

THE ACTIVIST SELF: COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN  
ANTI-NATIONALIST, ANTI-MILITARIST, FEMINIST  
MOBILIZATION IN SERBIA

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## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with the concept of collective identity formation via feminist, anti-nationalist, anti-militarist mobilization. Based on qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with Women in Black activists in Serbia, the thesis looks at how activists' participation in this organization represents a process of construction of shared self-definitions as feminist, anti-nationalist, anti-militarist activists. The construction of a collective identity is facilitated by previous activist experiences, the various functions of social networks, emotions, as well as value identities as the bases for specific ideological orientations. Most importantly, the thesis highlights how the collective identity of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist feminist activist becomes central to activists concepts of self. In this context, activism is not only a civic duty but above all a personal necessity for existence.

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## Introduction

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1991, after the outbreak of war in Croatia, a group of feminists from Belgrade held a vigil in front of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade's city center and peacefully protested against the war. They wore black as a sign of mourning for all the victims of the war and held signs. They called themselves the Women in Black (WiB) and had been inspired by a group of Israeli women who, in 1988, held weekly vigils to peacefully protest the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. (Mladjenovic and Hughes 2000) The WiB were one of the first groups in Serbia to publicly protest the war in Croatia and to denounce the regime of Slobodan Milosevic for the atrocities it was committing. As other conflicts developed in the Balkan region—in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, years later, in Kosovo—WiB continued protesting publicly against the wars on a strict regular basis (Cockburn 2007).<sup>1</sup> What started in 1991 as a group of ten women who were protesting against the wars that were destroying then multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Yugoslavia has become one of the most important organizations in the international women's peace movement.<sup>2</sup>

WiB started as a feminist, anti-militaristic, anti-nationalist project to confront the belligerent politics of the Serbian regime, which “denied its criminal reality,” which claimed to be “a ‘Serbia that was not at war.’”<sup>3</sup> Today, WiB have become one of the most important projects in Serbia to confront Serbia's criminal past. They are one of the

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<sup>1</sup> During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, WiB stood in Belgrade's Republic Square every single Wednesday in silent vigil against the war (Duhacek 2002).

<sup>2</sup> The examination of roles played by Yugoslav Successor States other than Serbia during the Yugoslav wars of secession that took place between 1991 and 1999 is obviously important but goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, I focus almost exclusively on Serbia because it was the context in which WiB originated and the regime they were resisting.

<sup>3</sup> Zajović, Staša. (2006). “Not in Our Name! Feminist Ethics and Confrontation with the Past.” URL Available: [http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&lang=en&id=201](http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=en&id=201)

various human rights and the only explicitly feminist organization to take as its foremost duty the imperative task of dealing with the recent past. During the 1990s, WiB took to the streets to oppose the wars that were destroying Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo; today, they take to the streets to remember those very wars and the incredible destruction in all of its forms that they brought about, as Stasa Zajovic<sup>4</sup> has stated, “guided by the same moral imperative: Not in our name!”<sup>5</sup>

The WiB in Serbia are a consciousness-raising movement that has been fighting the culture of denial surrounding Serbia’s authoritarian, militaristic, and criminal past. Paradoxically, because in this way they fight the general social tendency to forget about the past in order to move on, the WiB have been considered by many people in Serbia as disrupting the process of restoring normalcy and peace. (Fridman 2006) As Stasa Zajovic has stated, “we have always represented a tiny minority in Serbia: pushed to the margins, stigmatized, labeled and criminalized, we have always been ‘a shame for Serbia and the Serbian people,’ exclusively because of our relentless calls for accountability for the war and war crimes that were committed in our name.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, ever since the inception of the organization, WiB have been subject to both social and—most importantly—state repression.

The activism of WiB represents a case of what Dough McAdam calls high-risk/cost activism. According to McAdam, in the context of the study of social movements (SMs) and social movement organizations (SMOs), cost “refers to the

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<sup>4</sup> Co-founder and current coordinator of WiB.

<sup>5</sup> Zajović, Staša. (2006). “Not in Our Name! Feminist Ethics and Confrontation with the Past.” URL Available: [http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&lang=en&id=201](http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=en&id=201)

<sup>6</sup> Zajović, Staša. (2006). “Not in Our Name! Feminist Ethics and Confrontation with the Past.” URL Available: [http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&lang=en&id=201](http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=en&id=201)

expenditures of time, money, and energy that are required of a person engaged in any particular form of activism,” while risk “refers to the anticipated dangers—whether legal, social, physical, financial, and so forth—of engaging in a particular type of activity,” where “certain instances of activism are clearly more costly and/or risky than others.” (1986:67) WiB began their work on a volunteer basis in an atmosphere of rampant nationalism, authoritarianism, and censorship. Throughout the years, there have been instances of WiB activists being threatened, slurred, physically attacked, intimidated, unlawfully detained, tortured, illegitimately criminalized and socially demonized. (Zajovic 2007; Amnesty International 2005; Fridman 2006; Mladjenovic and Hughes 2000) These social and state practices have had the aim of frightening and exhausting WiB activists and of promoting distrust and divisiveness among the members of the organization (Zajovic 2007) in order to inhibit the advancement of its mission.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the social and state repression they have endured throughout the years, WiB have not only managed to maintain the cohesion of the organization intact; they have also expanded the organization’s sphere of influence beyond Belgrade. They have initiated the International Network of WiB and built the Women’s Peace Network – Network of WiB in Serbia, constituted by WiB and other women’s non-governmental

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<sup>7</sup> WiB’s mission statement is the following: “We bring visibility to women’s nonviolent resistance to war, nationalism, sexism, militarism, all forms of ethnic homogenization, fundamentalism, xenophobia, homophobia, and all other forms of discrimination; we create space for women’s voices and actions against all forms of patriarchy, war and violence; we build networks of women’s solidarity on the global and regional level across all state, national, ethnic, and all other divisions and barriers; we build peace networks, coalitions, and associations to stimulate the active participation of women in peace-building, peace processes, and peace negotiations; we demand confrontation with the past and the application of models of transitional justice; we create new forms of transitional justice from a feminist perspective; we educate women about feminism, pacifism, antimilitarism, nonviolence, women’s peace politics, new concepts of security, civil society, women’s activism, interethnic and intercultural solidarity, reproductive rights, transitional justice and fundamentalism; we create an alternative women’s history by writing about women’s resistance to war and the history of those who are different; we start campaigns and legislative initiatives that sensitize the public to important societal issues.”

organizations from Serbia. (Cockburn 2007; WiB 2008) All of this is not only obviously admirable but also sociologically intriguing. The context in which WiB originated and continue to work has not been conducive to the development of civil society initiatives such as WiB. In the context of both state and social repression, what has motivated activists' participation into this organization? What has motivated them to remain organized? Why did other activists, apart from the founding members, become mobilized into this organization and what prompts their sustained participation?

Previous studies of WiB have included the qualitative sociological study of WiB in the context of the transnational women's peace movement (Cockburn 2007); the study of WiB and the work and politics of social memory (Fridman 2006); the relationship between WiB and the construction of responsible citizenship (Duhacek 2006); the role of WiB in the process of redefining women's political subjectivities in Serbia in the context of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and nation-state building (Duhacek 2002); the anthropological study of the role of women during the Yugoslav wars of secession (Slapsak 2001); and the study of women's organized resistance to war and domestic violence during the collapse of Yugoslavia in Serbia. (Mladjenovic and Hughes 2000) These previous studies provide biographical information of some of the members of the organization, map how the organization emerged, and sketch motives for participation—as part of the background necessary to the development of the specific topics of inquiry they address, such as political subjectivity (Duhacek 2002), social memory (Fridman 2006), etc. However, none of them focus exclusively on analyzing the sociological process that is at stake when activists join and support this social movement organization—namely, the process of collective identity formation.



Based on fifteen semi-structured interviews with WiB activists on their subjective motives for participation in political activism and in WiB specifically, in this thesis I argue that the process of mobilization into the organization represents a process of collective identity formation that sharply define activists' concepts of self. In this context, engaging in feminist, anti-militarist, anti-nationalist activism via WiB—and in all political activism, for that matter—does not consist only of an act of citizenship (Duhacek 2002), but above all of a personal, at times almost vital necessity. Failing to engage into political activism would signify a negation of the self as such. Through their participation in WiB, not only do activists take part in anti-militarist, anti-nationalist, feminist activism; anti-militarist, anti-nationalist activism becomes a part of who they are.

In what follows, in chapter one I will first provide a background to the emergence of civil society and the anti-war movement in Serbia during the 1990s, within which WiB originated. In chapter two, I will provide a context to the characteristics of this specifically feminist peace initiative drawing from the contributions made by the previous studies of WiB mentioned before. In chapter three, I will move on to provide a background on what Zajovic has called the “dis/continuity of repression towards WiB.” (2007:49) In chapter four, I analyze my empirical findings from my interviews with WiB activists in conversation with a variety of theoretical paradigms. First of all, I look at Melucci's collective identity theory (1996), and supplement it with other theories, including theories of social networks (Passy 2003), emotions (Calhoun 2001), and value identity (Gecas 2000). At last, I provide concluding remarks with suggestions for further research.

## Chapter I: Civil Society as Politics of Resistance in Serbia During the 1990s

According to Einhorn and Sever (2003), during communism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the notion of civil society went hand in hand with the notion of political dissidence as politics of resistance to the pervasiveness of an all-intrusive authoritarian state-apparatus. During state-socialism in CEE—where the state had control over all social, economic, and political activities—political or civic initiatives that could pose themselves as alternatives and potentially challenging to the state were usually suppressed. In this context, the citizen was defined in her right to work, to welfare, and housing at the expense of her right to political subjectivity and individual autonomy.

At the same time, Watson (1997) argues that since during communism the realm of public politics was pervaded by the power of the communist state, civil society became private. Under state-socialism, all citizens were equally disempowered before the state as their rights to political citizenship were equally limited. All citizens—regardless of gender, class, age, or ethnicity—were equally excluded from the polity. This concept of citizenship differed drastically from the concept of citizenship of liberal democracy, where the citizen is defined in terms of her individual rights and freedoms to act as a political subject. Under state-socialism, the citizen as defined through the prism of liberal democratic theory was not allowed to exist.

Einhorn and Sever (2003) argue that in countries of CEE, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the advent of multi-party elections, predominantly male intellectuals who had been part of the dissident movements of resistance against communism became part of the governing elites and the

process of democratization and political pluralism was advanced as such. In Serbia, however, the passage from communism to post-communism did not involve a passage from state-socialism to democracy but rather the passage from state-socialism to state-nationalism. (Papic 1999) Although nominally post-1989 Serbia showed the apparent features of a liberal democratic regime (multi-party plurality), in actuality it remained a system of one-party, authoritarian rule. (Gordy 1999)

Socialist Yugoslavia had been more open to the development of independent civic initiatives in comparison to the other socialist regimes in CEE and less prone to official censorship. (Ramet 1991; Slapsak 2000) However, the political and institutional structure of socialist Yugoslavia was also, like in other countries in CEE, a structure of authoritarian, one-party rule. (Stojanovic 2000) According to Stojanovic, “during the 1970s and 1980s, with the exception of narrow liberal and civilly-oriented circles, resistance to the ruling regime had been largely based on national arguments and ideas about the conceived exploitation and engenderment of existing nations by the regime, but even more, and more importantly, by other Yugoslav peoples.” (2000:451) As a strategy for arising to power, Slobodan Milosevic appropriated the rhetoric of nationalism and the alleged defense of Serbianism that had been the ideological basis of much of the Serbian opposition prior to 1987.

Following Milosevic’s rise to power in 1987, the institutional and political structures that had characterized the communist regime prior to 1989 were maintained at the same time that the collusion of the ideological interests of much of the pre-1989 Serbian opposition with the newly emerged Serbian leadership devoid the opposition of its ideological bases. (Stojanovic 2000) This political move enabled the regeneration and

consolidation of the power of the SKS, named the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) in the advent of multi-party elections, camouflaged in its alleged defense of the Serbian people and their right to live together in one state. (Stojanovic 2000) The passage from communism to post-communism in Serbia should hence be understood as the passage from state-socialism to state-nationalism, where the institutional structures that formed the bases of the former communist regime remained almost untouched but where the ideology that the regime used to maintain its power was, on the outlook, fundamentally changed from socialism to nationalism. (Papic 1999)

Throughout the 1990s, the regime of Slobodan Milosevic managed to maintain a total monopoly of power. It systematically prevented the development of a normal parliamentary system by resisting all alternatives to its overbearing rule. The regime systematically depoliticized the population, manipulated election results, maintained control over the most important media sources, discredited political opponents and limited their public visibility, and co-opted part of the right-wing nationalist political opposition to its own cadre of allies. (Gordy 1999) Most importantly, the regime played the main role in instigating the wars that destroyed Yugoslavia, where “the war constituted a vital part of the destruction of alternatives.” (Gordy 1999: 24) In addition to the incredible humanitarian tragedy that that they signified, the wars provided the regime with “the ability to categorically disqualify political opponents as treasonous, unpatriotic, and fomenting division when unity is needed” and as “a pretext for severing communication between anti-war and anti regime forces in different republics” (Gordy 1999: 24)

In this context where the ethno-fascist nationalist state<sup>8</sup> pervaded public politics, just as it had happened in CEE under totalitarian communist regimes, civil society in Serbia during the 1990s became private. Papic (1999) describes the socio-political context of Serbia during the 1990s as one of fundamental civic disempowerment and state/nationalist/patriarchal authoritarianism. “From the beginning Milosevic worked consistently to disempower all political institutions, and therefore all men except himself to preclude any possibility of competition between equals.” (Papic 2002:130) What Papic (1999:168) calls the structural emasculation of men’s power at the public level went hand in hand with what she calls as the “retraditionalization, instrumentalization, and naturalization of women’s identities, social roles, and their symbolic representations.” (2002: 128)

In this context, with the realm of formal politics and decision-making bodies completely monopolized by one party and one man, civil society in Serbia during the 1990s emerged as the locus of resistance to state-nationalist authoritarianism. Blagojevic characterizes the 1990s in Serbia as a “history of protests” (2005: 147), in which she highlights the role of the 1991/1992 and 1996/1997 students’ and citizens’ protests in the development of a culture of civil resistance and in furthering a democratic political culture. In addition to the protests, other initiatives provided also exemplary mobilizations of resistance to the overbearing power of the regime. These initiatives included pan-Yugoslav political movements that sought a peaceful settlement of disputes and a stabilization of the Yugoslav state, autonomous women’s organizations that worked toward refraining the curtailment of women’s rights and freedoms in the context of the

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<sup>8</sup> Here, I borrow the term ethno-fascist nationalism to describe political situation in Serbia during the 1990s from Papic (2000)

rise of nationalism in Serbia, anti-war organizations such as WiB that worked toward demilitarization of all aspects of life in Yugoslavia as well as on aiding deserters and conscientious objectors, organizations that promoted the development of civil society, and independent intellectual organizations. The development of civil society anti-nationalist and pacifist initiatives was an almost exclusively urban phenomenon and was frequently attacked and discredited by the regime since it posed an alternative to the politics of the nationalist state. (Susak 2000)

## Chapter II: A Feminist Peace Initiative

Within the context of the development of civil society anti-nationalist and pacifist initiatives, WiB initiated a specific feminist response to nationalism, militarism, and war. WiB have been an organization with a clear feminist orientation since the start because the founders of WiB had long been involved with the feminist movement in Yugoslavia in a variety of different ways prior to the inception of Women Black as such. Founders of the organization had been involved in the production of feminist academic scholarship, in the organization of feminist conferences and groups, and in the foundation of women's centers. (Duhacek 2002).

The founders of WiB did not begin their anti-war activities in WiB per se; rather, they first took part in the mainstream peace movement in Serbia, where they worked together with other pacifist women and men. The women who came to found WiB noticed that, within the peace movement, issues of gender were not being addressed in any way and that "the peace movement was...repeating certain patriarchal models, using patriarchal language and ignoring the inequalities between women and men." (Zajovic 1994 in Cockburn 2007:84) Thus they saw the need to organize pacifist resistance to war outside the realm of the mainstream peace movement and to form a "specifically feminist initiative against the terrifying upsurge of patriarchal militarism now dominating politics, pervading the media and swaggering the streets (Cockburn 2007:85)

For WiB activists, the peace movement was to certain extent replicating a patriarchal model because the work of women in peace groups was taken for granted and deemed invisible. The women who came to found WiB wanted their presence in the peace movement "to be VISIBLE, not to be seen as something natural, as part of our

woman's role," they "wanted it to be clearly understood that what we were doing was our political choice" (WiB in Mladjenovic and Hughes 2000:262, capital letters in the original). WiB were not becoming involved in anti-war action because to care for others is "what women do," but rather because becoming involved in anti-war action was what they deemed important to do as political subjects. As expressed in WiB's annual report of 1998, which took the form of a "confession of their guilt for seven years of activism for peace, freedom, and democracy for all the people in former Yugoslavia": "I confess...that I first challenged the murderers from the state where I live and then those from other states, *because I consider this to be responsible political behavior of a citizen*" (in Mladjenovic and Hughes 2000:265, emphasis added).

In search for visibility and as a way to assert their political subjectivity, WiB took to the streets in the form of non-violent resistance. As mentioned earlier, they held vigils on a regular basis during the war years and on especial dates once the war period was over. (Fridman 2006) WiB created a tradition of women's public political action, a tradition that before the inception of WiB was unheard of in Yugoslavia. (Mladjenovic in Cockburn 2007)

According to Duhacek, WiB's presence in the street has been a "material statement, by their bodily presence" and a "conscious act of subversion" (2002:120). It has been an act of subversion to the reconfiguration of the gender order that has taken place in Serbia with the rise of nationalist revivalism since the end of the 1980s. This reconfiguration of the gender order has attempted to depoliticize women, encouraging them to return to their conventional roles as mothers of the nation's children. (Papic 1999, 2002) By acting as public political subjects, WiB reject the limitations imposed by



traditional conceptions of gender roles. WiB activists have asserted their political subjectivity as women not only by their public condemnation of the wars that destroyed Yugoslavia, but above all by taking responsibility for the wars that were committed in their name and by demanding accountability for the wars from the Serbian state. Since the inception of the organization, they have positioned themselves explicitly against the Serbian nation-state and accepted their roles as disloyal to the nation and the state. (Zajovic in Duhacek 2002) They have rejected identification with the state because for them “identification with the states, with the male militaristic states means to assume the role of an accomplice in war and war propaganda” (Zajovic in Duhacek 2002:120) WiB activists are “building a model of citizenship that is based on responsibility *for the political unit* they belong to.” (Duhacek 2006:214, emphasis in the original)

Through public commemorations, WiB work toward inscribing the memory of the wars and war crimes of the 1990s into Serbia’s history. During the war years, they protested against the wars by standing in Republic Square in silence, making a circle, carrying anti-war banners, and dressed completely in black. (Cockburn 2007) Through their black clothing they warned against the deadly destruction brought by war and mourned all the victims of war. (Slapsak 2001; Cockburn 2007) In the post-war period, they commemorate important dates—such as the anniversary of the July 10<sup>th</sup> 1995 genocide in Srebrenica—in the exact same way. In this way, they not only offer counter-memories to the predominant historical narrative in Serbia in regards to the wars and war crimes of the 1990s (Fridman 2006); they also create bonds of solidarity with war victim survivors.

Just like WiB have persistently rejected the reduction of women to the roles of mothers, care-takers, and bearers of the nation's children; in short, just like they have rejected patriarchal and essentialist notions of the category "woman," they have also rejected the confinement of their identity to the category "Serb." (Cockburn 2007) As Yugoslavia fell apart and ethnic identities became sharply drawn, WiB rejected "the politics of naming and othering" that were being promoted by the nationalist and militarist ideologues of their state. (Cockburn 2007:88) They refused to be told how to live their identities and how to respond to those of others who were, after the fall of Yugoslavia, located in so-called enemy sides of conflict. (Cockburn 2007)

As Yugoslavia was collapsing, WiB made an explicit effort to maintain the pre-war bonds with other activists in the region and to create a network of women's solidarity with activists from all over former Yugoslavia and other parts of the world that persists to this day. (Cockburn 2007) Most importantly, "they didn't invoke sisterhood between women similarly positioned as victims of war, rather between women with similar values" (Cockburn 2007:88), between women who understood the gendered nature of the intersection of nationalism and militarism, as ideologies that manipulate "masculinity and femininity for the purposes of ethnic political power." (Cockburn 2007:88)

According to Cockburn, "in the early days they [WiB] were not unanimous in their take on 'nationalism' and 'national' identity, but soon a strong and clear antinationalism emerged as a key principle in the group" (2007:87). WiB took a clear political stance against nationalism by considering how women are used and manipulated within the discourse of nationalism in both symbolic and material ways. According to Papic, "as *insiders* they are colonized and instrumentalist in their 'natural' function as the

nation's sacred 'essence' and as birth 'machines'" and "as *outsiders* they are reified into the target of destruction, as mediated instruments of violence against other men's national and cultural identity." (2002:128) According to Papic (1999), the most dramatic example of women's instrumentalization as outsiders was the incidence of systematic rape of thousands of Muslim women by Serb men during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Inside Serbia during the 1990s, the Serbian government and the Serbian Orthodox church virulently contested the right of Serbian women to abortion—at the same time that they were "worried" about the high numbers of children bore by women of other nationalities in Serbia (i.e., Roma, Albanians, and Muslims), whose birthrates they claimed were "beyond rational" and were "a threat" in need of control. (Papic 1999)

## Chapter III: Three Phases of Repression

According to Zajovic (2007), the state and social repression that Women in Back have endured throughout the years are interwoven and can be divided into three distinct phases identified in chronological order: the period comprising the Yugoslav Wars of Secession and the fall of the Milosevic regime (1991-2000), the period between the fall of the Milosevic regime and the murder of democratically-elected prime minister Zoran Djindjic (2000-2003), and the period following Djindjic's assassination and the election of nationalist leader Vojislav Kostunica's as prime minister up to the present (2003-2008).

According to Zajovic (2007), during the first period of repression the state promoted a denial of its belligerent reality by claiming that Serbia was not at war and consequently claimed an alleged lack of responsibility for the wars while blaming others—such as anti-war activists like the WiB. In this context of “state-organized crime and denial of criminal reality” (Zajovic 2007:49) between 1991 and 2000, WiB were in one occasion unlawfully banned to conduct humanitarian work in a refugee camp. (1995) From 1993 onwards, they also faced illegitimate legal proceedings against their public declarations following their street actions in several opportunities. In addition, throughout this first period, over twelve WiB activists were subject to police interrogation “as a form of threatening, frightening, blackmail [sic], and breaking solidarity and group cohesion.” (Zajovic 2007:50) Between 1992 and 2000, the state purposefully frustrated meetings of the International Network of WiB through a variety a means as a way to sever WiB's connections with international solidarity networks. In 1998 following the outbreak of

violence in Kosovo, the government banned an anti-war rally organized by WiB and other anti-war groups. WiB and other peace groups condemned this government ban through a public statement, which was followed by the aggressive rhetoric of extreme-nationalist right-wing member of the Serbian parliament Vojislav Seselj, who labeled the WiB and other human rights organizations as “Serbia’s inner enemies” that should be caught (Zajovic 2007; Mladjenovic and Hughes 2000).

Between June and September 2000, several WiB activists were subject to daily interrogations by the Serbian State Security (SSS), one of them was subject to illegitimate detention and torture from this same state entity, while two WiB activists were prosecuted through an arrest warrant. Also during this period, WiB were criminalized through financial control, the passport of one WiB activist as well as some of the organization’s materials and documentation was confiscated by the SSS. In addition, WiB activists were subject to apartment search, secret monitoring of phone-calls, and installation of bugs in some of their apartments, while international WiB volunteers were expelled from Serbia. (Zajovic 2007) At the social level, during the 1991-2000 period, WiB were not only subject to physical and verbal attacks during their anti-war street actions but also socially stigmatized and criminalized. (Zajovic 2007)

During the period of the Djindjic government (2000-2003), WiB experienced a “disburdening of fear” (Zajovic 2007:52) and the promotion of their activities outside of Belgrade; at the same time, the legal financial proceedings that had been initiated against them by the Milosevic regime were not dropped until February 2003. Despite the change in government, “the ouster of Milosevic in October 2000 did not bring an end to his legacy—a legacy entrenched in the institutions of the country and in the persons at the

highest levels of those institutions.” (Fridman 2006:293) Following the assassination of Djindjic and the rise to power of Vojislav Kostunica, WiB experienced a renewal in the repressive measures taken against them both at the social but most important, state, level.

As stated by Zajovic, “parallel to the rehabilitation of representatives of the previous (Milosevic’s) regime, methods from that period were rehabilitated as well” (2007:53). Since 2003, WiB have been unjustifiably banned from conducting a variety of street actions on significant days—including International Human Rights Day on December 10<sup>th</sup> 2004 and International Women’s Day on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2005. Also, they have been subject to state intimidation through visits of police officers to the main office of WiB and they have been accused of legal offenses. Most importantly, they have been unjustifiably subject to investigations on financial irregularities and have been accused of the crime of organization of women for prostitution. Consequently, they have undergone police interrogations and hearings in the Department of Organized Crime and Prostitution at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and at the Economic Crimes Department and they have also had unannounced visits from police officers to the main office of WiB in regards to this alleged offenses (Amnesty International 2005; Zajovic 2007).

These incidents were particularly prominent between the months of April and October 2005. Apparently, they were part of a campaign of systematic harassment and intimidation conducted by state and non-state parties against human rights organizations like WiB who were involved in a campaign called “Facing the Past.” This campaign commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the genocide of 8000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men in the town of Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1995 at the end of the Bosnian war and demanded for responsibility and accountability from the Serbian

state for the wars and war crimes committed in the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. (Amnesty International 2005)

At the social level, since the rise to power of Vojislav Kostunica in 2003, WiB have been subject to media harassment and physical attacks and threats by non-state actors—including, but not limited to, individuals affiliated with extreme nationalist and clerical-fascist organizations including Obraz<sup>9</sup> and the Fatherland Movement of Serbia. (Zajovic 2007; Amnesty International 2005) In 2004, WiB were attacked during a street action opposing the rise of violence in Kosovo and the attack of mosques and non-Serbs in Serbia and during the public commemoration of nine years since the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995. In 2005, WiB activists were attacked during a street action in Novi Sad demanding that those prosecuted for war crimes be sent to the Hague tribunal, during a commemoration of 10 years since the genocide in Srebrenica, and during a public celebration of the International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism on November 9<sup>th</sup>. They also received numerous threatening phone-calls in their office during the days prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. In several occasions, the police blatantly condoned this violence by ignoring the charges that WiB pressed against the attackers. (Zajovic 2007; Fridman 2006; Amnesty International 2005)

In 2005, Amnesty International launched an international campaign requesting the Serbian state to increase the protection of human rights defenders in Serbia. This campaign resulted in an increase of police custody in all of the street actions organized by WiB. At the same time WiB “think that some forms of this protection led to an increased degree of ghettoization of WiB and separated us from public participation.” (Zajovic

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<sup>9</sup> Obraz means “honor” in Serbian.

2007) The international recognition of the problems faced by human rights defenders in Serbia like WiB did not by any means put an end to the social and state repression they have been subject to. Most recently, in January 2007 two WiB activists were attacked by skinheads upon return from an election night party organized by a coalition of parties and associations of the opposition and WiB were unjustifiably banned from carrying out a peace march and performance in celebration of International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2008.<sup>10</sup> (Danas in WiB 2007; WiB, personal correspondence). According to Zajovic, these events serve as evidence to show the continued and planned repression of the Serbian government over human rights defenders like WiB that aim to "discredit, frighten, and exhaust WiB" as well as to inhibit individuals to join the organization. (2007:54)

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<sup>10</sup> The Belgrade police refused to grant WiB a permit to carry out a street performance and a peace march on March 8<sup>th</sup> on the alleged basis that the street performance and the march would constitute a threat to public safety and public property. Belgrade was the only capital city in Europe where street actions in commemoration of International Women's Day 2008 were forbidden. WiB were finally granted permission and police protection to carry out the activities they had planned for International Women's Day on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2008 (WiB, personal correspondence).



## **Chapter IV: The Collective Identity of Anti-Nationalist, Anti-Militarist, Feminist Activist**

In this chapter, I present a variety of different theories in conversation with my empirical findings in order to elucidate how participation in anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activism represents a process of collective identity formation. A collective identity, as succinctly defined by Taylor (1989), is “the shared definition of a group that derives from its members’ common interests and solidarity” and by Gamson as “the mesh between the individual and cultural systems. More specifically, the question is how individuals’ sense of who they are becomes engaged with a definition shared by co-participants in some effort at social change.” (cited in Gecas 2000:99-100) How women and men become anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activists and hence share the collective identity of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activist will be elucidated from their narratives of participation in this kind of contention.

According to Melucci, “collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the orientations of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which such action is to take place.” (1996:70) The process of collective identity “involves cognitive definitions concerning ends, means, and fields of action,” “a network of active relationships between actors who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate, and make decisions,” and “emotional investment...which enables individuals to feel themselves part of a common unity.” (Melucci 1996:70-71)

According to Melucci, identity appears usually as given and continuous across a range of situations. It establishes the boundaries that differentiate an actor from other actors and the capacity of an actor to underline its uniqueness and be distinguished by

others. The notion of a collective identity also appears as a given and as a continuous phenomenon that transcends situations, but it is actually a dynamic process in need of elucidation. The process of collective identity allows actors to act as autonomous collectives; at the same time, it also necessitates social recognition in order to exist. “The ability of a collective actor to distinguish itself from others must be recognized by these ‘others’...a collective actor cannot construct its identity independently of its recognition (which can also mean denial or opposition) by other social and political actors” (Melucci 1996:73) According to Melucci, in the context of confrontation with other oppositional actors, solidarity among members of the collective “reinforces identity and guarantees it...the solidarity that ties individuals to each other enables them to affirm themselves as subjects of their action and to withstand the breakdown of social relations induced by conflict.” (1996:74) For Melucci, in the context of the study of SMs “collective identity ensures the continuity and permanence of the movement over time” and “it establishes the limits of the actor with respect to its social environment. It regulates the membership of individuals, it defines the requisites for joining the ‘movement’, and the criteria by which its members recognize themselves and are recognized.” (1996:75)

How much participation in anti-militarist, anti-nationalist activism represents a process of collective identity formation can be elucidated from activists’ narratives of activism as paramount to their existence.

For Zorica,

For me it is really important not to be passive. I couldn’t just look and say ‘I’m not interested; I’m not interested in that.’ Somehow it makes me alive, I feel that I am a part of this society; I don’t feel like an island.

For Jelena,

[Activism] is something I find myself in, something where I belong. Actually, I couldn't find myself belong anywhere and now I feel like I belong somewhere [...] I feel like I belong somewhere because I couldn't fit anywhere else, actually all my life, I couldn't fit anywhere else, and this is somewhere I feel like I belong, in that way.

For Ana,

[I have] This very general motivation: [for activism]: I don't want to live in this kind of world and on the other hand if I say "I hate it, I quit" I've done nothing. What's your choice, I don't like it, if I quit, would I commit suicide? No, I don't want to, I want to live, I love life. So I just have to do something, at least to change some very narrow environment around me, to talk with people that is around me in my everyday life [...] I don't feel autistic when I do something. Sometimes of course you get tired and say "I don't care, I'm going to take care of my cats and my boyfriend and nothing else" but then you feel really autistic, like closed.

According to Passy (2003), social networks are of primary importance in the process of how people decide to join and remain as part of a SMO, and hence they also play a paramount role in the construction of a collective identity. They "intervene throughout this entire process, at the beginning by building and reinforcing individual identities that create potential for participation and at the very end when individual preferences and perceptions (e.g. individual costs of action, chances of success, the risk involved) eventually prompt people to take action." (Passy 2003:22) Social networks are an important factor of SM mobilization in democracies but they play an even more important role under conditions of social repression. Social networks have three fundamental functions in the process of participation into a SMO: a socialization function, a structural-connection function, and a decision-shaping function. (Passy 2003)

On the one hand, the socialization function of social networks refers primarily to the role that social networks play in the process of development of a political

consciousness, creating social actors' dispositions to participate in a SM. The political consciousness of individuals develops to a great extent in their interactions with other individuals in specific networks "that build and solidify identities and shape the actors' cognitive frames, thereby enabling them to interpret social reality and to define a set of actions that involve them in this perceived reality." (Somers 1992 in Passy 2003:24) The location of individuals in specific networks "enables them to define and redefine their interpretive frames, facilitates the process of identity-building and identity-strengthening, and creates or solidifies political consciousness towards a given protest issue." (Passy 2003:24) The socialization function of social networks as facilitating the process of formation of a collective identity of feminist, anti-nationalist, anti-militarist activist becomes evident in activists' narratives of their path toward creating or joining WiB.

To begin with Jasmina, one of the founders of WiB, "politics is part of my life and I come from a very political background." Jasmina's parents were part of the communist youth during the Nazi occupation and she sees "continuity between my parents' political activities and me." She became a political activist at the age of 14, while living in Italy, by participating in the students' demonstrations of 1968. She then joined the hippie movement mainly through rock 'n roll music, then left-wing oriented student organizations while in university, and finally, feminism. She became involved with politically-conscious groups of feminist artists, journalists, and writers in Italy and, in 1978, together with two other feminists from Belgrade she organized the first feminist conference in Central-Eastern Europe. Upon her definitive return to Serbia from Italy in the mid-1980s onwards, she became involved with women's and feminist groups in

Yugoslavia. When Milosevic came to power, she engaged in anti-war political activism via WiB.

Like Jasmina, Stasa, WiB's coordinator and also one of the founders of WiB, had a life-time of activism prior to the formation of WiB. She comes from "a very anti-fascist family" and she also felt the influence of the 1968 student protests as a catalyst for her activism. She began her activism in the 1970s, when she was a student in the university, by joining the dissident movement against the communist regime in Yugoslavia which was also anti-nationalist, in which rock 'n roll music of protest played a major role. During this time, through the dissident movement she became involved with the Open University, an initiative of dissident professors and students that was banned from the institutions of the state. During the 1980s, she became involved with Woman and Society, one of the first feminist groups in Yugoslavia, and in 1990 participated in the SOS hotline that feminists set up for women victims of domestic violence. On the brink of war, she participated in all the initiatives against the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), providing support to conscientious objectors and war deserters in the Center for Anti-War Action until she co-founded WiB.

Similarly, Lina, also one of the co-founders of WiB, had significant experience in activist networks prior to the origination of WiB as such. In 1968, she participated in the students' protests that took place in Belgrade and elsewhere. Later on, she became involved with Woman and Society at the end of 1981. Also at the beginning of the 1980s, she joined public discussion groups on women's issues and women-only, consciousness-raising groups in the mid-1980s. In 1990, she co-founded the SOS hotline for women and children victims of domestic violence. She was one of the organizers of the Women's

Party in 1990 and the Women's Parliament in 1991. On the brink of war, together with the Women's Party they joined the first peace group, the Center for Anti-War Action, from which WiB originated.

Zorica had also been involved with activism all of her life prior to the origination of WiB as such. She "somehow inherited that activism" from her family, where both of her parents were political activists even before the Second World War. She started her activist career when she was in high-school, fighting to get back a space for the youth in her town which had been converted into a pensioners' club. During the 1980s she became involved with feminist groups and with Woman and Society in particular. In 1990, she became politically involved in the Women's Party; in 1991, she co-founded the Women's Parliament. When Yugoslavia was on the brink of war, she became involved with a constitutional initiative that intended to press the government to renew the constitution and to permit the countries to secede without war. In 1990, she became involved with the Center for Anti-War Action, where she stayed for three years and from which WiB originated.

Lepa, also one of the co-founders of WiB, was not involved in politics at all before the war period. She was, however, "really into this injustice against women—I didn't understand that was politics" too then. After attending the first feminist conference in Yugoslavia in 1978, which was "a turning point" in her life, she got involved with women's discussions groups that originated from this conference—namely, public discussion groups in the beginning of the 1980s and consciousness-raising, women-only groups in 1986. From these groups, she co-founded a SOS hotline for women victims of domestic violence. In the 1990s, she founded the Autonomous Women's Center.

For Ana, to become interested in politics was a somehow “a rather spontaneous evolution,” because both of her parents were political activists before she was born. They were members of the students’ protests of 1968 and part of the organizers of the Open University that started after the student protests were shut down. At the end of high-school, she became a volunteer for the SOS hotline for women and children victims of domestic violence that had been co-founded by Lepa, Lina, and others. Her mother was one of the founders of WiB and Ana joined them in their activities since the start.

Nevzeta, who joined WiB in 1999, became involved in activism on the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia. During the 1990s, she did not join any civil society organization per se but was constantly involved in the citizens’ protests against the Milosevic regime throughout the 1990s.

Marija, who joined WiB, in 1999, was “born political.” Both of her parents were communists and her mother was also a feminist, so she became acquainted with politics from an early age. During the 1990s, she was active in the political opposition against the Milosevic regime, primarily through her activities as a journalist and through her collaboration with some of the parties of the opposition even when not joining any one of them.

Boban, who joined WiB in 2001, had experience of political activism first by becoming involved in an educational project for refugees in several towns around Serbia and afterwards by volunteering for one specific refugee camp nearby his town.

Snezana, who joined WiB in 2005, had also been involved with activism prior to joining WiB. She had been involved in the organization of an independent workers’

union that supported women's issues, especially Roma women's issues, as well as in the creation of a feminist non-governmental organization in her home town of Kruzevac.

Nadja, who has been involved with WiB in a consistent basis since 2005, is the daughter of one of the founding members of the organization and had also activist experience prior to joining WiB as such. While she was in high-school, she joined an organization called the Post-Pessimists, which was a network of young people across former Yugoslavia with offices in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Pristina until she moved to Bulgaria in 2000 to attend university there where the student body was primarily from Central and Eastern Europe. While in Bulgaria, she and other students organized panel discussions in order to create a more structured dialog between Serb and Albanian students. Upon her return from Bulgaria, she joined WiB.

Adam, who became involved with WiB in 2005, was involved with the Anti-Trafficking Center in Belgrade, an organization that is part of the Women's Peace Network – Network of WiB in Serbia prior to joining WiB as such.

Magda, who has been involved with WiB for the past eight months, "grew up" with political activism as both her parents have been involved with political activism. Her father is a political journalist and her mother used to work in the Humanitarian Law Center.

Katie, an American volunteer who has been involved with WiB for the past seven months, had significant experience of activism prior to joining WiB. Both of her parents have been politically active in the Democratic Party, so to be politically conscious was part of her upbringing. While in high-school, she participated in the activities of the LGBT community organized in the near most university. When in college, she



participated in a feminist group and was co-leader of the Students' Peace Initiative. Upon graduation from college, she spent a year volunteering for an organization in the US-Mexico border that provided services for undocumented persons. The year following this experience, she joined WiB.

Jelena, who became involved with WiB in 2007, had been involved with Sunglas, a feminist organization that is part of the Women's Peace Network – Network of WiB in Serbia for three years prior to joining WiB as such.

The structural-connection function of social networks refers primarily to the role that social networks play in facilitating the process of integration of social actors into a SMO. According to Passy, this function precedes the actual action of involvement with a SMO. Passy argues that identification with a specific SM, such as the women's peace movement, does not suffice to make social actors join a SMO. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), "the initial disposition to participate will remain latent or unrealized as long as there is no opportunity for it to be converted into action." (in Passy 2003:24) The activities of a SMO, such as vigils and street performances, offer individuals who identify with a SMO an opportunity to "convert their dispositions to participate into concrete action." (Passy 2003:24) In this context, the ties that a person who is already predisposed to participation in a SMO has to people already involved with a SMO are fundamental links to opportunities for participation. Ties to a SMO—such as family members, friends, or acquaintances—play a "mediating role" between a potential movement participant and a SMO. The function that social networks play in structurally connecting people to join a SMO becomes clear from activists' account of how they came to create WiB but even

more so of how they came to join WiB after its foundation. The founders all knew each other; they were linked structurally through specific networks prior to the inception of the organization—for instance, from joint activism in the Center for Anti-War Action or the SOS Hotline for women and children victims of domestic violence, as well as through common ties of friendship. The role of social networks in facilitating the participation of activists other than the founders can be seen, for instance, from the accounts of Jelena and Magda on how they came to join the organization.

For Jelena,

I came here first [to Sunglas] and this was the first place where I get in touch with feminism actually, to learn more about feminism and my friend from here, Marina, whom I met here, now we are best friends, she was in WiB and she took me there for the first time last year in July. I was in a performance of Srebrenica and I went to Srebrenica with them [WiB] also and I got interested in their work, actually I got interested in fundamentalism before I met them [WiB] and that's why I wanted to go to WiB, I was interested in fundamentalism and nationalism and I wanted to learn more and to see if I can do something about it.

For Magda,

I thought of joining and a family friend, a neighbor, is a member for a long time and I wanted to go to a meeting to see her about something and then Stasa asked me if I wanted to join a long time and I said “yeah, sure.” Because I wanted it, I just didn't know exactly how to get in.

The third, decision-shaping, function of social networks refers to the role social networks play in actualizing social actors' participation into a SMO. The decision-shaping function of social networks is perhaps the most relevant function of networks to take into consideration in the study of how participation in WiB represents a process of formation of an anti-militarist, anti-nationalist, feminist identity. According to Passy after “push and pull factors have intervened, (respectively, socialization and structural linkages

with the opportunity for mobilization)” potential participants in a SMO decide on their involvement with a SMO. (2003:24) For Passy, “those who are ready to join a specific political contention undertake a decision-making process by assessing various parameters of the protest itself and their own willingness to take action.” (2003:25)

The decision-shaping function of social networks has been conceptualized both from rationalist and phenomenological standpoints. On the one hand, the rationalist paradigm conceptualizes the decision-shaping function of social networks from the premises of rational choice theory, in which human action is conceived as primarily intentional, self-interested, and maximizing behavior. In this context, social networks are conceived as primarily instrumental and “individuals decide strategically according to the behavior of others.” (Passy 2003:25)

On the other hand, the phenomenological paradigm addresses the limitations inherent in the rationalist paradigm and thus presents a better framework for understanding mobilization into SMOs. The phenomenological paradigm takes notice of the fact that there is more to human action than mere goal-oriented, self-interested, and maximizing behavior. The decision to become involved in a SMO is shaped by “the constant work of definition and redefinition of the social world by individuals, as well as their self-positioning within this world...Social relations create and sustain a structure of meanings that contributes to the definition of individual perceptions or preferences” which influence individuals’ decisions to participate in a SMO. (Passy 2003:26)

The decision-shaping function of social networks becomes particularly evident from the narratives of anti-militarist, anti-nationalist feminist WiB activists. Decisions to participate in this kind of activism are shaped not only by activists’ beliefs, but also by

the sense of community, solidarity, support, recognition, and belonging that are created through the ties that activists' share among themselves within the organization as well as with others outside of it. In this context, the decision-shaping function of social networks plays a paramount role in creating and strengthening the collective identity of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activist, as can be seen from examples of the activists' narratives below:

For Jasmina, during the war period,

Women in Black was the only safe place, if it hadn't been for Women in Black I think I would have gone crazy or I would have gone on exile. With a thing like Women in Black we had meetings and we could exchange these kind of opinions, help the refugees, do kind of political work, because during the wars if you don't do anything you feel like going crazy, really. This was the only place that I could feel alright with myself. I realized there were other people like me, like Women in Black, that something could be done [...] I met women who were really good and we put our energies together [...]

Similarly, for Lina

In war time it was many women needed because the feeling was much better if you are not alone. I isolated myself [...] and I didn't feel at all well. So this activism really helped women survive this war time [...]

Similarly, for Stasa,

I can't live without doing this; I can't live here [in Serbia], I have no motive to live here if I don't do this. I have lived here all of my life but I have no reason to live here, after 1991, I have no motive, only this. Only this and the people with whom I do this, nothing else, and it is everything, a lot [...] If I can't fight, I do not live in this country, because I cannot live in a country that makes me so angry, where people make me so angry and everything. Most people [here] make me angry and I don't respect them. On the other hand, I respect a lot—and that is why I'm here—the people with whom I share these wishes and this wish of justice for the victims, there is nothing else. [...] The great satisfaction that we have with the community of victims, who recognize us, for me it is one of the most gratifying things. When I reach a great desperation here [in Serbia], I go there with them and I recover, I go there every once in a while. When I am tired of

everything, I rest with them, because we have created an almost equal human relationship [...] If I see that people do not resign themselves and that they don't become apathetic, I am not scared. That is the most important thing: to have people say "we do not let them." We resist together. Solidarity in the struggle, that is the most important thing for me, knowing that it is a lost cause. Can it be a lost cause? Yes. But I see no motive to live here. I see no motive, as long as we go gathering these indignations, putting them together, and putting together solidarity bonds [...]

For Nevzeta,

I find my place with similar opinions [in WiB], with people with a similar opinion, because it was very important for me. Because I was so tired to explain to other people about war and war crimes and Mladic, and Karadzic, and Slobodan Milosevic, I was so tired, and I need only people with a similar opinion. WiB is really organization which can help me and support me and I can support the organization, because it is a very temperamental organization [...]

For Nadja,

[With WiB] I like the idea that I am doing something for the public good, that I'm helping someone [...] They [WiB] are also nice people and I like to hang out with them, I like to spend time with them, even apart from activism or anything like that [...] At different times you feel that what you are doing as an activist is not enough and then maybe sometimes it helps when you bump into people who have heard your workshop or lecture years ago and who come in and tell you 'that was great, hearing you speak made a difference.' Sometimes you get worried because you watch the news and you see that things are going horribly wrong, you go to that place and you talk to some women and it actually cheers you up, gives you some energy [...]

For Adam,

This [WiB] is maybe some safe place for me, but not on the victim side, I feel free here, in the way that I want to be free [...] I feel now them [WiB] like my family [...] They are women in the age, but they have energy to fight and I see that if they want to change something, I have too enough here not to try to be a part of them. I want to change something and I like [it] [...] I know as one person cannot change the world but I have a lot of people around me who have the same ideas and we can try to change something [...]

For Snezana,

[...] We have a very special connection and it's very different woman but we have the same connection, which is peace and democracy and I think that's the connection with us, peace and democracy and freedom [...] This is the group opened for the people who are different, like gay people, lesbians [...] I think that's ok, because all people have the same place when you talk, when you feel free and I think that is important [...]

The social networks paradigm offered by Passy (2003) is a useful although limited tool to analyze participation in a SMO. Even when Passy is critical of the rationalist social network paradigm and even when she offers a more sophisticated alternative to it—namely, the phenomenological paradigm—she still conceptualizes the decision to take part in a SMO as a matter of perception, without paying attention to the role that emotions play in SM mobilization.

According to Calhoun (2001) emotions play a fundamental role in SM participation. Calhoun criticizes the rationalistic bias in sociology that has avoided taking emotions seriously as factors motivating social action. In social movements, emotions may motivate people to join a movement and they may also serve as vehicles for group solidarity as well as catalysts to motivate different movement actions. Calhoun correctly argues that the incapacity of a rationalistic sociology of action to take emotions seriously creates a dichotomy between “rational” and “irrational” behavior that may dismiss activists’ behavior as merely “irrational” and not worthy of further elucidation. This view reifies a notion of social activism as social deviant behavior and establishes a dichotomy where society becomes the norm and activism “abnormal.” Calhoun argues that this flawed perspective may stem from the long-standing mind/body dualism upon which much of Western thought has been founded and which posits thinking and feeling and hence cognition and emotions as irremediably opposite. Calhoun argues that rather than

understanding emotions and cognition as antagonistic they should, along with perception, be interpreted as relational, influencing each other in shaping actors' worldviews—and hence in determining actors' actions. At the same time, Calhoun argues that “movements produce emotions; they do not simply reflect emotional orientations brought to them by members.” (2001:55)

The role that emotions play in motivating activists into participation in anti-nationalist, anti-militarist feminist activism and hence in facilitating the construction of an anti-nationalist, anti-militarist feminist collective identity becomes evident from activists' narratives of their involvement with this type of contention. Anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activism provides a venue to transform feelings of anger, indignation, and helplessness through the medium of pro-creative action, which emphasizes Calhoun's point that movements produce emotions and not only reflect those brought to them by members, as can be seen from activists' accounts regarding their participation both during and after the war period:

For Jasmina, during the war period,

Women in Black saved me from going mad, because I was going mad with depression, with the cruelty of the society, with the lies, this is like the only place; coming out of depression I became an activist, because you do something about your own life, you just don't sit there and eat yourself from inside. I was shortly upset, but I was really upset when the war started, I couldn't eat, I was watching the news every hour hoping that something would stop it [...]

Similarly, for Lepa,

[WiB] really helped me survive the war because before that I remember in the beginning before the WiB I was in some kind of agony: I didn't know what was going on, I didn't know what to do with my time, I was not working, I didn't know what to do, I mean before you start being active you are sort of really feeling helpless and you don't understand, because with practice you are working, you get to know more, not only you get to know, being active you learn more, you get to

know more, you understand more of what is going on because you are involved with other people, and before we organized you are really like sitting here not knowing what to do. And then you bum yourself with guilt, you bum yourself with shame, you bum yourself with helplessness and it is really difficult to exist like that [...] so it gives meaning, you are transforming your guilt and helplessness into pro-creative activities that care about the others and for yourself and that gives visibility to your general politics: if you are against the regime and you are sitting in your kitchen, nobody knows that, but if you are going out with your body on the main square, that's different. There are other people who are against the regime and nobody knows. And when you go with your body, in black, standing in front of the others, that gives public meaning to your politics against fascism, it's important. And then this gives back the force that this is right what you are doing, you are empowered because you haven't been helpless and you haven't been sitting in one corner invisibly, it's a circle: you are doing something for the public and by doing this act for the public it gives you back the energy that you have more force to survive in these bad times. It's empowerment, personal is political becomes a really good moment in that [...]

Similarly, for Ana,

It was like, I don't know, I want to do something but you feel really helpless to do anything so at least you can show your attitude, that that is not done in my name, I'm against it, so if that's the least thing I can do, then I'm going to do that, at least. So I just joined them [WiB] together with my mother so we went there, these standings [...] I was in school at that time, secondary school and it all seemed so bizarre, because the war was starting very nearby and on the other hand it seemed like everything is normal, life goes on and I was just so angry because it was like a sort of a theater, everything is regular: streets, people, cars, we go to school and 100 km away killing started [...] I felt it was somehow important for my life to do whatever I can do, not to feel totally helpless and passive [...]

For Stasa,

If you ask me why I have founded Women in Black, it is not because of ideological motives, but because of moral and emotional motives [...] What united us all [the founders] was the indignation, the indignation before the crimes and the aggression, that is the most important as a motive [...] All the Women in Black have this indignation, very strong. And if you don't have that indignation that you make it into a proactive and responsible thing,, then what for? [...]

For Marija,



The political values of Women in Black and my political values necessarily have an emotional point of view and an emotional aspect in our activities. It's foolish to say that in society you can divide political values from emotional values, only in capitalism they are trying to divide those two things; if you want to get a very good job you will also see it from an emotional point of view, you will decide for yourself if it is good for you, you don't have to think all in economic way or political way to do something, so those two things, emotions and politics, go together, that's my point of view. The political values that WiB are representing are the ones that are demanding revolutionary changes in society and everyone who is looking for those kinds of changes as we can see in history, even in the Christianity wanted revolutionary changes, it's because we don't feel safe in the society today. If someone is looking for those kinds of changes, revolutionary changes, it is because him or her is suffering, because he doesn't feel ok in the society or the world where he is living at the moment.

In addition to the socialization and the decision-shaping function of social networks, value identities play a fundamental role in collective identity formation. According to Gecas (2000), value identities are central to the collective identities that people develop via the participation in a SMO and hence are an extremely important concept in the analysis of participation in a SMO. People define their sense of who they are in terms of their social roles (such as their position within their family or their professional occupation), in terms of their location in specific groups (such as a specific nation or social class), as well as in terms of their collective identities. In addition to these, Gecas argues that values and value systems are perhaps one of the most fundamental sources of identity location, "since values give meaning, purpose, and direction to our lives." (2000:94) He argues that while identities based on groups may promote identification and solidarity with people who belong to the same group (such as people who share the same ethnicity), identities based on values have the same capacity to connect people to collectivities that hold their same values. This becomes particularly evident in the account of activists' involvement with WiB.

For instance, for Boban,

I had a focus on war problem, and Women in Black was the only one group who give me some kind of answers. I respect all these other kinds of activists [feminist activists] a lot, but this was something that was a really big problem for me, because refugees are not victims of domestic violence and for me it was like a real problem, and I asked myself why that happens, what these people will do here and how their lives can look like, you know a lot of questions, and any answer was based in war. When I try to find the root of problem, was war. And I try to find some answers and WiB was the only one group who give me some kind of explanation.

Similarly, for Nadja,

The reason I got involved with WiB is because it was the only thing that made any sense, it was the only place where somebody was sort of make a structured effort to explain how war is not inevitable, how it is something that we can and should avoid and stop and how it starts and what are the warning signs.

For Katie, she chose to become involved with WiB because

I'm a feminist and I'm against the military, anti-militarist, both of those things are things that I really believe in and I've believed in for a while. And since I heard of Women in Black in the US and I'd heard of them already here and what they had done and I respected what I read about them before here in Belgrade I knew that it was an organization that I could really believe in and believe in what they are doing rather than something that I agree with what they are doing but I am not sure about how they are doing it, or I agree with their mission or agree with part of it or something like that and I knew that this organization was something that I really agreed with their mission and how they were doing it [...]

According to Gecas, there is clearly an overlap between identities based on values and other kinds of identities; at the same time, there are significant differences not to be overlooked. He argues that identities based on values remain constant regardless of the situation precisely because values are “defined as conceptions or beliefs about desirable modes of conduct or states of being that transcend specific situations, guide decision making and the evaluation of events, and are ordered by relative importance.” (Gecas

2000 and Rokeach 1973 et al in Gecas 2000:95) The way in which value identities, as intrinsic to collective identities, transcend situations and remain constant can be elucidated from activists' narratives of their relationship to activism, where the collective identity of feminist, anti-militarist, feminist activist permeates all aspects of activists' lives.

For Jelena,

[Activism] is not a job for me actually, it's more like something I enjoy doing and I can't say "oh, I'm coming from work, I'm tired" sometimes I don't wanna go home, actually, I want to stay more [...] It's life, it's not just a job, activism is a way of life, you can't go home and be something else, you are all the time like that [...] Besides my child, that's [activism] the most important.

For Boban,

I cannot separate my private life from my activism, my activism is my life as a whole and I really live activism, from that time when I go to the store and recognize some kind of discrimination, everything is very, very connected because for me activism in this way which I do that is a way of life [...] Because I don't do that because I get money, and some benefits and etc. This is not a job like any other, like an ordinary job, I don't have that working time from 9 to 5 or something like that. Every day of my life is activism, every part of heart is activism, everything what I read is activism, everything what I listen is activism, almost all people who are my friends are involved in some kind of activism, everything that I wear is activism. Basically all my life [...] It makes me sad that some people see activism only as a job, that is no good [...]

For Stasa,

I do not see any motive to live in Serbia if I don't work on this. If I don't work on this, I do not live in Serbia. As a person, with this charge, I do not see any motive to live here, just this. This is the main motive to live here [...] I can't live without doing this; I can't live here, I have no motive to live here if I don't do this. I have lived here all of my life but I have no reason to live here, after 1991, I have no motive, only this [...] Activism is essential, I live from activism, I do not separate my private life from activism, I couldn't live a single day with a person who does not agree with me politically 100% [...]

For Jasmina,

The significance of activism in my life is absolutely primary, because it made my life as it is and I am very happy with my life, I went through many difficult situations, I didn't have an easy life, but all the choices I made in my life I made it on my own and I had to fight for them and that's activism, because I didn't accept the life that my parents, my languages, my country gave me, I chose [...] This is not easy, but I think that activism is what made me, what made my books, on private and on public issues, the way I live my private life too [...]

For Nevzeta,

Actually my job in WiB is I'm financial coordinator but I'm first of all an activist [...] it is not only a job, but this is atmosphere, this is solidarity, this is our anti-militarism and the hope. With this group I have a hope that something will be changed.

For Adam,

This is my life. This is what I like. From time to time it is very hard, but the feeling that I am doing something is enough for me...Now I feel I cannot work in a regular job because I loose myself, I find myself in [activism]. This is my life, I really find myself in this job, this is not a job; it is activism. This is a way of life. when somebody says "I find myself in mediation" I think that I find myself in activism and I think that there doesn't exist a job that can pay me that I can be happy like now, satisfied, not only happy, satisfied.

According to Gecas, values are produced via cognition; nonetheless, they have a fundamental emotional dimension: "people feel pride and satisfaction in the affirmation of their values, guilt and shame in not living up to their values, and anger or fear when their values are threatened." (Gecas 2000:95) When people define their sense of self according to specific values, failing to act according to these specific values represents for people a negation of the self. People need to act according to these values in order to experience a sense of self-realization and authenticity.

Taylor (1991) defines authenticity as a displacement from the notion of morality, which is defined as the feeling of what is right and wrong. For Taylor, while “being in touch with our moral feelings would matter here, as a means to the end of acting rightly...the displacement of the moral accent comes about when being in touch takes on independent and crucial moral significance. It comes to be something we have to attain to be true and full human beings.” (1991:26). The notion of authenticity implies the capacity to be loyal to one’s own originality, where “I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s. But this gives a new importance of being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*.” (Taylor 1991:29, emphasis in the original)

According to Gecas, authenticity along with self-esteem and self-efficacy provide the “motivational foundation” of the concept of the self. Self-esteem “refers to the motivation to view oneself favorably and to try to maintain or enhance a favorable evaluation of oneself” while “self-efficacy is the motivation to perceive oneself as a causal agent in one’s environment, as efficacious and competent.” When the ideology and value identity that define a SM or SMO manage to promote self-esteem, self-efficacy, and authenticity among movement members, they are more likely to feel loyal and committed to the SM.

According to Shamir “the consequences of acting in accordance with one’s values is not a sense of pleasure but rather a sense of affirmation attained when the person abides by his or her moral commitments.” (quoted in Gecas 2000:95) Values “signify the ideological grounding of the individual in the form of political, religious, or philosophical doctrines.” (Gecas 2000:98) Gecas notices that SMOs usually represent and promote

particular values. For instance some of the values that WiB represent and promote include anti-militarism, anti-nationalism, anti-homophobia, justice, and peace. And by the very fact that they are a SMO, WiB promote the value of activism as such. According to Gecas, values such as the ones aforementioned, “as integral parts of a movement’s ideology become important aspects of members’ self-definitions, of their value identities, with implications for individuals’ commitment to the social movement. They may even provide the moral foundation for a person’s self-conception.” (2000:200) This becomes particularly evident in activists’ narratives of their involvement with feminist, anti-nationalist feminist activism.

For Jasmina, during the war years,

It was just my conscious that we were doing something important, since nobody else was doing it, we had to do it. I would have been very glad if somebody else was doing it instead of me, but since nobody else was doing it we had to do it, it felt more like a duty than an honor [...] I had a personal responsibility [to stand], it is a very particular situation, if you know that something is wrong to stay quiet is very difficult. Because if you know that people are being killed and everyone is lying [...] I knew what was going on in Bosnia, in Kosovo, I couldn’t say “it’s none of my business.” I couldn’t not write about it. I couldn’t not stand up. I had two options: to leave the country or if I was here, to be a Woman in Black and do anti-war stuff [...]

Similarly, for Lepa she became involved with this type of activism

You know it’s wrong, the war is wrong. It was horrible, so I had to be everywhere, because when the war started there were daily protests against the war, not only the WiB [...]

Similarly, for Zorica,

I can feel myself responsible for the war because I was already 30 years old [...] It’s a personal, it’s a citizen, responsibility, maybe I could have done something, and also generational because a lot of the people who were in the war were my age [...] people who got drafted, who went as volunteers, so it was more or less my generation involved in war [...] I was thinking I was doing the right thing because I decided to come to live to

Belgrade when the war started. I had the possibility of maybe to organize my life in some other country but I never thought of it, but when the war started I felt the responsibility to be here in Belgrade, so I decided to stay in Belgrade [...] It was my decision, and I never altogether regret it, I regret that we spent altogether so many years, but on the personal and emotional level I don't regret that I was involved [...]

For Nevzeta, she is part of WiB,

Because I need to stop war, to stop fascism, to stop militarism, and I would like to say that in an open way in the streets [...] Sometimes I'm tired and I say "I'm finished! No, I can't come anymore! Please let me!" and after that I say "oh, I can't, I can't" I just say "I can't anymore" but after a few hours I'm back at the organization. Because I'm tired, I have my own problems with health, etc. you know and so many. And I'm employed about 38 years, it's too much [...] WiB it is a very important part [part of my life] at the personal level [...]"

Similarly for Lina

We were many years only a few on the streets, 10 of us, and something that was difficult for me in these discussions I am terribly shy and I didn't like to be visible in the streets, no I can, I don't like being in the first plan [...] I don't like [to be in the street], but I do [want to be there], I think it's good, it's important [...] I don't like people say "I am not interested in politics" because politics is interested in you, it's your life. We are now in this situation; we must do something about it. To me it is important to say that I am against many things, to declare myself, to say it open, because it is part of my conscious. [to say it] publicly through activism, through my work, because I have an opinion and I see situation [...] I think I have to say, to show my statement [...]"

For Nadja, she is involved with WiB because

[...] I am afraid that if I don't do at least as much as I can maybe something else will go horribly wrong within my life time, the way it went wrong for my parents 20 years ago and I wouldn't like to feel guilty in 10 or 20 years. [WiB] is part of who I am and it is one of the parts I really like.

For Magda,

I generally like to have an opinion on stuff, so this helps me confirm something and I like the fact that I am actually doing something to stand up for what I think is right [...]

People are usually like they just don't understand why I feel the need to be so upright with that, they just say "can't you be a feminist for yourself, why do you have to join an organization? [...]"

For Katie,

[Activism] is a really big part of who I am and I think it is something I can do so that I'm; if I didn't do it I would feel really, I don't know if guilty is the right word but I think it's important, it is something that I want to do and I really enjoy doing and it is something that I need to do [...] I feel that patriarchy; I feel that capitalism, and fundamentalism, and militarism all reinforce patriarchy and to me if we got rid of patriarchy things would be very different, it would be a better world, so to me working against capitalism, fundamentalism, militarism, we work against those and are working against patriarchy and so I think you can't just work against one I feel the need personally to work against patriarchy and against all that means, all that that forms [...] I think that that's something that I feel like I need to do so that I can be ok with who I am.

For Jelena, activism is

Something that I need to do, something I need the right thing to do, I think it is not my purpose just to sit around and wait for something to happen, I need to do something to happen. I have a daughter and I want for her a better life, I want her to have a better life than I had actually and that's one of the reasons, maybe she is my motivation, one of the reasons, and one of the reasons is myself because I need something more of life than just life. And I think I can do something, not just me, but if we all get together we could do something and I don't know, I just feel it is the right thing [...] Because I can't be peaceful about seeing our society change in fundamentalist way, I can't just sit and say "it's ok, we have, it's great, our young women are going back to marriages and they won't work, they will have more children, they are going to Church, it's ok, they can have their scarves," they will teach their daughters to be like that and I can't let that happen and just sit and wait or just sit, it's stupid [...]"



## Concluding Remarks

The main research questions motivating the realization of this study concerned activists' motivations for participation in WiB. If during the Milosevic regime it was dangerous to become involved in this type of contention, what motivated their participation, despite the risks involved? For self-evident reasons, the period following the demise of the Milosevic regime is significantly different from it; however, WiB still undergo state and social repression. Then why do they get involved? Because, in short, anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activism becomes an identity that activists share with others and that they cannot live without.

Activists' narratives of participation point at the fundamentally life-affirming character of activism—at the venue it provides to transform feelings of anger, indignation, and helplessness by rendering individuals with a sense of agency. Activism provides a venue for individuals to affirm their sense of self by enabling them to act according to their values; it is an identity that becomes strengthened by the bonds of community, solidarity, support, recognition, and belonging created in the process of participation. Activism becomes a value in itself and the collective identity of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activist a value identity that therefore transcends all situations.

Earlier in this thesis I point at the relevance of the socialization-function and decision-shaping function of social networks in the process of collective identity formation. Due to the fact that this was a primarily qualitative study, I only make a passing reference to the relevance of the structural-connection function of networks in

movement participation, which should be further elucidated in subsequent research. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, some of the activists interviewed point at the role that the fact that their parents were activists played in influencing their decisions to become activists. Subsequent research should perhaps look into not only the role of networks, but the role of primary socialization in contributing to the development of an activist identity. Melucci (1996), as mentioned earlier in the thesis, points at the relevance of recognition by opposition in defining a collective identity. Subsequent research should look into how the relationship of activists with oppositional groups contributes to strengthening collective identity formation. And finally, considering that WiB is not only limited to Serbia but is actually an international network of WiB organizations, subsequent research through network analysis should look into the mechanisms that have promoted the development of the network and that contribute to its continual spread throughout the world.

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