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THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF NORMING SEXUALITY

Abstract:

Even with the act of birth, we, as human beings are "assigned" different" identities that differ from our wishes. The same identities that we are assigned at birth continue to be further <u>moulded</u> and shaped through the process of socialization. Even so, sometimes we even discredit or "give up" on those identities entirely. The focal point of this thesis is placed upon the human sexuality, culture, and society, and the ways the socio-cultural context influence the shaping of human sexuality. Hence, my efforts to hirghlight the enormous influence of the culture over the modelling of the human sexuality. In fact, the aim of this academic presentation is to discredit the traditional claims (that do not possess evidence of the claim) that sexual desire, i.e., sexuality as a whole, is treated as a kind of given or genetically predisposed occurrence (also referring to heterosexuality as the sole, healthy sexual desire). In the same notion, I intend to unveil the influence of the social and cultural factors in the shaping of the sexual behaviour, which are rather significant factors that have been greatly ignored throughout history. The sexual behaviours of people hold certain meanings – people use and express their sexuality in a variety of ways. To people, there is more to sexual activity than just biology. In that context, we shall consider culture as the rudimentary determinant in the process of the formation of human sexuality. In the light of such occurrences, the need for a more exact examination of the role of the culture in the shaping of human sexuality arises. Besides impacting the shape of human sexuality, culture is an inevitable influencer of the gender self-identification in time and space.

Keywords: Sexuality, culture, nature, gender, sex

Introduction

The concept of sexuality can in no way be determined on the basis of using apparent facts, even practices. In the dawn of today, someone's sexual identity (sexual orientation) cannot be determined by utilizing a standpoint or an apparent fact (sex/gender identification).

In today's modern way of living, where the system of sexual orientation and identities is abundant in options for self-creations (in religious, ethnical, national, and other sense), which allows for sexual identification and orientation to be fluid, interchangeable, or momentary, depending on the experiences and practices of the individual at a certain point in life.

Modern societies practice pluralism as the principal political system enabling individuals to make a presence of themselves in whichever sexual orientation or identification they see fit.

In its most general sense, sexuality is not to be associated only with the act of sex – it is greatly more than that (Stojanović, 2011).

As it is the case with every human phenomenon, **sexuality is not the exclusive consequence of biology** that simply happed to occur! Sexual practices, viewpoints, behaviours, and values (moral and immoral) have been constructed by men throughout a long process of socialization. As a matter of fact, ever since the most primitive human existence, people have been displaying sexual behaviours.

In the realm of sexuality, if we carry out a discovery venture, we will come across data showing primitive human forms abiding by social norms and practices when it came to sexuality in a certain culture (Unwin, 1934).

In correspondence, sexual identities and sexual practices (hetero/bi/homosexual) in people should be examined and re-evaluated through the dominant cultural norms, to be able to gain insight into the **cultural influence of the creation of sexual identities**; in other words, by which extend is culture an important factor in the creation of sexual identifes in individuals in a society.

What strikes as the most interesting find is the revelation that heterosexuality is the automatically accepted by society, and no one even questions it or asks for definitions or searches for the root cause of that particular sexual orientation. In contrast, society is quick to examine and question the "occurrence" of homosexuality and why is someone identifying themselves as homosexuals (Foucault, 2003).

To be able to showcase the importance of culture in the creation of sexual, and gender identity, we should learn wat comprises the term "culture".

Defining Culture: Different Approaches

In its most rudimental sense, culture is defined as the way in which people interact with each other and with their surroundings. It (the culture) represents an accumulated outcome of different experiences, values, beliefs,

standpoints, meanings, knowledge, social organization, procedures, roles, social relations, concepts of the universe, and so on.

What is oftentimes described as characteristic of the members of the same culture is the shared origin of the language, tradition, ethnicity, race, as well as the reference to joint historical traits, geographical cornerstones, gender/sex, the socio-economic status, the physical traits, the sexual orientation, and more. That is why certain individuals consider themselves to belong to a particular culture since they believe they share the same sexual orientation, or economic status, and other determinant that form a specific image of themselves (Žegarac, 2016).

As a term, the culture is comprised of a myriad of meanings and understandings, which are frequently used in different ways, making it difficult to define culture in a single way that will encompass everything culture stands for. According to **Raymond Williams**, culture is one of the two or three most complex words (Williams, 1976). To form that opinion, Williams was led by the Latin origin of the word culture. Namely, the first-ever connotation of culture was referred to raising crops (from the Latin words Colere, cultus, which means to cultivate the field, the soil), whereas in the XX century, the term culture became more frequently associated to art, literature, painting, ballet, theatre, and so on.

Although both connotations of culture are the polar opposite of each other, both carry the same essence of meaning. Cultivating, i.e. farming, encompasses the betterment, domestication, and creating civilized characteristics, which is something we can also distinguish in the arts. For instance, we do not just read for pleasure, but also to "better" ourselves. Yet, when speaking of culture, its significance is quintessential – it represents more than a conscious process of by which people aim to cultivate or amend their natural environment and display their supremacy (Williams, 1976).

Culture is wide-spread social phenomenon with the tendency to pass on its traits onto future generations mainly because culture is not only a means for an individual to showcase their characteristics, but also the trademark of a group of people. In essence, the traits of a particular culture are "planted" deep within ourselves that sometimes we are not even aware of it (Williams, 1976).

The theoretical and practical complexity of the term (culture) extends to an all-encompassing connotation – there is practically nothing that cannot be associated to culture (Dzeparovski, 2016).

In its broadest sense, the culture is defined as a way of life, but that does not mean that the term culture should e perceived as a collection of rules, customs or skills that are passed from generation to generation within a society. In the same effect, culture refers to the way of contemplating, reasoning, and perceiving certain perceptions, as well as to the heaps of other meanings that are widely spread within certain cultures.

There are niches of socially-embedded culture codes that we take for granted, and do not really bring into question, although there is no particular reason why an individual or a group of people acts, or thinks a certain way. Cases like that are particularly prominent in certain cultures that have been

exhibiting specific cultural traits, i.e. customs and traditions for years on end, even after they have lost their meaning in modern times.

For instance, regarding sexuality, our (western) culture nurtures the image of impurity of sex as something that is the reflected as shameful, deeply intimate, and hidden. Furthermore, the act of sex is accompanied by the stance that it should be an intimate bodily encounter involving two individuals (masturbation is perceived in a similar way – as a sexual act). Undoubtedly, sex is a regular desire and occurrence in people, which represents a sense of pleasure, but the reason why couples adhere the notion of a deeply intimate occurrence to sex, is not attributed to nature.

Experiencing sex as a deeply intimate sensation is not a universal way of "making love". In fact, historically speaking, sex has not been a common practice for exchanging romantically sentiments between two people (monogamy), nor has been present in all cultures today as the sexual act between two adult individuals. Also, there are examples of cultures regarding sex as something that should be practiced publically (there are cultures today that stand by this notion), without any concealing and intimacies (Stojanovič, 2011). That particular perceiving of sex points us in the direction of understanding what different cultures (both comparatively and historically speaking) have forged rules and understandings which we do not bring into question – we do not seek a logical explanation for the behaviour, nor do we ask for a rational reason – we simply assume what's practiced is right.

The culture codes such as the instances mentioned above are so deeply rooter within our vision of normality that not only forces us to act a certain way, but also imposes a feeling of disgust, shame, and discomfort should "deviations" occur.

Hence, what our society perceives as good, regular, and ordinary can be considered quite the opposite in different cultures. Some of our customs and behaviours might carry out a completely different meaning to certain cultures, and vice versa – all of that is the result of the difference in cultures.

The definition and the meaning of the word culture have been subjected to opposition by a number of central conceptions in social sciences. Referring back to Raymond Williams (oftentimes considered "the father of cultural studies"), he suggested three main connotations for the word: a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development (pinning culture as 'civilization'), the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity (high culture), and a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group or humanity in general (Williams, 1996: 9).

A Dichotomy of the Nature/Culture Concept

When discussing culture, it is inevitable to notice the dichotomous placement of the tern "nature", and "nature" almost does not exist – it's is often underlined by "culture". What puts "nature" and "culture" in such a juxtaposition

(as explained earlier), can be tracked back to the etymology of the word culture, which refers to agriculture, as means to preserve natural growth, progress, and prospect.

What makes the definition of culture that much more complex is the attempt to incorporate nature into the concept? Furthermore, culture might not even exist should nature not be a part of its definition (Dzeparovski, 2016).

The concept of nature and culture, or culture vs. nature, as well as the complicated theoretical definition of the both leads to a burdened effort to separate yet integrates the two terms into a single definition. The scientific and theoretical importance of the term further burden the attempt to conceptualize the terms.

Nature, and defining the nature of things, as well as answering questions like "What's natural?" and what is given, or assigned to, what's natural and what is not lead to the **juxtaposition of the terms in the concept of nature/culture**. In fact, it is genuinely difficult to detect where does nature end, and where does culture begin (Papić, 1997).

The difficulty of defining the term nature, which is, by itself, already complex enough to be interpreted and defined, would pose a multidimensional complexity for defining it, much similar to the attempts of defining culture. In that sense, a certain tendency becomes apparent – the one that intertwines culture with nature. Furthermore, there have been theories that, in essence, **culture sprouts from nature**, further elaborating that nature supersedes culture in its existence, both from an evolutionary and creationist standpoint – meaning nature came before culture (Golubović, 1997).

A vast number of sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers use the term "human nature" without considering the naturalistic side (much as a physical or biologic trait), but rather to emphasize the essence of a lifestyle that's formed (assigned) by the process of the socio-cultural evolution. In other words, "human nature" is perceived as a construct that explains the essence of being (Golubović, 1997).

According to **Charles H. Cooley**, "human nature is not something that exists outside of the society as a whole, the human nature is the rudimental phase of society, a relatively simple and general condition of the human mind. The human nature is formed by the process of socialization (quote by Tasheva, 1999: 369).

The general conception of the opposition between nature and culture in the western model of thinking is greatly based, performed, and proven by following the frameworks of the sex/gender model describing the opposition of genders (Papić, 1997).

Even though in anthropology, the term nature/culture is exceptionally abundant in theories and can be perceived and contemplated in a multitude of ways, such as the example provided by Edgar Morin. Namely, according to Morin, the root cause for the "disturbances" between the terms culture and nature has adopted a wholesome paradigm, a model that conditions each and

every discourse, and still, the analytical duality, says Morin, "man-animal/culture-nature is obviously conflicted" (Morin, 2005: 23).

As a matter of fact, when we contemplate the process of opposition between nature and culture, or the sole idea of an opposition, we would not be referring to an opposition to an actual "real" nature and its counterpart – a certain culture; on the contrary, we would be referring to an opposition of two cultural conventions, i.e., the convention of the essence of nature, and the convention of the nature of culture (Papić, 1997).

The Cultural Norms of Human Sexuality

As inseparable part of human life, sexuality is omnipresent throughout each of the phases comprising an individual's life. An individual will experience sexuality by manifesting certain fantasies, thoughts, erotica, pleasures, desires, standpoints, values, demeanours, practices, as well as roles, relations, and so on. Having in mind the broad implications of sexuality, a typical socio-cultural environment would be facing with a hard time to define the sex/gender identity of an individual

The act of defining the sexual identity of an individual by only considering their sexual practices, we would only be able to attain a false representation of their factual sexuality, and be convinced we have "figured out" the sexual identity, the urge, and sexual desire in question.

Within the continuum of human sexuality, heterosexuality is merely one of the variants, alongside homosexuality, bisexuality, and according to novel research, asexuality, as well (Simon LeVay. 1996).

The notion of an individual's sexuality being revealed or determined by their sexual thrills, practices, feelings, and urges arises as the socially acceptable definition. The sexual identity of a person is realized by their own, individual conceptions and representations of sexuality present in a never-ending circle of cultural and social norms that are established and accepted by the majority as such. It is in that way that an individual shapes their "real" sexuality (Ristevska-Crvenkovska, 2013). In that sense, when speaking of the actual act of sex, in accordance with the already-accepted social and cultural representations, it becomes evident that almost every cultural representation of sexuality within modern societies is determining **the active and the passive element of sexuality**. In that manner of thinking, the man is assigned the active role in sex (masculinity us emphasized, macho roles are fore-fronted). The man is the one that "should know" how to carry out a sexual act. According to this **cultural norm**, the gender role of the macho man will be closely connected to the accomplishments regarding sexual conquests and achievements regarding the female sex.

Showcasing sexual power, skilfulness, and the utter fascination with the act of sex is one of the dimensions that shape masculinity. One of the most significant components comprised in the hierarchy of **masculinity** is the number of sexual conquests, as well as sexual skills. Besides that, the power of men is

not only associated to individual males – it is institutionalized within the social structures and ideologies supporting the gender architecture in favour of men.

As opposed to the **male's active sexual character**, the passive portion of sex is assigned to women. Furthermore, women's sexuality will revolve around the **phallocentric model of sexuality** which yields inequality by the sole fact that female sexuality comes second in line as to make room for that of the male (Davchev, 2016).

While on the subject of male-female predominance, we should take a moment and mention the concept of "**hegemony**" as perceived by **Antonio Gramsci**, regarding the asymmetry of the powers as a theory that moulds the "entirety of the social process" by precise divisions of power and influence. According to Gramsci, hegemony is described as a notion that both incudes and surpasses two powerful terms: the t**erm culture**, which people use to define and shape their entire lives; and the **term ideology**, which is the system of values and meanings uses as a projection of particular class (in the Marxist sense of the word) interest. There are particular inequalities regarding means in almost every society, which is why Gramsci brought into question the importance of accepting dominance and submission (quote by Markovska, Simonovska, 1999).

The social systems, which have been greatly influenced by the guidelines of the **patriarchal system of values** that present men (masculinity) as the superior human lifeform within societies, as opposed to women. In essence, the notion that the male sex is socially more significant, worthier, stronger, and more capable than "**the other sex**" – women, (is) practiced (de Beauvoir, 1989). It is because of standpoints like these throughout the course of history (especially in ancient times and the Middle Ages), that intricate social systems practicing misogyny, sexism, and stigmatism become frequently established.

Furthermore, by perceiving sexuality, Michel Foucault defined or comprehended sexuality as an experience, or better yet, a correlation between knowledge, normativity, and types of subjectivity within a culture. Hence, Foucault **recognized sexuality through the desire and the subject holding the desire**, i.e. the way a man recognized himself as such, thus revealing the truth about his being through desire (Foucault, 2003).

According to Foucault, he believed that research on sex and sexuality until the first half of the 20th century was practically invisible or sporadic. In Foucault's History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge, the author talks about sex and renditions of sexuality by supporting the stance that society is what constructs sexuality. Foucault's works appear in times when sexuality is regarded through a psychoanalytical lens, or, according to Foucault, "psychoanalytical vulgarity". To Foucault himself, the inception of the **repression of sex** most probably occurred in the 17th century. In the era of the inception of capitalism, sex was subjected to rigorous monitoring and control because it was utterly unfit with labour. In other words, the working class was not to spend its stamina in unproductive, unnecessary enjoyments. Hence, Foucault deemed the 17th century as the beginning of the entrapment of sex – sex was not something to

be talked about, and the only place where sex was considered appropriate was inside marriage and in the marital bed (Foucault. 2003).

Moving onto the part where Foucault considers the "production" of false claims about sexuality to have begun in the somewhere along the course of the 19th century, the author believes that the notion of sexuality was examined through two main spheres: biology (concerning biological reproduction), and medicine. The biological traits of sex were mainly a large part of the content in the medical books in the 19th century. Also, all of the medical research about sexuality conveyed at the time were supportive of the thesis about the unification of heterosexuality, leaving no spare room for other sexual variations. In this sense, to Foucault, the study of the history of sex is especially meaningful, mainly because of the fact that it reveals the "real" truth about sex.

By performing a historical analysis on sex, we are guided toward the "birth" of two different constructions about sexuality – one of them is characteristic of civilizations such as the Chinese, the Indian, the Japanese, the Arab-Islamic, and the Roman civilizations, all of which Foucault labels as **ars erotica**. The other construction about sex, labelled by Foucault as **scientia sexualis**, can be linked to the western civilizations, differing from the first ones, immensely (Foucault, 2003).

Michel Foucault emphasizes the notion that what we understand by sexuality is actually a pool of experiences that the Greek-Roman culture perceived as "the art of being", referring to "**techniques of self**" that were later assimilated to the conveying of the power of the priesthood during the era of early Christianity. Later on, the same "techniques" were adapted to educational, medicinal, and psychological experiences. The sexual differences date back to the system of the control of sexuality that is based on the deeply rooted dissymmetry between sexes (Foucault, 2004).

Ana Fausto-Sterling's work "Sexing the Body" revolves around the examination of the process of constricting politics about sexuality; in other words, conveying research about the social construction of sexes. In the acclaimed written work, the author presents definitions in which sexuality is deemed a somatic fact created by cultural effects (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

"Sexuality is a somatic fact that is the result of a cultural effect, by which one can understand how an individual can create their own representation of sex/gender and practice it through social, cultural, and economic relations, by which the gender/sex tries to support their sexuality (Fausto-Sterling, 2000: 21).

Intertwining Nature (Gender) and Culture (Sex) into the Sphere of Sexuality: Is Anatomy a Destiny?

With the sole act of performing research about the origin of the differences between men and women, we are reflecting our own different standpoints used to form gender identities and social roles based on said identities.

According to **Anthony Giddens**, the debate is mainly occurring between those of the social, scientific sphere that deem social impacts as the determinants of the sexual nature of people, and those that do not credit society to have an influence over the gender differences. Furthermore, Giddens wonders which, and **to what extent, do differences between men and women result in gender, rather than sex differences**. In other words, the author aims to reveal how significant the role of biology in determining one's gender is (Giddens, 2003: 117).

According to **genetics**, sexuality is closely linked to some of the aspects of human physiognomy, from hormones to chromosomes to the size of the brain. Presumably, genetics condition the inborn differences between men and women. According to that point of view, there have been cases of numerous sightings of cultures treating genetics as the universal condition for the "nature" of people, despite of the cultural influences, the uniformity of the natural factors greatly determine gender (in) equality among sexes.

By adopting said point of view, a particular individual, born in a certain time/space frame, is naturally characterized and "assigned" a gender role (man-woman/male-female/manly-feminine), and cultural influences are disregarded and not taken into consideration, at all? Yet, can gender be interpreted as a universal marker for individuals, while also representing a fact that applies to all, equally? In other words, is the notion of "natural sex" the one that predetermines the architecture of the obligatory heterosexual orientation? Some of the cases supporting the notions of heterosexuality being the only "normal" sexual orientation ("which is a heterosexual orientation that is naturally assigned by birth due to the biological sex of the individual"), are based upon the facts regarding biological procreation (continuing the existence of humankind), and are basically the results of the biological functions of the genitalia (Butler, 2022).

A multitude of authors uses the unambiguous distinction between sex and gender as the starting point for analysis. **Robert Stoller,** an American psychoanalyst, is regarded as the first-ever theorist to have coined a clear distinction between the two categories. In 1968, Stoller wrote the acclaimed book Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity, which he used to depict and support the differences between sex and gender. Stoller came forth with a sound standpoint according to which the majority of the population can be clearly characterized and determined as men and women, based on the **bodily traits**.

So, in biological regards, women can give birth, whereas men can conceive and a multitude of other biological traits that both men and women possess from birth. In the context of defining gender, Stoller supports the stance that "gender is a term that carries a psychological and cultural connotation. If 'man' and 'woman' are the primary terms for gender, the terms that would be used to determine the sex should be 'male' and 'female', and such terms can be entirely independent for the biological gender" (Stoller, 1994: 66)

In **feminist theories**, the notion of using classical definitions for gender and sex is regarded as the "accomplishment" of traditional social perspective,

which **intertwines sex and gender** as unseparated, co-dependent terms, without assigning a cinch of criticism encompassing the regards of gender being different than sex. Through a sociological perspective, gender socialization is actually accepting the gender/sex dimension; in other words, gender is considered as nothing more than a social fixation, or a fortifying of the biological sex through culturally-acceptable models dependent on the gender, that have been assigned a sex connotation (Papič, 1989).

In the same point of view, **Judith Butler** uses her scholarly work labelled "Gender Trouble" to state that it is becoming impossible for our "gender" to be separated from the political and cultural interferences, which have helped create and sustain the notion of genders. Namely, according to Butler, the division of sex/gender favours the argument that regardless of the biological frivolousness of the sex, as the author states, the concept of gender is a cultural construction. Hence, gender is neither a causal reason of sex, nor as supposedly fixated as gender (Butler, 2002: 41).

This particular viewpoint supported by Butler can be used to come to the conclusion that **biology is not a destiny – our destiny becomes the culture we find ourselves in**, pointing to the famous saying by French philosopher **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**, in his famous work Du Contrat Social (The Social Contract), in which the author states that "a man is born free but everywhere is in chains" (Rousseau, 1997: 9). Concerning the essence of sex/gender, we are born with certain biological sex, but all the causal characteristics of our sex are essentially cultural constructions and socio-cultural expectations according to our assigned sex/gender.

Later on, Butler continues to explain that even in the case sex is a gender category, it would not make any sense for gender to be defined as a cultural interpretation of sex. Gender should not be perceived as a cultural impression of the meaning of a previously assigned sex – this is how Butler describes the meaning of the sex/gender system, using a political concept. Moreover, the concept of gender should be able to describe the actual apparatus of creation that is used to create the foundation for genders themselves. As a result, gender, concerning culture, is not the same as sex regarding nature; gender is also perceived as a mean for cultural discourse by which "gender nature" or "natural sex" is shaped and based as pre-discursive, as the predecessor of culture, as a politically-neutral basis used for cultural actions (Butler, 2002).

It is also worthy of mentioning that **gender identity is susceptible to cultural connotation**, used by people to create. In that sense, the cultural understandings about which behavioural models suit each of the genders differ massively. **Margaret Mead** used her acclaimed work Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies to elaborate on the observations she performed upon the social divisions, i.e., the variances in the temperament and the differences in the "inborn" characters according to gender within the Mundugumor, the Tchambuli, and the Arapesh tribes in Papua New Guinea. According to Mead's observations and analysis on the visible gender differences and variations pres-

ent in a particular society, the author supports the claim that the differences in genders are precisely what condition the individual shaping of all men and women presenting a certain behaviour. According to Mead, each individual, in their own way, belongs to a certain sex, and possesses a unique temperament that is shared with others of the same gender, as well as those of the opposing gender. To the author, societies **construct a collective standardization of the temperament conditioned by the sex**, i.e., all distinctive characteristics of the individuals that we label as "manly" or "feminine" are exclusively related to sex. Hence, to be able to define the individuality of the sex of a child, the child itself would be educated according to the gender understandings prevalent in the community, according to its gender. Mead came to the conclusion that each community adheres to a particular system of social regulations encompassing the definition of sex. In other words, Mead claims that a single culture assigns particular gender traits to one sex, and a set of different ones to the other sex, whereas different cultural systems would follow different gender standards. In the footsteps of Mead's contemplations, we can come to the understanding that all available social gender (sex) norms are relative and prone to changes, depending on the cultural context (Mead, 2009).

It becomes rather apparent that **gender roles are greatly perceived as normative social expectations** about how men and women should behave within a particular social environment. Hence, masculinity and femininity pose as socially constructed categories that are founded on the "natural" differences between sexes. Certainly, masculinity has been institutionalized within different layers of society, such as family, education, media, and religion, where boys socialize to become men (Davchev, 2016: 56). In that sense, the trouble with sexuality lies with normativity, i.e., the cultural heteronormativity, which is becoming more and more omnipresent in the majority of contemporary societies.

The Issue of Cultural Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity relies on the idea that the heterosexual relations and behaviours are the only ones that are normal, healthy, moral, and natural, which places heterosexuals above everyone else, making them superior to the others (non-heterosexual individuals). A rather large number of the contemporary societies' of today can be described as "heterosexist", mainly because they follow a particular system of values, viewpoints, prejudice and behaviours that favour heterosexual individuals. What makes a society a heterosexist one is the adoption of the fact that everything other than heterosexuality is deviant or abnormal. Because of individual or collective fear, despise, or hatred toward homosexuals, the presence of **homophobia** is mainly based on the stereotypes and prejudice, and is essentially an irrational sense of hatred toward differences (everything different to heterosexuality), and is sometimes brought into close-knit connection to the political and religious beliefs of individuals. Because of

that, persons of different sexual orientations are facing social labelling, marginalization, and social exclusion, more and more (Žegarac, 2016).

Regarding the sole concept of sexual diversity[1] (homo/bi sexuality), non-heterosexual persons are still under massive influence of medical and natural sciences, as well as religious organizations. Most contemporary cultural systems are under the influence of heteronormativity, displaying an unambiguous support or promotion of heterosexuality **as a dominant socio-political force** that establishes the norms of gender roles and the "clear" criteria of conduct of every individual as a member of a certain society. The **dominant heteronormative culture** puts heterosexuality forward as the only acceptable and desirable gender socialization, whereas any differences that might lead to a gender identity crisis are marginalized and "normalized" by unifying gender and sexual orientation. Hence, the distinction between male/female is also passed onto the behavioural traits of an individual through gender socialization, while visualizing "facts" about sexual orientation. For instance, if a boy displays feminine (as understood through forceful normativity) behaviour, regardless of his sexual practices, the boy is labelled as fag/gay – homosexual (Butler, 1999).

Furthermore, in most cultures, heteronormativity is comprehended as "exclusively righteous", which is an utterly wrongful perception, from many viewpoints. Namely, due to the fact that heteronormativity is the outcome of cultural dominance that has garnered great power and higher status while its norms are dominantly determined by social establishments that imposed the "exclusively righteous" rhetoric of observing heterosexuality, everything else is deemed "inferior" or "deviant". Heteronormativity (heterosexism) encompasses perceptions about heterosexual relations and behaviours as the sole "normal", "healthy", and "moral" (or natural).

Concluding Statements and Observations

The ongoing discussions about sexuality as a social and cultural occurrence might contribute to the visible and rather prominent conceptions about people being shaped according to cultural contexts. What is even more important is that the social disciplining of sexuality, encompassing the credo of "naturally given", is, in fact, a creation of the thought process of humankind and the cultural evolution.

Social constructivists emphasize the fact that human sexuality is more of a social phenomenon rather than being a biological fact, which is why the definition of sexuality they bring forward stresses out the need to omit the one-sided reflection of sexuality, excluding the option to divide sexuality into one (or

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[1] In most cases, the term "sexual diversity" applies to a sexual behaviour different than heterosexuality, assuming that non-heterosexuals are "others" or "different" than heterosexuals. The concept revolving around persons with a different sexual orientation than the heterosexual one encompasses individuals "different" that heterosexuals.

two) orientation politics: homo/hetero, or limiting the gender identities to only men/women. The **construction of the sexual behaviour,** identity, and politics is the result of the influence of society, defining male and female roles (division of labour, origin of sexual connection, polygamy, monogamy, parentage, and so on). Throughout the development of the social reality of humankind, there have been cases of different cultures in which sexual flexibility has been institutionally banned or supported, and certain cultures have even experienced developmental changes regarding the values and viewpoints of sexuality and sex in general (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

The extent to which sexuality varies is noticeable in almost every culture and society. Research on the matter brings forward evidence of the need for context before categorizing sexuality. In most cases, sexuality has been subjected to bans and taboos.

More importantly, according to the bare nature of things, sexuality should not be limited – there should be no boundaries retaining sexual behaviours (mainly because sexuality is deeply intimate) and defining them as universal, permanent, constant, or unchangeable in humans. In that sense, outlining the limitations in human sexuality (historically or culturally) can lead to a false or wrong representation of the factual reality of people. Because of stances like the aforementioned ones, we can confidently say that sexuality must be treated as a phenomenon or a segment of societal and cultural existence; in other words, a segment that is in close relation with every other segment that delivers contextual meaning (Papič, 1997).

Another noteworthy aspect of sexuality is the **framework of sexual identities**. The whole array of sexual identities basically succumbs to the interpretation of the heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual relations and practices. The social roles assigned to each of the sexual identities are another important aspect of sexuality – the gender representations. Namely, these gender representations can be explained in the following matter: an individual that doesn't practice homosexual sex but takes on social roles of the opposite gender, and can practice heterosexual sex while taking on social roles belonging to the opposite gender, and so on. If we continue "mixing and matching" the ways individuals' genders are presented in society, we will come to the conclusion that it is a process of occurrences and phenomena that are culturally rooted to the days of yore. In essence, social communities will make an effort to categorize these individuals in the framework of sexual identities, labelling them as gay or lesbian (homosexual), or straight (heterosexual).

We should really ask ourselves have the members of social groups chosen their own gender role or have they been assigned one by the community? Have they been "born heterosexual", have they gotten their sex status (sexual identity) during their lifetime? Who really does label people as hetero/homo; men/women; manly/feminine; and how do they call themselves, and so on. Hence, to be able to understand **the complexity of sexual identity and behaviour in people**, perhaps it is not necessary to detect an intimate sexual practice

for society to label people according to their sexes, and then determine their behaviours – the genders. The level of complexity that is present in the sphere of gender identity politics can be best described through the following example: "a typical manly man, married, with children – in love with a young man". After being presented with a hypothetical example like this one, we are already dealing with a web of complex aspects while trying to determine the man's sexual identity, his sexual behaviour, as well as his gender category.

To be able to inspect sexuality, it is utterly important to consider the ways of understanding the sexual variations (gender/sex) within distinct contexts, in terms of defining or categorizing particular sexual behaviours or practices within social interactions. The concepts of masculinity and femininity are becoming apparent through the social interactions within a community or a society of established genders pertaining to a certain group of gender identities in a culture (Bonvillain, 2001).

Now, when elaborating on sexuality, we mainly focus on the particular natural occurrence, which doesn't exclude the fact that sexuality is a social emergence and a cultural phenomenon that only appears as an "apparent" fact and an easily determinable appearance. Every intention to focus on sexuality includes a broad spectrum of possible "identity" determinations and politics, including all the drawbacks and advantages of identity politics regarding sexuality/sex/gender (Bonvillain, 2001).

By exploring the complexity of sexuality in each of the areas included in the research, it became apparent that sexuality is, in fact, the basic condition for providing contextually sensitive and analytical overview of the available theories and research on the sexuality within different cultures through diverse historical timeframes. In that context, the viewpoints included in this research encompass a wide array of possible identification approaches, practices, and cultural constructions following sexuality and genders. The cultural variations that have been, and are still present in social interactions between individuals reveal a multitude of layers regarding processes in the creation of sexual norms and forms of sexual behaviour. Human sexuality is incorporated in social interactions, statuses, roles, behaviours, practices, and networks, shaping the way an individual practices their sexual liberties within particular contexts. To great extent, sexuality is susceptible to the different social rules of interaction, the existing power ratios, norms, roles, and social layers, which ultimately determine an individual's identity – sexual and gender-wise.

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