviews with the students attending school in the post-2000 period is still one of the marginalization of sexuality and non-normative sexuality within the school curriculum. There is a strong pattern, additionally, remaining from the previous period of sequestering sexuality within the area of Biology lessons, implying the focus on the "physiological" dimension of sexuality. Within this area, the stress is still on heterosexuality and heterosexual reproduction, as can be seen from the following statement by Tina, a 23-year-old attending, as she characterizes it, one of the most elite gymnasiums in town and one, again in her own words, dominated by girls and members of various subcultures and, therefore "pretty tolerant towards diversity". Answering my question whether sexuality was dealt with within the official school courses, she says:

> [pause] Only in Ethics class, I think. In other classes I'd say not at all, nowhere. Except in Biology, but it was basically meiosis, mitosis, human reproduction and stuff like that. But it didn't really deal with human sexuality in the social context, more with the pure biology of it, how sperm and egg cells come together and develop and so on. So, outside of the Ethics class, nothing, nowhere.[41]

This image of the predominant educational sexuality discourses is repeated in other interviews with the "younger generation". Josip (24, gymnasium, larger Northern coastal city), talks

[41] Tina, personal interview April 2012.

about the "absence" of non-normative sexualities from the school curriculum throughout high-school and recalls Biology lessons dealing with "the penis and the vagina" and Ana (19), the youngest in my interviewee group, comments on the tackling of sexuality within the curriculum of her elite Zagreb gymnasium as having been boiled down to a lesson where "some students came to teach [us on sexuality]", focusing strictly on "Herpes, putting on condoms and pregnancy"[42]. In certain cases non-normative sexuality is dealt with in terms of disease: "we did STDs, and of course, it said they were spread the most among drug users and homosexuals" (Goran, 23, urban, administrative high-school)[43] or abnormality: "It's not natural (…) Their body parts are not meant for that purpose" (Jakov's Biology teacher commenting on male-male sex while teaching on human anatomy in an small town gymnasium).[44] In most cases when it is addressed in certain curricular areas, as was the case in the school attended by both Tina and Ana, it is, as Ana notes: "never the first thing on the agenda". Furthermore, its introduction into formal teaching seems, to a significant extent, the result of the efforts of particular students and teachers committed to broaching the topic.

Effects can, again, be pointed to of the predominant curricular discourses, as in the case of the earlier period. On the one hand, one of the discursive strands within the official curriculum that I have identified above - that of the "silencing" of non-normative sexuality and the stressing of reproductive heterosex – seemed in the younger generation to have the effects similar to those in the older one: a lack of awareness that anything outside of heterosexuality exists as a possibility in the processes of defining oneself sexually. Josip (24) likens the worldview thus discursively created to the life of a goldfish. He recalls rummaging books searching for information as well as "discovering" an on-line community of non-

[42] Ana, personal interview, April 2012.
[43] Goran, personal interview, April 2012.
[44] Jakov, personal interview, April 2012.

heterosexually identified individuals, which had provided him with a sense of community and showed him one could openly live a queer identity. Apart from these self-found sources,

> "when I was in [name of the city] and I didn't have access to the Internet it was something that would occasionally appear in the media, in a movie or a TV show… and I simply didn't have, how do I put it, anything on the basis of which to form my attitude towards it and see whether it was bad, good or neutral".

On the effects of the first messages he received on homosexuality he remembers:

> I saw it as **something undesirable, something that should be suppressed** or, if one cannot suppress it, something that should be hidden…I mean, when I first started thinking about it, I couldn't imagine one day having a relationship with a man, it was always something, as I've told you already, I would be doing up until a certain moment or something that..um… something..um…how do I put it…something I would be engaging in exclusively with some kind of gigolos, male prostitutes or something like that.. something that should be completely anonymous and **disconnected from my life**… and in those days I saw it as some sort of a greatest secret I could imagine, something I would definitely take to my grave with me…[45]

An administrative school student from one of the larger coastal towns, Goran (23) remembers learning about non-heterosexual sexualities from television and TV shows that started to appear, as he recalls, in the late 1990s and early 2000s featuring gay characters: "they started inducing me, teaching me about sexuality and the fact that there were forms [of it] different from what I… then though was the only thing that existed", he says, adding that, at the time he still believed he would "find a girlfriend and get married". [46]

In addition to Josip's and Goran's memories of building up a sense of identity during their school years and the roles that the "presences" and "absences" as well as various school and out-of-school discursive sources played in these processes, harking back to their own teenage attitudes towards their identity, my respondents recall expecting that they would be attracted to the members of the same gender only for a limited amount of time (and giving themselves ultimatums such as "if I don't find a girlfriend by such and such time, I can

[45] Josip, personal interview April 2012, emphasis added
[46] Goran, personal interview April 2012.

practice this" – meaning non-heterosexuality), of not wanting to admit to themselves they might have been attracted to the same gendered friend, of being "auto-homophobic" in high-school. Along with the wider social discourses, those of politics, religion, the media and others, I would argue that the narratives within the official curriculum that "silenced" non-normative sexuality and stressed reproductive heterosexuality exerted a normative influence on the students. The influence seems to have been one of "channeling" young people into heterosexual futures of opposite-gendered partners and marriages. What we can "read" and discursively interpret from these young people's accounts are the following patterns. Firstly, when it comes to young people's imagined futures and conceptualizations of their own identity, non-normative sexuality does not even seem to present an option unless and until this possibility is presented to young people through alternative discursive channels, such as the media. As Josip's and Goran's accounts show, what can exist prior to that moment is inserting oneself into the dominant heterosexual narratives and imagining non-normative sexuality as something that cannot possibly be part of somebody's life (that is, somebody's socially accepted and sanctioned life). In light of this, it does not surprise that the reactions of young people to their own same-gender directed feelings and/or desires might be a desire to expurgate them and to re/embed oneself into some sort of a heterosexual narrative. In that sense, again, "silence" surrounding non-normative sexuality has very concrete, productive effects – it produces identities as heterosexual or at least, as "uneasily" non-heterosexual.

Additionally, the discursive "silence" on non-normative sexuality does not only influence non-heterosexually identified students. Discussing the situation in her school, Ana (19) describes it as rather tolerant[47]. Recalling no overt violence, she says: "I didn't sense any

[47] It is the same elite gymnasium in Zagreb attended by another one of my interviewees – Tina. The school requires a rather high entry GPA, is high on the list of Zagreb's high-schools when it comes to its students' grades and is mostly attended by girls. Furthermore, as Tina has been earlier quoted as saying, there are quite a lot of members of various subcultures attending the school, contributing, as Tina claims, to the school's greater openness to diversity.

intense homophobia. The homophobia I did feel came in the form of ignorance (…)"[48] . I interpret it as: not having the (accurate) information makes people act in homophobic ways. Not having (accurate) information leaves existing stereotypes and negative attitudes, transmitted, as Ana astutely notes, through the families, where heterosexuality is the predominant model of relationality, as well as the media, in place. In that sense, the "silence" on non-normative sexualities in the school curricula can be said to present an additional problem: it makes it easier for traditional and stereotypical discourses to stay in place in the minds of the young *straights,* acting in two ways - directing their own identity development into the normative heterosexual mould and not challenging the expressions of negativity towards non-heterosexual identities in any way. This line of thinking brings us back to the connections between the personal and the institutional/structural in the conceptualizations of homophobia itself. It makes clear how the discourses circulating through institutions and the wider social structures lead to the development of attitudes and modes of behavior understood often in both the popular conceptualizations as well as part of the scholarly literature as simply "personal" and "irrational" negative reactions of individuals.

With all of the above said, it would be erroneous to assume, however, that the official school discourses on non-normative sexualities in the period of my interest engendered only negative effects. The discursive versification of the more recent period has made it possible for more than one discourse on sexuality to penetrate the schooling institutions. Some of those provided the students with the alternative ways of conceptualizing sexuality. In the more recent period, non-normative sexuality enters schools not only in the context of a "non-existing" identity option, a "liability to disease", or an "anomaly" but also within the discourses of civil rights and minority rights. It also seems to be penetrating schooling institutions in the more *normalized* way, mentioned in the class discourse in what my

[48] Ana, personal interview April 2012.

interviewees term a "neutral" way, as a simple fact, a facet of one's identity not judged or questioned. It is likely, in my opinion, that these new discursive strains are, at least partly, result of the penetration of the wider social discursive currents into schools – those of civil rights and human rights, which have, arguably, been gaining in strength and importance since the beginning of Croatia's EU accession process. These have since proven as a powerful incitement to change in various areas of Croatia's social and political life, changes that otherwise the political elite would not have instigated. Although it might be argued in line with the assertion by Epstein, Telford and O'Flynn mentioned earlier, that there is a possibility for both the state, at the wider social level, as well as the schools locally, to use these newly present discursive areas in the school curriculum to sequester discourses different from the dominantly preferred ones into delimited zones, thus constraining them, the spaces provided by what seems as the newly emerging discourses on non-normative sexuality proved to be spaces that allowed for the possibility of resistance by both teachers and students. To the latter I will turn in one of the following sections. In the next section I turn to another discursive space within the schooling institutions – that of the "hidden curriculum" and students' cultures and the ways in which these might work in heteronormative and homophobic ways.

3.3. The (In)visible Fence - Student Peer Goups and the Policing of Identities

As I have shown in Chapter 1, a number of scholars investigating the interconnections between (non-normative) sexualities and schooling, and particularly the group of authors working within the feminist/queer/poststructuralist paradigm, stress the importance of peer cultures in both the production as well as regulation ("policing") of students sexual(ized) and gender(ed) identities within schools. These authors have shown how play and informal time

within the peer groups are organized around activities centered on heterosexual meanings (e.g. "the diary group" – a group of girls studied by Kehily meeting in the school playground to discuss boyfriends and various other teenage problems, as well as the practices of dating). The work of Renold (2005), Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996), Nayak and Kehily (1996), Pascoe (2005, 2007) has pointed to the ways in which gender and heterosexuality in schools intersect in the production of students' identities as masculine and feminine in their own peer groups and through student-student interactions. "Sex education," as Epstein, Telford and O'Flynn note, "takes place not only in the official school curriculum but also within pupil cultures through processes of social learning." (2003: 16)

My own work points as well to the salience of the influence of students' peer groups in the production of the students' gender(ed) and sexual(ized) identities. Some of these processes, as different examples from my interviews show, work in heteronormalizing ways.

As mentioned, earlier scholarship has shown how students' peer groups in schools work to police individual children's constructions and enactments of masculinity and femininity. The presence of these processes in Croatian schools comes out of the interviews with my respondents as well. Vesna (23, urban, larger coastal town, attended a gymnasium) talks about herself as "exhibiting lots of elements of transgenderism" as a young child, manifested in her wish to wear men's perfume, playing stereotypically "male" games, playing with boys only. However, as she says, during puberty this changed: "[in the period of puberty] I couldn't really do that, these adolescent *cliques* functioned differently: people somehow divided into boys and girls so I started hanging out with girls"[49] She describes how she tried to "conform to those 'feminine currents'[of her female peers], [through] clothing, gender expression and a heterosexual lifestyle", noting that it was hard for her because she always felt "like an outsider". It is clear from Vesna's account how peer groups get gender-

[49] Vesna, personal interview April 2012.

segregated at a certain period of childhood and subsequently work to maintain their boundaries symbolically, through markers such as clothing but also through "appropriate" sexuality. Feeling constrained by the gender restrictions imposed by her (girl) peer group, Vesna found a solution in adopting the "hippie" subcultural style: "hippies could wear everything and everything was pretty baggy and it wasn't clear whether something was masculine or feminine or what". Here, as will be seen later on as well, subcutural expression and values are used as a means of resistance to and stepping out of the dominant gender and sexuality "rules".

Martina (29, attended a gymnasium in a small town near Zagreb) is another young woman in my interviewee group to speak of the restrictions posed by her peer group on her gender/sexuality expression.[50] Talking about her high-school peer group, she says: "Hetero was also always the norm in the group I was socializing with." Speaking of her sense of identity today she says she sees it as "fluid", she" doesn't "define [herself] according to any kind of categories". It was conceived of fluid in a way during her high-school years as well, as she remembers, but, as she contends, it is the peer group and its norms that define one "from the outside", so to speak: "Perhaps I didn't impose any strict categories on myself, I was always like "O.k., anything can happen" [laughs] but on the outside, when you're a part of a group and you want a sense of belonging, then you are defined, sort of, as a hetero."[51] The impact of this peer pressure can be seen both on the level of Martina's individual behavior as well as the behavior of her friends and the students in her school more generally. Although, as she contends, even in secondary school she saw her identity as fluid, as "anything can happen" (in the sense of: there's a possibility of being attracted by both a man or a woman),

[50] Which does not mean that the other girls in the sample did not experience this in some form. However, they did not point out to such experiences directly in their interviews. Also, it has to be taken into account that the number of youg men in my sample outweighs that of the young women: a fact that might influence the possible conclusions one might draw from the interviews.
[51] Martina, personal interview, April 2012.

during her high-school years, as she says, she always had boyfriends, was "always fitting into the standards". Despite the fact that both she and her group of friends used subcultural expression to experiment with gender and sexuality norms, it was always strictly on an experimental and temporary level: nobody, claims Martina, wanted to *define* themselves firmly and definitely as non-heterosexual. Furthermore, their experimentations with sexuality took place exclusively outside of school.

Although, as can be seen from both Vesna's and Martina's story, peer groups work to police the gender and sexuality identities and expressions in girls, it seems that the peer "restrictions" are even more strict for the boys. Several of my male interviewees recall being communicated, at the point of starting their schooling, that their non-normative gender(ed) behavior wasn't considered acceptable in school. Ivan (28) was teased and avoided by both little boys and little girls after pulling out a Barbie doll out of his backpack in his elementary school class. The sanctions came from teachers as well: Josip (23) and his kindergarten (male) friend were told that holding hands was a "no-no" in school.

What has to be emphasized when it comes to male peer groups is their tendency to employ expressions of homophobia as a means of keeping the gender(ed) expression of their members in check, a feature I didn't notice in the stories of young women's peer groups. This is the reason to discuss the interconnection of homophobia and gender policing in relation to males, to which I turn in the next section.

3.4. Teenage Masculinities as Homophobias?

3.4.1. "The Feminine 'Fag' vs. 'The Cool Boy'"

As shown above, peer groups within school settings work to regulate the gender(ed) and sexual(ized) behavior of their members in the process of "policing the boundaries" of the group. These processes, as can be seen from the cited examples, work in both the boys' and girls' peer groups. However, when it comes to the males, I have noticed a pattern that did not seem to come out of the accounts of the young women: in the processes of policing the boundaries of the "appropriate" masculine behavior male groups at times employ homophobic behavior, in the form of homophobic language and gestures.

Similar patterns have been noted by other authors as well (see Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1996, Nayak and Kehily 1996, Pascoe 2005, 2007). In the study of the processes of the contruction of masculine identities within the school settings these authors have utilized the theoretical notion of gender as performative (Butler 1990 as cited in Nayak and Kehily 1996; Butler 1993, 1999 as cited in Pascoe 2007) and the notion of multiple masculinities (Connell 1987 and Brittain 1989 cited in Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1996).

The contribution of Butler's theorizing lies in Butler's interactional approach to gender formation that views the gender formation process as acts of constant repetition, "a set of repeated acts (…) that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance" (Butler 1999 as cited in Pascoe 2007), wherein individuals continually invoke the norm and reject that which lies outside of it. The "outside" needs to be repeatedly invoked "to remind individuals of its power. Similarly, it must be constantly repudiated by individuals or groups so that they can continually affirm their identities as normal and culturally intelligible" (Pascoe 2007). Following Butler's conceptualization, certain contemporary approaches to the study of

adolescent sexuality and the acquisition of gender(ed) identity within educational settings show how in the daily interactions within school contexts "the fag" functions as an outside to the normative identity that makes the affirmation of the latter possible (Pascoe 2007). As Haywood and Mac an Ghaill note, building on the work of Wood (1984), males use terms of abuse directed at other males' sexuality in order to achieve the work of "normalizing masculine subjectivities" (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1996: 55).

How do the processes recounted above play out in Croatian educational contexts? What is considered normative when it comes to adolescent masculinities in these settings and what is constructed as its constitutive "outside"? The conversations with some of my male respondents point to the possible answers to these questions. In discussing the form homophobia took in their schools, several of the young men mention "feminized" boys as being the targets of homophobic insults. Thus, Andrej, a gymnasium student from Zagreb, member of the "older generation" remembers:

> (…) there were people, both in my year group or older who appeared more gentle, feminized and there were comments like "Look, there comes the faggot [pederko]". But my classmates wouldn't beat them up, they would only look at them with disgust, [would look at them as] something that's a huge taboo.[52]

Similar pattern is noted by a younger male interviewee, Josip (24), also a gymnasium student from an urban setting as well as by Ana (19), my youngest interviewee. She attended, as she characterized it, a rather tolerant, elite gymnasium. The only overt display of homophobia she recalls from her schooling days involves a boy considered feminized:

> …I know about a boy from school who's a bit feminized, he is interested in fashion, he had girlfriends in school and everything. I heard negative comments about him, indirectly, that he was a fag, [pederko] a faggot[pederčina], something like that. That was the only homophobic thing [incident].[53]

[52] Andrej, personal interview April 2012.
[53] Ana, personal interview April 2012.

What comes out of these accounts is that the "fag" [peder] and the feminine are conflated in guarding the borders of "appropriate" masculinity. As can be seen from these quotes, "being more gentle" or "being interested in fashion" are considered prototypically feminine pursuits which render one not a real male – thus a "faggot".

Apart from being more gentle or "feminized" or interested in activities stereotypically considered feminine, there is one more trait that makes boys the target of abuse by others. Studiousness was referred to several young men in my interviewee group as a trait that caused them to face the reactions of disapproval, such as name-calling, from others. This mostly was not connected to the boys' (perceived) sexual orientation but shows one of the patterns of conceptualizing acceptable masculinity by adolescent boys in Croatian schools.

The abuse, either homophobic or more generalized, targetting the boys considered to be "inappropriately" masculine has been identified by my respondents as coming from the boys displaying a different form of masculinity – the "rough" masculinity – practiced through engaging in different kinds of risky behaviors: experimenting with cigarettes and drugs, cutting classes, not doing homework, as well as through doing sports and "spending one's days at the gym". Commenting the context of his Catholic high-school in which one group of students, including himself, was taking the classical antiquity stream and the other the sports stream, Ivan (28) comments on the second group of boys:

> They were true macho guys, girls really liked them. Those were guys with pumped-up muscles who used to train for sports seriously. Those were mostly kids that aimed to be professional sportsmen some day. And they were quite... How do I put it; they lived in that atmosphere of sports matches, slightly heteronormative rules, and so, everything that deviated from their ways of behaving was subject to derision.[54]

In the logic of adolescent boys in Croatia, being a "jock" and being willing to take a risk and get involved into dangerous and socially unacceptable behavior renders one "cool" and

[54] Ivan, personal interview April 2012.

heterosexually desirable. Those falling outside the lines of the "cool", heterosexually desirable masculinities are divested of the status of the "real boy" and can become the targets of homophobic abuse.

However, interestingly, as the memory of one of my respondents shows, being involved in heterosexual "conquest", even if only in a very indirect way, overrides the non-acceptable, "feminized" masculinity and renders one an "acceptable" boy again:

> There was this one guy who was in the administrative secretary track… among female administrative secretaries because there were 30 girls there and him alone…and he was quite *performative*, feminized, one might say, and… but he was never target to mockery, I think the fact that he was alone among the girls, and even the fact of him being a little feminized, was seen by others as "He's cool, look at him here with thirty girls; so what, even if he's a faggot, he's surrounded by thirty girls in his class"…[55]

3.4.2. The Classed Masculinities: The Hair-Dressser and The Truck Driver

The theory of multiple masculinities, especially the contribution by R.W. Connell has been valuable in the context of educational research in terms of the provision of a complex and nuanced approach to the conceptualization of gender by means of an introduction of the notion of the heterogeneity of the gender categories and of the power struggles and processes taking place within them. Thus, according to R.W. Connell (1987 as cited in Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1996; 1995 as cited in Pascoe 2007), a variety of masculinities is enacted by individuals and these are positioned in hierarchies of power in relation to one another. The type of masculinity one comes to enact and the place of an individual within the masculine hierarchy depends on one's position in the social hierarchies of power (Connell 1995 in Pascoe 2007); in other words, is also dependent on other social variables such as class, race

[55] Goran, personal interview April 2012.

and sexuality (Connell 1987, 1989; Mac an Ghaill 1991; Thorne 1993 in Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1996).

In his study of masculinities in the educational context and drawing on the earlier ethnographies of working-class schools in Britain, Connell (1989: 295) connects the construction of masculinities in educational settings as well as the differentiation thereof to the organization of the school curriculum which differentiates the students and places them in a hierarchical order through the employment of competitive grading and streaming - the process which reflects wider social distribution of power. According to Connell, social power is made available through the educational system to those who are "academic successes". Others, contends Connell, are compelled to resort to alternative sources of power, such as aggression, sporting prowess and sexual conquest.

In the Croatian context the division of schools into vocational schools and the so-called gymnasiums seems to play a role when it comes to the constructions and the acting out of various forms of masculinity. In the context of the Croatian educational system, vocational schools are "reserved" for students with poorer grades and are more geared towards preparing the students for the working life, while gymnasiums accept those who are considered better and more ambitious and are the university preparatory track. Recalling his high-school education in a gymnasium in a small town in continental Croatia, Jakov (22) says:

> I mean, it was a gymnasium, so it was better than others [other types of schools], especially there, in [name of the region], where people don't customarily go to gymnasiums like they do here in Zagreb.(…) vocational schools are more popular because, of course, nobody feels like going to college, nobody feels like studying so… The school is o.k., so the people who go there are…somehow different from other people; I don't want to discriminate, but I think that difference is obvious.

Although facing homophobic abuse in the form of homophobic insults, Jakov still characterizes his school as "better" than the vocational schools in his region:

> I know there were gays [pederi] at all times and everywhere but I know they always faced trouble in those Hairdressers' schools…When a guy or two per generation would appear, they would have a terrible time because they would go to the same school [share the school building] with the truck drivers and the welders and the like, and I was out to a significant extent and I can't say I had any bigger problems, bigger incidents, whereas they really did: from getting beaten up to all sorts of stuff. I would sometimes get a "faggot" remark, but that's not a big deal, I don't care![56]

Compared to the homophobic outbursts faced by him in his school, Jakov recalls facing more serious problems on his way to school, travelling on the train with his former elementary school colleagues who subsequently ended up in vocational schools. He recalls passing through a "very feminized phase" in elementary school. Whereas rumors about it didn't cause problems for him in his own high-school, they did, as he says, cause trouble with the vocational school students: "sometimes harsh words would get exchanged".

As the excerpts above indicate, certain class-based models of masculinity can be discerned in Croatian educational settings, with vocational, working-class masculinities, especially those tied to stereotypically masculine occupations ("welders", "truck drivers"), defining themselves as "tough" and aggressive and again, setting the "feminine", both in the form of an activity ("studying to be a hairdresser") or a certain type of behavior as its rejected "outside", employing homophobic behavior in the processes of the repudiation of the "feminine" Other. Once again, the "feminine" and the "gay" get conflated in the construction of what is seen as an acceptable model of adolescent masculinity.

In the previous two sections I have demonstrated the workings of peer groups in high-school settings in the policing of gender(ed) and sexual(ized) behavior of both the young women and the young men. I claim, in line with previous research, that in male peer groups homophobia is utilized in the process of gender and sexuality boundary-keeping and the

[56] Jakov, personal interview, April 2012.

processes of the construction of what is in particular context considered "acceptable" masculinity.

The effects of the peer gender and sexuality policing can be read out of the accounts of my respondents.[57] Most of my interviewees, both those belonging to the older as well as the ones belonging to the younger group, were not *out* (i.e. lived openly as gays or lesbians) to their high-school friends in the period when they attended high-school.[58] Some of them, such as Ana (19) describe "not awakening sexually" at the beginning of puberty, when most teenagers start feeling sexual attractions for other people:

> When I was twelve, thirteen, the age when I was supposed to be interested in boys, girls, [someone] romantically. I didn't have that phase, I was more turned to myself, I didn't awaken sexually. I was more of a sexual person as a very young kid and from the age of seventeen, eighteen onwards.[59]

Some of the young men remember attempting to date girls, even though their attraction went in the direction of boys or, like Josip, giving themselves "ultimatums": if they didn't grow to like a particular girl, they would accept themselves as being homosexual. Yet others, like Vesna, mention trying to fit in, as was said, into the "feminine currents" of heterosexuality and feeling "like an outcast". Several respondents remember feeling attractions for their same-gendered peers but unwilling to acknowledge it during their secondary school years. Furthermore, although for a lot of young people the practice of dating starts as early as the later years of elementary school, for a lot of the young people in my interviewee group the development of sexual and relationship life began only at the end of high-school or the beginning of college. Indeed, they all speak of college as a sort of "liberation" – meeting for

[57] What has to be taken into account is that the effects of the workings of the official curriculum and the informal peer cultures might have intersected in producing the effects on the personal development and behavior of my respondents I am mapping out above.
[58] Some of them came out to their high-school friends subsequently.
[59] Ana, personal interview April 2012.

the first time people who were openly gay and lesbian, learning that "there was nothing wrong with me, I am not diseased", starting to develop first serious relationships.

From all of the above I read high-school peer cultures as working in heteronormative ways. Definitions of the "real boy" and the "real girl" appear to be excluding homosexuality and the processes of boundary watching sometimes directly employ homophobia. Even when sexual experimentation took place, as in the case of Martina and her friends, members of the group would keep their identification firmly heterosexual. In this sense, as has been seen with the official curriculum, this aspect of the school life seems to have shaped the identity formation processes of the young people inhabiting schools in a particular direction – the heterosexual one.

4. STUDENTS' AGENCY, RESISTANCE AND SUBVERSION

I have started this work by mapping out in the introductory chapter the main theoretical approaches to the study of the interconnections between (non-normative) sexualities and schooling. Whereas one of the strains of research I have identified focuses on the personal negative experiences of LGBTQ students with homophobia in the school settings and approaches the individuals mainly as sufferers of homophobic acts , the authors working in the second strand of research based in, among other theoretical groundings, feminist and queer theory and post-structuralism, emphasize the agency of the students and the active role they take in the processes taking place in the schooling environments. Students, these scholars note, are not passive subjects in these processes - they do not simply inertly take in the knowledge and influences from the environment but actively interpret, use or resist them.

In line with the above statement, my conversations with my respondents have shown the discourses in their schooling settings did not simply operate unidirectionally and without a challenge. In different ways my interviewees and their school colleagues resisted and subverted them, at certain points "puncturing" the dominant discourses and creating spaces in which their gender(ed) and sexual(ized) identities could be played out more freely. Throughout the interviews, several modes of resistance and subversion crystallized: direct challenges to the dominant/official discourses within the discursive space of the official curriculum as well as the employment of subcultural expression as a means of stepping out of the proscribed norms regulating gender and sexuality as part of the non-formal discursive area of student peer cultures.

4.1. "I'd speak out loudly and clearly against various types of discrimination" – Students' Interventions Into the Official School Discourses

When it comes to the official curriculum, as I have argued in Chapter 3 the period following the year 2000 marks a certain diversification of discourses: non-normative sexuality becomes directly visible within the school curricula; along with the previously dominant discourse of heterosexual reproduction coupled with religious moralism, non-normative sexuality comes to be discussed in schools along the lines of the categories of civil and minority rights. Although I have expressed caution when it comes to the actual effects of these changes, keeping in mind the persistent marginalization of LGBTQ topics in the school curricula as well as the tendency, noted by Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford, of institutions to control resistance by closing it off into particular areas, I have also noted the possibilities these new discursive avenues provided for both the teachers and the students. Thus, the younger interviewees in my sample recall utilizing the available curricular spaces, such as

courses that make available to students a free choice of topics and the possibility of open debate, for inserting material related to non-normative sexualities. Keeping in mind the aforementioned word of caution by Epstein and her colleagues, I argue that spaces thus created and used by the students (as well as some of their teachers) present an important inroad for varied discourses into the official school curriculum and create an opportunity for contestation and debate between various discourses, providing the students with more than just one, hegemonic model in the processes of their subjectification.

However, as the examples from my interviews show, the students do not only use the discursive "inroads" officially offered to them within the school curriculum and by their teachers. They also actively appropriate, "hack" so to speak, the official discursive space within the school for their own purposes. This process, as Denis' story shows, is part of the students' resistance to school and the schooling process. In our conversation Denis characterized his school as "the worst gymnasium in Croatia", requiring the lowest entry GPA out of all the gymnasiums in Zagreb. The school was, as Denis noted, populated by the students disinterested in the studying. In that sense, it might be said to resemble vocational schools and working class student identities. Academic disinterest and resistance to the "official" learning seem to have had a productive side effect, though: Denis describes his classmates as critical-minded and curious about various topics outside the curriculum, explaining his classmates' critical-mindedness thus: "It stemmed from the fact that most of us were totally uninterested in studying, so we showed more interest in the daily news and in proving to the teachers how well read we were."[60] In the school context, this type of the students' resistance to the formal teaching and the resulting boredom it, apparently, had produced, resulted, in Denis' words, in the tendency of the students to use class time, when possible, for debates and discussions on various topics,

[60] Denis, personal interview April 2012.

including sexuality. Through those discussions, the students honed their own critical thinking, which resulted in an increased openness to diversity and the gradual rejection by the students of the conservative, traditionalist discourses they were exposed to elsewhere[61]:

> The fact I'm very proud of: in the first grade of high-school everyone exhibited [the consequences of] the negative influences of "conservative Croatia", so they [the kids] had rather negative attitudes to the homosexuals, blacks, Roma people, and anything that was not "white, Croatian, Catholic", whereas by the end of high-school everybody became more tolerant and I believe that [progress] was based on the discussions we were constantly having (…)
>
> We used to, especially in the third and the fourth grades, have those discussions on that topic [homophobia] and, as I've mentioned, that it makes me proud, I graduated from a class that didn't have homophobes. Through all those discussions and all kinds of argumentation people have come to accept it simply as a fact that exists and against which one shouldn't (and cannot) fight; somebody's sexual orientation can't be changed, it's not a disease, and that's it.[62]

Denis minimizes the role of the teachers in this process, attributing the activity to the students and their need to "escape" the boredom and "make the time go faster" as well, as he notes, "to prove to the teachers how well read we were" – which can be interpreted as the students' attempts to challenge the authority of the teachers. As Epstein and Johnson (1998: 113) note, the relations between the teachers and the students in the context of schools are marked by the relations of teachers' power and control and students' resistance. Furthermore, they note, "the school is often experienced [by the students] as an alien and alienating place" provoking the reaction of the students' resistance to schooling (118). In Denis' case, this resistance involved the use the official discursive space within the school for students' own purposes, overriding those it was formally intended for, wherein the students worked to transform and challenge the discourses of the wider society they were exposed to outside of school and actively created their own sense of identity.

[61] Denis does not specify, but I am supposing he is talking about tha influences of the family upbringing and, perhaps, the media here.
[62] Denis, personal interview April 2012.

4.2. Hippies, Punks and the "Alternative Kids": Subcultural Expression as Subversion and Resistance

Apart from the space of the official curriculum and class instruction, students' resistances and subversions take place within the students' peer cultures as well. As I have shown in Chapter 3, teenage peer groups utilize the policing of gender(ed) and sexual(ized) behavior of their members in the process of constructing the subjectivities of the members as "acceptable" boys and girls. In the sense in which certain forms of gender(ed) expression and sexuality are promoted and others discouraged or suppressed, these groups might be said to, at times, work in heteronormative ways. However, as hinted at in the previous chapter, some young people use different forms of subcultural expression to either avoid these heteronormalizing influences or to widen their field of gener(ed) and sexual expression available to them.

Illustrating the ways in which some of my interviewees dealt with the expectations and constraints imposed on their gende(ed) and sexual(ized) expression and the playing out of their gender(ed) and sexual(ized) subjectivities, I have briefly recalled two examples: that of Vesna, a 23-year-old young woman from an urban environment in coastal Croatia and that of Martina, member of the "older" generation attending a gymnasium in a small town near Zagreb. I have mentioned how both young women used subcultural expression and symbols, such as that of the hippie and the punk movements, as a way of "widening" and transgressing the gender/sexuality categories imposed by either their peer group (Vesna) or the environment of their school more generally (Martina).

Throughout my interviews a number of my respondents spoke about the interactions between subcultural expression and gender(ed) performances in the school environments. As response to my inquiry on whether anyone in their schools faced problems because their non-

normative gender expression, my respondents tended to answer in the negative, claiming that subcultural use of style, such as various hair colors and styles of dress worked to render the rules of "acceptable" gender expression in schools more flexible and malleable. As Denis notes, speaking about himself:

> I think I was the most non-traditional in that school at the time due to the fact that I liked to change the color of my hair frequently, my was of dressing; that was all a "non-traditional way" and people used to accept that simply as fashion quirks, nothing more than that. It would be like "Look what has done again!" nothing else.[63]

Jakov, a young man from a small town in continental Croatia similarly commented on the ways in which the so-called "metrosexual style" of dress introduced certain elements of stereotypically feminine style into the visual expression of the young men, thus rendering his schooling environment more accepting of non-normative gender expressions:

> They [his schoolmates, on account of gender expression] could only terrorize me because everybody knew [about his sexuality], but I never had any problems either. Even then I was quite feminized but… honestly, there were guys more feminized than me who were straight. So, there was this guy who wore his jeans two sizes too small (…) but it was some sort of *glam* or *metrosexuality* (…)[64]

As noted earlier, Vesna used the visual markers of the hippie subculture in the form of its somewhat "androgynous" style of dress to subvert the limitations posed on her gender expression by her female high-school peer group and to widen the repertoires of expression available to her.

Tina (23) speaks of the ways in which involvement in subcultural forms, or, in her words, being an "alternative kid", made possible greater freedom when it comes to sexuality and sexual expression. She connects the two in the more general sense in the following way:

[63] Denis, personal interview April 2012.
[64] Jakov, personal interview April 2012.

> I mean, when you're already a minority by being a metalhead, an alternative kid, a rocker, a punk, automatically you are on the outside, in the margins and automatically more is allowed within those, so it's much easier to be out than…being nice and polite, Ralph Lauren jeans, everything by the book (…) definitely from my experience, in the more alternative circles (which I'm using as an umbrella term for metalheads, punks and all that are not the *mainstream*) definitely more people will be out than in those other, *mainstream,* circles.[65]

The greater freedom allowed by "being on the margins" of the mainstream could, in Tina's words, be sensed in her school as well. She portrays her school as "alternative", populated by a large number of youths belonging to various subcultures and thus "more open" to diversity, the fact she illustrates by the existence openly gay people in the school without the concomitant open expressions of homophobia. This is an interesting contrast to Martina's (29) experience: although she and her friends made use of the possibilities that punk subculture offered in terms of gender and sexual experimentation, the sexual dimension of this experimentation was seen as temporary (limited to the period of adolescence) and limited to the students' free time out of school. In terms of the regulation of sexuality, in Martina's case, school remained relentlessly normative.

In this section I have mapped out the ways in which the students, within their peer cultures, utilize subcultural expression to subvert and widen the normative boundaries of gender and sexuality. What comes out of these examples is a picture of the ways in which the students draw on the wider social discourses - those of popular culture - in the shaping of their gender(ed) and sexual(ized) identities both outside but also within the school. It is clear, as well, that students take an active role in the subversion and resistance to the forms of gender and sexuality imposed on them within schooling institutions and by their high-school peer groups. It is interesting to note the ways in which these resistances and their impact in the schooling context changed over time: while in the example of Martina, a member of the older generation, challenges to the regulations of sexuality remain sequestered outside of school, it

[65] Tina, personal interview April 2012.

seems that in the case of my younger interviewees they managed to penetrate the schooling institutions. I am inclined to connect these changes, however tentatively, to the changes of the wider social discourses in the areas of politics, the media and others taking place over the ten-year period I have examined and the move from the dominant discourses of strongly divided gender roles and heterosexual families espoused in the late 1990s to the, arguably, more liberal ones in the period after the year 2000.

5. CONCLUSION

In this work I have set up to map out the workings of homophobia within the high-school settings in the Republic of Croatia.

Although negative attitudes towards the non-normative sexualities can be discerned in various dimensions of Croatian public discourse, from the politics and the media, to the public opinion, their workings and the forms they take in schools have heretofore have been largely ignored in scholarly work on gender and sexuality in the context of Croatia. I attributed this "elision" both to the strengthening of the influences of the right-wing political options and the Catholic church and their traditional views of sexuality in the period of the post-socialist transformations and the formations of the new national-states in the area of the former Yugoslavia, as well as to the notion, noted by various authors examining the interconnections of sexuality and schooling, of "children as innocent" and schools as asexual.

Basing my work on the theoretical concepts of "homophobia", understood in my work as a complex interplay between the structural/ideological dimension and the individual/personal one, and the concepts of "heterosexism" and "heteronormativity" as well as the notions of power and discourse elaborated by M. Foucault, it was my goal to examine how the wider social discourses get played out and transformed in the secondary schools in the specific context of the Republic of Croatia as well as how they interrelate with the specific local organizational practices and discourses of the schools to form the gender(ed) and sexual(ized) subjectivities of the students in specific ways. I attempted to examine and map out how these processes work in heteronormative ways, constructing certain subjectivities as available and "acceptable" and others as abject and stigmatized, thus prompting negative attitudes and behaviors towards non-normative sexualities. In order to reconstruct the aforementioned processes, I examined personal experiences of young self-identified LGBTQ

individuals in high-school settings in the Republic of Croatia in the specific time period between the years 1997 and 2007. I focused on two specific areas of school life: that of the official curriculum as well as that of the informal peer cultures of the students.

As the experiences of my respondents show, heteronormativity is present in both areas examined. In the official curriculum of the earlier period, that of the late 1990s, gender role division and reproductive heterosexuality are stressed. The period after the year 2000 is marked by the diversification of discourses on sexuality and non-normative sexuality. Whereas the heterosexual reproductive discourse has the effect of "channeling" the students' subjectivity development in the heterosexual direction, eliding other possibilities, the discursive areas appearing in the post-2000 period mark the entry of non-normative sexualities into the curriculum in the forms I have identified as the discourses on civil and minority rights. Although these discursive "inroads" of non-normative sexuality into the official curriculum might be read as limiting in certain respects, they also provided both the students and the teachers with the opportunity to engage with the discourses on sexuality different from the dominant ones, providing alternative possibilities of identification as well as the spaces for resistance to the dominant narratives. I have read the changes in the school curricula as, at least partially, the effect of the events and transformations in the wider socio-political context: from the strengthening of the nationalist ideology and religion in the late 1990s as one of the effects of the processes of post-socialist transformation and the creation of the new national states in the post-Yugoslav area to the political and social liberalization after the year 2000 connected with both the internal political shifts in the Republic of Croatia as well as the international processes of EU accession.

As existent research has shown, students' peer groups control the gender(ed) and sexual(ized) behavior of their members in the process of "boundary policing", i.e. determining who belongs to the group as a "proper" member and who does not. The interviews with my

respondents have shown high-school peer cultures as working in heteronormative ways. Definitions of the "real boy" and the "real girl" appear to be excluding homosexuality and the processes of boundary watching sometimes directly employ homophobia.

From the examination of two dimensions of schooling via the experiences of young LGBTQ individuals it is clear that heteronormativity – the division of the subjects into separate groupings and according a differential value to each – as well as homophobia – understood as negative attitudes and behaviors towards non-normative sexualities resulting from a complex interplay between the structural/ideological and the personal –figure in both the official schooling discourses in the form of the official curriculum as well as the informal interaction within the students' own peer groups in the context of secondary education in the Republic of Croatia. Further research in both the qualitative as well as the quantitative vein will be necessary to both determine the scope and directions of these processes and to provide a more detailed picture. Here I wish to point to two conclusions: the processes taking place in schools are in no way simple and unidirectional. Schools, as my research has shown, are sites where varied, multiple and contested discourses clash, interconnect and compete. Additionally, students are not passive observers in these processes but, as has been shown in this work as well as in the previous work of others, actively engage with them and contest them. These are the points that need to be taken into account in any effort to bring about change into the way the schooling processes play out in schools. Any such change needs to conceptualize the school as a site influenced by a complex network of the wider social discourses but also as one with a rich nexus of its own disparate organizational and discursive practices. Any attempt at change needs to take account of a series of factors in mutual interaction. Furthermore, these processes need to take an account of and tap into the students' own potential and creativity in subverting and resisting the dominant narratives.

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