

# Media portrayals of the 'Other'

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Media portrayals of the 'Other'  
Master's Thesis

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## **1. Introduction**

The topic of this master's thesis is media representations of the 'Others', who are categorized in opposition to the dominant group, the 'Us', and therefore negatively evaluated, which can lead to different forms of out-group derogation, which in its highest form includes domination, inequality and hegemonic social structures. Although contemporary societies are generally perceived to be progressing in inclusion, there are still evident processes of 'othering' that affect the social situations of minority groups based on sex, race, gender and other differences. Since language constructs knowledge, and different forms of media become more available to broader audiences, analysis of discourse on different media outlets can reveal how negative representation influences the social minds of individuals and groups. The focus of this paper is on the portrayal of LGBTQ communities as the 'Others'. The political discourse on LGBTQ issues in online media was analysed from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective. Recent developments in the US have had negative effects on the rights of LGBTQ individuals in terms of passing laws, such as new health care bills in Florida. Because of the recognition that this is a relevant social issue and has negative effects on the LGBTQ community, a critical discourse analysis was designed to analyse political discourse on different media platforms that involves negative LGBTQ representation. The theoretical and research framework for this study is multidisciplinary, drawing from theories of social identity, positive group evaluation and negative out-group derogation, media representations, Critical Discourse Studies as well as media literacy and critical pedagogy. These critical perspectives have a common aim of fighting oppression and harmful ideology, producing social change and constructing just societies. The analysis tries to answer the questions of how the LGBTQ minority as the 'Others' is being represented in political discourse in online media, how this kind of discourse in turn reproduces unequal power relations in the US and Croatia, and what the implications of this analysis are for suggesting an educational strategy from the perspective of critical media literacy and critical pedagogy.

## **2. The ‘Other’**

In order to understand how LGBTQ and other minorities are being portrayed as 'the Others' it is necessary to understand social identity and the construction of social groups that leads to negative evaluations of members that are not within own group. Tajfel and Turner (2004) explain the definition of a social group,

“We can conceptualize a group, in this sense, as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it.” (pg. 283)

Group members are thus characterized by the perception of the same social category, emotional involvement in social identity and shared group evaluation as well as individual evaluation within the group. According to Tajfel and Turner (2004), social identity is perceived as an individual's self-identification with certain social categories that classify and order the social environment and enable social actions. They refer to these identifications as relational and comparative in contrast with other groups in the sense that they perceive themselves to be “better” or “worse”, similar or different to members of other groups. (pg. 283) General assumptions and theoretical principles derived from social identity and group evaluation involve: individuals’ strive for positive self-evaluation and positive self-esteem, positive and negative self-identity resulting from positive or negative value connotations of social groups and categories and own group evaluation that is referenced with socially comparing to specific other groups in which positive identity results from favourable comparison with relevant out-groups. (Tajfel and Turner, 2004, pg. 284)

These principles underlie Social Identity Theory, according to which a positive self-image and high self-esteem in an individual are mainly developed by group identification. Social Categorization Theory states that group membership also involves a cognitive process of categorization that affects how individuals perceive own group and members of other groups through categorization of oneself and others as members of in-group or out-group. These two theories stress social categorization as a process in which differences between the groups are maximized and differences within the group are minimized. (Mannarini et al., 2020, pg. 7)

Therefore, social identity and theory of associating one-self with a social group explain negative out-group evaluation. But social groups like the LGBTQ minority face much more than negative evaluation. Through history, members of the LGBTQ community have endured discrimination, violations of their human rights and aggression. According to Mannarini et al. (2020), categorizing ourselves and the others at the intergroup level does not necessarily result in out-group negativity. They claim that there are different levels of intergroup hostility – moderate hostility which includes verbal attacks and avoidance and severe hostility, such as discrimination, violence and extermination. Different factors influence out-group derogation and they include viewing others as a threat, in-group and out-group status, strength of in-group identification and whether groups feel wronged or deprived by others. (pg. 7)

Framing ‘Others’ as a threat is mentioned later as a way of representing ‘Others’ in media. This kind of framing is also observable in the representation of the LGBTQ minority. Mannarini et al. (2020) explain the term of “paranoid belongingness” in regard to constructing identity in terms of perceiving ‘Others’ as a threat and enemy. (pg. 8) They claim that identity develops only when individuals within a group constantly perceive ‘Others’ as enemies. They explain that in-group and out-group experiences are under constant influence of the perception of ‘us’ as the ones being attacked and ‘Others’ who are threatening. The term ‘paranoid’ refers to the human need to make sense of threatening environments which results in a form of collective thinking that includes ‘Others’ as a permanent enemy. There are three judgemental consequences that result from this: interpreting ‘Other’s’ actions in a disproportional way contrasted to our own, perceiving that ‘Others’ cannot be trusted and perceiving that ‘Others’ are involved in conspiracies against ‘us’. These judgemental consequences correspond to political attitudes and beliefs, especially in societies where there are unequal power relations between social groups. (Mannarini et al., 2020, pg. 8-9)

The creation of ‘Otherness’ (also called Othering) is a discursive process that results from discursive strategies and power. A dominant in-group constructs dominated out-groups. A dominated out-group is identified as a group based on the opposition to own group, but otherwise lacks any identity. This lack of identity is based upon simplistic and stigmatizing stereotypes. The process of constructing the out-group as

‘Others’ involves two mechanisms – incorporation (assimilation in which the ‘Other’ is deprived of any subjectivity and independent existence) and exclusion/distance (negation that there is any similarity between the self and the ‘Other’). (Staszak, 2008, pg. 2; Mannarini et al., 2020, pg. 9) Incorporation/assimilation and exclusion/distance result in three consequences for the ‘Other’: 1. dualistic split (between good and bad), 2. marginalization and 3. homogenization and objectification. These consequences lead to one of the central characteristics of discourses on ‘Others’, that is, production of stereotypes. (Mannarini et al., 2020, pg. 9)

As seen, the process of ‘Othering’ involves severe hostility towards the specific group as the prominent form of out-group negativity. ‘Others’ are the ones being dominated, deprived of subjectivity and independency and excluded. The process of establishing dominance includes constructing the out-group in a discursive process, which results in producing stereotypes. According to Staszak (2008), this asymmetry in power is crucial in constructing ‘Otherness’. Only the dominating group succeeds to impose its value and devalue ‘Others’ while imposing discriminatory measures. The ‘Others’ are dominated because they are unable to establish their own social and cultural norms. In order to stop being perceived as the ‘Others’, the dominated group needs to gain social power to fight the oppression and construct their own norms and group identity. (pg. 2-3) Staszak (2008) points out that the power is discursive but also depending on other forms of power (social, economic and political) of those who produce the discourse. (pg. 3)

Wodak (2003) argues that, once the out-group has been constructed as ‘Others’, different linguistic tools and strategies are used for positive in-group representation and negative representation of ‘Others’. In the process, ‘Others’ are often blamed for social phenomena that are usually much more complex in nature. Reducing these complex issues, along with vague metaphors, and blunt slogans is a part of the rhetoric of exclusion that makes wide interpretation and identification possible. This rhetoric is characteristic of political discourse and communication which is fundamentally based on the distinction between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. (pg. 133) For the purpose of this paper, representation of LGBTQ minority as the ‘Others’ is analysed in political discourse available on different media and social platforms. The following theoretical sections

deal with the media representation of ‘Others’ (which includes LGBTQ minorities), but also LGBTQ representation more specifically. Giving an account of social identity, group identification and the process of ‘othering’ is the first step in providing the theoretical background for understanding how ‘Others’ are represented in the media, how critical discourse analysis can reveal discourse strategies used by the dominating groups to (re)produce power and legitimize control and its effects on social cognition and, lastly, what the implications are for media education and critical media pedagogy, which aim to guide students in becoming critically literate and competent so that they could become active citizens in constructing just democracies. Ideally, these processes could contribute to ‘Others’ successfully escaping oppression and becoming social groups with positive autonomous identity, thus no longer being the ‘Others’.

### **2.1. Media representations of the ‘Other’**

Previously, processes of constructing social identities, group identification and conceptualization and the factors that lead to their resulting in constructing ‘Otherness’ have been discussed. In this section the discussion moves onto the role of media and media representation of ‘Others’ and their role in (re)producing stereotypes and inequality. According to Fürsich (2010) media have played an important role in constructing national identities and nation-state in Europe and America throughout history. This national identity was often formed in limiting ways by defining the boundaries of the community as a nation and by excluding minorities as ‘Others’. Contemporary geopolitical constellations, increasing globalisation and mobility (voluntary and forced) add new aspects to the media discourse on ‘Others’ which concentrate on portrayal of struggles of situating the ‘Others’ among ‘us’. (pg. 113) Fürsich (2010) states that there are two forms of ‘othering’ in media representations: representation of minorities as ‘Others’ in the nation (linguistic, racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities) and representations of international ‘Others’ (international relations, culture and conflicts). (pg. 116) Staszack (2008) also draws a distinction between geographical ‘Others’ and other forms of ‘Otherness’, “Women, homosexuals and the insane, all major figures of otherness in the West, owe their stigmatization to something other than their location. They are, after all, found among the self” (Staszack, 2008, pg. 4) The LGBTQ minority are therefore represented as the ‘Others’ among the

nation, those whose ‘otherness’ is not geologically influenced but represent a threat to the identity of the dominating group.

The role of media is evident in actively influencing public opinion and social behaviour as they activate and transmit stereotypes and shape political issues and representations of groups, specifically minority groups by using frames, attributing importance and giving visibility to certain positions. (Mannarini et al., 2020, pg. 9) Mannarini et al. (2020) argue that media discourses play an important role in reproduction, construction and circulation of images of ‘Others’. They claim that an analysis of media representations can provide insight into the construction of ‘Otherness’, especially those that concern groups most threatening to the identity of dominating groups, such as groups based on gender and sexual orientation (LGBTQ minorities), religious belonging (Muslim) and ethno-cultural belonging (immigrants). (pg. vii)

According to Fürsich (2010), the idea of representation emerged within a cultural-critical paradigm of media studies. Representations are understood as a concept that establishes norms and common sense about individuals, groups and institutions in today’s society. Representations constitute of culture, meaning and knowledge about ourselves and the world around us. Different types of media (film, television, photography etc.) contain representations that normalize ideologies, which cultural theorists consider to be a hegemonic force in contemporary societies. Within this paradigm, representations are regarded as constructed images that carry ideological connotations. Critical-cultural media studies focus on the representation of ‘Others’ and its role in sustaining inequalities, but also in creating negative effects on social and political decision-making. (pg. 115-116) Mannarini et al. (2020) point out the relevance of media representation in the sense that it partly constructs social knowledge (that is, common sense) and that it involves production of meanings that have performative effects, which makes this production a form of social action. (pg. 9-10) The concepts in critical-cultural paradigm have similarities to those within the theory of Social Representations, which states that social representations are collective forms of socially constructed knowledge and that they are a way in which individuals and groups transform abstract, unusual, vague and even disturbing objects of knowledge into

concrete and familiar ones. Social representations are created, reproduced and changing through communication, which also allows the formation of shared meanings, views and social practices between individuals and groups. (Re)production of social representations is observable in different communicative forms – micro interactions (one-to-one, everyday talk, one-to many and many-to one exchanges) and cultural artefacts (ideologies, norms, historical and political events, media and advertising). (Mannarini et al., 2020, pg 10) Because of the performative effects of media representations, they influence people's behaviour and attitudes and in that sense stereotyped media representation of 'Others' contribute to prejudice, anti-LGBTQ, anti-immigrant and anti-religious movements. Misinformation about 'Others' that is constantly shared through media portrays 'Others' as a fundamental threat to contemporary society and that in order to escape this threat, the danger that 'Others' pose should be eliminated. (Mannarini et al. 2020, pg. 10-11)

Representations are problematic when they exclude minority groups that are considered to be the 'Others' or limit their range of representation in news and entertainment media across various platforms. 'Others' are often portrayed as special, exotic or even abnormal and these media representations are constantly recycled in various media. (Fürsich, 2010, pg. 121) Fürsich (2010) enumerates three reasons for the continuous repetition of stereotyped media representation: 1. due to the repetitiveness and ubiquity of the media they sustain the longevity of media representations, 2. commercial media industries are profit-driven and unable to produce more complex representations that would undermine the traditional ones and 3. media are closely connected to, or directly controlled by the elites in society that are not interested in challenging and changing the status quo. (pg. 117) The question arises whether these sustained media representations can be challenged by the Internet and rising digital technologies that add new outlets for media representation. Due to increasing channels being available to the audiences, the audiences become fragmented in nearly all countries, and this fragmentation can attribute to diminishing the impact of traditional media representations. However, negative representation can still persist on different and new media outlets and platforms because problematic media portrayals are tied to a sustained image that is delivered across various media channels. (Fürsich, 2010, pg 117)

Internet and different media and social platforms have certainly allowed individuals that belong to dominated minority groups to share their stories and personal experiences, as is the case with members of LGBTQ communities. How can these individual accounts of personal experiences contribute to change of stereotyped and traditional representation in media is still debatable. As can be seen in the research conducted for the purpose of this thesis, media platforms can also be used to share different types of discourses that promote established and stereotyped media representations. Political discourse is one of them, as politicians create their own official social media profiles and share their political speeches in forms of video or posts that can reach wider audiences.

Different authors consider ways of challenging problematic media representations of 'Others'. Mannarini et al. (2020) suggest that media could be used in an opposite direction. They state that because of the heterogeneous and evolving media environment there is potential to change traditional media representations and provide alternative representations that contribute to social and cultural diversity. (pg. 11) Fürsich (2010) mentions counter-stereotyping as a strategy to overcome traditional stereotyped media portrayals. This involves creating media content that would portray minorities in a positive light. The problem with this strategy however, is that it can be seen as inauthentic and didactical but it could also refer back to previous negative representations. (pg. 121-122) Another representational move this author mentions is trans-coding, which is based on the notions that meanings are not fixed and that existing meanings can be re-appropriated for creation of new meanings. The problem with this strategy is that it can be hardly implemented as an actual media strategy because it assumes that it is evident in media content which representations are positive and which negative. (pg. 122) Instead, Fürsich (2010) suggests that the central focus of challenging problematic media representations should involve rethinking of media practice by showing the production conditions, providing space for other voices and by working toward more fluid production logic. (pg. 122) Not only media workers, but also media educators and students play a critical role in transforming media representations, as well as media literacy for general audiences. (pg. 128)

According to Fürsich (2010), the analysis of media representations could be incorporated into the creation of “radical pedagogy of the mass media” that allows critique of discriminatory media representations while focusing on emancipatory movements that can attribute to change in global politics of culture (pg. 116) The focus of this thesis is on the fact that analysing media representations of ‘Others’ from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective provides an opportunity to observe how power relations involving the discrimination and oppression of ‘Others’ are being (re)produced linguistically through discourse. The aim of this approach, that is social change, can be achieved in its implications with critical media literacy and critical pedagogy.

## **2.2. LGBTQ representation**

Media portrayals of ‘Others’ that are being analysed in the research are those of LGBTQ individuals. While there are many groups that are being represented as ‘Others’ in media based on ethnic, religious, cultural and sexual differences, recent social and political developments carry possible negative effects on LGBTQ communities concerning their status and rights but also overall quality of life, like the ones happening in the United States of America, especially Florida.

McInory and Craig (2015) define some key terms that need to be understood regarding the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer and it is a common acronym used to refer to people who belong to all sexual and gender minorities. Transgender man is a person who transitioned from the socially constructed gender category of woman to the category of man. Transgender woman is a person who transitioned in the opposite way, from the category of man to woman. Transition itself is a process which an individual undertakes to live as the gender with which one identifies and it often includes changing appearance, name, medical processes (hormones or surgery) and changing legal documents. (pg. 607)

Despite the common assumption that today’s societies are more progressive when it comes to human rights and inclusive of different minority groups, certain groups still face negative effects of stereotyped and traditional representation. This is also the case for LGBTQ minorities because individuals that identify themselves as their members can experience negative consequences in all areas of life. 31% of Croatian subjects in a 2012 EU LGBT study reported experiencing negative

consequences because of their gender identity or sexual orientation in terms of comments and behaviour aimed at them while being underage (under 18) and attending school. 24% of the subjects report being discriminated against by school or university employees in the last year. (Vučković Juroš, 2015, cited in Bartulović and Kušević, 2023) Bartulović and Kušević (2023) state that there are few empirical studies on LGBTQ inclusivity in Croatia, especially when it comes to the educational system. Those few that exist reveal that the Croatian educational context is particularly hostile and heteronormative, which is also true for the general social context. The findings of these studies reveal that LGB individuals (homosexual and bisexual people) face negative consequences in their daily lives due to the fact that the Church still condemns enjoyment of sexual relations and that the implementation of legal framework into practice is still incomplete which results in LGB individuals experiencing discrimination and violence. (Kamenov et al., 2015, cited in Bartulović and Kušević, 2023, pg. 3) When it comes to the USA social context, Funk et al. (2016) note suicide attempt rates, which are 1.6% for the whole population, but 41% among transgender individuals. (pg. 11) According to Funk et al. (2016), individuals who are gender-creative face harsh representations and harsh realities. When it comes to transgender individuals, the representations in media often dismiss, mock and vilify the social issues they face. (pg. 11) Notably, there is improvement in the representation of LGBTQ characters in media as their roles are increasing, but it is still minimal. 6.4% of regular characters in television identify as LGBTQ, while the number of LGBTQ individuals between the ages eighteen and thirty-four in USA is at 20%. (Kellner and Share, 2019, pg. 40)

To understand LGBTQ representations in today's society, it is necessary to observe the historical and cultural context of these representations. Sears (2006) notes that concepts such as heterosexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, trans sexuality and cross-dressing, did not even exist for the most of 19<sup>th</sup> century. (pg. 2) 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers had a role in reflecting pre-existing perspectives on sexual and gender difference, but also in creating new social meaning. Coverage of rare cases associated with homosexuality, lesbianism or cross-dressing reveals that reporters did register debate on sexuality to a limited degree. (pg. 16) During the period between two world wars, media portrayed homosexuality as sexual perversion and the prevailing debate

revolved about the issue of defining the homosexual act as a consequence of a serious medical illness or as an equivalent to criminal behaviour. There was, however, curiosity surrounding the subject which resulted in assignments of stereotypes, specifically those connected to gender behaviours or characteristics. (ManKen, 2006, pg. 23) ManKen (2006) states that homosexual intercourse was a part of the 'crimes against nature' policy of the criminal code and that it was associated with other sexual crimes including pedophilia. (pg. 24) The existence of gay and lesbian Americans was ignored in the mainstream media during 1920s. The word 'homosexual' first appeared in the New York Times in 1924 and the word 'gay' in the magazine Vanity Fair in 1922. (ManKen, 2006, pg. 26)

According to de Jong (2006), the media representation of homosexuals as 'deviants' and 'sexual perverts' continued throughout the 1950s and engaging in homosexual activities was illegal in all US states. He further addresses the issue of associating homosexuals with other sexual crimes including child molestation and rape,

"In an October 1949 Newsweek article, "Queer People," one journalist wrote: "The sex pervert, whether a homosexual, an exhibitionist, or even a dangerous sadist, is too often regarded merely as a 'queer' person who never hurts anyone but himself." However, the journalist continued, often the homosexual is a danger to society as well. He delineated the different types of "sex perverts" that exist in society: the rapist, the pedophile, the sadist, and the homosexual." (pg. 42-43)

The 'othering' and criminalizing of homosexuality by media and medical experts without providing any legal, moral or political reasoning for portraying homosexuality as a threat can be understood within a sociological context of power dimension. Homosexuality is not heterosexuality, therefore it is sexual perversion and should be illegal. If homosexuality were to be accepted as a sexual category, heterosexuality loses its privileged status in society. (De Jong, 2006, pg. 43-44)

According to Mannarini et al. (2020) homosexuality was incriminated by the law and associated with deviance before the 1960s. Media narratives showed structured absence of their representation and Hollywood cinema history on queer representation reveals issues of 'othering', denial and absence. When it comes to news media, any rare instances of representation in the US portrayed homosexuality as a perversion, sickness

or crime and the ones in British press were used as a negative reference point in morality stories which aligned with the sense of ‘normality’. (pg. 84-85)

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders dropped homosexuality as a condition in 1973, but in the same year ‘transsexuality’ was added. In later revisions, the condition was renamed ‘gender identity dysphoria’ (Arune, 2006, pg. 115) Even though the representation that is associated with a mental illness has undergone changes in last decades when it comes to homosexuals, it is still relevant for other members of the LGBTQ community, even to this day. Arune (2006) argues that the concepts of gender and sex were considered to be the same until the 1950s – if one was born male then one was of masculine gender. (pg. 118) Humans are generally conceptualized as male or female and this conception underlies the understanding of any discourse on transgender and transsexual subjects, even in today’s societies. When it comes to legal protection under human rights law, transgender individuals lack legal protection in comparison to gay and lesbian individuals. Protective laws prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but rarely include gender identity. (Arune, 2006, pg. 123) Kellner and Share (2019) also touch upon the topic of gender and sexuality, claiming that the aim is to move beyond binaries and understand these concepts as fluid and to break the myth perpetuated by the media that there are only two genders and the only ‘normal’ orientation is heterosexual. (pg. 38) Hegemonic representations of LGBTQ and other minority groups as ‘Others’ are repeatedly perpetuated by the media and result in conceptualizations that involve politicians as males, Blacks as criminals and transgender individuals as freaks, which in turn establishes what the society considers to be ‘normal’. (Kellner and Share, 2019, pg. 11)

Media representations of transgender individuals are often inaccurate and incomplete or ignore the historical context. The representations involve portrayal of transgender individuals as criminals, sex workers, unlovable or mentally ill. However, there are positive representations that exist in offline media. For instance, movies portray emphatic transgender characters and provide information on possible support and medical treatment, but also educate the public about difficulties transgender people experience. (McInroy and Craig, 2015, pg. 607) McInroy and Craig (2015) also note that transgender individuals are becoming more visible in online media due to the

telling of transgender stories on the Internet, which in turn results in positive, real-life and diverse representations. Transgender individuals become active producers in constructing discourses on transgender identity and issues. The positive side of online media for transgender representation is that they offer access to community, resources and information for transgender individuals who may not have this access to offline resources. A common trend among transgender individuals is to document their transition process in the form of video and share it on YouTube, which then provides support for others who are beginning their transitioning. (pg. 608)

In conclusion, LGBTQ representation has changed throughout history and the community has gained more visibility and positive portrayal. LGBTQ media representation has included ignoring the existence of individuals that have different sexualities and sexual identities, portraying them as mentally ill or criminal, even associating them with rapists and child molesters. In contemporary societies, positive representation has enabled the media to play a role in raising visibility and educating people on social issues and struggles that LGBTQ individuals face. LGBTQ individuals themselves have gained more access in terms of producing discourse on their identity, personal experiences and stories which they can share online on different media and social platforms. Still, stereotyped and negative representations can be found online and offline. A critical discourse analysis of online political discourse on LGBTQ issues is presented later in this work.

### **3. Critical Discourse Analysis**

From the start of this theoretical framework it is evident that discourse plays an important part in the construction of social meaning, the knowledge of the world, social and group identity, ‘otherness’ and social and media representations. All of the notions influence individuals within a society, social order and unequal relationships when it comes to dominance and power. To study ways in which these power relations between different groups are being produced and maintained by discourse it needs to be approached critically. Critical Discourse Analysis as a multidisciplinary approach is used in the research for the purpose of this thesis to examine the ways in which LGBTQ

minority is portrayed in political discourse on different media platforms, what linguistic devices and strategies are used in the production of these representations and how they influence people's minds in order to sustain hegemonic power relations.

Fairclough (1995) states that discourse can be defined from various disciplines, but is mostly understood from two perspectives. One perspective is that of language studies that see discourse as social action and interaction, that is, interaction between people in real social situations. The other is characteristic of post-structuralist social theory that defines discourse as a form of knowledge and a social construction of reality. (pg. 25) Discourse analysis can therefore be perceived as a way to examine systematic links between discourse practices, texts and sociocultural practices. (pg. 16-17) Critical discourse analysis approaches discourse from both the linguistic and social theory perspectives, as being both socially shaped and socially constitutive, rather than exclusively choosing one perspective. (Fairclough, 1995, pg. 55) Mullet (2018) defines discourse as the creative use of language as a social practice. Discourses play a bigger role than meaning production; they constitute knowledge along with social practices, form subjectivity and power relationships; they constitute the unconscious and conscious minds and emotional lives of individuals they try to manage. (pg. 4)

Different authors define Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is also often referred to as Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). Fairclough (1995) further defines Critical Discourse Analysis as the analysis of relationships between three dimensions of a communicative event, which are: text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. He refers to 'texts' as written, oral, spoken and visual communications. 'Discourse practice' is the process of producing and receiving these texts. 'Sociocultural practice' includes social and cultural context of the communicative event. (pg. 57)

According to van Dijk (2014), CDS is not defined as a method but an attitude, position and critical perspective within the Discourse Studies as a multidisciplinary discipline. The research from a CDS perspective uses various methods that come from humanities, psychology, social sciences and Discourse Studies itself. This approach is characteristic of their scholars who are socio-politically committed to justice and equality in society, which is evident in their scientific research in formulating goals,

constructing theories, developing methods of analysis and in application of the research for dealing with pressing social and political issues. (pg. 389)

Mullet (2018) defines CDA as “a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities.” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, cited in Mullet, 2018, pg. 1) Both Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis study the psychological and social contexts of language production. However, CDA includes the power dimension of language as a resource. The imbalance of power is evident in unequal access to discourse as a social resource. CDA analysts are motivated by social issues arising from the imbalances in power and aim to accomplish change through a critical approach. (pg. 1-2)

According to Wodak (2015), the goal of CDS is to denaturalize the role of discourses in the production of unequal and discriminatory structures and to challenge social conditions that surround them. Discourses are described to be in mutual relationship with material institutions and semiotic structures, they are shaped by them and, in turn, they shape them. (pg. 1)

CDA can also be used in educational research, which is aimed at the social context of discourse within the educational practice. An example of such research is examining the connection between the teachers’ ideological perspectives and their practice, or studying the representations of ‘Others’ in textbooks. (Mullet, 2018, pg. 2) Considering that the main goal of CDA analysts is to respond to pressing social and political issues and to contribute to social change that would result in just societies in which social groups would have equal power, the multidisciplinary approach of CDA needs to take into consideration a pedagogical theoretical aspect. The pedagogical aspect of media studies that analyse media discourse is further discussed in a later section of this paper. For this part, it is important to note that the fact that discourses mediate the construction of individuals’ knowledge, beliefs, values and ways in which they construct their social identities makes the discourses ‘pedagogical’.

### **3.1. Guiding principles of CDA**

Van Dijk (2014) states that it is nearly impossible to define this approach in a brief and adequate manner, but concludes that CDS typically contains the following properties:

1. The goal of CDS is to analyse social problems and contribute to their solutions, especially when these problems are enhanced by public text and talk resulting in different forms of power abuse and social inequality. CDS research is socially committed and should be accessible to anyone because of its practical applications. This especially applies to students. CDS also take into consideration scholarly activities in society.

2. CDS is carried out in a normative perspective that builds upon the terms of international human rights and allows a critical approach to abusive discourse practices which also provides guidelines for practical intervention and resisting domination.

3. Interests, expertise and resistance of those who suffer consequences of discursive injustice are specifically taken into account. (pg. 390)

Mullet (2018) lists characteristics that are true for most approaches to CDA: they analyse semiotic data, they are problem oriented, they suppose the discursive dimensions of power, they take into consideration the context of discourse, they are based on the premise that the context of language use is never neutral, they use interdisciplinary methodologies and the analysis is interpretive, systematic and descriptive. (pg. 3) Core assumptions that underlie approaches to CDA include an interest in exposing conditions of inequality and contributing to their change, analyses that go beyond language interpretation, aim to explain the effects of language in society and the perspective that viewpoints are contextual and not neutral, even the researcher's. (Mullet, 2018, pg. 3)

Van Dijk (2014) emphasized that CDS is multidisciplinary and problem oriented and defines his approach by the discourse-cognition-society triangle. Because discourse has a verbal-symbolic nature, CDS requires a linguistic basis which is understood in a broader sense. This means that although CDS deals with cognition and social dimensions, it must also account for strategies, structures and functions of text and talk.

This includes grammatical, rhetorical, stylistic, argumentative, pragmatic and other forms and meanings of multimodal structures of communicative events. (pg. 392)

In the mentioned triangle, the cognitive and social dimensions are defined as a relevant context of discourse. Relationships between text and talk are theorized with regard to CDS's problem and socio-political oriented aims. In addition to linguistic analysis, CDS at the same time requires social and cognitive analysis, and their integration enables the critical, descriptive and explanatory adequacy in the study of social problems. The social and cultural context of the communicative situation is a subjective mental representation which is referred to as a context model. The context model controls discourse production and comprehension of the social environment. Discourse, cognition and society are thus mutually integrated in interaction. (Van Dijk, 2014, pg. 392)

### **3.2. Discourse and power**

Since CDA approaches discourse from the perspective that it constructs social realities and social orders that produce unequal power relations between groups, this next section deals with the aspect of power. Understanding social power and dominance is a critical aspect in conducting adequate CDA, which allows the examination of how discourse contributes to the reproduction of inequality. Dominance is characterized by top-down and bottom-up relations and CDA focuses on the former. It also takes into consideration that power relations between dominating and dominated groups are sometimes jointly produced which involves the persuasion of the dominated group that dominance is legitimate and natural. (Van Dijk, 1993, pg. 251) According to Van Dijk (1993) CDA focuses mainly on social power that is acquired by access to resources (group membership, wealth, position, education etc.). A socially valuable power resource is also access to communication, various genre and discourses. By focusing on social and group power, CDA ignores individual enactments of personal power. (pg. 254) Social power involves one group controlling the other. 'Other' groups are being controlled in lines of action and cognition. Namely, a dominating group can control others' actions in a way of limiting their freedom, but also by influencing their minds. In modern societies power is mostly cognitive and dominating groups enact it by manipulating and persuading others, along with other strategies that are used to

influence their minds in a way that serves their own interests. Mind management is basically a function of text and talk, and that is the reason why social power is one of the key notions in CDA (Van Dijk, 1993, pg. 254) Van Dijk (1993) notes that mind management in some cases is not openly manipulative, but it can be carried out subtly in everyday forms of text and talk. Because these forms naturalize the social order and legitimate control that results in inequality, CDA focuses on different discursive strategies used to this effect. When managing the minds of others results in them accepting the unjust social order and voluntarily acting in the interests of the power group, then the term used to describe this kind of control is hegemony. (pg. 254)

As mentioned, an important social resource for establishing power and dominance is privileged access to communication and discourse. Access involves participation in communicative events and contexts, having more or less freedom in using special discourse styles and genres and control over variable properties of discourse (turn-taking, setting, planning, topics and style). Social groups are more powerful if they have more access to contexts, participants, audiences and discourse genres that they can control. Groups that have lack of power have less control and therefore less social power. (Van Dijk, 1993, pg. 255-256)

Unequal relationships of power and dominance are products of ideologies which are defined as “fundamental social beliefs that organize and control the social representations of groups and their members”. (Van Dijk, 2014, pg. 397) However, ideology has no direct link to discourse and it is not always possible to determine ideologies based on discourse alone. Discourse relates to specific event models (action and participants) and is influenced by context models. These events are under the influence of attitudes and socially shared opinions of a group. These attitudes and opinions are organized by basic beliefs of an ideology. (Van Dijk, 2014, pg. 397) According to Mullet (2018) there are different levels on which power can be indirectly exercised through controlling the discourse: controlling context, through linguistic surface structures (e.g. forms of address, tone, hesitation, laughter, pauses etc.) and through properties of turn-taking, syntax and rhetoric. The relationship between discourse and ideologies can be observed in two forms: the indirect use of discursive strategies that influence others’ minds and the direct exercise of power in text and talk

realized in specific contexts. Because of this relationship between discourse, power and ideology, discourse plays a role in reproducing and sustaining the status quo. (pg. 4)

### **3.3. Socio-cognitive model**

Defining the theoretical implications between discourse and social power and their relevance for CDA is the first step in understanding the discourse-cognition-society triangle. The ‘cognition’ part refers to van Dijk’s notion of social cognition. Social cognition is seen as “the necessary theoretical (and empirical) interface, if not missing link, between discourse and dominance”. (Van Dijk, 1993, pg. 251)

Van Dijk (1993) defines social cognition as the conceptualization of the public mind that entails mental operations, such as thinking, arguing, interpretation and learning, as well as shared representations of societal arrangements. (pg. 257) Social representations are assumed to have a schematic form that features specific categories (the schema heterosexuals have about LGBTQ individuals may feature a category of *morality*). Contents of social representations are formed by evaluative beliefs, that is, shared public opinion. Norms and values that form the basis for evaluative beliefs can be further constructed in basic, abstract and complex ideologies. Ideologies are then viewed as social cognitions that are constructed by basic goals, interests and value systems of a group. (Van Dijk, 1993, pg. 258)

CDA links the relations between discourse structures and structures of social cognition. It aims to analyse how specific discourse structures determine mental processes that result in the formation of specific social representations. Opinions that embody mental models can be affected by discursive strategies such as semantic moves or specific rhetorical moves (hyperboles and metaphors) which affect the formation of opinions and facilitate the change in social attitudes. (Van Dijk, 1993, pg. 259) According to Van Dijk (2014), social representations have a crucial role in constructing personal models. Personal models comprise of socially shared knowledge and opinions and serve as an interface of the individual and social. Prejudice regarding ethnic or sexual identity is typically shared personal beliefs that also appear in instances of individual discourses. Social representations such as knowledge, attitudes and ideologies are formed by personal mental models of influential individuals that are shared by others of a group or community. (pg. 396-397)

Van Dijk (1993) claims that the discursive reproduction of dominance, which is the main object of CDA, has two dimensions – that of production and that of reception. On one hand, CDA deals with the linguistic expression, enactment and legitimation of dominance in the production of discourse. On the other hand, it analyses the consequences and results that the structured text and talk have on social cognition of the recipients. Social cognitions of the powerful group influence their discursive (re)production of power and the discourse structures and strategies result in social cognition of others. (pg. 259) Van Dijk (1993) argues that social cognition can be perceived as a link between the micro- and macro levels of society. On the micro level, social cognitions are constructed in the minds of individuals. On the macro level they are shared by group members and play a role in the organization of society. (pg. 257) Considering this theoretical approach, the analysis of discourse on LGBTQ individuals supposes that the production of discourse reflects the social cognition of the majority group, which influences discourse strategies and structures that in turn have an effect on the minds of others. Therefore, when the powerful majority group's opinions and beliefs about the LGBTQ minority are based on stereotypes and negative evaluations, this reflects in discourses they produce, for instance in media and political discourse. Media representation of LGBTQ individuals that are based on such social cognitions influence the minds, opinions and beliefs of their audiences and help to perpetuate systemic and social inequalities that LGBTQ communities face.

CDS that deal with issues of racism, classism and sexism analyse specific discourses in the broader social framework and relate properties of the discourse with the social cognition of the powerful group that underlies the properties of discourse. This discourse is typically defined by the social-psychological strategy of in-group positive evaluation and out-group derogation. (Van Dijk, 2014, pg. 397) CDS however, do not deal with subjective meaning and discourses produced by individual language users because the reproduction of power abuse and dominance usually involves collectiveness in terms of groups, organizations and institutions. Therefore, the cognitive approach focuses on personal mental models in regard to social cognition, that is, with the beliefs and social representations that are shared within a group. Social representations involve shared knowledge, attitudes, values and norms. (Van Dijk, 2014, pg. 396)

#### **4. Media literacy**

So far, the theoretical background from the perspectives of social sciences and linguistics has been provided to explain the formation of social identities, group formation, positive in-group evaluation and negative out-group derogation as well as how these processes influence media representation and discourses. Critical Discourse Studies have been presented as an approach to analysing discourses that involve negative minority representations and the relationship between discourse, social cognition and society has been further elaborated. As already mentioned, CDS can be useful in educational studies. The main objectives and interests of CDS can be incorporated within the educational strategy of media literacy.

To explain the media literacy approach, the key terms ‘literacy’ and ‘media’ need to be defined. Kellner and Share (2019) define literacy as a process of “gaining the skills and knowledge to read and interpret the texts of the world and to successfully navigate and negotiate its challenges, conflicts, and crises.” (pg. 3) They further explain that literacy is a necessary competence for participation in local, national and global economy, polity and culture. (pg. 3) Scheibe and Rogow (2011) claim that the questions of what it means to be literate and how literacy skills can be developed are key notions in media literacy pedagogy. The approach that results from these questions is based on critical thinking and literacy practice. (pg. 21) From the perspective of media literacy, the term literacy therefore denotes the central competency that involves skills needed for interpreting, analysing and reading media discourses as well as their use for active participation in society and politics.

Although the term media carries many meanings, it is necessary to ascertain how the term is used within the frameworks of media literacy. According to Scheibe and Rogow (2011), the term media can have many different meanings depending on the context and approach, but in the context of media literacy, it means mass media. (pg. 31) Defining the term media is also important for teachers because it shapes how they practice media literacy education. These authors state that mass media can be defined as having the following characteristics:

- a) the messages are conveyed through language, visuals and/or sound

- b) the messages are mass produced for audiences and mediated by some form of technology
- c) producers of these messages are not in the same physical space as their audiences. (Scheibe and Rogow, 2011, pg. 33)

Media literacy education does not revolve around the premise that media are a problem and the goal is not to teach against media. It also doesn't consider media to be trivial, but it recognizes that media play an important part in everyday life and enables students to critically reflect on that role to ensure that it is a healthy one. (Scheibe and Rogow, 2011, pg. 84-85)

Different authors define media literacy and its involvement in national educational programmes and efforts. Volčić (2003) defines media literacy as "the ability to analyze, critically evaluate, and produce media content (in all media: print, radio, TV, computer), as well as to foster the development of skills and practices integral to the practice of participatory democracy." (pg. 37) There are differences in national programmes and efforts for media literacy's integration into the educational system. The differences also include the term used for media education. The term 'media literacy' is used in the US, Canada and Australia, 'media education' is used in the UK, 'media competence' in Germany and 'audio-visual education' in the Netherlands. (Erjavec and Zgrabljic, 2000, pg. 90) According to Fürsich (2010), media literacy is an important effort in educating individuals as audiences to be more critical towards media discourse. In the USA media literacy is a part of K-12 and college education, but not in journalism schools and institutions of media production, which she claims, may be due to the fact that media literacy is often perceived as an individual defence mechanism against fixed and unchangeable media practices. (pg. 126) However, Kellner and Share (2019) note that in K-12 schooling in the US media education has never been developed and established systematically, despite the recognition that media themselves are a form of pedagogy and despite the criticism of negative and stereotyped representations in media. (pg. 5) According to Erjavec and Zgrabljic (2000) media education in Croatia has yet to be successfully developed and implemented as an educational strategy. Some efforts have been shown in terms of media culture which is a part of the educational programme for Croatian language in elementary schools. There are also no systemically developed

programmes for media literacy education of teachers. (pg. 95) As can be seen, media literacy as an educational strategy still needs to be developed both in the US and in Croatia, along with the education that will equip teachers in skills and competencies necessary for successfully conducting media literacy praxis.

A declaration which stresses the important role media education has in the lives of individuals and society and requires all developed countries of the world to be involved in a world project of media education by creating systemic media literacy strategies at all levels of education, was signed at the UNESCO's Media Education conference, held in Germany in 1982. (Erjavec and Zgrabljic, 2000, pg. 89) Although media literacy education can be beneficial for individuals in all life stages, the notion that it is especially crucial for young children is based on the fact that they are not on the same level as adults when it comes to social identity and social cognition. Because they are not yet developmentally on the same level as adults, and because they are just beginning their process of developing individual and social identities, media discourses and representation can influence their minds with greater consequences. Volčič (2003) stresses the role of identity and mass media and argues that media literacy can be seen as a new vehicle for identity formation both on the individual and societal basis. Mass media play a crucial role in identity formation in the emerging information society. (pg. 62)

Erjavec and Zgrabljic (2000) claim that media education is especially crucial in early education and that some of the countries have recognized this importance during the process of creating media education strategies. Young children are, for instance, not developmentally at the same level as adults in terms of physical, cognitive and emotional capabilities, meaning that consuming mass media, such as television, can have even greater consequences on their developing minds. However, among the populations of developed countries, children are the ones who watch television the most. (pg. 90) Erjavec and Zgrabljic (2000) mention that in the US children watch television on average 4.2 hours a day, while in Slovenia 3.5 hours a day. (pg. 90)

Different media forms enable the media discourse to reach broader audiences. How the audiences receive the messages and what their roles are is a crucial question in media literacy. Throughout the second part of the 20th century qualitative media

audience studies revolved around the premise that audiences were passive in receiving media messages. (Volčić, 2003, pg. 38) However, the role of audiences is one of the central points of media literacy. They are no longer perceived as only recipients of media messages, but also as participants and creators of media discourse. (Fürsich, 2010, pg. 126) Perceiving audiences as passive means viewing them as simply being exposed to and receiving media messages. On the other hand, the concept of active audiences involves the processes of interpretation, selection and understanding of these media messages. (Hasebrink, 2012, pg. 60) This shift from perceiving audiences as passive media recipients to viewing them as active participants in media discourse also enables the critical perspective of media literacy which is described in the following section.

One aspect of media literacy involves the user's ability to participate in media politics and media governance. Media governance includes processes that aim at: setting the legal and political framework for media activities, defining the cultural, social and democratic objectives for media services and evaluating the performance of these services along with the media system as a whole. (Hasebrink, 2012) The users' role in media governance presupposes abilities and competences that are considered to be relevant for different aspects of media literacy. Involvement in media governance is based on one's awareness of individual communicative needs and social requirements of the communicative system, as well as on the knowledge of general properties regarding the structures and rules of media systems and the abilities to participate in political forms of media engagement. (Hasebrink, 2012, pg. 71) Educational programmes that aim at developing media literacy need to distinguish the set of skill and competences that are relevant for this strategy.

Scheibe and Rogow (2011) enlist a set of area of skills and knowledge in which someone who is media literate would be proficient: *access* (having physical access to media technology and knowledge about their use), *understanding* (understanding messages from media sources in order to be able to critically analyse them), *awareness* (paying attention to the presence of media messages), *analysis* (decoding media messages), *evaluation* (making judgement on the values or utility of media messages for specific purposes), *creation* (production of media messages for specific purposes),

*reflection* (consideration that personal values and beliefs influence the production of media messages and assessing the consequences of those media messages on others) and *participation* (collaborate in activities that are enabled by interactive media technologies). (pg. 39-40) Incorporating CDA into media literacy educational strategies can help develop the students' proficiency in the area of understanding in terms of both in-text analysis and broader analysis which allows understanding messages from a linguistic and critical perspective. Fairclough (1995) suggests four questions that students need to be able to answer in order to reach the objectives of media education:

"1. How is the text designed, why is it designed in this way, and how else could it have been designed? 2. How are texts of this sort produced, and in what ways are they likely to be interpreted and used? 3. What does the text indicate about the media order of discourse? 4. What wider sociocultural processes is this text a part of, what are its wider social conditions, and what are its likely effects?" (pg. 202)

These questions can help students in understanding the aspects of text production but also enable them to consider the wider socio-cultural context, which is important when that context includes unequal power relations between social groups.

The notion of critical analysis within media literacy is perceived differently among different authors, especially regarding the aims of such analysis. According to Kellner and Share (2007b), the need for media literacy addresses the social issues in evolving multicultural societies regarding injustices and inequality based on gender, race and class discrimination. This need is based on the recognition that media representations influence the understanding of the world and construct our opinions, values, beliefs and identities and that there are challenges in teaching media literacy as part of multicultural education. (pg. 16-17) Media literacy is not only text-centred and focused on the analysis of media messages in terms of production and reception. Instead, it is characterized by the interdisciplinary cultural studies movement, which includes concepts such as ideology, hegemony, representation and cultural appropriation that enables the field of media literacy to systematically criticize the impacts of mass media. (Fürsich, 2010, pg. 126) On the same note, Kellner and Share (2019) state that media literacy gains more importance in changing multicultural societies as goals for social justice arise. Recently, it has been recognized that media representations influence the construction of images and understanding of the world and that education should focus

on the challenges of teaching media literacy in contemporary societies which involves raising awareness among students and publics on the issues of inequality and injustice based on gender, race and class discrimination. (pg. 4) These understandings of the need for critical analysis within media education move beyond text analysis and the analysis of media practices to challenging social inequalities and notions such as ideology and hegemony.

On the other hand, Scheibe and Rogow (2011) state that media literacy cannot be equated to media reform in the sense of a political movement. Media literacy education can influence politics, but it is strictly an educational discipline that promotes the principles of democracy in a non-biased way that does not lead to indoctrination. It rather helps students to express their own values. (pg. 83) Political initiative could originate with students and that would be considered to be a sign of success because action is an important part of media literacy education. But such initiatives should not be directed by the teacher. (Scheibe and Rogow, 2011, pg. 83) In that sense, critical media literacy that deals with broader socio-cultural contexts and issues of power should be distinguished as a perspective within the media literacy movement.

#### **4.1. Critical media literacy**

According to Scheibe and Rogow (2011), critical thinking can be taught outside the field of media literacy but young students may need guidance in translating skills from one area to another so it is necessary to specifically teach critical thinking in terms of analysing media. This includes the critical perspective on all types of media and its processes, from production to reception, to avoid the message that only certain forms of media in specific contexts require critical thought. (pg. 26) Kellner and Share (2007a) stress that teaching critical media literacy is not even in question, but the main question is how it should be taught. Critical media literacy is seen as a multidisciplinary approach that addresses issues of race, class, gender and power to examine relationships between media literacy, critical pedagogy and cultural studies. (pg. 3)

Kellner and Share (2007a) stress that

“critical media literacy is an imperative for participatory democracy because new information communication technologies and a market-based media culture have fragmented, connected, converged, diversified, homogenized, flattened, broadened, and reshaped the world.” (pg. 2)

Critical media literacy as an education strategy is concerned with developing skills that enhance civic participation and democratization which is connected to the establishment of a radical democracy. A comprehensive approach is needed to teach critical thinking and skills, but also to teach how to use media for achieving social communication and change. New technologies are becoming ever more accessible citizens and young people. These technologies can be used to spark participation and public debate and to promote democratic self-expression and social progress. (Kellner and Share, 2007b, pg. 17)

Critical media literacy as an educational strategy expands the notion of literacy and includes different forms of new technologies, popular culture and mass communication. It builds on the potential of literacy education to critically analyse relationships between audiences, media, information and power but also uses alternative media production in empowering students to produce their own media discourses and challenge other media narratives. (Kellner and Share, 2007a, pg. 3) Fürsich (2010) describes an important approach to media studies emerged in the 1960s – the cultural-critical paradigm, which is based on the premise that media play a role in the reinforcement of the hegemonic status quo. This paradigm is based on linguistics, semiotics and humanistic traditions of cultural criticism along with political economy and cultural anthropology. The cultural-critical paradigm was countered by the emergence of audience-focused research by interdisciplinary cultural studies which established the dominance of audiences and focus on their ability to resist dominant messages. (pg. 115) According to Fürsich (2010) there is still debate whether the media controls the discourse in a way that maintains the status quo or whether the audiences are able to resist the cultural domination and negotiate media messages. However, recent theories understand that media plays a significant role in problematic cultural forces and turn to cultural critique to examine its effects along with the ways in which audiences actively appropriate, accept or even undermine dominant discourses. (pg. 115)

However, there is some caution in approaching media literacy exclusively through a critical perspective which involves the desired outcome of students' critical autonomy. Critical literacy should not become a form of determinism that as an outcome deprives students of independent thought in the sense that they are led to view the world through

a dichotomous approach which divides it into dualistic categories of oppressors and oppressed and positions media and the public in oppositional ways. (Scheibe and Rogow, 2011, pg. 74) Scheibe and Rogow (2011) stress that one of the major aims of media literacy education is to empower students to act, which leads to the possibility of them pursuing social justice but not in the sense of imposing the agenda of critical literacy's social justice. Critical literacy aims at teaching students to challenge the way things are and to take autonomous action in changing them. (pg. 75) The point of the argument is that media literacy should teach students how to think rather than what to think. Simply sharing a critique of the media without providing students with the necessary skills that they need to critically analyse media for themselves, forms a notion of dependency by teaching them to use media literacy to reveal meanings that are favoured by the teacher or cultural critics. (Scheibe and Rogow, 2011, pg. 81)

Kellner and Share (2007a) explain the necessary elements of critical media literacy divided into four general approaches:

The first perspective is what they call the protectionist approach – it comes out of fear of media and aims at protecting individuals from the dangers of media manipulation. In this approach, audiences are seen as passive victims and traditional print is seen as more valuable than other forms of media culture. The advantages of the protectionist approach are seen in addressing the relationship between media and social injustice and the naturalizing processes of ideology. However, the criticism of this approach reveals its anti-media bias, which does not take into consideration the complexity of the relationship between media and individuals, groups and society. This approach then leads to an undemocratic pedagogy and hinders the potential for empowerment through alternative media production and critical pedagogy. (Kellner and Share, 2007a, pg. 3-4)

The second approach is seen in media arts education, which is oriented towards students' creative self-expressions through creating art and media and teaching them to value the aesthetic qualities of the arts and media. This approach can be motivating and relevant to students because it brings popular culture and pleasure into education. By incorporating cultural studies and critical pedagogy that deal with issues of race, gender, class, sexuality and power into this approach, dramatic potential can be achieved that

would serve transformative critical media literacy. Criticism of this approach reveals that it favours individual self-expression over alternative media production and over analysis that is socially conscious. The programmes of media arts education are concerned with technical skills for production without exploring the ideological implications and providing any social critique. Using the skills to come to voice is something any sexist or racist group can also do, thus critical analysis that deals with the structures of oppression needs to be incorporated into this approach. It is also important to open spaces for those who are in marginal positions so that they could create their own representations. (Kellner and Share, 2007a, pg. 5)

The third approach to media education is characterized by the media literacy movement in the US that established two national membership organizations in the US. The Alliance for Media Literate America, one of them, defines media literacy as a series of communication competencies which include the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate. The goal of the approach is to expand the notion of literacy to include multiple forms of media (Internet, music, video etc.) and popular culture while still being based on a print literacy tradition. The positive outcome of the media literacy movement can be seen in promoting concepts such as intertextuality and semiotics and incorporating popular culture into education. However, this approach lacks a critical perspective on the role of discourse that defines power relationships and domination along with underlying notions of ideology. Without considering cultural studies and critical pedagogy, the media literacy movement risks becoming involved in the social reproduction of inequalities. (Kellner and Share, 2007a, pg. 5)

Kellner and Share (2007a) propose a fourth approach, that of a critical media literacy that includes positive aspects of the three previously mentioned approaches but shifts its focus on analysing the politics of representations regarding gender, race, sexuality and class along with a critique of ideology. It also incorporates alternative media production and expands the textual analysis to issues of control, resistance, social context and pleasure. Literacy as a term, from the perspective of a critical media literacy approach, includes technical literacy, multimodal literacy, information literacy and other forms. Ideology, power and domination are key notions for critical media literacy which challenges the apolitical and relativist notions of media education. It is also based on the

perspective that audiences are not passive, but active in the meaning-making process. (pg. 5)

Critical media literacy as an approach takes the stance that all ideas are not equal and every perspective is not valid. Opposed to the cultural relativist perspective that promotes apolitical notions and that every message and viewpoint is equal, critical media literacy states that relativism is not a harmless personal point of view, specifically when it promotes sexism, racism, heterosexism and other types of discrimination. (Kellner and Share, 2019, pg. 12) One important aspect of critical media literacy is media production. By creating their own narratives and digital media which are influenced by their own unique perspectives, students become aware that every media production process depends on the creator's perspective and that perspective can reflect privilege or disadvantage. (Kellner and Share, 2019, pg. 12)

Kellner and Share (2019) recognize the pedagogical potential for students in the production of media in terms of their empowerment through the process of creation, understanding and learning the codes of representation that shape the social world and creating new media for challenging stereotypes and domination. (pg. 12)

#### **4.2. Pedagogical aspects of media literacy**

It has already been mentioned that media themselves are seen as a form of pedagogy. This section deals with the pedagogical aspects of media literacy and the underlying pedagogical theories that authors mention in constructing the approach to media literacy. Kellner and Share (2019) argue that media culture itself is a type of pedagogy that is usually invisible and subliminal because individuals are often not aware that they are being influenced and educated by the media. However, media culture influences one's knowledge of the world, behaviour, gender roles and values. Because of this unawareness, it is necessary to approach media discourse and media processes critically. (pg. 5)

According to Kellner and Share (2007a) the challenge of developing critical media literacy comes from the fact that it is not pedagogy in the traditional sense which includes a canon of texts, teaching procedures and established principles. Critical media literacy requires a democratic pedagogy in the sense that teachers share power with the

students and co-operate with them in processes of challenging hegemony and designing methods for own media production. (pg. 7) A democratic approach to media literacy along with critical pedagogy is based on the works of authors like Paulo Freire and John Dewey (Kellner and Share, 2007a, pg. 8). Dewey's theory for democratic education is based on the notions of active learning, experimentation and problem solving. His approach involves the connection between theory and practice and encourages students to connect reflection and action. Freire, on the other hand, uses a problem solving pedagogy to signal action against oppression and his approach involves critical thought on perceptions of concrete problems and situations. Freire's approach requires dialogical communication between teachers and students in which they both learn and teach each other. In sum, critical media literacy rests on the ideas of praxis, critical reflection and action to transform society. Therefore, media education requires critical analysis and critical media production. (Kellner and Share, 2007a, pg. 8) Kellner and Share (2019) define the aims of critical media literacy pedagogy in terms of exploring complex relationships between power, ideology, information and audiences. Transformative pedagogy and media education rely on sociological understandings of literacy which enables them to approach issues of gender, race and class ideologies through a contextual approach. (pg. 16)

Along with the perspective of a democratic pedagogy based on Dewey's and Freire's work, Alvermann and Hagood (2010) also mention that from a feminist pedagogical perspective, critical media literacy is oriented toward the function of popular culture texts to produce gendered identities and specific relations of power and the students' ability to resist or use these texts in their everyday educational experience. (pg. 194) The common characteristics of the above-mentioned pedagogical approaches to media literacy are that they are problem-oriented, call for connecting theory to action and deal with questions of oppression and social injustice. These objectives are typical of a critical perspective, which includes CDA.

According to Tolić (2008), in the contemporary educational paradigm, media play a dual role – on one hand their contents have an educational-informative character, while on the other hand they easily turn into a form of manipulation and indoctrination, especially when it comes to children and young students. (pg. 1) Tolić (2008) argues

that media pedagogy has established itself as a separate scientific discipline in the last few decades. It resulted from the joint effects of educational sciences development and a reaction to pedagogical implications of the rapid development of innovative media. However, the theoretical framework for media pedagogy has not yet been fully developed. It is characterized as a multidisciplinary approach drawing from different scientific theories (communication sciences, social sciences, educational sciences etc.) The aim of media pedagogy is creating adequate competencies by using innovative media in order to avoid media manipulation. (pg. 1) Tolić (2008) further explains that media education involves decoding manipulative symbols in order to prevent a negative effect of media on young students. Young people are seen as slaves of mass communication, internet addicts and isolated individuals who are socially depressed. (pg. 3) This definition of media pedagogy falls under the category of the above-mentioned protectionist approach (Kellner and Share, 2007a) which sees students as passive victims of media manipulation without considering the complexity of the relationship between individuals, media and society. In order to become a theoretically developed approach, media pedagogy should position students as members of active audiences that analyse and interpret the messages, understand the underlying mental processes involved in the production of media, are aware of the socio-cultural contexts and participate in producing their own media.

According to Kellner and Share (2007a) the ultimate goal of critical media literacy pedagogy is to guide students in their transformations to socially active citizens, which in turn results in the transformation of society into just democracy. (pg. 12) For transformative teaching and democracy, it is necessary to recognize that education is in its nature political. In this sense critical media literacy guides students and teachers in developing skills necessary for critical thought and empowers them in their roles of responsible citizens who use their knowledge and skills to challenge injustice in society. (Kellner and Share, 2019, pg. 14) Unlike previously mentioned apolitical aspirations of media literacy, the critical pedagogical aspect of media literacy recognizes that education is in fact not devoid of political influence. According to CDA, every discourse is characterized by its context, issues of access, participant roles etc. This is also true for discourse inside of the classrooms. Teachers are influenced by their own

social cognitions that are a result of their group identification and that involve the socio-cultural context, including politics.

Tolić (2009) stresses that media pedagogy acts as a 'guide' for functioning within contemporary media societies, especially for children and young students. Media pedagogy uses different tools for the critical analysis of media which is based on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives. Different areas of research need to be assessed according to their relevance to media pedagogy. (pg. 99) As mentioned, critical analysis of media can include CDA. For media education to reach its goals, students need to be able to acquire specific skills and competences. Tolić (2008) claims that there are four points that describe the pedagogical aspect of media competence: 1. compensatory: social and ethical, 2. intercultural: cultural connections, co-habitation, and values systems 3. theoretical and symbolic: semantics and decoding symbols in media and 4. socio-cultural: the responsibility and co-operation with different forms of media. (pg. 6)

As mentioned, positioning the students as subjects in the pedagogical relationship in the context of critical media literacy implies that they are seen as active recipients and constructors of media messages. According to Kellner and Share (2007b), critical pedagogies stress the importance of students' own voices in deconstructing media messages along with creating their own media. This calls for a bottom-up, student-centred approach that ensures that analysis comes from the student's own knowledge, experience and culture. Students are then encouraged to voice their discoveries through collaborative inquiry and media production. (pg. 10-11) Critical media literacy facilitates the development of skills that help create responsible citizens who are competent participants in social-political life. In that way, this approach's main goal is development of skills necessary for participation and democratization which will enable the students to work towards a radical participatory democracy. (Kellner and Share, 2019, pg. 9) Considering this student-centred approach, critical media literacy pedagogy is not directly concerned with the construction of democracy and just society. Rather, it focuses on the individual, on the student as the subject, and the guidance the individual needs to become an autonomous critical thinker. By achieving its goal in aiding students in their transformation and enabling them to become media literate participants of a just

society, critical media literacy pedagogy indirectly plays a part in transforming the greater social order. According to Kellner and Share (2007b), teachers should be committed to social justice and equality principles that form the basis for their work of media educators in guiding students to come to their own conclusions about, for instance, homophobic, sexist or racist discourse and the fact that oppression and domination result from them. (pg. 10)

## **5. Previous research**

Previous research on LGBTQ representation can provide helpful data for better understanding of media discourse on LGBTQ-related issues. Billard and Gross (2020) provide results of research done on the framing of gay, lesbian and transgender individuals in news coverage. They describe framing as “the application of interpretive schemas for organizing the social world onto complex social issues in their representation in media and, in the context of politics especially, defining the nature of social problems” (pg. 5)

Coverage on the issue of gay and lesbian rights proved to contain value frames that position gay and lesbian rights as those of competing social values. When it comes to transgender rights issues, morality frames were scarcely found, but the predominating frames were that of equality, education and safety (most common frame of safety is that of the “bathroom bogeyman” frame, that portrays transgender women as dangerous regarding the safety of women and children). In some research, religious frames were also included. (Graber, 2018, cited in Billard and Gross, 2020, pg. 5) The bathroom frame is also evident in the research in this thesis – transgender individuals were banned to use bathrooms opposite of their biological sex in the state of Florida, and governor DeSantis legitimizes the bill in discourse by portraying transgender individuals to be a threat to women and children. The threat frame for transgender individuals (specifically transgender women) is believed to be the dominant opposition frame for transgender rights. It is also unique to transgender rights coverage in contrast to gay and lesbian coverage. (Billard, 2019b; Graber, 2018; Schilt and Westbrook, 2015, cited in Billard and Gross, 2020, pg. 5)

Competing frames on public opinion on gay and lesbian rights that were adapted by the media were studied for their possible consequences on politics. The studies found that framing has a significant effect on public opinion in the sense that those who were exposed to equality frames are more likely to support gay and lesbian rights and those who are more likely to oppose their rights were exposed to traditional morality frames. (Brewer, 2022, 2003; Price et al., 2005 cited in Billard and Gross, 2020, pg. 7) Political discourse, in this sense, attracts more support for the political initiative of the group if it frames minority groups, or more specific the LGBTQ minority, in a negative way.

A similar study to the one conducted for the purpose of this paper was carried out by Gera (2023). The author conducted a critical discourse analysis of Orban's political narrative surrounding his campaign against LGBTQ communities. The aim of the research was to analyse how Orban uses populist rhetoric and social categorization in his anti-LGBTQ campaign in Hungary that led to a referendum on LGBTQ issues in April 2022. (pg. 105) Gera (2023) examined television, newspaper and radio interviews, press statements, public speeches and op-eds by using a CDA approach and integrating historical, sociological and political dimensions into the analysis. (pg. 105) The results of Gera's (2023) research showed that the Hungarian prime minister's discourse constructs the LGBTQ communities as an out-group by negative representation and emphasizes their 'otherness' by linking them to geographical 'others', that is, to social groups in Western culture. Orban uses the will of parents as an oppositional frame to LGBTQ values. Orban also portrays the LGBTQ community in connection to other out-groups and scapegoats, such as immigrants, to add to the frame of threat. (pg. 105-106) Similar strategies are seen in DeSantis's discourse in which he emphasizes the parents' role in education and portrays himself as acting on behalf of the parents that want their children to be protected from indoctrination. Discourse on parental rights is also observable in Croatian media. It contributes to the impression of parental resistance to the inclusion of LGBTQ issues into the Croatian school system, which is based on the argument that parents have rights in deciding which content the students should be exposed to and that the school content should be consistent with what they teach them at home. (Bekić, 2013, cited in Bartulović and Kušević, 2023, pg. 4)

Gera (2023) also mentions Orban's strategy in portraying the LGBTQ community as a threat to children. He mentions Orban's response to a recently published children's book that contains retold classical stories which now include LGBTQ characters. In this response Orban stated "leave our children alone." (pg. 109) Orban and the Hungarian government also argue the children should be protected from sexual propaganda in schools. The Hungarian government passed a law in June 2021 that bans LGBTQ individuals from featuring in TV shows and movies for minors and also from featuring in schools. (Gera, 2023, pg. 109) This strategy is evident, and even emphasized by the structural properties of DeSantis's discourse. Namely, the bills that involve questionable policies when it comes to the rights of the LGBTQ communities are titled 'Let Kids Be Kids'. Child innocence is one of the arguments that appears as an explanation for the persistence of LGBTQ taboos in Croatian education in the research conducted by Bartulović and Kušević (2023), who studied different discourses teachers use when discussing modalities (content, timing and methodical approach) of addressing LGBT issues in education. Other arguments proved to be the already mentioned parental resistance along with the lack of a systematic approach to LGBTQ inclusivity. Child innocence as an argument is observable in research that places sexuality into education. According to different authors, the predominant approach to sexuality education is based on social discourses that describe sexuality in connection to childhood to be developmentally inappropriate, unimportant and even threatening to children. (Robinson et al., 2017, cited in Bartulović and Kušević, 2023, pg.8)

Drawing conclusions from these previous studies and comparing them to the results of the present study shows that, although the socio-cultural and national contexts for the LGBTQ community differ, the same genre or type of discourse produces similar strategies in portraying LGBTQ individuals.

## **6. Research**

As already mentioned, the research conducted for the purpose of this thesis relies on the CDA perspective to examine LGBTQ representation in political discourse on different media platforms. The selected materials deal with topics surrounding the LGBTQ minority and events in politics and education in connection to their representation.

### 6.1. Methodology

As already mentioned, CDA is considered to be a position, attitude and critical perspective that relies on multidisciplinary methods. Scholars who conduct research in CDA draw from different fields of humanities, psychology, social sciences and linguistics in constructing theories and developing methods of analysis with the goal of the research producing effects for social change. (Van Dijk, 2014, pg. 389) CDA's focus is on social problems, not on theories. Therefore CDA is used to solve these problems with any method or theory that is perceived to be relevant which includes designing the methodology and using any procedures that are relevant to the research purpose. (Mullet, 2018, pg. 2) This section provides the description of the method used for conducting a critical discourse analysis of political discourse on different media platforms that involves LGBTQ representation.

This analysis draws from theories of social identity, group identification and social representation to explain LGBTQ representation in media, as well as media literacy and pedagogical theories to consider how this kind of analysis could contribute to producing just social order and societies by integration within educational practices. The discourse is then analysed from the CDA perspective, mostly relying on van Dijk's theory. In-text analysis is based on the discourse strategies and structures which he suggests and which are used to legitimize the unequal power relations by focusing on various forms of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. (Van Dijk, 1993) The general framework for the research was based on the one that Mullet (2018) suggests in her work. Implications were considered in light of a critical media literacy and pedagogical perspective.

Van Dijk (1993) states that the most obvious way for achieving positive self-representation and negative other-presentation is through semantic content. However, for the content to be credible, persuasive moves are used, such as following:

- *argumentation* (used to prove that the negative evaluation follows from 'facts')
- *rhetorical figures* (hyperbolic enhancement of 'their' negative actions and 'our' positive actions which includes denials, euphemisms...)
- *lexical style* (refers to choice of words that imply negative or positive evaluation)

- *story telling* (telling negative events as personally experienced, giving plausible details about negative events)
- *structural emphasis* (in headlines, summaries, other properties of text schemata)
- *quoting credible witnesses, sources and experts* (pg. 264)

Mullet (2018) discusses the criteria for qualitative rigour in CDA and explains two criteria that are generally agreed upon in CDA: completeness and accessibility. For the research to comply with the criteria of completeness there should be no new discoveries when new data is presented. In achieving accessibility, the work should be accessible to the social groups that are affected by the study. Trustworthiness of the research is proved by methodical, theoretical and data source triangulation. Theoretical triangulation considers four context levels: 1. immediate language, 2. interdiscursive relations between discourses and text, 3. social level of context and 4. the broader societal and historical context. (pg. 5) CDA involves a critical perspective that transcends the narrow conversation analytical approach. Tools that CDA analysts use can be derived from different fields, including speech act theory and pragmatics, but it can also be any other tool that enables the discovery of underlying beliefs that construct the language. (Mullet, 2018, pg. 5) Mullet (2018) offers a generic analytical framework for constructing CDA as a stepping point in creating a widely applicable guide in hopes of making CDA easier to understand and easier to conduct by new and inexperienced CDA researchers so that CDA could be used in disciplines where its application has been rare. (pg. 23)

Mullet's (2018) framework includes the basic premises of CDA in a seven-step analysis, which serves as a guide to design more specific frameworks that would be oriented to achieving the researcher's goal. The seven steps she suggests are:

1. *Selecting the discourse*

This step includes selecting discourses that are related to injustice or inequality in society (for example, discourses on ethnic, religious, sexual and other minorities).

2. *Locating and preparing data sources*

The second step is to select data sources and prepare the texts for analysis. The sources include visual media, advertisement, textbooks, articles etc.

### *3. Exploring the background of each text*

The third step includes analysing the social and historical context behind the texts, for instance publisher characteristics, historical context, characteristics of the genre, intended purpose etc.

### *4. Coding texts to identify overarching themes*

The fourth step is to identify themes and subthemes of the text by using qualitative coding methods, such as open or inductive coding, axial or didactic coding and thematic analysis.

### *5. Analysing external relations in the text*

The fifth step includes analysing the social relations that are involved in the production of the text, but also the reciprocal relations in terms of how the text and social practices influence each other. The examples are dominant practices and norms, and social structures (institutions, schools, legal system and governments...)

### *6. Analysing internal relations in the text*

The sixth step includes the analysis of the language for indication of speaker positionality, representations and aims of the text which includes linguistic devices, grammar, structural properties and similar strategies.

### *7. Interpreting the data*

In the seventh step, data is interpreted in connection to meanings of major themes, external and internal relationships of the text. This includes revisiting earlier structural fragments and placing them in broader contexts and themes. (pg. 7)

Some of the steps were followed in constructing the research for the purpose of this thesis. Political discourse on LGBTQ representation was selected because of recent social and political happenings in the US and because similar discourse was also observed in the Croatian context. The data and texts were taken from different media

platforms: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Context of the material was examined in terms of access, participants and setting while the broader social and historical context is provided in the theoretical section. Overarching themes of the discourses were interpreted by using the method of inductive coding. Themes and messages that were interpreted were analysed in terms of social and media representations of LGBTQ individuals that they produce. The discourses were then analysed to uncover discourse strategies and structures based on persuasive moves that van Dijk (1993) suggests. And lastly, implications of the findings were considered in terms of their application for critical media literacy and pedagogy in constructing educational strategies for creating just democratic societies.

## **6.2. Research questions**

The analysis conducted for this paper was guided by the following research questions:

Q1: How are 'Others' (LGBTQ individuals) portrayed in political discourse available on different media and social platforms?

Q2: In which way can political discourse available on different media and social platforms play a part in the (re)production of dominance, discrimination and inequality toward 'Others'?

This paper focuses on the representation of the LGBTQ community in the United States of America and Croatia.

## **6.3. Gathering materials**

This analysis was conducted by gathering materials and texts on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. The media platforms' own search engines were used to search for key words such as 'LGBTQ' or names of politicians who are related to relevant topics regarding LGBTQ individuals in the United States and Croatia (the new health care bill in Florida; Zagreb Pride).

The next step was going through the search results and selecting materials that are relevant for this research. The research and research questions suppose that the discourse should be political. Therefore, one of the criteria was the genre of discourse.

Another criterion was that the topics of posts and videos should revolve around events in the USA and Croatia which motivated this analysis, specifically the signing of the new health care bill in Florida, Ron DeSantis's campaign, reactions to Zagreb Pride and reactions to educational strategies for implementing LGBTQ narratives in schools. The third criterion was access, since the post and videos should be publicly accessible by all users of the mentioned media and social platforms.

Search results that matched the criteria were then taken into consideration to select a limited number of posts and videos that allow the analysis to be carried out in order to answer the research questions. The focus was put on materials that contain discourse produced by politicians, mainly Ron DeSantis, but also Božo Petrov and Nikola Grmoja. The textual content of the posts was copied and videos were transcribed by the researcher and put in a single file to allow the identification of overarching themes.

The materials selected relevant for this analysis are the following:

Facebook:

1. A post of Governor Ron DeSantis' interview on the Benny show
2. The reel 'The many targets of Ron DeSantis' by Brut
3. A post on 'Drag story' by Hrvatska udruga roditelja aktivista (The Croatian Activist Parents Association)
4. Nikola Grmoja's post as a reaction to Zagreb Pride Association's accusations
5. Božo Petrov's post as a reaction to Zagreb Pride Association's accusations

YouTube

6. 'Let kids be kids' Gov. DeSantis sings an anti-transgender health care bill

Twitter

7. Ron Desantis's post 'Let kids be kids'
8. Ron DeSantis's post on expanding Parents' Rights in Education

#### 6.4. Context

The first step in doing the analysis on the macro-level of text and talk is to examine the context. The social and historical context of LGBTQ representation was described in the theoretical framework of this paper. The contexts of selected materials were examined by analysing access, settings, participants, genre and participant's positions and roles.

*Table 1 - A post of Governor Ron DeSantis' interview on the Benny show*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Access</i>                            | Facebook as a form of on-line social media platform is accessible to anyone that creates a profile. The discourse between the journalist and governor DeSantis can be shared, messages of opposition or approval added to the post, which can also be seen by the approving message that the poster included. Also, opinions can be provided via the comment section. Posts can be shared on different levels, from only visible to other Facebook friends to being public and accessible for everyone. Therefore, the access to this discourse proves not to be limiting to anyone, even though that by sharing the post, the original content of the discourse remains unchanged. |
| <i>Setting</i>                           | The discourse between the journalist and governor Ron DeSantis takes place in, what it seems to be, a convenience store, which makes the setting informal and the exchange as a form of everyday talk between two participants. However, The Benny show is a politics podcast.  |
| <i>Genre</i>                             | The form of the communication in the video is that of a journalist interview. However, since it revolves around governor DeSantis's attitudes and beliefs that form his political activity and it is shared on a politics podcast, it is also a political discourse.  |
| <i>Participants' positions and roles</i> | The journalist Benny Johnson acts as the interviewer but also as an American conservative political commentator.<br><br>Ron DeSantis speaks in his role of the governor of Florida. He is also a member of the Republican Party, white, heterosexual and male.<br><br>Facebook users can also be participant in sharing the discourse   |

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
|  | and adding their own perspectives. |
|--|------------------------------------|

*Table 2 – The reel ‘The many targets of Ron DeSantis’ by Brut*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Access</i>                            | To access to Facebook as a form of online media has already been discussed for the previous discourse. This is also applicable to this video post.  |
| <i>Setting</i>                           | The video consists of fragments of Ron DeSantis’s political speeches that convey the main messages of his overall narratives. However, this kind of editing eliminates the broader context for each utterance.  |
| <i>Genre</i>                             | The genre of the discourse is political speech. However, this discourse consists of compiled parts of several different political speeches.   |
| <i>Participants’ positions and roles</i> | Ron DeSantis speaks in his role of the governor of Florida. He is also a member of the Republican Party, white, heterosexual and male.<br><br>Brut is an international video content publisher which covers topics of politics, social justice, culture etc. This publisher focuses on feature-based and short-form content. It could be interpreted that the publisher tries to criticize Desantis’s narrative by compiling a series of discriminatory utterances, but this is done indirectly and outside of a wider context. |

*Table 3 - A post on ‘Drag story’ by Hrvatska udruga roditelja aktivista (The Croatian Activist Parents Association)*

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <i>Access</i>  | Access is seen as previously discussed access to Facebook as an online media form.   |
| <i>Setting</i> | The setting of this discourse is in form of a public Facebook post. This enables The Croatian Activist Parents Association to approach wider audiences and their content to be available at all times. |
| <i>Genre</i>   | The genre is that of a social media post, in this case it is used to   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | convey the message of caution about protecting children from LGBTQ representation in education. Although, the discourse itself is not primarily political, it was selected as relevant because it portrays how certain parents view educational programmes concerning LGBTQ issues in Croatia. |
| <i>Participants' positions and roles</i> | The Croatian Activist Parents Association is an association of parents that are gathered in the initiative of protecting children from vaccination, but also create media content regarding other issues, such as seen in this example.  |

*Table 4 – Nikola Grmoja's post as a reaction to Zagreb Pride Association's accusations*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Access</i>                            | Access is seen as previously discussed access to Facebook as an online media form.   |
| <i>Setting</i>                           | The setting of this discourse is that of a public post on Facebook as a social media platform that is used for expressing the politician's response to accusations made by the Zagreb Pride Association. |
| <i>Genre</i>                             | The genre is that of a social media post which is used to defend and legitimize opinions on LGBTQ individuals.   |
| <i>Participants' positions and roles</i> | Nikola Grmoja is a Croatian politician. He speaks from his role of a white, heterosexual male who legitimizes and defends his attitudes on LGBTQ individuals.  |

*Table 5 – Božo Petrov's post as a reaction to Zagreb Pride Association's accusations*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Access</i>                            | Access is seen as previously discussed access to Facebook as an online media form.   |
| <i>Setting</i>                           | The setting of this discourse is that of a public post on Facebook as a social media platform, similar to the one from the previous example. |
| <i>Genre</i>                             | The genre is that of a social media post similar to the one from the previous example.   |
| <i>Participants' positions and roles</i> | Božo Petrov also speaks from his role of a white, male,  |

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <i>roles</i> | heterosexual Croatian politician who legitimizes his opinions on LGBTQ individuals against the accusation that they are discriminatory. |
|--------------|---|

*Table 6 - ‘Let Kids be Kids’ Gov. DeSantis sings an anti-transgender health care bill*

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <i>Access</i>  | <p>Access to this discourse is controlled by selecting speakers who support the legislation and provide personal experiences which legitimize the need for signing the bills. Ron DeSantis as a governor has the power of constructing the discourse by being the key speaker who then invites others to take their turn. Since this was a speech prepared by governor DeSantis (and his team) members of other groups have no access to constructing the discourse.</p> <p>YouTube as a media platform is accessible to almost everyone. As an online form of media it can be accessed at any time. By posting this video on YouTube, audiences from almost all around the world can be reached. Viewers have the option to voice their opinions in the comment section.</p> |
| <i>Setting</i> | <p>The speech was given at Cambridge Christian School in Tampa. As mentioned in the speech itself, Cambridge Christian School filed a lawsuit against the Florida High School Athletic Association in order to be able to pray before sports events. The speech was also delivered in front of the children who attend the school. The choice of the setting can be perceived as making a statement – supporting the school and the beliefs, values and norms that are held at the specific institution but also supporting religious freedom of speech.</p>  |
| <i>Genre</i>   | <p>The participants have access to the genre of the discourse which is political speech. The speech is followed by signing bills which makes this discourse a part of a political decision-making process. In contrast to the formality of the speech, the setting and the occasion which is legislative, personal experiences from individuals that are not members of political parties make the speech less formal and closer to the audiences.</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Participants' positions and roles</i></p> | <p>Ron DeSantis, Sean Minks, Luca Hein, Tiffany Hansen, Clay Yarborough and Randy Fine participate as speakers.</p> <p>Ron DeSantis speaks in his role of the governor of Florida. He is also a member of the Republican Party. The construction of the speech, also discourse structures and strategies, are influenced by these facts but also by other parts of his social identities – being white, male, heterosexual and a politician. The part of his identity that he emphasizes is that he is also a father. The role that he assigns himself throughout the speech is that of a protector. As a white male politician he has the power to ‘protect’ citizens of Florida from dangers of the modern society and as a father he is especially focused on protecting children.</p> <p>Sean Minks is the head of Cambridge Christian School, also white, male and heterosexual. Sean Minks represents the school and their values, norms and beliefs.</p> <p>Luca Hein is a person who underwent gender affirming care treatments but later regretted the transition. Hein’s role in the discourse is to provide personal experience which is plausible and legitimizes the goal of the discourse. Since Luca Hein is a former member of the LGBTQ community, she has the power of speaking on behalf of the ‘Others’. In a way, access was given to members of other groups, but only those whose experience supports the main narrative.</p> <p>Tiffany Hansen, a mother from Indian River County is also invited to participate in the speech. Her role as the speakers is also to provide personal experience but from the perspective of a mother. It should be noted that her other social identities are also white and heterosexual. Again, access is given to individuals who are not members of political parties to represent different groups, but only those who support the legislation.</p> <p>Clay Yarborough is an American politician who is a member of the Florida House of Representatives and a member of the Republican Party. He is another white, male, heterosexual politician who expresses support from a political view. He also stresses that he is a father.</p> |
|---|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Randy Fine is also a politician who is a member of the Florida House of Representatives and a member of the Republican Party. He is also white, male and a heterosexual. He also stresses his role as a father but he also offers his opinion as a religious person. |
|--|--|

*Table 7 - Ron Desantis's post 'Let Kids Be Kids'*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Access</i>                            | The post is shared on Twitter as a social media platform and is accessible to anyone. Ron DeSantins, as the owner of the profile has access to publicly share his discourse. Participation to the discourse is open in the sense than anyone can respond to it, building up on the original content. |
| <i>Setting</i>                           | The post was produced in the setting of Twitter as a social media platform to state political opinions and goals.  |
| <i>Genre</i>                             | The genre is that of a social media post that deals with political statements and political discourse.   |
| <i>Participants' positions and roles</i> | Ron DeSantis constructs the discourse from his role of a white, male, heterosexual politician who is a member of the Republican Party, but also the governor of Florida and, as of recently, a candidate for the American president.   |

*Table 8 - Ron DeSantis's post on expanding Parents' Rights in Education*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Access</i>                            | Access to DeSantis Twitter post is defined in the same way as for the previous example.  |
| <i>Setting</i>                           | Setting is similar to the one from the previous example.   |
| <i>Genre</i>                             | The genre is that of a social media post that deals with political statements and political discourse.   |
| <i>Participants' positions and roles</i> | Ron DeSantis constructs the discourse from his role of a white, male, heterosexual politician who is a member of the Republican Party, but also the governor of Florida and, as of recently, a candidate for the American president. |

The analysis of the contexts of selected materials reveals that discourse on LGBTQ issues can vary in its properties concerning access, setting, genre and participants' roles and positions while still producing similar representation and using the same discursive strategies. This is not only relevant for the field of CDA, but for its implications in critical media literacy and critical pedagogy. Posing the questions of who the participants of a discourse are and what roles they play; what genre of the discourse is used; how the setting influences discourse and who has access to participate and actively construct the discourse involves analysis of the media production process and consequentially considering these aspects when creating own media.

### **6.5. Identifying themes**

The next step in the analysis of the materials was identifying overarching themes that appeared in the discourse. By using the method of inductive coding the materials were read and re-read, highlighting important parts that could be contrasted and compared to identify the main themes of the discourse. This step in the analysis serves to identify the main messages that are communicated throughout the discourse, which show the speakers'/authors' perspective on the LGBTQ community. This in part answers the first research question - How are 'Others'(LGBTQ individuals) portrayed in political discourse available on different media and social platforms?

I have identified five main themes/messages throughout the analysed discourse:

1. Inclusive society poses a threat
2. LGBTQ individuals have less rights in freedom of speech
3. LGBTQ equals sexualisation of minors
4. Gender affirmative care is dangerous
5. Schools indoctrinate children (in transgender ideologies)

The five main themes were further divided into subthemes corresponding to the excerpts taken from the materials. The next step was gathering all the excerpts and describing the theme and the message, which was then interpreted regarding the perspective of the speakers on the LGBTQ community. The findings and examples can be seen in Table 9.

*Table 9* Overarching themes

| Theme  | Subthemes   | Description  | Example  |
|--|---|--|--|
| 1. Inclusive society poses a threat                        | a) Threat to children concerning their upbringing, education and health<br>b) Threat to women's safety<br>c) Threat to women's integrity in sports<br>d) Threat to 'normalcy'           | Throughout the selected discourse there is a notion of modern society that threatens the upbringing of children, their health and education, women and their safety and integrity in sports but also 'normalcy' in general. The message that is interpreted throughout this theme is that an inclusive society poses threats that need to be 'fought'. | "You know, I feel very strongly as governor but also just as a dad of a six, five and a three-year-old that you know, umm, we need to let our kids just be kids and we have a very crazy age that we live in. There's a lot of nonsense that gets floated around and what we've said in Florida is we are going to remain a refuge of sanity and a citadel of normalcy and kids should have an upbringing that reflects that and I think that there's a lot of emphasis in other parts of the country, in our society as a whole to take that away from them" (DeSantis, 'Let kids be kids') |
| 2. LGBTQ individuals have less rights in freedom of speech | a) Discrimination against religious freedom of speech<br>b) Discrimination against individual freedom of speech<br>c) Banning pronoun preferences and school materials on sexuality and | The discrimination of religious freedom of speech and individual freedom of speech is contrasted with the banning of pronoun preferences and school materials on sexuality and inclusivity. The message interpreted from this theme is that an individual needs to be able to express their religious and personal                                     | "By banning a pregame prayer over a loudspeaker at a football game the EHSAA sent a message to our students that prayer is inappropriate to lead publicly in large forums. Today, the state of Florida teaches a different lesson, one that supports free speech and respects the religious freedom of students across the state. After today, schools will be allowed to make opening remarks before state  |

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|   | inclusivity is not a discrimination against freedom of speech   | beliefs but at the same time choosing pronoun preferences is described as being forced on individuals and should be banned.   | championship games supporting important principles of free speech that have made this nation great.” (Minks, ‘Let kids be kids’)  |
| 3. LGBTQ equals sexualisation of minors | <p>a) School materials on sexuality and inclusivity are pornographic</p> <p>b) Drag shows expose children to adult entertainment</p> <p>c) LGBTQ narrative is connected to pedophilia</p> | The analysis of the discourse shows that LGBTQ narratives, drag shows and school materials on inclusivity and sexuality are often connected to sexualisation of children, even pedophilia. The message interpreted from this theme is that exposing children to LGBTQ content is dangerous and immoral. | <p>“Otkad sam otvorio temu rane seksualizacije djece, LGBT propagande i pedofilije u hrvatskom društvu, dobio sam više prijetnji i uvreda nego ikad u životu, a tim su uvredama, ni krivi ni dužni, zahvaćeni i članovi moje obitelji.”</p> <p>(trans. Since I opened up the topic of early sexualisation of children, LGBT propaganda and pedophilia in Croatian society, I have received more threats and insults than ever before in my life, and these insults have affected members of my family, who played no part in the situation.)</p> <p>(Grmoja, Facebook post)</p> |
| 4. Gender affirmative care is dangerous | <p>a) The medical community mutilates children and experiments on them</p> <p>b) The procedures are forced on minors</p>  | Throughout the analysed discourse there is a recurrent theme that gender affirming care is something that is forced on children by the medical professionals who want to mutilate them and conduct  | “And I’ve worked with kids, I’ve seen how they experience the world and they experience the world in this very magical and innocence filled way and introducing kids to these concepts, making them a permanent patient of the medical industry is taking that  |

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|  | c) Children need help with mental health issues rather than gender affirming care.  | experiments in order to gain profit.   | away from them. Children deserve a chance to grow up whole and discover themselves in a way that will not link them to an experimental medical industry for the rest of their lives. I will live with the results of what was done with, to me for the rest of my life, including all the health issues I deal with because of it.”<br>(Hein, ‘Let kids be kids’)                                    |
| 5. Schools indoctrinate children in transgender ideologies | <p>a) Indoctrinating children prevents them from learning important academic skills</p> <p>b) Children are forced into identities</p> <p>c) Schools work against parents</p> <p>d) Indoctrination causes mental health issues</p> | <p>In the selected texts, schools and teachers are described as enemies who work against parents’ wishes and are forcing minors into transgender identities by indoctrinating them in transgender ideology which in turn takes a toll on their mental health. By focusing on indoctrination, schools are not providing positive learning environments that help students excel in other important academic skills.</p> | <p>“To bi olakšalo nametanje rodne ideologije maloj djeci, zbunjujući ih njihovim identitetom i izlažući ih drag queensima koji su često 'seksualizirani'.”<br/>(trans. This would make it easier to impose gender ideology on small children, confusing them in their identity and exposing them to drag queens who are often ‘sexualized’)<br/>(Hrvatska udruga roditelja aktivista, Facebook)</p> |

## 6.6. Discourse strategies and structures

Discourse strategies and structures were analysed in order to examine in which way relationships of power, dominance and inequality are realized linguistically within the discourse. Following van Dijk's (1993) model, instances of positive and negative representation were analysed. This includes the positive representation of own group while negatively representing 'Others', which is realized in the discourse by using persuasive moves. Examples of persuasive moves that were analysed can be found in Table 10:

*Table 10 Persuasive moves*

| Persuasive moves   | Example  | Description  |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Argumentation      | „I did a proclamation from our office saying she was the best women swimmer in 500 yard 'cause she was and so some of this is yes it's taking way opportunities in athletics and some other stuff and that's really really important but I think there's also just the issue of are we gonna be a society based on truth, are we gonna be a society based on deceit and if you take a man and they dress up as a woman, you tell me I'll have to accept that they're a woman then you're asking me to be complicit in a lie and I just refuse to do that.“<br>(DeSantis, the Benny show) | The argumentation used in this excerpt lies on the 'fact' that women are women and men are men and that someone claiming otherwise is not telling the truth and that accepting this would mean being complicit in a lie. |
| Rhetorical figures | “We're obviously doing the opposite here and I think this is, this provision is important, this is going to create a way to recover damages for injury or death resulting from mutilating surgeries or these experimental  | 'Their' negative actions are enhanced by calling sex change operations mutilating surgeries, stressing that puberty blockers are experimental and emphasizing possible   |

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|               | <p>puberty blockers that are given to a minor because what happens they go through this then they get older and this is a huge problem, they should be able to sue the physician who hurt them and they are now going to be able to with this law.” (DeSantis, ‘Let Kids Be Kids’)</p>   | <p>complications, for example death from the procedure. On the other hand ‘our’ positive actions are presented as protection from the treatment which has been made into law.</p>   |
| Lexical style | <p>“Because the other side believes that eight-year-olds should pick their pronouns, that nine-year-olds should read books about sex, that ten-year-olds should be able to see, take puberty blockers, that eleven-year-olds should be able to get experimental drugs and twelve-year-olds should be able to have healthy body parts cut off. In the state of Florida, we have said this is going to stop and we’re going to do it because God does not make mistakes with our children.” (Fine, ‘Let Kids Be Kids’)</p> | <p>The choice of words in this excerpt implies the negative evaluation of LGBTQ individuals. By claiming that ‘God does not make mistakes’ it is implied that being a person who identifies with the opposite gender is fundamentally wrong. This representation of the LGBTQ community can be seen as an oppositional frame to the religion frame of the majority group.</p> |
| Story telling | <p>“One day my daughter came home and told me she wanted to be called by different pronouns and felt like she was a different gender. I didn’t think much of it at first as she is young, I was being supportive. As time went on, I realized how deep this had gotten and how much this was influencing her life in a negative way. Unknown to me, the schools had been secretly pushing this transgender ideology in the classroom, behind my back,</p>  | <p>Personal experience told from a mother’s perspective is making other statements plausible. The mother explains the issues her children have had with their identity and mental health because of their school experience which proves that children are being indoctrinated in transgender ideology and that it has a negative effect on them.</p>                         |

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|   | <p>encouraging her to question her gender, her sexuality and her preferred pronouns. To this day, she has had to undergo therapy because it has been such a toll on her mental health. It wasn't just her. More than one of my children has come home telling me the exact same thing. They are being taught to question their entire identity by schools. These are 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade kids we are talking about here.” (Hansen, ‘Let Kids be Kids’)</p> |  |
| Structural emphasis                             | <p>“PROTECTING CHILDREN’S INNOCENCE (HB 1438)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protects children from sexually explicit adult performances in all venues – including drag shows and strip clubs.</li> <li>• Imposes fines and license suspension for hotels and restaurants that admit a child into an adult performance. “</li> </ul> <p>(DeSantis, tweet)</p>  | <p>In this section, the headline stresses the words ‘protecting’ and ‘innocence’ when it comes to banning children at sexually explicit adult performances. This is another instance where drag queens are sexualized and contrasted against children innocence, proving the immorality of such individuals.</p> |
| Quoting credible witnesses, sources and experts | <p>“We’re also joined by Sean Minks, who’s the head of uh, head of Cambridge Christian School, Luca Hine, who you’ll hear from and has experience in some of the things we are talking about, mother from Indian River County, Tiffany Hanson, and you’re going to hear their stories later.” (DeSantis, ‘Let Kids be Kids’)</p>   | <p>While constructing the discourse around the signing of the new health care bill in Florida, governor DeSantis was joined by several speakers on stage that can be considered to be credible witnesses and experts. Their stories and experiences were used as proof why the bills need to be supported.</p>   |

## **6.7. Findings**

The analysis answers the first research question - How are 'Others' (LGBTQ individuals) portrayed in political discourse available on different media and social platforms? The representations can be interpreted by examining overarching themes and messages. The representation of LGBTQ individuals is negative in the sense that they are portrayed as a threat, not equal in rights, that they are objects rather than subjects in constructing their identity because it is imposed on them.

### **1. LGBTQ individuals pose a threat.**

The modern inclusive society is perceived as posing a threat to the most vulnerable members – women and children. The LGBTQ community is either indirectly or directly implied in the message. Indirectly by stating for example that “there is a lot of nonsense that gets floated around” and directly by claiming that women are not safe in public restrooms because of trans individuals. LGBTQ individuals are therefore negatively represented as a threat that needs to be fought in order to protect people and the ‘normal’ way of life. The bathroom frame has already been mentioned as a common way that transgender individuals are being represented in media.

### **2. LGBTQ individuals are not equal when it comes to freedom of speech.**

Emphasis is put on religious and individual freedom of speech, which are then contrasted to using pronoun preferences and LGBTQ narrative in school systems, although not directly. It is pointed out that in today’s society religious freedom of speech is being discriminated against and that individual freedom of speech must be ensured as someone’s right. On the other hand, choosing different pronouns for oneself is considered to be something that is forced on children and they are legally required to be referred to according to their biological sex. By implying that one only wants to express their identity using different pronouns for themselves because they are forced to do so, LGBTQ individuals are represented as not having a voice of their own and therefore they do not have the same right to freedom of speech. LGBTQ representation in this

sense involves the religious frame. LGBTQ rights are represented as oppositional to the rights of the majority groups.

**3. LGBTQ individuals are defined by their sexuality, which is immoral.**

A lot of emphasis is put on drag shows as adult entertainment to which minors are exposed to and it is described as immoral and inappropriate. The message conveyed is that by introducing children to the concept of drag queens they are immediately exposed to sexually explicit content. Also school materials on LGBTQ narrative is considered to contain content which is pornographic and in many instances the LGBTQ community is connected to pedophilia. This is also influenced by the notion that LGBTQ individuals pose a threat to children but it is broadened by the representation that the main part of their identity is their sexuality and that their sexuality is immoral and inappropriate. In this sense, both the frame of morality and frame of threat were used for LGBTQ representation. Grouping LGBTQ individuals with forms of sex crimes, such as pedophilia, has been observed throughout the history of LGBTQ representation and seems to be relevant even to this day, both in the US and in Croatia.

**4. LGBTQ individuals who go through gender affirmative care are objects for mutilation and experimentation.**

Gender affirming care is described as something that is, again, forced on patients. Surgeries are described as mutilating and treatments as experimental. The medical community in the United States is also negatively represented in the sense that medical professionals perform surgeries and conduct experiments for profit and without moral consideration. Although minors are in focus, it is pointed out that adults also need clear instructions on the irreversibility and consequences of these procedures. The representation of LGBTQ individuals that follows from this is that they are considered to be objects, again without personal choices and voices of their own. When it comes to minors, this may be due to the fact that they are not yet developmentally prepared for these kind of choices, but by pointing out that adults need clear instructions on the processes it is implied that LGBTQ individuals are not aware of the specifics of these surgeries and that they would make this kind of decisions without extensive thought and research. This representation also reveals that there has been a shift

in LGBTQ representation involving the medical practice. Former instances of LGBTQ representation involved the medical community's definition of homosexuality, lesbianism and transsexuality as medical conditions and mental illnesses. However, medical practitioners are now grouped with the LGBTQ community in the moral frame for gender affirming care.

**5. LGBTQ individuals' identities are a result of ideologies that are imposed on from a young age.**

Schools and teachers are also negatively represented in these discourses by claiming that they work against parents' wishes, beliefs and value systems, that they are focused on indoctrinating children in transgender ideology which in turn prevents children from learning academically valuable skills. The negative effect of such indoctrination is seen in mental health issues, 'confusing' children when it comes to their gender identity and forcing them into identities that are not authentic for them. Someone having an LGBTQ identity is therefore represented as being indoctrinated and not authentic. Reasons for constructing one's identity as a member of the LGBTQ community are placed 'outside' the individual, making it not their personal choice, but again, the identity is imposed on LGBTQ individuals as objects. Gera (2023) claims that Orban's discourse involves the notion of protecting children and acting on the will of parents, and that the LGBTQ community's portrayal in this sense can be seen within the threat frame. This study concludes that the same can be observed in discourses in the USA and Croatia.

These representations, social-cultural context and other contexts of the discourse, along with the analysis of how power, dominance and inequality are being realized through discourse by using discourse strategies and structures provide an answer to the second research question - In which way can political discourse available on different media and social platforms play a part in the (re)production of dominance, discrimination and inequality toward 'Others'?

As stated before, discourse control is connected to management of social representations. The two main dimensions to discourse control are production and

reception. By examining the production of the discourse, the context of the discourse and issues of access we can reveal the social cognition that plays a part in the minds of the members of the dominant group. These social cognitions affect the discourse structures and strategies which are used to legitimize the social representations of 'Others'. By managing social representations, those who have power in discourse and control the contexts and production of discourse also influence the outcomes of the reception of the discourse. The recipient's beliefs, values, knowledge, norms, attitudes and understanding are influenced. Therefore, political discourse plays a part in the (re)production of dominance, discrimination and inequality towards 'Others' by enacting the power and control in producing the discourse, limiting access to the discourse and using different discourse strategies and structures to legitimize the above-mentioned representations. This in turn influences the social minds of recipients.

## **7. Implications**

As already stated, the part of CDA that analyses the context of a discourse in terms of access, setting, genre, participants and their roles reveals the different discourse properties that play a part in the production of the discourse and also in the reproduction of dominance. This is relevant for the field of critical media literacy and critical pedagogy because it can help question processes that underlie the production of media discourses so that critical media students would be able to use this knowledge in analysing media discourses but also in producing their own media.

In May 2023, Ron DeSantis announced that he is running for the president of the United States in the upcoming presidential election in 2024. This example serves to explain the point for implementing CDA and media literacy educational strategies, along with principles of critical and transformative pedagogies on a real-life situation.

The results of this discourse analysis showed that his discourse on the LGBTQ community is based on negative and stereotyped representations. By analysing the discourse critically, we perceive that social cognitions of Ron DeSantis and members of his team include the construction and identification of the LGBTQ group as the 'Others', which is contrasted to the positive evaluation of their own group. The LGBTQ community is represented as a threat, as being immoral, as unequal when it comes to

human rights and as the enemy. The discourse in this sense perpetuates unequal power relationships between the majority group and the LGBTQ minority. The enactment of that power can be seen directly by signing bills that limit LGBTQ individuals' rights. The indirect enactment is seen in discourse strategies and structures that influence the minds of his audiences which in this case can have potential for creating serious problems concerning individuals' rights and social conditions of the LGBTQ community in the US. The more audiences this discourse reaches, and the more social cognitions it succeeds to influence, the more sympathizers and voters Ron DeSantis gains. This could result in him being elected for the president of the US, which means that the bills and laws that discriminate against the LGBTQ community in the state of Florida could potentially be passed on a nation-wide basis. This is even more troubling considering that the discourse targets other groups, like immigrants, who were not included in this analysis.

I believe that implementation of this analysis into critical media literacy and critical/transformative pedagogy could be done by following these steps:

1. Critical media literacy teachers in the US recognize the problematic discourse, its contexts and implications for the LGBTQ community and design lessons for students to equip them with necessary skills to critically approach the discourse. The teachers themselves need to be adequately educated in teaching practices of critical media literacy and pedagogy.
2. Teachers and students collaborate in analysing the discourse, using multidisciplinary approaches along with CDA and other critical methods. In this process the teacher guides the students in how they could analyse the discourse, asks the questions relevant for discovering the context and underlying properties that shape the discourse and encourages students to come to their own conclusions.
3. Teachers work with, and guide the students in creating their own media discourses which are produced to express their own experiences and opinions, and which are a result of their own intrinsic motivations.

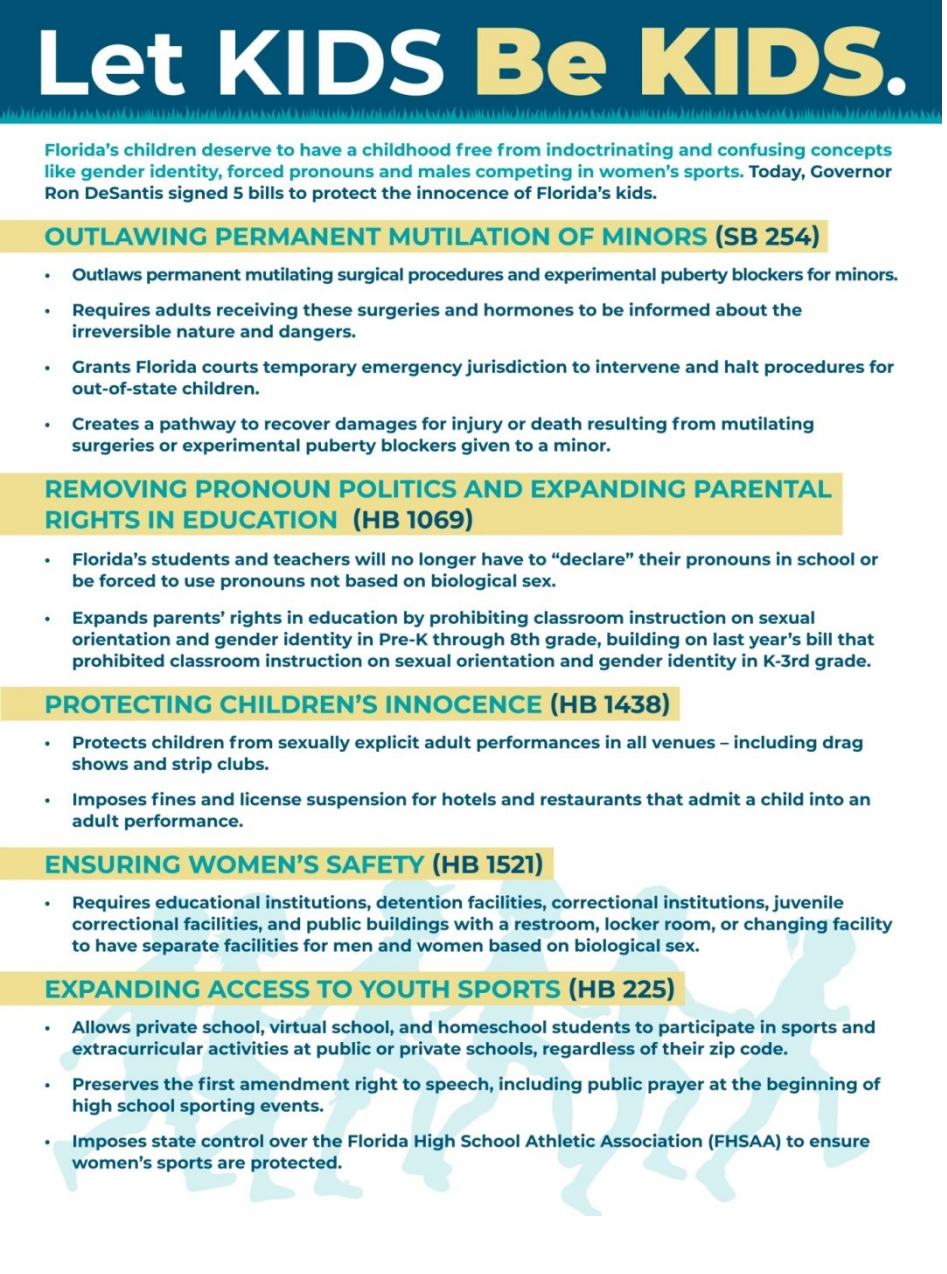
This approach supposes that by guiding the students in the critical analysis of this discourse, they should simply come to the same conclusions that the LGBTQ

community is being negatively represented and that this representation causes inequalities and domination. Furthermore, it also supposes that by enabling students to become critically aware of the discourse and its social and political context, they would be intrinsically motivated for fighting the oppression when guided in constructing their own media discourses. On this real-life example, this would at least mean that RonDesantis's discourse would be met by an active audience that is educated in critical thought and strives for a participatory democracy. This kind of audiences would therefore seriously reconsider who they give their vote to.

The findings of this study can be used for designing specific activities which can be used when implementing critical media literacy into education. The first step is preparing media materials that deal with topics corresponding to the findings of this study – representation of LGBTQ individuals as a threat, having unequal rights, immorality of LGBTQ individuals, gender affirming care as a dangerous practice and resistance to inclusion of LGBTQ narratives in education. According to the materials, activities can be designed that have the objective of advancing students' critical thinking when it comes to interpreting, analysing and producing media messages on LGBTQ topics. In the following table, an example of such activity is provided, using one of the materials selected for the purpose of this study. The activity can be used as a part of a lesson plan for students when teaching critical media literacy but also on its own in conducting other forms of pedagogical interventions. The activity is briefly described and can be broadened according to the purpose of its use.

*Table 11 – Activity example*

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Title      | Let KIDS Be KIDS.  |
| Duration   | 30 min   |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advancing critical thinking about media messages</li> <li>• advancing students' skills in text analysis</li> </ul>  |
| Outcomes   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the students are able to understand, interpret and analyse the text</li> <li>• the students are able to evaluate the messages the text conveys</li> <li>• the students are able to recognize the context of the text's production, underlying values and beliefs, and consequences on others</li> </ul> |

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| Form of work and methods | Individual work, text analysis, writing, discussion   |
| Materials                | <p>Ron Desantis's Twitter post:</p>  <p><b>Let KIDS Be KIDS.</b></p> <p>Florida's children deserve to have a childhood free from indoctrinating and confusing concepts like gender identity, forced pronouns and males competing in women's sports. Today, Governor Ron DeSantis signed 5 bills to protect the innocence of Florida's kids.</p> <p><b>OUTLAWING PERMANENT MUTILATION OF MINORS (SB 254)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlaws permanent mutilating surgical procedures and experimental puberty blockers for minors.</li> <li>• Requires adults receiving these surgeries and hormones to be informed about the irreversible nature and dangers.</li> <li>• Grants Florida courts temporary emergency jurisdiction to intervene and halt procedures for out-of-state children.</li> <li>• Creates a pathway to recover damages for injury or death resulting from mutilating surgeries or experimental puberty blockers given to a minor.</li> </ul> <p><b>REMOVING PRONOUN POLITICS AND EXPANDING PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION (HB 1069)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Florida's students and teachers will no longer have to "declare" their pronouns in school or be forced to use pronouns not based on biological sex.</li> <li>• Expands parents' rights in education by prohibiting classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in Pre-K through 8th grade, building on last year's bill that prohibited classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in K-3rd grade.</li> </ul> <p><b>PROTECTING CHILDREN'S INNOCENCE (HB 1438)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protects children from sexually explicit adult performances in all venues – including drag shows and strip clubs.</li> <li>• Imposes fines and license suspension for hotels and restaurants that admit a child into an adult performance.</li> </ul> <p><b>ENSURING WOMEN'S SAFETY (HB 1521)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires educational institutions, detention facilities, correctional institutions, juvenile correctional facilities, and public buildings with a restroom, locker room, or changing facility to have separate facilities for men and women based on biological sex.</li> </ul> <p><b>EXPANDING ACCESS TO YOUTH SPORTS (HB 225)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows private school, virtual school, and homeschool students to participate in sports and extracurricular activities at public or private schools, regardless of their zip code.</li> <li>• Preserves the first amendment right to speech, including public prayer at the beginning of high school sporting events.</li> <li>• Imposes state control over the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSA) to ensure women's sports are protected.</li> </ul> |
| Articulation             | <p><i>Introduction</i></p> <p>The teacher provides the material to students so that each has their own copy. Then the context of the post is provided – who posted it, when, and where. A discussion follows on who the poster (Ron DeSantis) is, what his role is and following questions are posed: <i>What is the context of this post? Why was it posted? Which social events are connected to the production of the post? What</i></p>   |

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|  | <p><i>are the implications of the text?</i></p> <p>The teacher does not provide answers to the question, but encourages the students to discuss them and note down the answers.</p> <p>Aim: exploring the wider context of the text</p> <p>Duration: 5 min</p> <p><i>Central activity</i></p> <p>The students are instructed to read the text closely and determine the main themes of the post. The next step is examining the structural properties, which parts are emphasized and how they are connected.</p> <p>The questions asked during the main activity are: <i>How is the text designed? Why is it designed this way?</i></p> <p>The students are then instructed to re-read the text and note discursive strategies (argumentation, lexical style, rhetorical figures etc.). The teacher provides a brief overview if the students are not already familiar with them. The students do this individually.</p> <p>Then the following questions are posed for group discussion: <i>What are the main messages of the post? Who are the recipients of these messages? How does this post portray the LGBTQ community? How does the language used reflect the beliefs and values of the author? What are the consequences of the post on LGBTQ individuals?</i></p> <p>The students then share their findings and opinions on the post and discuss their views on LGBTQ representation with the teacher. The teacher then notes if the students came to the same conclusions on LGBTQ representation as shown in this study.</p> <p>Aim: analysing the themes of the text and linguistic devices used for conveying the message. Interpreting the messages and discussing LGBTQ representation.</p> <p>Duration: 20 min</p> <p><i>Conclusion</i></p> <p>In the last part of the activity students are asked to reflect on their process of analysing the post. They are encouraged to note answers to the following questions: <i>How did reading the post affect me? Do I have a better</i></p> |
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|  | <p><i>understanding of how the language used portrays the LGBTQ community? Am I motivated to pose this kind of questions on other texts I encounter in media?</i></p> <p>Students are then asked if someone is willing to share their reflections.</p> <p>Aim: students' self-reflection and evaluation of the process</p> <p>Duration: 5 min</p> |
|--|---|

Two examples of media discourse on LGBTQ representation in Croatia were also included in this analysis, which means that this approach could also be implemented in a similar way into the Croatian educational system which shows that similar research could be done in different national contexts. The multidisciplinary approach that combines CDA, critical media literacy and critical pedagogy, could therefore help achieve the common goal of these different perspectives, which is observed in the aspiration for social change in societies that are built upon unequal power relations, discrimination and oppression. This kind of research can also provide a basis for further studies in the respective fields which would lead to broader implications.

The possible problem with this approach is that students can potentially become dependent on the teacher's perspective rather than forming their own autonomous critical thought, if the collaborative efforts between the teachers and students turn into the teachers providing their perspective as the right one in an effort to obtain the goals of the approach. In addition, the approach supposes that by becoming autonomous in critical thought and the use of skills, students will themselves recognize the same conclusions and become motivated for change in media production, while other, unforeseen outcomes may be possible. This could only be observed by implementing such strategies and then designing research for the evaluation of its success.

## 8. Conclusion

In order to approach a pressing social issue of injustice and inequality that is produced by social order based on unequal power relations between groups in a scholarly way, different approaches, methods and perspectives need to be incorporated into a multidisciplinary form of theory analysis and research. LGBTQ minorities face

social difficulties in form of discrimination, inequality and domination which affects individuals' rights as well as the LGBTQ community as a group in different national contexts which is evident through out history and in contemporary social and political situations. The theoretical framework defines the processes behind social identity, group formation and negative out-group evaluation that influence the media representation of the LGBTQ community as the 'Others'. The approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis, critical media literacy and critical pedagogy were implemented to form a framework for analysing political discourse on different online media platforms regarding LGBTQ representations in the US and Croatia and suggesting an approach to implementing these findings into educational systems as a strategy to produce social change. The results of the research showed that political discourse on LGBTQ individuals perpetuated stereotyped representations that frame LGBTQ individuals as a threat, as an enemy, as being immoral and unequal in rights. Steps were then suggested for dealing with this real-life social problem in terms of critical media literacy and critical pedagogy educational strategies, that aim at guiding students in becoming autonomous critical thinkers, who are competent in skills needed to analyse and also produce media discourses and intrinsically motivated for social change and creating a just participatory democracy.

## **9. Abstract**

Different forms of media are becoming more available and consumed by broader audiences. It is necessary to approach media discourse critically in order to analyse the ways in which media plays a role in the reproduction of power, dominance and the hegemonic status quo. This is the central aim of the Critical Discourse Analysis approach. Portrayals of LGBTQ individuals were analysed in political discourse across three media platforms: Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. LGBTQ minorities are negatively portrayed as an out-group in contrast to positive in-group evaluation. The goal of CDA is not only contribution to theory, but also social change. In order to construct a just, democratic society, which results in change for oppressed minority groups, CDA should be considered in connection to critical media literacy and critical pedagogy. The analysis showed that political discourse on media platforms in the United States and Croatia portrays LGBTQ individuals as 'Others', and represents them as an enemy, a threat, immoral and unequal. Analysis of the text on the macro-level, including access, context and overarching themes, reveals LGBTQ representations and their contexts that influence the minds of audiences and support stereotyped and discriminatory social cognitions. In-text analysis reveals discourse strategies and persuasive moves used to legitimize these representations. The implications of CDA for designing educational strategies within the disciplines of critical media literacy and critical pedagogy were considered on the real-life example of the on-going pressing political and social issues for the LGBTQ community in the US.

Key-words: Others, Media literacy, Critical media literacy, LGBTQ representation, Critical pedagogy, Critical Discourse Analysis

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